

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The schools exist to provide opportunities for students to develop their intellectual abilities through inquiry, discovery, expression, and the exchange of ideas. Education in a democracy also requires students to develop self-discipline so that minimal reliance on external control is necessary.

To support this purpose, schools must offer meaningful learning experiences and provide students with opportunities to participate as responsible citizens within the school community. Essential concerns include maintaining freedom of expression, association, leadership development, due process, and reasonable standards of behavior, so that students gain both individual growth and preparation for responsible citizenship.

The rights guaranteed under the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Delaware shall be maintained for all students. Decisions concerning due process or potential abridgment of individual rights may be subject to appeal.

Freedom of Expression and Communication

Students have the right to express their views and opinions, provided that such expression:

- Does not coerce others to adopt the same views or interfere with the rights of others.
- Does not disrupt the orderly operation of the educational process.

Within the classroom, students are free to discuss and express all views relevant to the subject matter. This right is balanced with the teacher's responsibility to:

- Maintain order.
- Ensure meaningful participation.
- Respect the contributions of all students.

Students are responsible for:

- Learning the required subject content.
- Meeting performance standards established by teachers and school officials.
- Attending classes, participating actively, and completing assigned work.

Secondary students shall also be provided opportunities to participate in discussions and develop recommendations to improve the curriculum through duly elected or appointed representatives.

Forms of Expression

Students may express themselves through spoken, written, or symbolic means so long as such expression:

- Does not mock, demean, harass, bully, or ridicule others.
- Does not interfere with scheduled activities or disrupt the educational process.
- Does not include obscenity, vulgarity, profanity, or statements likely to cause disruption.

Publications and Distribution

Students have the right to publish and distribute materials provided such materials:

- Do not endanger health or safety.
- Do not reasonably and foreseeably disrupt the educational process.
- Are not defamatory in nature.
- Do not serve a commercial purpose.
- Do not contain obscenity, vulgarity, profanity, or statements likely to cause disruption.

With these rights come the following responsibilities:

- Clearly identify the author(s) of published materials.
- Adhere to accepted standards of journalism.
- Distribute materials before or after regular school hours.
- Accept legal consequences for expressions and publications.

Peaceful Assembly

Students may hold peaceful assemblies involving discussion, resolutions, or lawful action related to their education, provided that:

- Assemblies do not disrupt classes or scheduled school activities.
- Assemblies do not endanger persons or property.
- Reasonable advance notice (preferably 24 hours) is given to school administration regarding intent, time, and place.

Freedom of Association

Students have the right to organize clubs and associations within the school for educational, civic, athletic, and other lawful purposes, in accordance with these guidelines:

- Membership shall not be denied based on unlawful factors.
 - Special qualifications may be required if they directly relate to the purpose of the group.
 - Groups with constitutions or by-laws shall submit these, along with a list of officers, to school administration and student council. Amendments shall also be submitted.
 - Students may determine the nature, organization, and procedures of their groups, provided such decisions do not threaten health or safety or disrupt the educational process.
 - Student organizations shall function within guidelines and policies established through student government or student council, where applicable.
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Student Responsibilities

The rights assumed by students must be accompanied by corresponding responsibilities. Students are expected to accept the consequences of their actions, respect the rights of others, and recognize the limits of their freedoms.

Students have the responsibility:

- To treat every individual with respect and to promote intercultural understanding.
- To apply their abilities toward gaining knowledge and developing skills.
- To follow policies established by the Board of Education and school officials.
- To attend school for the purpose of obtaining a meaningful education.
- To abide by rules necessary for the orderly conduct of school activities.
- To follow rules developed through student-faculty committees.
- To contribute to a positive teaching and learning environment.
- To demonstrate respect, self-control, and self-discipline.
- To participate in school activities, such as assemblies and clubs, that provide constructive learning opportunities.
- To ensure all students have a voice in student government and cooperate with student officers in policy development.
- To contribute to the improvement of curriculum through classroom and extracurricular involvement.
- To take pride in and respect the school and its mission.
- To support athletic teams and student groups in building school spirit.
- To recognize that all rights are relative to the rights of others and must be respected equally.

Adopted 12/18/89

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