

A Declaration of Readers' Rights for all Students in Grades 5-12

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Through a series of five studies, the researchers examined factors that promote and prohibit the development of adolescent readers. Through interviews, surveys, and focus groups conducted across the United States, the researchers collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data in order to identify ten readers' rights that support reading engagement and development for students in grades 5-12. These rights provide a framework to help educators put the focus of their teaching on their students' needs, strengths, and goals. This framework also offers a solid research base so educators can advocate for and enact teaching practices, policies, and curricula that support the development of engaged readers.

A Declaration of Readers' Rights

All Children and Adolescents Have the Right to:

- Be taught by a caring, competent, highly qualified teacher.
- An education that involves families & communities in meaningful ways.
- Instruction that is individually appropriate.
- Appropriate reading assessments.
- Access to a rich literate environment.
- Schools that create a climate for all to learn.
- Be treated as competent individuals who are capable of reading.
- Culturally relevant literacy instruction.
- Choose reading materials.
- A reading program that stirs readers' emotions and creates a passion for reading.



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Center for the Interdisciplinary
Study of Language and Literacy

All Children and Adolescents Have the Right to:

Be Taught By a Caring, Competent, Highly Qualified Teacher

The right is important because

Academic and personal dimensions of caring affect student motivation and engagement.

There is a strong correlation between teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Certification in a teaching area is correlated to student achievement.

An Education that Involves Families and Communities in Meaningful Ways

The right is important because

Students live in the nested contexts of home, community, and school.

Cultural expectations influence students' school experiences and outcomes.

Parent involvement is correlated to student achievement, attendance, attitude toward school, and high school completion.

Instruction that is Individually Appropriate

This right is important because

All students deserve high quality instruction, including those who excel; those who struggle; those who fall somewhere between; those of all SES, cultural, and racial groups; and those who are English Language Learners.

Differentiated instruction “meets students where they are.”

A life-span view of reading indicates that it is a developmental process.

Appropriate Reading Assessments

This right is important because

Assessment drives instruction.

Different types of assessments have different purposes and audiences.

The interests of students must be paramount in all assessment and evaluation.

Access to a Rich Literate Environment

This right is important because

Access to texts (both print and electronic) that students can read and want to read influences whether they choose to read.

Multiple literacies are a reality in the lives of students in grades 5-12. The literacy environment in schools needs to honor this.

Access leads to more reading; more reading leads to improvement of reading performance, which leads to confidence in reading, which leads to more reading, and so on.

All Children and Adolescents Have the Right to:

Schools that Create a Climate for all to Learn

This right is important because

School climate includes the physical facility, organization, relationships, safety, access to materials and technology, and sense of unity / belonging.

School climate is related to student learning and well-being. Poor school climates are correlated with low achievement, negative staff attitudes, and discipline problems.

Be Treated as Competent Individuals Who are Capable of Reading

This right is important because

Competence is linked to motivation and engagement, which leads to positive educational outcomes.

Adolescents choose those activities they feel most competent to do; this is especially true for boys.

When teachers believe in students and treat them as competent and capable of success, students tend to meet these high expectations.

Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction

This right is important because

Students deserve to see themselves in the curricula of their schools.

Culturally relevant instruction includes students rather than marginalizes them. When students are marginalized by the curriculum or their schools, they become disengaged and have a higher risk for failure and dropping out.

This approach holds promise for closing the achievement gap.

Choose Reading Materials

This right is important because

Choice leads to intrinsic motivation to read.

Choice leads to more frequent reading, adoption of a competent reader identity, increased confidence as a reader, and less resistance to reading challenging, complicated texts.

Choice contributes to control and agency over one's own education.

A Reading Program that Stirs Readers' Emotions and Creates a Passion for Reading

This right is important because

Affective aspects of reading are as important as cognitive considerations.

Being alliterate is really no better than being illiterate.

Lifelong reading is the goal.

For More Information

Bass, J. A., Dasinger, S., Elish-Piper, L., Matthews, M. W., & Risko, V. J. (2008). *A declaration of readers' rights: Renewing our commitment to students*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.