



# **THE KC PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS FOR EDUCATION**

September 19, 2019



## AN INTRODUCTION

The parents of Kansas City, having experienced inconsistencies in navigating their educational needs, have expressed a desire for the existence of clear guidelines and expectations from their children's educational institutions. These parents felt strongly that they wished to be viewed as assets and essential partners in their children's education. These parents gave their time and knowledge to craft a document outlining the rights and responsibilities associated with the education of their children.

The Bill of Rights was created with the belief that each child's maximum potential can best be achieved through a partnership between parents and their educational communities. These parents created this document with the hope of inspiring and empowering those who raise and care for young children to lean in as partners and collaborators in their public schools. This is one of the places where they can have the greatest collective impact on the children in their care and, ultimately, all of the children in our city. In doing so, it is their hope that this will ensure that all families will have equitable access to excellent public education opportunities, that all families will have connection to knowledge surrounding school navigation, and that all families will feel more empowered to advocate for their kids.

Resolved by the families of Kansas City, Missouri in the United States of America assembled together with Show Me KC Schools, on Thursday the Nineteenth of September, Two Thousand and Nineteen, this document was endorsed with the hope that all schools will support these policies and all parents will feel that they have clear paths to advocate on behalf of their child. It is the creators' hope that this document will facilitate a more equitable experience for all families and provide foundational tools to give families a voice.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## PARENTS BILL OF RIGHTS

As a parent or guardian of a child living in the Kansas City Public Schools boundaries, I have the right to:

1. Receive timely, clear communication from official school channels in regards to all policies, disciplinary actions, grades, processes, application and enrollment guidelines, staffing changes, and incidents that may affect my child's education.
2. Be provided with information that explains curriculum, teaching methods, testing and scores, classroom schedules, and individual student evaluation processes.
3. Be actively engaged in ways that are meaningful to my family and to be viewed as an asset and a partner in my child's learning process. This includes visiting my child's classroom when appropriate.
4. Have my child learn in an environment free from physical, emotional, or psychological harm. In the event that harm is caused, I have the right to clear processes for communication and resolution.
5. Be seen as my child's first educator and to raise my child with the culture, traditions, and values that are important to my family and for those to be honored, welcomed, and supported.
6. Transparency about how my child's school is funded and governed.
7. Advocate for my child without fear of repercussions. To review their record and appeal any information that is incorrect.
8. Have access to my child's teacher, school administration and principals either in person, by phone, or electronically for the purpose of helping my child.
9. Have a clear, efficient, and accessible process for resolving problems.
10. Have access to any services that may help my child be successful in school, whether they are Title 1, IEP, 504 plans, medical attention, translation services, homeless or transitional housing services, and/or counseling.



## PARENTS BILL OF RIGHTS: RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

As a parent or guardian of a child living in the Kansas City Public Schools boundaries, I have the responsibility to:

1. Send my child to school well rested and ready to learn.
2. Ensure my child attends school regularly and on time.
3. Be aware of my child's work, progress, and problems by reading notices from the school, talking to my child about school, reviewing work and grade cards, attending conferences, and maintaining open lines of communication with school staff.
4. Adhere to all school policies and regulations as they pertain to my child's education and learning environment.
5. Respond in a timely manner to any communications that are sent home.
6. Enter and exit the school building in a respectful manner, refraining from disruptive or abusive behavior and to treat all staff members with courtesy and respect.
7. Ensure that the school is updated with accurate emergency contact information for my child.
8. Make every effort to attend all meetings and conferences requested by the school that pertains to my child's education and needs.
9. Seek understanding when incidents might occur by not making assumptions, asking questions first, and responding using appropriate channels.



## HELPFUL STEPS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

Challenges arise at every school – you are not alone. Keep the following information on hand so that when issues arise you can contact the right person:

- School telephone number and front office manager's name
- Teacher and principal's email addresses
- PTA president name, telephone number and email address, if applicable

Before situations escalate or you post your grievance on social media, seek to gain all perspectives. If a problem still exists, consider following the steps below for positive outcomes for everyone.

**Step 1: Talk to your child's teacher.** Please be patient when scheduling meetings – these can take a few days. If an in-person conversation is not possible, schedule a time to discuss your problem or concern over the phone. In the meantime, keep track of your communication and of anything you receive in return with dates and names.

**Step 2: Present your concern to the next level.** He/she will be able to be more helpful if you share the steps you've already taken with the staff member closest to the problem. Take time to openly share with them the reasons why you feel uncomfortable dealing directly with the person who is closest to the situation.

**Step 3: Contact the building principal, superintendent, or the head of school.** You should be able to arrange a meeting or a telephone conversation through the school's office.

**Step 4: The final step is to go to the board of directors for your school or district.** This should be used as a last effort. You can ask to be placed on the agenda of their regular meetings. This will be a public presentation. Be prepared to present your issue and to provide supporting documentation.

*No matter how difficult the situation may feel, remember that schools do want to work with parents to resolve problems for students.*



## WAYS TO ENGAGE IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

Parent engagement looks different for every family. Here are a few ideas about how you can support your child's learning.

Check with your children every day about what is happening at school. Ask about homework, read with them, check their progress reports and grades regularly, and talk with them about expectations.

Read all communications that are sent home. This is the best way to stay "in the know" about opportunities for volunteerism. This includes flyers in backpacks, emails, newsletters, Facebook pages, texts, and student information systems.

Ask your school about how you can join the parent-teacher organization, if available. If your school doesn't have one, ask about creating one. These are typically parent led groups that support the students, staff and school.

Many schools have a reading buddy program. Check with your school to learn more about yours. There may be opportunities for you to read with students and offer additional support.

Ask with your child's teacher how you can help. Often times, teachers need support in sorting papers, organizing classrooms, bringing snacks, and acting as room parents.

Use travel time to engage with your children about their school day. This is a great time to make the most of together time and learn about they are learning, what they like, and what they are struggling with.

Be their cheerleader. Know when things are hard and help them get through, advocate when you need to, but listen and offer your support.





# SHOW ME KC SCHOOLS

Know your options.

*Show Me KC Schools is a nonprofit organization that helps families make well-informed decisions about their children's education by providing vital information about district, charter, faith-based, and independent-private school options in Kansas City.*