

Climate change: What can schools do?

There are many ways schools and the education system can support action on climate change, and the transition to a low-carbon future.



Build knowledge about climate change

Students, teachers, school leaders, and communities can work together to build knowledge about:

- the causes and consequences of climate change, and solutions and strategies that can make a difference.
- how climate change is expected to affect your community and region.
- the social impacts of climate change, and how it intersects with issues of equity and social justice.

Look at school operations

- Make your school a model of climate-conscious action. Your school campus should reflect your school's values.
- Understand, and reduce your school's carbon footprint.
- Explore options to become a zero-carbon school or community.

Know your place

- Explore your local area through a climate lense. Developing a sense of place strengthens people's desire to care for their local environments and can inspire action.
- Build relationships with mana whenua and get to know the histories of your area.
- Examine the relationships between colonisation and environmental change in your area.

Focus on positive action

- Take action. Action helps people to feel that they can do something about these problems.
- Taking action doesn't just help with wellbeing—it actually makes a difference, however big or small.

Design climate-conscious curriculum

- Address climate and sustainability education through all subject areas, not just science and social science.
- Teach for the development of critical, creative, and futures thinking.
- Strengthen te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori within place-based and localised curriculum design.

Empower young people

- Support young people's initiative and capacity for leadership, and enable students to have input into planning and decision-making.
- Encourage learners to develop and test new ideas, designs, and strategies that can scale up to make bigger differences. Schools can be great sites for innovation.
- Understand action as a rich context for student learning—learning *about* action, learning *through* action, and learning *from* action.

Engage your Board of Trustees and community

- Engage your Board and community in discussions about climate change and what it means for your community/region.
- Embed sustainability and climate-conscious thinking into school charters and strategic plans.

Strengthen local partnerships

- Find out what your local and regional councils are doing to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Explore opportunities for students get involved in sustainability and climate change projects and initiatives in your local area.
- Build community partnerships that support meaningful and rich learning for your students.

Be visible

- Share your climate action experiences and stories with others.
- Encourage other schools in your network to adopt sustainable and climate-conscious behaviours.

Keys for success

Whole-school climate action projects are most likely to be successful (Gibb, 2016) when they are resourced with:

- A knowledgeable and committed principal
- Expertise within the school (teachers) and access to external experts
- Facilitators to manage the process
- Supporting materials and teaching resources
- Adequate long-term financing.

Selected reading and references

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NZCER's climate change research

Educational policy and practice for a changing climate: What are the options?

Our research project explores what changes or adaptations our education system may need to make in response to climate change.

We publish research reports, articles, and blogs.

Read more: <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/climate-change>

