

## **An Educational Bill of Rights for California's Students**

Every student in California has a fundamental constitutional right to an adequate education that prepares him or her to graduate from high school qualified for a 4-year state university, a living wage job, and active participation in civic life. Every student has a further right to educational opportunities equal to those provided to most of the students in the State. Students, parents and members of the community at large have a right to know what they may expect California's system of public education to provide for each student in California, in accord with these fundamental constitutional principles. These abstract rights must be understood as giving to every student in any public elementary or secondary school in California a right of access to each of the following:

- 1) A clear statement of the academic standards that both define what students are expected to know and be able to do at every educational level and specify the basic conditions for learning that students and families can expect from the educational system.
- 2) Adequate learning materials and resources, including:
  - Materials necessary to support the instructional program at each level recommended in the state curricular standards;
  - Individual texts, workbooks and other instructional materials (e.g., graphing calculators for mathematics) for use in and out of school;
  - Books that can be borrowed from the school library and elsewhere that the student may use individually;
  - Computers with internet access that each student may use on a regular basis;
  - Necessary equipment for rigorous science and mathematics instruction;
  - Resources for teachers to tailor and creatively adapt curriculum to the interests and needs of individual students;
  - Suitable chairs, desks and other classroom equipment.
- 3) A suitable learning environment and school classrooms, buildings, and facilities that enable learning and health, including:
  - School facilities located within a reasonable commuting distance of one's home;
  - Clean, uncrowded, well-lighted classrooms and other instructional spaces with adequate ventilation and necessary heating and air conditioning, reasonably maintained and free of vermin, mold and other health hazards;
  - Adequate laboratories and studios for students to complete rigorous work in science and the arts;
  - Bathrooms and sanitary facilities that are unlocked, accessible, well-stocked and maintained in decent, safe, and sanitary condition;
  - Outdoor space sufficient for exercise and sports;
  - Adequate school nursing services;
  - Adequate lunch periods with nutritious food;
  - Educational programs during "off-track" periods.

4) High quality teachers and counselors, including:

- Teachers adequately trained to teach the subject;
- Teachers who have a caring attitude towards students;
- Teachers who receive ongoing professional development and training;
- Teachers who have the cultural and linguistic skills and backgrounds to optimally teach California's diverse population;
- Teachers who understand and use knowledge of cultural differences to inform instructional decisions and multiple teaching strategies;
- Teachers who have sufficient time to devote to each students' development-- hence access to classrooms with a reasonable cap on class size;
- Counselors available to meet with students at regular intervals throughout the school year;
- Counselors who serve as student advocates, instructional leaders, and parent education leaders;
- Middle and high school counselors who are trained in college preparation and admissions, community college and four-year college programs, and postsecondary financial options.

5) A course of instruction that will enable all students who wish to do so to compete for admission to any public university in the state and participate actively in California's civic life, including:

- Access to challenging curriculum in elementary and middle school that prepares students to enroll and succeed in college preparatory curriculum in high school;
- Access to A-G course sequence;
- Access to AP courses regardless of which 'track' or which part of the school the student is enrolled in;
- Access to the full array of curricular and extra-curricular options offered across the entire school calendar. No student can be denied access to any program offered in the school because of their assignment to a particular "track" in a year-round school.

6) A safe and supportive school environment, including:

- Protection from harassment or abuse of any kind, from any person, including those persons designated to provide school security;
- A fair and nondiscriminatory disciplinary system;
- Proactive measures on the part of the school to prevent criminalization of youth.

7) Fair and authentic assessment that is used to measure and improve the quality of education students receive and supplementary educational services that respond to identified student needs, including:

- Measures that are sensitive to the diversity of learners and of school communities;
- Measures that allow students to demonstrate their competence authentically for the purpose of graduation, state scholarship funds, and college eligibility;

- Items and results that are available immediately, and that are reported in ways that enable teachers to guide students and design further learning opportunities and that enable students to take a more active role in directing their learning;
- Reports that communicate what students have learned, rather than scores based on norms or other representations of the “bell curve;”
- Full disclosure of all of the uses to which student assessment information will be put;
- The right of parents/students to waive out of any standardized test.

8) Instruction which incorporates students' home language so as to provide all students with equal opportunity to access curriculum and develop and maintain proficiency in their native language.

9) Easily understood, current, reliable information on the performance of the school in delivering each of the rights herein listed, including:

- Access by parents, guardians, and students to accurate information about the quality of services each student receives and the individual student's preparation for, and completion of, requirements for college eligibility;
- Access by parents, students, the press and the public to information, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and curricular 'track' assignment, on the quality of services provided to all students within the school;
- Access by parents, students, the press and the public to information, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and curricular 'track' assignment, on student preparation for, and completion of, requirements for college eligibility;
- Access by parents, students, the press and the public to information, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and curricular 'track' assignment, on disciplinary actions taken by the school.

10) Regular public forums that allow students and parents to communicate their experiences relative to these rights to educators and local and state elected officials responsible for insuring these rights, including:

- Access to mediation services to resolve conflicts with teachers, principals, or other school personnel;
- Access to an ombudsperson who will advocate on behalf of students and families in their interactions with schools, districts, and the state;
- “Whistle-blowing” protection for educators and others who might expose violations of law or standards of fairness and equity.
- The right of students, parents, and teachers to associate, organize, protest, and petition—without threat of retaliation—to insure that the rights as herein enumerated are being met.