



# Position Statement

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## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recognizes and supports the basic human rights of children, as well as rights specifically related to education. Within the United States, many of children's basic rights are protected by law, and certain rights of disabled children in particular are protected by statutes related to education. However, there are some beliefs and principles regarding children's rights and education that are not necessarily covered by statute, but are important enough to state. Following is a summary of NASP's beliefs regarding children's rights, along with a statement of related principles and goals of education.

### BASIC RIGHTS

Decisions involving children are based on the best interests of the child and a balance of respect for parent responsibility, a recognition of the child's evolving capacities, and respect for children's basic rights. Children's rights include:

- The right to live freely, and a legal identity which provides access to services and protection
- Self-expression and participation in decisions which affect them, to their developmental ability
- Privacy
- Freedom from discrimination or exclusion based on family status or beliefs, or individual disability
- Leisure and play and protection from economic exploitation
- Protection from harm, abuse, and neglect
- Rehabilitative care after abuse and neglect experiences
- Respect for the dignity of the child in the juvenile justice system
- A safe and healthy natural environment and protection from the impact of natural disasters
- An adequate standard of living, with government assistance when required
- Adequate health care, which includes preventive care, and government assistance when required
- A free and appropriate primary and secondary education

### PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

NASP supports the right of the child to education along with the following principles:

- Primary and secondary education is compulsory and available free and with equal access to all
- Education is provided in ways respecting the inherent dignity and worth of children, and enables child participation, contribution, and decision-making
- An appropriate education respects the child's individual and unique potentials, present and future needs, and contexts of meaning
- Education should be child-friendly and empowering

- The experience of education should include a range of life experiences and learning processes
- Basic skills should include not only academic skills, but also adaptive skills such as social, communication and occupational skills, as well as life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution, and the ability to reconcile diverse values in ways that respect differences
- Educational and vocational guidance should be available to all children
- School discipline is administered in a manner consistent with a child’s human dignity and basic rights
- NASP encourages and supports research in methods of teaching and other school activities that promote children’s rights
- NASP also encourages and supports the professional development of educational personnel regarding children’s rights

## **GOALS OF EDUCATION**

NASP agrees that the goals of a child’s education include the following:

- The development of the child’s individual and unique personality, talents, and abilities to their fullest potential
- The development of respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of self and others
- The development of respect for the cultural identity and values of the child’s own family and those of others
- The preparation of the child for a responsible life in a free and diverse society, with understanding, tolerance, equality, and friendship
- The development of respect for the natural environment

Combining our beliefs regarding children’s basic rights with the stated principles and goals of education, NASP will join with others to help “build a world in which the human rights of all girls and boys are realized—a time of play and learning, in which they are loved, respected and cherished, their safety and well-being are paramount, and they are enabled and supported to develop in health, peace and dignity.” (NGO Alternative Text Response to the Third Revision of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2001.) NASP will work at the federal, state, and local levels to promote legislation that ensures that the rights of all children are protected and defended. Active collaboration with international, national, and state organizations that strive to preserve the basic rights and education of children is critical to improving the welfare of all children, both in this country and around the world.

## **REFERENCES**

- NGO Alternative Text Response to the Third Revision of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child: “A World Fit for Children,” June 2001.
- United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. General Assembly Resolution 44/25. United Nations, New York.
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