

# Alberta Council for Environmental Education -Youth Climate Narratives Project

**Location:** Canada

**Project:** Youth Climate Narratives Project - Roadmap to Excellent Climate Change Education

**Industries:** Infographics, Environmental & Natural Sciences, Climate Change

**Project timeline:** October 2020 to June 2021

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Fuse was contracted by the Alberta Council for Environmental Education to help deliver focus groups across Alberta to help understand how Alberta students feel about climate change. Our team was the lead on writing content, developing infographics and doing layout for communications materials at every stage of the program. Initially we developed a suite of materials targeted to teachers and parents who would agree to have the children in their care participate in the project. After these as well as the results of province-wide polling were analyzed, we also developed infographics, slide decks and a Roadmap to Excellent Climate Change Education to help mobilize the findings.



**ROADMAP TO Excellent Climate Change Education**  
Insights from the Alberta Council for Environmental Education

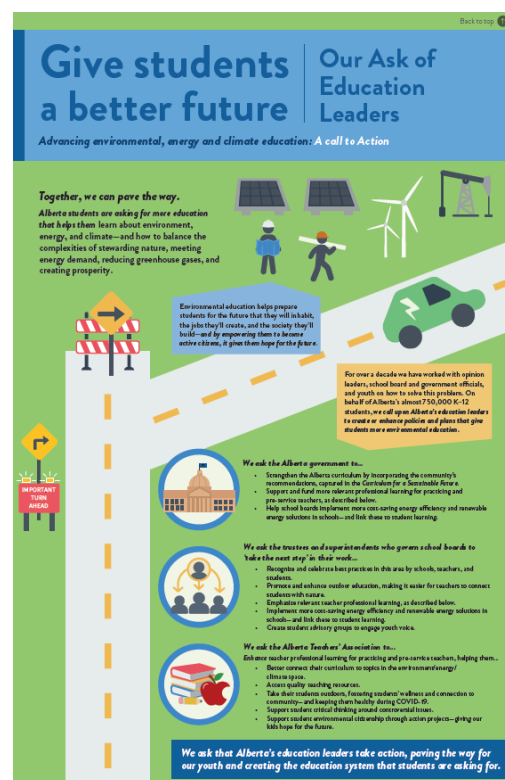
In late 2019 we spoke with more than 170 students from nine communities across Alberta and in early 2020 we conducted province-wide polling of over 500 Alberta youth ages 15 to 24. For today's students, climate change is not controversial; in fact, the vast majority agree that it should be taught in school and should be a high priority for grades 6-12. For Alberta youth, teachers are one of the most trusted sources of information about climate change. When students are not taught about environment, energy and climate change, they construct their own meanings, which are commonly incorrect - and can create feelings of confusion and anxiety. Here are six things we can all do on the 'road' to excellent climate change education:

- 1 Approach with empathy and curiosity**
  - Acknowledge and accommodate anxiety. Avoid fear and blame.
  - Frame climate action as a quest of positive, meaningful activities connected to our shared identity and pride in Alberta, and helping create the future we want.
  - Engage with your students' concerns. Listen to them.
  - Approach learning as a shared exploration, recognizing that, as educators, we aren't always right.
  - Remember that youth don't all feel the same about climate change. In Alberta, youth fall into three sub-groups: Anxious (53%), Concerned (30%) and Optimistic (17%).
- 2 Connect to nature and place**
  - Build a foundation of awe and respect for nature by spending time outdoors and providing positive experiences in nature, which also benefits mental health.
  - Help students understand that we are part of nature.
  - Engage communities and organizations with our environment, while learning local and relevant, to foster a sense of place.
- 3 Build literacy of environment, energy and climate**
  - Teach foundational concepts, creating a deeper understanding of key concepts.
  - Use consistent language for better understanding of the differences between pollution, climate change, environment, and more.
  - Use local news to connect student learning to real-world.
  - Explain how the scientific and social dimensions of climate change.
- 4 Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills**
  - Teach HOW to think, not what to think.
  - Create hands-on action projects that develop skills, targeted by student interests.
  - Consider different perspectives through the relevant scenarios.
  - Practice interdisciplinary, systems-level, and creative thinking.
  - Connect with experts and agencies that help students explore future career paths.
- 5 Create hope and agency by helping students be part of the solution**
  - Spend more time in the 'solution space' than the 'problem space'.
  - Connect to real-world (e.g. municipal) action plans and strategies, along with those actions that are from 'the ground' (e.g. youth energy efficiency challenges, car-pooling, composting, etc.)
  - Foster hope through local initiatives, including:
    - Help students imagine, progress for, and support their own, or their community's, sustainable future.
- 6 Inspire others to action**
  - Educate and engage parents, teachers and other people to demonstrate learning and impact.
  - Share resources to inspire others to action.

**Emotions:** anxiety, confusion, apathy, prepared, optimistic, informed

**To help you, we curate some great climate education resources from many sources and organizations. Here's how to access all climate education Alberta Youth Toolkit for Environment and Energy Education (AYTEEE)**  
<https://www.environment.alberta.ca/ayteee/>

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**Give students a better future** | Our Ask of Education Leaders

Advancing environmental, energy and climate education: A call to Action

**Together, we can pave the way.**  
Alberta students are asking for more education that helps them learn about environment, energy, and climate—and how to balance the complexities of stewarding nature, meeting energy demand, reducing greenhouse gas, and creating prosperity.

Environmental education helps prepare students for the future that they will inhabit, the jobs they'll create, and the society they'll build—and by empowering them to become active citizens, it gives them hope for the future.

For over a decade we have worked with opinion leaders, school board and government officials, and youth to learn how to solve this problem. On behalf of Alberta's almost 750,000 K-12 students, we call upon Alberta's education leaders to create or enhance policies and plans that give students an excellent environmental education.

**We ask the Alberta government to...**

- Strengthen the Alberta curriculum by incorporating the community's recommendations, reported in the Consultation for a Sustainable Future.
- Support and fund innovative professional learning for practicing and pre-service teachers, as described below.
- Help school boards implement more cost-saving energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions in schools—and look those to reduce learning.

**We ask the trustees and superintendents who govern school boards to...**

- Recognize and embrace best practices in this area by schools, teachers, and students.
- Support and enhance teacher education, making a case for teachers to connect students with nature.
- Engage with teacher professional learning, as described below.
- Implement more cost-saving energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions in schools—and look those to reduce learning.
- Create student advisory groups to engage youth voice.

**We ask the Alberta Teachers' Association to...**

- Enhance teacher professional learning for practicing and pre-service teachers, helping them...
  - Develop and embrace best practices in this area by schools, teachers, and students.
  - Assess quality teaching resources.
  - Take direct student feedback, focusing students' wishes and connection to community—and applying this monthly during COVID-19.
  - Support student critical thinking around environmental issues.
  - Support student environmental citizenship through action projects—giving our kids hope for the future.

**We ask that Alberta's education leaders take action, paving the way for our youth and creating the education system that students are asking for.**