

Experts urge greater investment in educating children about climate emergency

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Environmental education provision needs greater investment and innovation if future generations are to be able to respond fully to the climate emergency, experts have said.

The deepening environmental crisis will continue to worsen if there is not significant support and investment in environmental and science [education](#), researchers have warned. Reforms would help [young people](#) to address the complex, interlinked and dynamic issues of our contemporary situation.

The experts argue Governments and other organizations must direct more funding to education innovation in response to consistent warnings from scientists about trends in the deteriorating state of ecosystems, biodiversity and climate, amongst other environmental issues.

Writing in *Environmental Education Research*, Alan Reid, from Monash University, Justin Dillon, from the University of Exeter, Jo-Anne Ferreira, from the University of Southern Queensland and Nicole Ardoin from Stanford University, who are senior editors of the journal, say environmental education is a "cornerstone for the social and [environmental changes](#)" needed in the future.

Environmental and science education helps people to identify fake information and ideologies, and understand and respond appropriately to warnings about the climate emergency.

They add that consensus on our environmental predicaments is not simply a matter for scientists, however. It must be supported by those in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, and wider society. Only then will contemporary calls by organizations such as UNEP and UNESCO that "environmental education be a core component of all education systems at all levels by 2025," have a chance of gaining the multilateral and multileveled support the situation so urgently requires.

The academics highlight international surveys that show many governments continue to fail to support and invest enough in environmental and sustainability education across pre-school, school,

college and university settings.

Professor Ferreira says that "the research base is clear about the superiority of whole-school approaches to quick curriculum fixes for addressing topics such as the climate emergency. The existential risk aspects also mean we need to look at investment and innovation in lifelong learning and non-school based provision, alongside examining the focus of current initial teacher education and continuing professional development."

Professor Reid adds that "the popularity of outdoor education centers and activities are testament to the broader base of interest in environment and nature, as well as when arts, media and civil society addresses the climate crisis. Flagship environmental and science communication documentaries by the likes of David Attenborough examining the causes and effects of the [climate](#) emergency whet many people's appetites for understanding more from credible sources. Sir David's own learning journey in coming to understand the urgency of the situation underscores the rich learning opportunities available to us all, particularly in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow."

He further states that "ensuring any form of environmental education is relevant, coherent, fit for purpose, funded appropriately, and available to current and [future generations](#) within and beyond the curriculum will be crucial to addressing sound and pertinent warnings from scientists."

Professor Dillon explains that "global leaders should be discussing how to reimagine, recreate and restore [environmental education](#) to reduce the consequences of the environmental crisis. Countries should embed environmental and [science education](#) throughout society in ways that make sense locally."

Professor Ardoin concludes that "only by investing in education—and

especially environmental and sustainability education—will it be possible to radically alter the course we are currently on, and thus demonstrate to ourselves and future generations that sufficient heed was given to our warnings."

More information: Alan Reid et al, Scientists' warnings and the need to reimagine, recreate, and restore environmental education, *Environmental Education Research* (2021). [DOI: 10.1080/13504622.2021.1937577](https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2021.1937577)

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