

## ***A LEARNER'S BILL OF RIGHTS***

I am a human being. I have an innate ability to learn. I was born full of wonder, curiosity, and motivated to learn. I view myself and I expect others to view me as capable of learning.

1. I have a right to a safe learning environment.
2. I have a right to accept myself as I am and to be accepted as I am.
3. I have a right to be respected and to define success in my own terms.
4. I have a right to learn at my own speed and in my own way.
5. I have a right to ask whatever questions I have, to say I don't understand, and I have a right not to understand.
6. I have a right to be different, to have my own culture, opinions, and values.
7. I have a right to think for myself, question authority and challenge facts.
8. I have a right to express my own views without ridicule.
9. I have a right to need extra help and to ask for it.
10. I have a right to be treated fairly and to understand the grading process.
11. I have a right to evaluate my teachers and how they teach.
12. I have a right not to base my self-worth solely on my academic performance.
13. I have a right to my own expectations and limitations, to change my mind, to give up, to succeed, to fail.
14. I have a right to make mistakes, to risk, guess, to have more than one way and one chance to show what I have learned.
15. I have a right to be a part of the decision making process that concerns my education, classroom, and school—with my involvement determined progressively by my age and grade.

Explanation of the above rights:

1. I have a right to a learning environment free from violence, drugs, and threats to my physical and psychological well-being.
2. I have a right to be who I am, to like myself, and determine my own identity. I have a right not to fulfill some predetermined image someone else may have of me. It is not the role of the school to go about changing someone's positive character, personality, or cultural identity.
3. I have a right to self-determination and to have my own standards to judge my efforts beyond the formal grading system. I have a right not to compare myself or be compared to others.
4. I want to be recognized as a unique individual. I may learn at a different pace and in a different way from others. I recognize that I may have the ability to excel in some areas and subjects and may have difficulty in others.
5. I realize that knowledge and understanding come from questions. I see that questions can be more important than answers. Questioning helps me transform the world into terms that I can understand. If I do not understand, I will be able to continue asking questions or accept that I do not have to have instant meaning. I can live with an extraordinary amount of uncertainty confusion, ignorance, and suspense. The statement, "I don't know," does not bother me. This does not mean that I want to look to the teacher for all the answers because I want them to encourage me to learn on my own.
6. As an individual I am aware and proud of my cultural heritage and its values. I have a right to be free from the pressure and requirement to conform.

7. I prefer to develop my own judgment. I want to be a critical thinker. My role as a student is not to be a robot, memorizing facts without understanding the source of the data, or just to pass tests. I see that facts may change, and I must be encouraged to make the distinction between fact and opinion. I distrust authorities who discourage others from thinking for themselves.
8. I have a right not to be made fun of, harassed or punished for my point of view.
9. I am not embarrassed or ashamed to need help and ask for it. In order to function at my potential, I may need help and it should be given freely.
10. All methods and standards for determining my grades must be made clear to me as well as the objectives of the class/course so that I may be freely responsible for my efforts. I expect all grades to be determined in a fair and unbiased fashion.
11. Who, but students, know how teachers really perform in the classroom? Who else, besides other teachers, could really help teachers do better? So that my teacher knows what is effective, thoughtful, relevant, and respectful student feedback is necessary.
12. I realize that grading does little to sustain a deeply felt desire and motivation for learning for the sake of learning. Grades are not my reason for learning. I also realize that grades are an important documentation of learning. Yet, at its best, grades are imprecise. Failing grades do not mean I am a failure or unintelligent.
13. I am not afraid of being wrong, giving up or failing. I see my limits and suffer no loss in seeing what I thought was the case is not. In other words, good learners change their minds. In fact, changing the nature of my mind is what I am interested in doing and in doing so, I am not afraid to succeed.
14. I have a right and an obligation to learn from my mistakes. I see my mistakes are eliminating possibilities and so I am getting closer to an answer or solution, not necessarily farther away. A mistake can be a friend and a helpful warning. I am not embarrassed or ashamed when I guess. I do not have to have an absolute, final, unchangeable answer to every problem. I realize that intelligence may be defined as not what you know or how much you know, but what you do when you don't know. I also appreciate that I sometimes need more than one chance as well as different ways to show what I know and can do besides a high-stakes standardized test.
15. Freedom and responsibility are two different sides of the same coin. I am accountable only to the extent that I am free to choose. As I grow and progress through school and life, more choice and thus responsibility is my inherent right. It is the duty of the education system to gradually prepare me for participation in a free and democratic society. Providing me with opportunities to share in decisions about my education, classroom, and school can do this.

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