

Governor Phil Murphy

# First Lady Tammy Murphy Announces New Jersey Will Be First State in the Nation to Incorporate Climate Change Across Education Guidelines for K-12 Schools

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**TRENTON** – First Lady Tammy Murphy today announced that the New Jersey State Board of Education has adopted her initiative to make New Jersey the first state in the nation to incorporate climate change education across its K-12 learning standards. The New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLs) outline what is taught in New Jersey’s public schools and set the foundation for school districts to craft instruction and curricula. With this adoption, climate change education will be incorporated across seven content areas – 21st Century Life and Careers, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, Science, Social Studies, Technology, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages. Climate change standards have also been added to the appendices of the Mathematics and English Language Arts guidelines, which are up for review in 2022.

“In New Jersey, we have already begun to experience the effects of climate change, from our disappearing shorelines, to harmful algal blooms in our lakes, super storms producing torrential rain, and summers that are blazing hot,” **said First Lady Murphy**. “The adoption of these standards is much more than an added educational requirement; it is a symbol of a partnership between generations. Decades of short-sighted decision-making has fueled this crisis and now we must do all we can to help our children solve it. This generation of students will feel the effects of climate change more than any other, and it is critical that every student is provided an opportunity to study and understand the climate crisis through a comprehensive, interdisciplinary lens.”

“A top priority of my Administration has been to reestablish New Jersey’s role as a leader in the fight against climate change,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “The adoption of these standards across our K-12 schools is an important step forward that will strengthen the future of New Jersey’s green energy economy. By incorporating these standards into the nation’s number one public education system, we are creating a catalyst and knowledge base for new green jobs and teaching our children to become leaders who will propel New Jersey forward to 100 percent clean energy by 2050.”

Over the past year, the First Lady has met with the over 130 educators from across the state who have been charged with reviewing and revising the existing student learning standards, a process that occurs every five years. Since 2018, the First Lady has visited elementary, middle, and high schools across the state that have already implemented strong climate change education and sustainability initiatives. These schools include Mount Arlington Public School, Whitehouse Elementary School, Millbridge Elementary School, George L. Catrambone School, Delran High School, Valleyview Middle School, J.V.B. Wicoff Elementary School, Egg Harbor Township High School, Alder Middle School, and Northern Burlington County Regional High School. All of these schools participate in the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program.

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The process for reviewing and revising the NJSLS was informed by teachers, administrators, higher education faculty, and stakeholders from throughout the state. There was representation from public, nonpublic, and charter schools; from rural, urban, and suburban districts; non-profit organizations and agencies; and the military. The 2020 NJSLS were revised with consideration of the public input and feedback received through regional testimony sessions, written comments, and feedback submitted through the NJDOE website.

"I am incredibly proud that New Jersey is the first state in the nation to fully integrate climate education in their K-12 curricula," **said Vice President Al Gore**. "This initiative is vitally important to our students as they are the leaders of tomorrow, and we will depend on their leadership and knowledge to combat this crisis. We will need leaders who are not only well educated about the effects of climate change, but leaders who can craft the solutions for climate change and implement those solutions. Congratulations to First Lady Tammy Murphy and to all of New Jersey's educators who have helped New Jersey reach this historic announcement."

"Record hurricanes, wildfires, flooding, heat waves and drought have spelled out a dire reality: the climate crisis is here. New Jersey is on the front line of this crisis, and we can no longer afford to address climate change along the margins. I'm grateful for the First Lady's leadership on the climate crisis in our state. The K-12 climate change education guidelines will prepare young New Jerseyans to build a safe and prosperous future for generations to come," **Congressman Frank Pallone said**.

"One of the goals of our learning standards is to ensure New Jersey students are prepared to think critically, analyze data, and work collaboratively," **said New Jersey Department of Education Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet**. "These skills will be more important than ever as today's young minds learn how to address the issue of climate change."

"Today's students are tomorrow's residents, advocates and contributors to New Jersey's clean energy economy," **said New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe**. "We are pleased to work as a team with the First Lady and the State Board of Education to provide New Jersey's educators to empower future generations to reduce and respond to climate change, one of the most pressing challenges of this century. Today's milestone further establishes New Jersey's national leadership on both climate change and education."

"It's unfortunate that climate change has been turned into such a divisive political tool. In reality, it is a scientific fact, and human activity is a major contributing factor," **said Senator Vin Gopal**. "While we cannot control how the politics is played on the federal level, through the First Lady's first-in-the-nation initiative we can ensure our students understand the real world causes, effects and strategies to mitigate the future damage. For the students set to inherit this warming world, properly educating them is the most responsible thing we can do."

"The future of our climate impacts the future of our children," **said Assemblywoman Joann Downey**. "They will likely face environmental challenges we cannot begin to predict, and it's critical that they understand the magnitude of how drastically our planet is changing as a result of human behavior and other factors. By educating our students on climate change, we will better prepare them for their futures."

"Education is the vehicle through which so much meaningful change happens in a society," **said NJEA President Marie Blistan**. "Students need a meaningful understanding of climate change, so they can see the value in working to reduce its negative effects. The negative effects of climate change, are, in many ways, issues of equity; it is our most vulnerable citizens who will be most negatively impacted by climate change in the immediate future. Our students must know what the scientific community knows: climate change threatens our way of life, is driven by human activity, and can be slowed down through intentional, coordinated acts."

"The State of NJ is once again in the forefront of making change that is generational in its impact," **stated Amy Goldsmith, NJ State Director of Clean Water Action**. "As a mother of two college students, we have

no time to waste when it comes to educating young people and inspiring them to help create a more just and sustainable future for all in this climate changing world. What better place to start than at the beginning of a child's education - turning everyone's minds and attention towards reaching NJ's goal of 100% clean energy by 2050 and 45% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030. Thank you First Lady for making this K-12 program the first in the nation. It is our hope that it will serve as a model for others to follow."

"Our climate crisis is going to impact the students of today over their lifetimes the most. New Jersey will face unprecedented impacts from climate change, and it is critical that our students fully understand those impacts and climate science that links carbon pollution with these impacts. This should be the expectation for every state and the First Lady and her team deserve kudos for their work," **said Doug O'Malley, director of Environment New Jersey.** "Today's students will be our leaders dealing with this crisis and we should give young people a full understanding of the costs of climate change and the knowledge to help shape our collective actions now."

"Climate change is the existential threat to the people, economy and natural treasures of New Jersey," **said Eric Stiles, President & CEO of New Jersey Audubon.** "We commend First Lady Tammy Murphy and the New Jersey State Board of Education for this bold step to integrate climate change concepts across the curriculum. This significant commitment to educate the next generation continues to demonstrate the Administration's national leadership showcasing responsible state climate change actions."

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