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Educational Quality Bill of Rights



EDUCATIONAL QUALITY BILL OF RIGHTS

Preamble and Cover Note

Every child [in _____] has a right to a high-quality education that will properly prepare him or her to graduate from high school well-qualified for productive and meaningful work at a living income, higher education, and active participation in family, community, and civic life. This must be equally available to all children, not just to the most advantaged in the state.

To secure every child's right to a high-quality education, all students and educators must be able to count on: (a) an educational system that provides schools adequate resources, structures, and processes; (b) schools that transform adequate, equitable, and timely resources into high-quality education for every child; (c) democratic accountability mechanisms; and (d) an educated and engaged local citizenry who press for quality, work in partnership with the schools, and hold the overall system accountable.

Students, parents and members of the community at large are entitled to know what they can expect the [_____] system of public education to provide for every child (and to make sure that "no child is left behind") in accord with these fundamental principles. These abstract rights must be understood as giving to every student in any public elementary or secondary school [in _____] a right to the elements of a quality education needed to enable him/her to achieve. These elements form the basis for an Educational Quality Bill of Rights (EQBR).

The elements of the EQBR are designed to respond to a basic series of parent-oriented questions (printed on the next page). These questions are relevant across a wide span of contexts – from instances when parents interact with (or even just wonder about) a school concerning the effectiveness of their own child's program; to dealing more broadly, in concert with others, with quality of the school's program for all students; all the way to changing the state accountability system. (As the focus of attention shifts from securing a good education for your own child to dealing with the systemic issues, the terms of these questions can be shifted from "my child" to "all our children" and from "my" to "our" – an important shift for a school and community perspective. At the same time however, the focus on the individual child must remain front and center, as is inherent in a rights-based strategy, so that the accountability system is judged by its capacity to answer each of the key questions affirmatively for each child and parent – here's what you personally can and have a right to expect.)

<i>Key Question</i>	<i>Topic Areas for EQBR Elements</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What should my child be learning?” (This is the framing question for all the others:) 	I. Standards, school-level learning goals for authentic achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Is that what the school is teaching my child?” 	II. Curriculum, across all student grouping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Is the school teaching it well?” 	III. Effective instructional methods, well-qualified teachers, and strong professional development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What about my child’s particular needs in learning it?” 	IV. Individual attention and special needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Is my child learning it?” 	V. Assessment, and its use for improvement and accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How are important decisions made about my child?” 	VI. High-stakes decisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What’s my role in making all this happen (and in getting an effective response when it is not)?” 	VII. Democratic governance and involvement rights, school as learning community

The school’s ability to address each of these questions – with clear, affirmative, specific answers – is central to making sure that schools, and school reforms, actually work to ensure that every child receives a high-quality education. Thus the EQBR is organized as a set of answers to these basic questions. As such, it provides a clear statement to families of what they can and should expect to be able to count on, in the way of a quality education, when they send their child to a school (and how the school will respond if the reality falls short).

In addition, by articulating the elements of quality that a school must provide, the EQBR is a tool for helping schools, districts, and states deliver on the promise of high-quality education:

- As the framework for developing, implementing, and monitoring school level policy and practice.
- As the school-level qualities around which all state level policy and practice should be designed – so that the state can ensure both that schools deliver on the statewide obligation to provide a high-quality education and that schools have the capacity to do so.
- As the template for the school-level data that should be part of the statewide accountability system.

What follows are *two forms of the EQBR*. The first is a *one-page version*, with a very brief single sentence identification of a key element of quality education in response to each of the key questions about the school (covering standards/learning goals, curriculum, instruction, etc.). The second is a *much fuller version* that attempts to supply the content for each of those key elements.

Obviously, the subject of what's good education, and what are its markers, is one that is open-ended and properly resistant to a single fixed answer. Thus, while we have selected school elements that we believe – based on research, experience, and logic – are central, and in many cases are requirements of law, we nevertheless urge you to think about this area critically, discuss it with others (both within your community and across sites), and revise and expand the criteria, beyond the minimum requirements of law, in ways that most make sense to you.

At the same time, the expectation for our collaborative work with sites is that revisions at the site level are not made in a vacuum but come from careful deliberation, including sharing, discussion, and analysis with other sites and with us, for several reasons. First, new ideas generated by one site may be relevant to others. Second, the quality of each site's work will benefit from the reactions, perspective, and analysis of others. Third, alongside the value placed on sites' ability to define their own vision, there is also a value in finding as much common ground across sites as possible – to facilitate collaboration, to contribute to a common core that can help move forward a statewide or nationwide quest for educational adequacy, to help move toward a common core for purposes of collaboration, and to support overall effectiveness of our work (including an effective structure for use of limited technical assistance resources). On this last point, our ongoing development of useful materials supporting the elements of the EQBR argues for at least a common structure for key topics, built around the core questions, whatever differences emerge in the way different locales answer those questions.

Note

In the long version, each section first states one of the general rights contained in the one-page version and then provides a more detailed statement of that element. These details are introduced by the phrase “In our school, this right includes the following elements:”. That method of introducing the specifics may be best used where the EQBR is adopted by a school. When operating at a district, state, or national level, the “In our school,” portion of the phrase could be deleted, thereby introducing the more specific language with “This right includes the following elements:”.

Educational Quality Bill of Rights – Single-Page Version

A. Every Child Has the Right to:

1. A school that has a schoolwide commitment to a clear, specific set of challenging learning goals for all students, consistent with state and district academic standards for all children, and designed to prepare all children to use their minds well so as to be able to participate in activities characteristic of authentic adult achievement.
2. An enriched and accelerated curriculum that is aligned with the school's learning goals.
3. Effective instructional methods that enable all children to achieve the learning goals, provided by instructional staff who are highly qualified to enable all their students to achieve those goals, and who in turn regularly participate in ongoing, intensive professional development that improve their capacity to do so.
4. The individual attention needed to fully achieve the learning goals, including effective methods for addressing the child's particular learning needs and timely and effective intervention whenever the child is experiencing difficulty in mastering any of the learning goals.
5. Regular, ongoing, accurate assessment of the extent of the child's mastery of the learning goals, that: uses multiple methods for allowing students to fully demonstrate what they know and can do; is an integral part of the classroom instruction; is shared with the student, his/her parents, and appropriate school staff; and is used to improve the instruction and achievement of the child.
6. Valid, reliable, and fair decisions concerning program placement, promotion, graduation and other actions that may affect the child's access to post-school options, including valid use of assessment information consistent with #5 and full and adequate opportunity to learning any skills and knowledge being assessed, consistent with #s 1-4.
7. The resources and materials needed to fully avail himself/herself of #s 1-6, provided in a safe and healthy school learning environment conducive to achievement of the learning goals.

B. Every family – each child and his/her parents (or persons acting as parent) – has a right to:

1. Full participation as partners in school decision-making which affects the provision of high-quality education to the child under #A, including both school-wide planning and individual decision-making.
2. The information, training, and assistance needed for full and informed participation under #B1, and for understanding relevant laws and policies, this bill of rights and how it is implemented in their school, processes for participation, the school's programs and practices, school outcome data, and their own child's achievement.
3. Effective means of redress whenever any of the rights in A or B are not being fully implemented.
4. Provision of all rights under A and B free from all discrimination on the basis of race or national origin, income, disability, limited English proficiency, gender, religion, sexual orientation, family status, or prior achievement.