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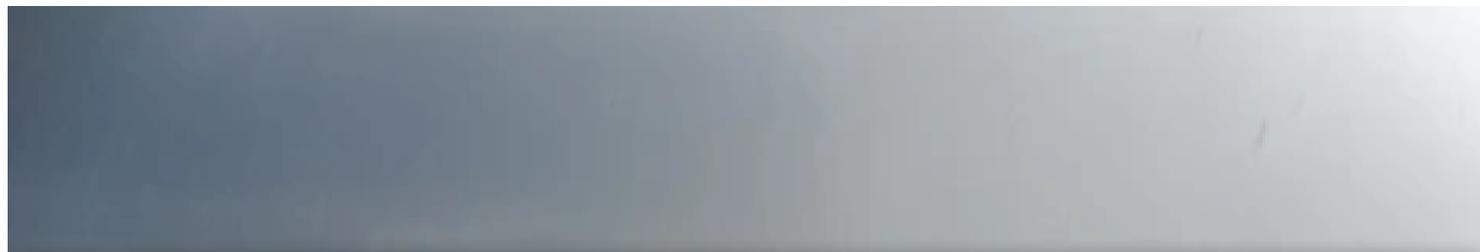


Columnists

# Opinion: Alberta students want climate, energy added to curriculum

Calgary Herald

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Downtown Calgary is seen from Nose Hill Park moments before it was taken over by stormy clouds on Thursday, July 23, 2020. PHOTO BY AZIN GHAFARI /Postmedia file

As Albertans, we often shy away from the topics of environment and climate change because of our reliance on the oil and gas industry for our economic prosperity. Many of us simply view climate change, and the tutelage of climate education, as far too controversial.

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However, the climate crisis will continue to worsen, and we can bury our heads in the sand no longer.



In order to properly address this crisis, young people must be provided with the education to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to prepare themselves for their futures.

Unfortunately, as we ourselves can attest from our personal experiences in Alberta's education system, not once has climate change, or the topics surrounding it, been adequately instructed upon.

Instead, when we have wanted to learn more up-to-date information on the environment and climate change, we have had to seek it out ourselves and hope we can find a teacher willing to help. As a result, we have found that the quantity and quality of climate education is widely inconsistent between schools, and even between teachers within the same school.

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The reason being for this is that our curriculum fails to address climate change. Which really is no wonder, as some aspects of Alberta's curricula are outdated by more than 20 years!

Needless to say, our current curriculum, and greater education system, is failing to prepare students like us for our climate change reality, and lies in stark contrast to the more preferable, whole systems approach, in which climate education is widely embedded throughout curriculum and taught in all courses.

For anyone who doubts the importance and need of climate education in Alberta schools, consider some recent polling findings.

According to Leger's 2020 polling report, 70 per cent of Alberta high school students surveyed are worried about their future as a result of climate change, with more than 50 per cent feeling they lack the knowledge and capability to do anything about it. At the same time, however, more than two-thirds of youth agreed that climate education within schools should be a top priority; something it is undoubtedly not at the current time. Consequently, this lack of education has spawned a generation of students insecure about their futures.

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~~Fortunately, there are a variety of solutions that we as Albertans can take to address this issue.~~

In 2020, Alberta youth wrote the [Supporting Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Climate Education in Alberta Schools](#), which includes a list of recommendations for education leaders to address the current shortcomings in our system.

Among other things, we students advocate for a revision to the curriculum to incorporate more environmental, energy and climate instruction throughout all classes. We also advocate for more hands-on and outdoor learning experiences, up-to-date resources for teachers, green school renovations and more opportunities for environmentally friendly transportation to and from school.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

We already know that these recommendations are achievable, as many are already being applied in some schools and school districts.

Take, for instance, [Lacombe Composite High School](#). Staff and students alike in Lacombe Composite's EcoVision Club have helped install solar panels, built a geothermal greenhouse and an outdoor gardening space, created a school compost system, and brought in beehives and goats, all of which continue to enrich students' environmental, energy and climate education.

As inspiring as examples like these are, though, we are not even close to providing these necessary learning opportunities for all students.

It does not have to be this way, though.

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This is why we, as students, urge all concerned Albertans to contact their members of the legislative assembly, as well as their local school board trustees, and share their concerns about the lack of environment, energy and climate education currently being taught in Alberta schools. We also encourage all Albertans to read through the [newly released draft K-6 curriculum](#) and pass along their feedback to the government.

Overall, integrating environmental education into our current curriculum, and throughout our entire education system, is crucial for preparing youth to be leaders in a world facing the climate crisis and providing them with a more hopeful, brighter future.

*Chloe MacGregor is a Grade 12 student; Isiri Jayathilake is a Grade 11 student; Logan Mitchell is a Grade 10 student; Sasha Adamova is a Grade 9 student, all in Calgary; and Sneha Rose Jigo is a Grade 12 student in Lacombe.*



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