



## 103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

HB4895

Introduced 2/7/2024, by Rep. Janet Yang Rohr

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

105 ILCS 5/27-23.17 new  
105 ILCS 5/27-23.18 new

Amends the Courses of Study Article of the School Code. Provides that, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, every public high school shall require a unit of instruction addressing climate change in either a required science class or a required social studies class. Sets forth what the unit of instruction shall include. Provides that the State Superintendent of Education, in consultation with the Director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency or the Director's designee, shall prepare and make available to school boards instructional materials and professional development training for educators that may be used as guidelines for development of the instruction. Provides that, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, every public high school shall include instruction on climate change and the impacts and causes of climate change in grades 9 through 12 in specified courses. Provides that the State Board of Education shall convene a working group of students, educators, and experts in the area of climate change. Sets forth the membership of the working group. Sets forth tasks for the working group concerning State learning standards. Provides that the State Superintendent of Education shall prepare and make available to school boards instructional materials and professional development training for educators that may be used as guidelines for development of the instruction. Effective immediately.

LRB103 36482 RJT 66586 b

STATE MANDATES  
ACT MAY REQUIRE  
REIMBURSEMENT

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The School Code is amended by adding Sections  
5 27-23.17 and 27-23.18 as follows:

6 (105 ILCS 5/27-23.17 new)

7 Sec. 27-23.17. Climate change education.

8 (a) In this Section, "climate change" means the negative  
9 impact of human activities on the Earth's environment,  
10 contributing to issues such as warming temperatures, rising  
11 sea levels, and an increase in extreme weather events.

12 (b) Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, every public  
13 high school shall include in its curriculum a unit of  
14 instruction addressing climate change in either a required  
15 science class or a required social studies class. The unit of  
16 instruction shall include, but is not limited to, all of the  
17 following:

18 (1) The relationship between rapid industrialization,  
19 carbon emissions, rapid temperature increases, and the  
20 increasing frequency of environmental and ecological  
21 impacts. This instruction shall include, but is not  
22 limited to, all of the following:

23 (A) The role of and relationships between specific

1 governments, corporations, and people in worsening or  
2 attempting to mitigate climate change.

3 (B) The historical patterns of emissions by  
4 specific countries.

5 (C) Current and proposed climate treaties and  
6 agreements.

7 (D) Showing sectoral emissions worldwide,  
8 nationwide, and statewide.

9 (2) Identifying and addressing the specific impacts of  
10 climate change on individuals and communities. This  
11 instruction shall include, but is not limited to, all of  
12 the following:

13 (A) Daily habits a person is able to change in  
14 order to reduce that person's contribution to climate  
15 change, such as choosing to recycle or support local  
16 businesses.

17 (B) Actions a community or organization is able to  
18 take to reduce its overall contribution to climate  
19 change.

20 (C) Institutional barriers to an individual,  
21 community, or organization in reducing the  
22 individual's, community's, or organization's  
23 contribution to climate change.

24 (D) An assessment that requires students to create  
25 an action plan that draws upon scientific data to  
26 address climate change for the students' community.

1           The assessment shall include stating current community  
2           action and proposing additional action items to  
3           address climate change locally.

4           (3) Scientific data explaining the existence of  
5           climate change and its effect on ecosystems and ecosystem  
6           services. The scientific data may include, but is not  
7           limited to, all of the following:

8                   (A) Climate scenarios and projections.

9                   (B) Global and regional climate change.

10                  (C) Weather and extreme climate events.

11           (4) The scientific processes of certain aspects of  
12           climate change. The scientific processes may include, but  
13           are not limited to, all of the following:

14                   (A) The interactions of methane gas molecules in  
15           the atmosphere.

16                   (B) Global chemical cycles and feedbacks.

17                   (C) Short and long-lived climate forcers.

18                   (D) Global water cycle changes.

19           (c) The State Superintendent of Education, in consultation  
20           with the Director of the Illinois Environmental Protection  
21           Agency or the Director's designee, shall prepare and make  
22           available to school boards instructional materials and  
23           professional development training for educators that may be  
24           used as guidelines for development of a unit of instruction  
25           under this Section. The instructional materials shall be  
26           revised and updated by July 1 in odd-numbered years in time to

1 be incorporated into instructional materials and training.

2 (105 ILCS 5/27-23.18 new)

3 Sec. 27-23.18. Environmental education.

4 (a) Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, every public  
5 high school shall include instruction on climate change and  
6 the impacts and causes of climate change in grades 9 through 12  
7 in all of the following courses:

8 (1) All science courses, including electives, that are  
9 subject to the Illinois Science Standards or the Next  
10 Generation Science Standards, including physical science,  
11 life science, earth science, and engineering design.  
12 Science courses under this paragraph (1) may include, but  
13 are not limited to, all of the following:

14 (A) Biology.

15 (B) Geology.

16 (C) Oceanography.

17 (D) Environmental science.

18 (E) Advanced Placement Biology.

19 (F) Advanced Placement Environmental Science.

20 (G) Zoology.

21 (H) Plant science.

22 (I) Botany.

23 (2) All courses that are subject to agricultural,  
24 food, and natural resources learning standards and that  
25 address food, food systems, food production, and

1 sustainability. These courses may include, but are not  
2 limited to, all of the following:

3 (A) Agronomy.

4 (B) Horticulture.

5 (C) Agri-business.

6 (D) Plant science.

7 (E) Soil science.

8 (3) All courses, including electives, that are subject  
9 to the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science in  
10 civics, geography, anthropology, economics, history,  
11 sociology, and psychology.

12 (4) Career and technical education courses that impact  
13 or are impacted by the environment or climate change,  
14 including, but not limited to, all of the following:

15 (A) Engineering.

16 (B) Business.

17 (C) Law.

18 (D) Economics.

19 (E) Consumer economics.

20 (b) The State Board of Education shall convene a working  
21 group of students, educators, and experts in the area of  
22 climate change. The working group shall include high school  
23 students and classroom teachers in science, agriculture,  
24 social science, and relevant disciplines that fall under  
25 career and technical education. The working group shall  
26 include the Director of Agriculture or the Director's

1 designee, the Director of the Illinois Environmental  
2 Protection Agency or the Director's designee, and technical  
3 experts provided by the Prairie Research Institute at the  
4 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The working group  
5 may include discipline-specific experts in climate change and  
6 the impacts of climate change.

7 The working group shall be charged with all of the  
8 following tasks:

9 (1) Identifying, evaluating, and, if deemed necessary  
10 by the working group, modifying State learning standards  
11 that address or relate to climate change.

12 (2) Developing additional learning standards for  
13 climate change and determining the placement of these  
14 additional standards into the State learning standards for  
15 science, social science, career and technical education,  
16 and agriculture.

17 (3) Creating climate change learning standards for any  
18 additional content areas that the State Board of Education  
19 deems appropriate or necessary.

20 (4) If deemed helpful or appropriate by the working  
21 group, developing supporting documents that list all  
22 required climate change learning standards across all  
23 subject areas and disciplines in a single document.

24 (5) Creating climate change learning standards for  
25 each of the courses identified in paragraphs (1) through  
26 (4) of subsection (a).

1       (c) As part of the task process under subsection (b), the  
2 working group may use, without limitation, all of the  
3 following issues and themes to guide the creation of new  
4 learning standards and the modification of existing learning  
5 standards:

6           (1) The basic foundation and definition of  
7 human-caused climate change.

8           (2) The disproportionate contribution to climate  
9 change that Global North countries have had historically  
10 and continue to have in the present.

11           (3) The disproportionate impact climate change has had  
12 and will have on traditionally marginalized people in  
13 local communities and communities across the world, such  
14 as in the Global South.

15           (4) The disproportionate challenges vulnerable and  
16 traditionally marginalized people face in relation to  
17 climate change. These challenges shall include, but are  
18 not limited to, extreme events, health effects, food,  
19 water, and livelihood security, migration and forced  
20 displacement, and the loss of cultural identity.

21           (5) Business and science, technology, engineering, and  
22 mathematics opportunities associated with adapting to or  
23 addressing the impacts of climate change.

24           (6) The importance of creating jobs and maintaining  
25 livelihoods when responding to climate change and  
26 fostering a sustainable economy.



1           (7) The role that companies and consumers can play in  
2           addressing climate change in the present and in the  
3           future.

4           (8) The current and future impact of climate change on  
5           the local, State, national, and global level, as well as  
6           the impact on individuals and communities.

7           (9) The difference between climate change mitigation  
8           and adaptation to climate change.

9           (10) The role that institutions, industries,  
10           corporations, governments, and citizens can play in  
11           creating a sustainable environment.

12           (11) Current events, such as natural disasters, air  
13           quality, and sea levels rising, and how they connect,  
14           contribute, or are affected by climate change.

15           (12) How various sectors, including, but not limited  
16           to, agriculture, industry, transportation, energy, and  
17           commercial and residential emissions, influence climate  
18           change.

19           (13) The absence of scientific controversy regarding  
20           the basic facts of climate change despite political,  
21           economic, or social disagreements about climate change.

22           (14) How the human relationship with the land varies  
23           across cultures, world views, and philosophies.

24           (15) The relationship between climate change and  
25           habitat loss, declines in biodiversity, land use,  
26           pollution, populations, and overharvesting.

1           (16) The relationship between rapid industrialization,  
2           carbon emissions, rapid temperature increases, and the  
3           increasing frequency of environmental and ecological  
4           impacts.

5           (17) Specific procedural steps a person, school, or  
6           community can take to actively address climate change.

7           (18) Institutional barriers to a person, school, or  
8           community taking steps to actively address climate change.

9           The State Board of Education may add other issues and  
10          themes related to climate change to State learning standards  
11          based on input from the working group.

12          (d) The State Superintendent of Education shall prepare  
13          and make available to school boards instructional materials  
14          and professional development training for educators that may  
15          be used as guidelines for development of a unit of instruction  
16          under this Section. The instructional materials shall be  
17          revised and updated by July 1 in odd-numbered years in time to  
18          be incorporated into instructional materials and training.

19          Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
20          becoming law.