

ED591 Organization
Capstone
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The Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for Learning addresses standards for conduct and standards for achievement in our public schools and has been written by the American Federation of Teachers as a bill of rights for the new millennium. These ten rights and responsibilities can be categorized into both management and educational tasks and each are integral to the overall task of teaching and learning. This bill of rights and responsibilities has been supported by school boards, state legislators, city councils, business and community groups and citizens across our nation. I believe these high standards of conduct and achievement for both students and educators are the foundation for reform of quality public schools.

BILL OF RIGHTS (American Federation of Teachers, Bill of Rights)

Management Tasks

All students and school staff have a right to:

- schools that are safe, orderly and drug free.
- learn and work in school districts and schools that have clear discipline codes with fair and consistently enforced consequences for misbehavior.
- all students have a right to be treated with courtesy and respect.
- be supported by parents, the community, public officials and business in their efforts to uphold high standards of conduct and achievement.

Before academic learning can take place, management of the classroom and school must be made a priority. “In a disorderly school, the opportunity to learn is severely compromised.” (American Federation of Teachers, Setting the Stage for High Standards) Unclear rules and inconsistently enforced consequences can undermine the success of a safe and orderly school. Consistent rules and enforced consequences are critical in order to allow for student learning. These rules must be equitable, fair and handled with courtesy and respect toward the student. Rules need to honor student diversity and those with special needs. It is imperative for all district staff to uphold the school’s rules and consequences and have high expectations for student behavior. To further ensure the success of the school in its efforts to uphold high standards of conduct and achievement, school districts need to have community involvement, parent education opportunities and business sponsorship to support this goal. “The heart of effective classroom management rests on ensuring that the instructional techniques, classroom arrangement and classroom rules and procedures are all well thought out and supportive of the instructional program and students’ learning.” (AFT, Setting the Stage)

Educational Tasks

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts, schools and classrooms:

- that have alternative educational placements for violent or chronically disruptive students.
- that have clearly stated and rigorous academic standards.
- that are well-equipped and have the instructional materials needed to carry out a rigorous academic program.
- where teachers know their subject matter and how to teach it.
- where high grades stand for high achievement and promotion is earned.
- where getting a high school diploma means having the knowledge and skills essential for college or a good job.

In order for schools to meet the goal of upholding high standards of achievement for all students, schools need to provide “alternative placements that meet their needs for supervision, remediation of behavior and maintenance of academic progress.” (AFT, *Setting the Stage*) Oregon provides rigorous content standards for each benchmark grade level and provides its public schools with clearly stated and specific academic standards in all core subject areas. Funding becomes an issue to provide necessary instructional materials to support these rigorous standards. It is up to our lawmakers to provide the necessary funding that our schools need. A school may have high achievement goals, but without adequate resources and materials, they may not be able to carry out a rigorous academic program. In addition, effective staff development and training in curriculum and implementation is a critical component of high achievement standards. Clearly stated academic goals, instructional materials, knowledgeable and trained staff and authentic assessment ensure that all students have earned the grade that they received. Without holding students academically accountable, we shortchange the student, the school and the community. I believe this Bill of Rights promotes a high standard of conduct and achievement in our nation’s public schools. These “rights” provide clear educational and management tasks for educators and students to accomplish. Each student is responsible for his or her academic success and schools are responsible for providing an environment where students are able to learn.

REFERENCES

American Federation of Teachers: *Lessons for Life: Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for Learning: Standards of Conduct, Standards for Achievement.*

American Federation of Teachers: *Setting the Stage for High Standards: Elements of Effective School Discipline.*