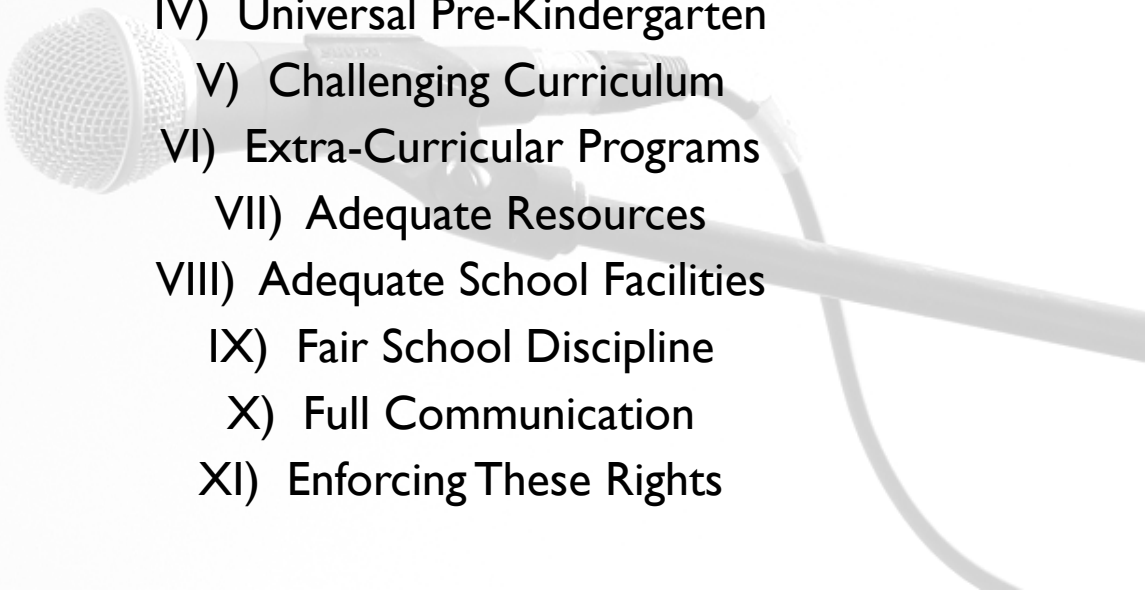


OUR EDUCATION's

STUDENTS BILL OF RIGHTS

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- I) Clear, High Standards
 - II) High-Quality Teachers
 - III) Student Voice
 - IV) Universal Pre-Kindergarten
 - V) Challenging Curriculum
 - VI) Extra-Curricular Programs
 - VII) Adequate Resources
 - VIII) Adequate School Facilities
 - IX) Fair School Discipline
 - X) Full Communication
 - XI) Enforcing These Rights

Our Education is a national youth-led non-profit organization dedicated to engaging and empowering America's students in a national movement for better schools.

More than 25,000 high school and college aged youth have joined Our Education's national campaign since 2006, by signing their support for a constitutional amendment to guarantee all American children the right to a high quality public education.

To learn more about Our Education and the campaign to make high quality education a fundamental right, please visit us online at www.OurEd.org.

I) the right to clear, high standards

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas high expectations are a paramount factor in determining the quality of education that a child receives,

And whereas all American children should be entitled to these same high expectations...

Section 2: All American children shall have the right to

- A) National Standards. It shall be the responsibility of the federal government to create standards that apply to all American public school students in all grade levels.
 - 1) The Standards shall be created by a panel comprised of experts in curriculum development and each subject matter, drawing on the best practices of the fifty state standards existing already.
- B) Clear, High Standards. The standards shall be of a clear, high quality as necessary to prepare all American children to succeed in higher education and to lead fulfilling, successful, and responsible lives. The standards should be specific enough to guide educators in ensuring that all children are at or above grade level in each subject.

Section 3: Accountability for Standards

- A) Aligning Standards and Curriculum. Upon creation of the national standards, local schools and districts shall ensure that their curriculum is consistent with the articulated standards.
- B) Accountability for Standards. Schools must be held accountable for achieving these standards, as measured by student performance on standardized tests and other reliable methods of assessment.
 - 1) Standardized tests. Standardized tests shall be written in a manner that emphasizes both specific subject matter mastery and critical thinking skills.
 - 2) Other reliable methods of assessment may include but are not limited to individualized school review, growth and value added gains, high school and college graduation rates.
 - 3) In addition to holding schools accountable for meeting these standards, Government officials must be held accountable at the local, state, and federal level for providing schools with the resources they need to meet the standards. *See 11.) Enforcing These Rights.*

Section 4: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Put forth maximum effort, individually, to meet the academic standards created by the federal government, including good faith efforts to perform on standardized tests, and
- B) Participate in school and district wide efforts to ensure that their curriculum is aligned with the standards.

###

II) the right to high quality teachers

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas the most important school factor that influences student achievement is the quality of that child's teachers...

Section 2: We believe all American students deserve the right to high quality teachers. High quality teachers are those who:

- A) Demonstrate mastery of their subject.
- B) Consistently produce results, assisting their students in performing at or above grade level or improving one or more grade levels each year as measured according to the standards set under the Right to Clear, High Standards (see I, *supra*). While strictly teaching to the test is undesirable, good teachers know that testing is a necessary part of evaluating student and teacher performance alike.
- C) Receive persistent and effective professional development and evaluation, from superiors, other teachers, as well as from their students.
- D) Value student opinions and encourage independent thought, while emphasizing the importance of shared community. Teachers should incorporate civics into their lesson plans, and teachers and students alike should have input when curricula are reviewed.
- E) Promote a classroom environment of safety, creativity, tolerance, and respect.
- F) Show a passion for teaching, a love of learning, and a commitment to their jobs. Our government should encourage bright highly-skilled graduates to enter the teaching profession with adequate pay, and provide them with incentives to stay there – especially in schools and school districts where the need for good teachers is most pressing.

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Respect teachers in the classroom, and take their responsibility to learn and contribute to others' learning seriously
- B) To take seriously their role in evaluating and critiquing both their teachers and curricula

###

III) the right to student voice

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas encouraging active participation, engagement, and ownership among students in their own education represents a powerful strategy for improving school performance and student achievement...

III) the right to student voice, cont.

Section 2: All American students should have the right to a voice in their own education.

Such voice includes:

- A) Forums to express their views on issues affecting their schools such as:
 - 1) Open communication with teachers and other staff members,
 - 2) Anonymous survey evaluations of teachers,
 - 3) Accessible guidance counselors,
 - 4) School newspapers,
 - 5) School and district wide student surveys on budget decisions and policy issues such as curriculum offerings, extra-curricular priorities, and resource distribution.
- B) An opportunity to present student views on school issues to local boards of education.
 - 1) All school districts shall have a permanent student member on their board of education,
 - 2) The student may be a voting member at the board's discretion, but in every case should at least have an "advisory" vote that does not count towards the decision but is recorded on the official meeting minutes,
- C) Student representation at the state and national level
 - 1) Each state shall create permanent, year-long positions for students to serve as representatives to state board of education meetings,
 - 2) The federal government shall create a position for students to serve as advisors to the US Department of Education,
 - 3) The purpose of these representatives shall be to foster two-way communication between policy makers and students on important education policy decisions

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Participate actively in constructive dialogue with policy makers and educators about ways in which schools are succeeding and areas where schools are in need of improvement.

###

IV) the right to universal pre-kindergarten

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas children, families, and society as a whole benefits when children enter kindergarten prepared to learn...

Section 2: We believe that all American students deserve the right to

- A) Compulsory and universal pre-kindergarten education. It shall be the responsibility of the federal government to mandate and ensure that every state provides all of its students with a free, comprehensive pre-kindergarten program prior to enrolling in kindergarten.

IV) the right to universal pre-kindergarten, cont.

- 1) Daycare facilities. All pre-kindergarten programs will provide parents with the option of enrolling their child in a half or full day of classes.
- 2) Pre-kindergarten shall be a mandatory prerequisite to kindergarten enrollment to ensure that all students enter the public education system ready to learn.

Section 3: A comprehensive pre-kindergarten education program includes

- A) A curriculum that will provide each child with the foundation for the skills that they will need to master throughout their education, with developmentally appropriate benchmarks that teachers shall strive to meet in their classrooms.
- B) Pre-kindergarten shall serve as an introduction to the education system, concentrating on exposing young students to language (phonation, alphabet skills), mathematics (basic introduction to numbers and arithmetic) and social skills that will assist the students in their future academic endeavors.

###

V) the right to challenging curriculum options

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas all students across the United States should have access to classes that will prepare them for civic, economic, and social success...

Section 2: We Believe All American students deserve the right to engage in a challenging curriculum. Such a right should include:

- A) Access to a high school curriculum that aligns with state requirements and includes:
 - 1) A base or core curriculum which involves subject area coursework such as:
 - (a) Four years of English
 - (b) Three years of Math
 - (c) Three years of Science
 - (d) Three years of Social Science
 - 2) The opportunity to take a mid-level curriculum which includes the above courses in addition to courses such as:
 - (a) Two years of Foreign Language
 - (b) Two math classes at the Geometry or Algebra II level
 - (c) Two sciences classes from Biology, Chemistry, and Physics
 - 3) The opportunity to engage in a rigorous curriculum that includes the above requirements in addition to course such as:
 - (a) Three or more years of Foreign Language
 - (b) A Pre-Calculus or above Math course
 - (c) Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate coursework

V) the right to challenging curriculum options, cont.

- B) Student choice as to:
 - 1) Which curriculum path they wish to take, and
 - 2) Whether or not to leave the curriculum path they chose at any point for any reason.
 - 3) Every student must receive approval by their school to move to a more rigorous curriculum path to ensure their academic success. However, school officials should express a presumption of approval towards students interested in moving up to a more difficult curriculum, and shall look for indices of effort such as but not limited to:
 - (a) Teacher recommendations,
 - (b) Evidence of achievement or other ability to perform at the more rigorous level,
 - (c) A student accountability system whereby all students, particularly those who may lack a previous record of academic achievement needed to complete a more rigorous track of coursework, can enroll in a curriculum of high difficulty upon signing a "promise of effort agreement" indicating that they understand the demands of the higher level curriculum and are prepared to meet those demands.
 - 4) Core academic curricular courses should be insulated from budget cuts, at least for the duration that students have already enrolled in them.
- C) Students should have the ability to provide feedback regarding available course offerings. Such a feedback loop should run pursuant to the Right to Student Voice (see III, *supra*).

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Provide honest feedback to school administrators about class offerings that are desired.

###

VI) the right to extra-curricular programs

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas extra-curricular programs play an important role in keeping students in school, improving academic achievement, and developing artistic and other skills in young people...

Section 2: We believe all American students deserve the right to have access to quality extra-curricular programs. Characteristics of quality extracurricular programs include:

- A) Trained program staff and appropriate volunteers.
 - 1) Program staff will demonstrate core competencies and participate in sufficient training in their specific program.
 - 2) Volunteers shall demonstrate a commitment to the program and pass any screening requirements as deemed necessary by the school.
- B) All extracurricular programs shall take place in a safe, supportive, and well maintained space that enhances the program's positive learning environment.

VI) the right to extra-curricular programs, cont.

- C) Outstanding extracurricular programs shall serve to supplement and enrich student's academics by providing them with a variety of real-world experience and skills that will enhance their future.
 - 1) Diverse extracurricular programs shall be accessible to students in order to expand their knowledge and exposure.
 - 2) Schools should encourage the provision of extracurricular programs that address the specific issues and needs presented in individual communities.

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Have the willingness to engage and have an open-mind in extracurricular programs
- B) Adhere to program rules and respect program staff and volunteers.

###

VII) the right to adequate school resources

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas adequate resources are vital to enable schools to provide quality educational opportunities to youth...

Section 2: We believe all American students should have the right to up to date, adequate resources:

- A) Books
 - 1) The textbooks and supplementary books used in the classroom should be up to date and in good condition.
 - 2) Students should be able to take home an actual textbook or a copy in good condition
 - 3) All students should have access to a library with adequate research materials and books covering a variety of subjects.
- B) Computer Access
 - 1) All students should have access to a computer lab that is connected to the internet. The computers should have adequate software enabling the students to learn word processing and other skills that may be necessary in a future profession.
 - 2) Staff members who are proficient in the use of computers and software should be available to students.
- C) Gym and equipment
 - 1) If the school offers or requires gym, there should be a gym that is reasonably accessible with sufficient equipment for a sound physical education.
 - 2) If the school offers athletics programs, there should be a safe and accessible practice area. Equipment required for the sports should be available and in reasonable condition.

VII) the right to adequate school resources, cont.

- D) Other instructional materials. Any other resources which are necessary for a child to obtain a quality education should also be provided by the school in an adequate manner.
 - 1) Adequate shall be defined as that quality and quantity which is reasonably necessary to ensure that students are able to achieve grade level proficiency as measured by the standards created pursuant to the right to clear, high standards.
- E) Additional academic help
 - 1) Schools should offer additional help in academic subjects, either before or after school. The assistance may be provided by teachers or by trained academic tutors.
- F) All computers, software, and textbooks should be no older than a level which is to be determined by the US Department of Education.

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Use the most of the resources that are provided for them without abusing them.

###

VIII) the right to adequate school facilities

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas adequate facilities are a significant factor for schools seeking to provide quality educational opportunities to youth...

Section 2: All American children should have the right to

- A) Adequate School Facilities
 - 1) Facilities shall be defined to include:
 - (a) All buildings, classrooms, and other places where substantial student learning occurs or whose provision is essential to a child's opportunity to obtain a quality education.
 - (b) All instruments of instruction, not including those covered under the right to adequate school resources (see VII, *supra*), that are necessary for a child to obtain a quality education. Such instruments may include but are not limited to desks, white boards and chalk boards, library facilities and others.
 - 2) Adequate shall be defined as that quality and quantity which is reasonably necessary to ensure that students are able to achieve grade level proficiency as measured by the standards created pursuant to the right to clear, high standards.
 - (a) When determining whether facilities are adequate, the number of pupils per school and per classroom must be considered and consistent with recommendations set forth by a panel of experts in class size and school size.

VIII) the right to adequate school facilities, cont.

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Act with the utmost care towards school facilities, both by refraining from acts that might harm such facilities and engaging in measures to ensure their long-term adequacy.

###

IX) the right to clear and consistent school discipline

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas the overarching purpose for an effective school discipline system must be the academic and social well-being of each student...

Section 2: We believe all American students should have the right to

- A) A Safe School Environment. Schools must ensure a fair and respectful environment conducive to learning for all children.
 - 1) Schools must have and follow documented disciplinary measures, including but not limited to such items as a student discipline handbook given to every student at the start of each school year outlining disciplinary measures
- B) Nondiscriminatory Discipline System. School discipline decisions and policies shall not be biased on account of national origin, race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or physical or mental disability. Discipline guidelines should be specific enough to guide principals in ensuring that all children are subject to equal disciplinary measures.
 - 1) To assist with creating a fair school discipline system, the US Department of Education may at its discretion create advisory guidelines for best practices in school discipline including such things as sound policies, staffing strategies, and student interventions
- C) Records. Students shall have all disciplinary actions on a permanent record that travels from school to school.
 - 1) Students with a serious record of disciplinary infractions may be sent to turnaround schools, which are themselves subject to this Students Bill of Rights

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Put forth maximum effort to meet the disciplinary standards set in each school
- B) Engage in constructive feedback to ensure that school discipline is carried out in a fair, effective manner

###

X) the right to full communication

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas students and their families have a right to know about all matters pertaining to the quality of education provided at their school...

Section 2: All American children should have the right to full communication with their school. Full communication is characterized by practices such as:

- A) Schools publish curriculum guides that inform students of their course options, either in print or online, pursuant to the right to a Challenging Curriculum (see V, *supra*).
- B) Schools provide a regular flow of communication to parents and students at:
 - 1) At the start of each school year to lay out expectations and requisites for a successful school year,
 - 2) The mid-point and end of each marking period to ensure that students and parents are aware of grades and can take appropriate corrective action where needed,
 - 3) At periodic intervals during the school year regarding news concerning the school and events that will take place at the school
- C) Communication with students and parents should take place through a variety of means, including postal mail, electronic mail, phone conversations, and letters carried home.
 - 1) Schools should make every reasonable effort to communicate with families whose first language is not English in their native languages. This should include translating important school documents—such as report cards, curriculum guides, announcements concerning transportation and extra-curricular programs, school board meeting minutes and other documents—and providing access to multi-lingual faculty where reasonable.
- D) School Board meetings should be advertised openly and well in advance in a manner that encourages maximum student, family, and community participation.
- E) To supplement district-wide school board meetings, individual schools should hold periodic school-level town hall meetings wherein specific school policies should be open for discussion among students, parents, and educators. These policies should include such things as curriculum, school discipline, and extra-curricular programs.
- F) All student records, transcripts, and files must be open to the parents and students to whom they pertain at all times with the exception of confidential documents such as guidance counselor files.

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

In furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Maintain open channels of communication with both their school and parents concerning issues affecting their education

###

XI) enforcing these rights

Section 1: Preamble

Whereas the rights herein enumerated represent the collective aspirations of America's youth,
And whereas the measure of our nation's future well-being will hinge on our ability to make these rights real...

Section 2: This Bill of Rights shall be enforced by...

- A) Accountability for Standards. There are two strands of accountability that must be enforced in order for these standards to be met. Government officials must be held accountable at the local, state, and federal level for providing schools with the aforementioned resources necessary for students to have the opportunity to meet high academic standards, and the schools must be held accountable for achieving these standards, as measured by student performance on standardized tests and other reliable methods of assessment.
- B) Corrective Action for Failure to Comply with the Bill of Rights.
 - 1) When local, state, and federal governments fail to provide schools with the inputs—the policies and resources as expressed otherwise in this Bill of Rights—that are necessary to provide children with high quality education:
 - i. A determination should be made as to what inputs are lacking and a plan created and implemented to correct such deficiencies,
 - ii. The burden for providing the missing policies and resources shall be placed on the most appropriate level of government actor, and
 - iii. An independent federal regulatory agency, comprised of leading experts in education and school reform, former elected officials, students, and other stakeholder groups, shall be created to make the determinations in (2)(a)(i) & (ii) above.
 - 2) When a school or school district has access to all of resources and policies articulated in this Bill of Rights, but nevertheless fails to bring its students up to proficient levels as measured in accordance with academic standards, the school or district shall face corrective measures as deemed necessary by Congress. Among these options should include:
 - i. Incentives for improvement and reform
 - ii. Targeted programs aimed at enhancing educator quality
 - iii. School choice
 - iv. Other programs as may be deemed effective by Congress

Section 3: Statement of Student Responsibilities

Consistent with and in furtherance of the right expressed above, it shall be the responsibility of all students to:

- A) Participate in democratic processes, such as local school board meetings and local elections, to ensure that elected officials are complying with this Bill of Rights, and
- B) Alert the agency created pursuant to §II(2)(a)(iii) of deficiencies in their schools.

###

OUR EDUCATION



Our Education's Petition for an American Right to High Quality Education

Whereas education is the foundation of a healthy democracy,

Whereas the future of our nation will depend on our commitment to educate all youth to their fullest capacity,

And whereas the United States Constitution is the guarantor of the rights and responsibilities most fundamental to the wellbeing of our society,

We the undersigned declare our support for a constitutional amendment to guarantee all American children the **right** to a high quality public education.

- Signed by 25,000+ Students

(list online at www.oured.org/forms/find_friend.php)