

## Podcast Transcript:

### Climate Change Education: A parent's call to action

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(Theme Song begins: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](http://Art-list.io))

**Host:** Hello and welcome to this special issue podcast on 'Climate Change Education: A parent's call to action.' I'm your host, Emily Hunter and in this podcast, you'll hear about my research on this topic of Climate Change Education in a mostly solo podcast format. But you'll also hear from pre-recorded speeches and interviews on the open web by educators, scholars, parents and youth. So sit down and get ready, we're gonna have some hard talks.

(Theme Song continues: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](http://Art-list.io))

**Host:** If there is one thing that really keeps me up at night as a parent....it's THE Talk. You know... THE talk. Now I'm not talking about the 'birds and bees,' I wish we lived in a different world where all I had to worry about was talking sex with my son. No, I'm talking about climate change....a far more troubling and scary conversation to have with any young person. And I'm not the only parent that thinks this way. Here's a segment on the *The Morning Edition of CBC News* with a parent interviewed by journalist Stefani Langenegger.

(Theme Song ends: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](http://Art-list.io))

**Steffani:** Amy Snider is a Regina mom of one and part of Saskatchewan's enviro collective. She says climate change is always in her family's consciousness.

**Amy:** My husband and I are both deeply aware of climate change, and deeply concerned and um.... And it's often an unspoken debate, a bummer of ours to know how much to talk about climate change in front of our son.

**Host:** As a climate activist, Graduate student and mom myself, I know what she's talking about. I too really stress about my son's climate future almost on the daily basis, as I do for all young people. It's hard not to if you're paying attention to the news.

**(Sound effect: rain pouring and wind blowing)**

**Host:** Already in 2021 in my home of Canada, we've been hit hard by freak events like heat domes, extreme heat events, wildfires, not to mention invasive species like ticks spreading Lyme disease further north with the warming trends. And the most recent natural disaster in British Columbia, reported here in this clip by *The National* on CBC News just a few days ago with journalist Ian Hanomansing.

**Ian:** Welcome to this special edition of the Nations , people in many parts of BC are dealing with deluge tonight, a weekend of record-breaking rain led to flooding and landslides. It shut down multiple highways, trapping motorists, forcing mass evacuations. Winds are making a bad situation worse as is unreliable cell service.

**Host:** This is the unfolding climate story before us and yes, this is a very hard conversation to have with any young person. But just because some talks are hard to have with kids, doesn't mean we get to cop out (no pun intended with the latest COP 26 climate summit in Glasgow). But if anything, I think there are important lessons to be learned from another hard conversation we have with our children - the age old sex talk.

**(Sounds of a woman moaning from sex)**

**Host:** That's right, the sex talk. That smooch-y, sticky, naked, embarrassing topic of sex with your kids. Ugh.... I just shutter at the thought. It's also why many parents shutters the mother. And why teachers shutter. But this is why there is an important parallel to make about the way kids are educated about sex, and the way they are getting educated about climate change that actually have a lot of similarities. Namely - how they are not getting a proper education on either topic.

**(Sound of man gasping)**

**Host:** It's true - sex and climate change are two 'wicked' talks to have with kids, that nobody really wants to have. So that's perhaps why there are gaping holes in our education system on these two topics. In a report released last year called the *State of Sex Ed in Canada*, I found a lot of glaring similarities to the gaps in Climate Change Education nationally. Here's a clip from Jeneace on Facebook, who's a member of Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, the organization that release the *State of Sex Ed* report.

**Jeneace:** 'Sex Ed' is extremely important to me. It's my way of remaining connected and staying informed about myself, whether it be sexually, staying healthy, or staying safe.

**Hosst:** Now in both Sex Ed and in Climate Change Education in Canada, there is inconsistent curriculum being taught across provinces and territories, with curriculum not meeting international standard. Teacher's bias creeps in here too. Such as with the Sex-Ed report that states some youth received, and I quote: "ideologically-driven, abstinence-based Sex-Ed that is

misleading and inaccurate from their educators,” end quote. Climate Change Education is not that different. For some teachers have been encouraging debate in the classroom over human causes of the climate crisis, when in fact the world’s leading scientist announced it is ‘unequivocal’ in the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Perhaps this ‘bias creep’ is not surprising when in both forms of education, teachers are reporting there is a lack of support, training and in some cases, resources, to properly teach youth about these topics.

**Jeneace:** I felt like sometimes in my sexual education classes, I wasn’t given the thorough details, specific details, about safe sex, consequences of unprotected sex, STDs, STIs. I didn’t really know much until I was placed in a position where I ended up pregnant with my first child...

**Host:** That was Jeneace again, and she ends there saying that she ended up getting pregnant early in life and that’s when she had to take her own health - namely her sexual health very seriously. Having to essentially educate herself about Sex Ed through through her own real-life experiences as a young mom.

**(Sound effect: Children playing in the playground)**

**Host:** Now the story of Jeneace, of course, is not an isolated one and this is exactly my point. Without a proper education, young people are essentially left alone to grapple with these complex issues by themselves, whether it be sex or climate change. But like sex, climate change should be understood as a health issue with real life consequences. In fact, some of the world’s leading health scientists in a Lancet report call climate change the greatest global health threat of the 21st century. But this is especially troubling news for young people. Here’s a clip to

explain why called “The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change: 2019 report” found on YouTube.

**Female voice:** Throughout their adult lives, they will experience more heat waves, stronger storms, the spread of infectious disease, and see climate change intensify mass migration, extreme poverty and mental illness.

**Host:** On that last point of mental health, there is emerging research showing that nearly half of global youth are affected by some form of ‘climate anxiety.’ This is coming from the largest study on the topic of climate anxiety across 10 countries with 10,000 youth involved in the study this year, and it’s published by the Eco-Anxiety and Climate Emotions Research Group. It’s a study that also found that 75% of children and young people feel the future is frightening. Here’s an interview with one of the lead authors of the report, Caroline Hickman, in an interview with CGTV America on YouTube.

**Caroline:** Children and young people care a great deal about these global pressures and global threats, um.....but frequently they’ll only talk about it if we engage them in conversation about it. I’ve been doing qualitative research for ten years talking to children and young people globally about this and increasingly this is what I’ve been hearing from them. So in that respect, these result didn’t surprise me. What did surprise me was the way their feelings impacted on their thinking. So things like, you know, 56% of them feeling humanity was doomed.

**Host:** Now while climate anxiety is not a clinical diagnosis yet, but it is a very real experience for many people including many young people.. Now some young people have managed to cope with their climate anxiety and even excel in life like international climate activist, Greta Thunberg. But others can have very severe life-long consequences from it. I’m talking about

symptoms associated with pre and post traumatic stress disorder, like depression, panic attacks, sleep and anxiety disorders. In other cases, it can translate into cognitive issues that affect a young person's ability to learn and therefore their educational attainment and even their future life pathway. Here's a clip of Jennifer Uchendu, a Nigerian youth climate activist, sharing her experience of climate anxiety on a Livestream event earlier in September with the campaigning organization, [Avvaz.org](http://Avvaz.org).

**Jennifer:** The powerlessness and overwhelm that comes with eco-anxiety is really crippling. It's a real thing and it's something that young people have to grapple with, have to think of. How do we manage the situation? What can we do? And what spaces exist to sort-of circumvent this feeling.

**Host:** So hearing from Jennifer and many other youth like her, we know the stakes are really high for young people in this crisis. But pretending it's not happening and sticking our kid's head in the proverbial sand isn't going to help matters either. Now some argue that we ought to protect children from hard realities like this crisis, and others argue we ought to prepare them for the warming world ahead. But I, like others, actually think it's not an 'either/ or' situation but somewhere in the middle.

**(Sound effect: School bell ringing)**

**Host:** Right now the primary way we teach youth about Climate Change in Canada is through a siloed way with limited our teaching to the climate sciences alone. Don't get me wrong, learning about the climate science in terms of emissions and the greenhouse effect and climate modelling is super important, and having our facts straight is really really important as to not breed denialism. It just simply isn't holistic approach to education in this crisis. Instead, it's going

to take teaching about the climate crisis in a way that works across the disciplines, or in an interdisciplinary way, or better yet, a transdisciplinary way. That doesn't just focus on the problems or the mechanics of emissions, but empowers youth with the knowledge, tools and mindsets necessary to face the challenges head on, and possibly even thrive in that new world. This is the kind of holistic education that children need and deserve in this critical time. And that's exactly what is missing.

**(Theme Song begins: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](https://art-list.io))**

**Host:** But what exactly is holistic education on climate change anyways? Well, it's a great question and it's one we're going to jump into next. As we have a series of speakers to share their answers from various open sources on the web. So stay tuned...

**(Theme Song continues: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](https://art-list.io))**

**Host:** For the next part of this podcast, we're gonna to explore several approaches to more holistic Climate Change Education, that goes past just teaching about the crisis in a siloed way in just one discipline of the sciences and works across disciplines to empower young people as change-makers. First, we're gonna explore here a pretty important approach - that of teaching climate justice. Ryan Cho is a teacher at Terry Fox Secondary School in British Columbia and author of *The Climate Justice Curriculum Package*. Here's his speech at a TEDx event in St. Johns.

**(Theme Song Ends: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](https://art-list.io))**

**Ryan:** Hi, um....here's a bunch of graphs, charts, and statistics which show all about all these crazy things that are happening in the world and injustices that are caused by things that are much bigger than you. Oh, it's three o'clock, weekend time, see you on Monday.

**Host:** Due to audio issues, I'll have to abbreviate part of this. But Ryan is making a satire out of our typical education practices on big issues like climate change, imperialism, or colonialism. Following with the argument that this information-deficit model often leaves young people disempowered on these issues, with little understanding of what to do about these big topics. Because as he says in this next clip .....

**Ryan:** Um...but talking about your values and learning about them, what it can do is move from despair to empowerment...

**Host:** Empowerment, Ryan says, is essential for teaching global citizenship. It's also what his curriculum package is centered around in teaching youth about climate justice in Canada. As Ryan says in an article for the Green Teacher: teaching about climate justice is and I quote "about (recognizing) that social equity, racial justice, historical responsibility, and functioning democracies - all need to be a part of any viable plan to address climate change, and that all those things are worth focusing on ...." end quote. And hence, worth educating on.

**(Sound effect: School children playing)**

**Host:** Next up is the approach of 'Art-ivism' which pairs artistic expression with activism on issues like climate change. Again, it's about going past just teaching about climate science in a siloed way and instead, blending our scientific knowledge with art. Here's a pair of speakers to tel you more about it. Elisabeth Curbelo Gonzelas and Husse Borup are founder of the project

called 'Artivism 4 Earth.' Here's their interview in the *Music for Climate Justice* event, a YouTube event live-streamed recently on November 10th.

**Elisabeth:** Yes so 'Artivism 4 Earth' is a project that brings together prominent artists, educators and scientists across the nation to create performance pieces informed by the science of climate change.

**Husse:** And essentially it's an attempt to really bring a lot different minds together to explore the space between science and the arts. And what we found as we began this process maybe close to two years ago now is that especially the scientific community is extremely interested in finding partners, in different parts of society, to help them communicate the urgency of climate change.

**Elisabeth:** Through this project, we hope to enhance understanding and inspire action. We hope teachers use the topic of climate change to teach their classes and inspire students and also collaborate with scientists through their disciplinary work and create performance pieces that inspire others to take action.

**Host:** That is why the use of art is so important in Climate Change Education too. Because it not only blends what we know from climate science into artistic expression. But It can also be used as a space for open dialogue where young people can express their own feelings, thoughts and emotions on the topic through art. It can also be a vehicle for imagining alternative futures that shift the dominant narrative of 'doom and gloom' perception of our climate future to one of hope, transformation and renewal, allowing young people the space to re-narrativize their own climate story.

**(Sound effect: Birds chirping on a summer day)**

**Host:** Finally, the last approach to explore here is something that is happening in my former country of New Zealand, where new standards in their climate change curriculum are shaking up the country by not only teaching about climate literacy in the form of the sciences but also what it means to actually drive change on the issue nationally. Here's a clip from Reuters journalist, Libby Hogan, summing up the issue.

**(Sound effect: crickets in the background)**

**Libby:** New Zealand is known for its dairy and grass-fed meat, the backbone to it's economy. But the launch of a new climate change curriculum in schools is rubbing farmers the wrong way. The Education Ministry says students - grades 7 through 10 - will learn the role science plays in understanding climate change, it's impacts and how students can help to adapt to it. The lessons also tackle climate change skepticism.

**Host:** Now New Zealand's climate change curriculum also includes case engaging youth on civic engagement on the crisis, including community organizing, climate policy, and ecological restoration projects as part of their curriculum credits. This is a really important step in the right direction for this kind of education, whether dairy farmers like it or not.

**(Sound effect: cow mooing)**

This is a pretty big deal when it comes to teaching about civic engagement on the climate crisis. Because traditionally when it comes to education on civic engagement and environmental issues, we often stop short with tree planting and changing LED light bulbs. And while these

were nice gesture when we were kids a generation ago, it just simply isn't enough in the 21st century with this crisis in mind.

**(Sound effect: Lighting and rain pouring)**

**Host:** Now these are just some of the approaches to holistic Climate Change Education. If you - the audience - have other ideas for holistic education on this topic, let us know in the comment feature below. I'd love to hear from you. Because of course it's gonna take all of us to mobilize on the climate crisis, and it's also gonna take all of us to mobilize on Climate Change Education.

**(Theme Song Starts: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](https://art-list.io))**

**Host:** One step you can take right now is sign the petition for quality Climate Change Education globally. Search the hashtag 'Teach4thePlanet' with the organization, Education International. It's not got everything I am talking about here today, but it is an important step in the right direction towards this education being available and accessible globally.

**(Theme Song continues: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](https://art-list.io))**

**Host:** If you want to learn more about this topic, please read my blog series of the same title on my academic website. That's [webpace.royalroads.ca/eHunter](https://webpace.royalroads.ca/eHunter). Or check out the links below.

**(Theme Song continues: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](https://art-list.io))**

**Host:** This brings us to the end of this special one-off podcast. I'm your host Emily Hunter and I hope you've enjoyed the show.

**(Theme Song continues: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](http://Art-list.io))**

**Host:** This podcast was created by me, Emily Hunter, and is entirely independent podcast with no funders. The research covered in this part is part of my ongoing research into this topic in my Master's programs at York University and Royal Roads University. This podcast was produced and recorded at *The Workaround*, a shared office space in Toronto east. Thank you all for listening! Singing off.

**(Theme Song ends: *A Place Beyond Belief* by [Art-list.io](http://Art-list.io))**

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