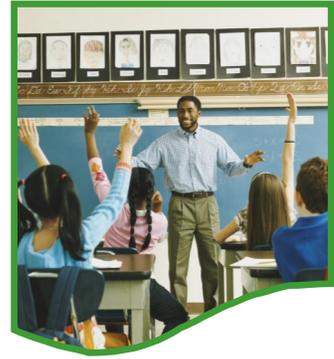


# Standards and Suggestions



## The Importance of Academic Standards

As with most real-world issues, addressing climate change calls on the knowledge and skills of many academic disciplines. To participate in shaping our democracy's responses to climate change, students need to have a basic understanding of:

- The main causes of climate change and the scientific principles that drive it;
- The scale of its impacts on humans, societies and on natural areas;
- The impact that collective versus individual actions can have;
- The ways in which decisions are made in our local and national governments and the kinds of economic considerations and public policies that can effect change;

In addition, students need to be able to:

- Reason and articulate evidence-based arguments,
- Critique their own ideas and those of others, and
- Individually and collectively, make forward-looking decisions as consumers and as participants in their communities.

## Where does climate change belong in the curriculum of our schools and in informal education programs?

We investigated this question by analyzing the newest academic standards that drive teaching, learning, and assessment in our education systems – i.e., the Common Core, Science, and Social Studies standards. Time constraints and limited resources prevented us from including additional disciplines. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that other disciplines also have a place in climate change education.

The reason we focused on standards is that, within formal K-12 schooling today, subject standards play a central role in determining what content teachers cover in

classrooms, what informal educators build into their programs, and how they cover that material. The extent to which students meet educational objectives outlined in standards (what they know and are able to do) is generally assessed through standardized tests. While each state determines its own subject standards, professional associations affiliated with academic disciplines also create standards. In some cases, states adopt these standards directly (as is the trend with Common Core standards, for example). In other cases, states may use these standards as guidelines or not at all. In all cases, however, concepts that do not appear in standards are less likely to be emphasized in the classroom since they will not be covered in standardized tests.