



Pearson



Ask the Expert

How can you teach climate change without causing eco-anxiety?



Climate change is a huge issue for our planet and children will be the most affected. In addition to the physical threat, climate change is taking a massive mental health toll on children with eco-anxiety on the rise. Climate education has enormous potential to educate and empower students to take climate action and reduce eco-anxiety, but it is currently being underutilised.



Keya Lamba

Co-Founder of Earth Warriors shares her advice.

1. Be positive & conquer your fears

Few of us learned about climate change growing up so this is new to many of us as adults. Eco-anxiety is on the rise for both students and teachers. So much of what you hear about today around climate change is 'doom and gloom' or 'the world is ending'. This can be very scary for students and adults. It can be empowering to couple a with a positive solutions-focused approach with the teaching of scientific facts. Learning with your students and modelling solutions-focused thinking will also help students feel supported and positive about tackling climate change.

[For training on this subject visit the Earth Warriors website](#)



2. Make students feel empowered to take individual action

Anxiety can be driven by, or exacerbated by, a sense of lack of influence or control, so when it comes to eco-anxiety helping students to channel their interest and engagement with action can make a positive difference.

To support this, find out what causes your students are passionate about. What inspires them? Sustainability can be discussed in relation to any industry and encouraging your students to focus on what they are excited by will motivate them to take climate action.

We have also found that you can give your students confidence by collaborating with other students around the world and creating a global community. Our pen pal programme, connecting students from four different countries, has shown that the issues related to climate change feel less daunting when students know there are teachers and students across the globe working on this issue, and that they are not alone.

3. Make it local and contextual for students

This is key. Climate change is a global issue but it affects every country, city and town differently and the solutions must be local. Providing options for students to get involved locally is critical so they can see that they can make a tangible hands-on difference right away. Choose a sustainability issue in your school or local community and work with your students to come up with a solution. Make sure to celebrate this with the community and involve parents and local organisations.

4. Make it part of daily life: sustainability in the classroom

If you can make sustainable living and habits part of your daily routine and normalise it, that will make it seem natural to students as well. This can be as simple as having a recycling bin in your classroom or choosing to use DIY materials rather than buying new plastic supplies or choosing local seasonal snacks.

5. Have open positive conversations

We have found it's better to talk to your students openly about climate change and create a safe space to see what they already know or have heard about the topic. Then you can provide support and a space where they feel comfortable to discuss their feelings. This helps with reducing eco-anxiety as well. Exposing your students to real-life climate activists in your city or country is a great way to positively discuss these topics so they know there are children and youth who are their age and already making a huge difference in their communities. We at Earth Warriors offer teacher training on this topic.