

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor, First Lady Tammy Murphy and New Jersey Department of Education Establish First-in-the-Nation Office of Climate Change Education

09/26/2023

TRENTON – To support New Jersey’s nation-leading climate change education efforts, Governor Phil Murphy, First Lady Tammy Murphy, and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) today announced the establishment of the first-in-the-nation Office of Climate Change Education within the NJDOE’s Office of Innovation to further climate literacy and environmental awareness among students and educators across the state and to prepare students for the future jobs created by the green economy. In addition, the NJDOE announced the hiring of Sarah Sterling-Laldee as Senior Climate Change Education Advisor to lead the Office.

The Office of Climate Change Education will support New Jersey’s schools in implementing the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) for Climate Change Education, which present interdisciplinary opportunities to address climate change during instruction. Through collaboration with educators and additional stakeholders across the state, this team will leverage feedback and insights to inform professional development opportunities, technical assistance, as well as guidance and resources to facilitate high-quality and innovative learning opportunities for all students.

“In the midst of some of the worst climate related events that our country has ever faced, New Jersey is taking a proactive stance in combating climate change, and education is the foundation of our efforts,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Through this initiative, we are not only fostering environmental consciousness but also preparing our youth to innovate, lead, and shape effective solutions for a greener world.”

“As our state and our world move closer to clean energy and green technologies, we have a unique opportunity here in New Jersey to properly equip our students to be at the forefront of the high paying jobs that power the future,” **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. “The establishment of the Office of Climate Change Education, led by the incredible Sarah Sterling-Laldee and dedicated specialists, will help develop best practices and approaches to assist our best-in-the-nation teachers in educating the next generation of climate literate leaders of the future green economy.”

“The establishment of the Climate Change Education Team underscores our dedication to equipping the next generation with the knowledge and tools needed to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time,” **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Education Commissioner**. “By integrating climate education into our schools, we empower our students to become informed and engaged citizens, ready to contribute to a sustainable future.”

“The DEP is committed to working with our partners across the Murphy Administration and in our schools to ensure that climate science is accessible and easy to understand,” **said Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn LaTourette**. “Through initiatives such as the new Office of Climate Change Education and the DEP’s recently released Summary of Climate Change in New Jersey, we are providing educators with the tools they need to effectively convey climate science to the next generation of climate leaders.”


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“The links between public health and our physical, biological, and ecological systems are inextricable. And the impacts of disruptions to these systems, especially to our most vulnerable communities, are very real,” **said Acting Health Commissioner Dr. Kaitlan Baston**. “Climate education will provide valuable and actionable lessons for New Jersey’s

students – our future leaders – to prepare for, adapt to, and mitigate the health and other impacts of climate change. Establishing the Office of Climate Change Education will pave the way for a healthier, more sustainable future for generations to come.”

As the Senior Climate Change Education Advisor, Sarah Sterling-Laldee will lead a team of Climate Awareness Innovation Specialists that will oversee New Jersey’s climate change education work to ensure our state continues to serve as a model for the rest of the nation. Sarah will provide support to school districts and educators implementing climate change standards, including the coordination of our climate change education grant program.

“I look forward to the opportunity to support full implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Climate Change across our state,” **said Sarah Sterling-Laldee, Senior Advisor, Office of Climate Change Education.** “Through this work, we are preparing New Jersey’s youth to respond critically and creatively to a changing world.”

Sarah Sterling-Laldee joins the NJDOE after 21 years of service in the Paterson and New Brunswick Public Schools, where she served in the role of middle school Science Teacher, Supervisor of Science, and Director of STEAM Education. An alumnus of NYU’s Environmental Conservation Education program, she has focused on place based, interdisciplinary learning to promote climate resiliency, community improvement, equity, and student agency in classrooms and out of school time programs for youth and their families.

In the fiscal year 2023 (FY2023) state budget, Governor Phil Murphy allocated \$5 million dollars to support schools with the implementation of the NJSLS for Climate Change Education. In fulfillment of this appropriation, the NJDOE provided funding directly to schools through two targeted grant opportunities. In response, schools across the state proposed innovative ways to engage teachers and students through the NJSLS for Climate Change Education. Governor Phil Murphy then allocated an additional \$5 million dollars in the FY2024 state budget to continue supporting schools with the implementation of the NJSLS for Climate Change Education. An announcement regarding the availability of these funds will be provided later through a notice of grant opportunity (NGO).

New Jersey’s commitment to climate change education is rooted in a legacy of policies and forward-thinking initiatives that are squarely focused on student success. With the integration of climate change education into the NJSLS and the establishment of the Office of Climate Change Education, the State is poised to build on its national lead in equipping students and educators with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary to address the complex challenges posed by climate change.

Governor Phil Murphy

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