

Waterford-Halfmoon UFSD

Dignity for All Students Act

Policy Update

September 1, 2021



New York's Dignity for All Students Act

- ❖ Signed into law in September 2010
- ❖ Became effective July 1, 2012
- ❖ Amendments were made to the law – August 2013
- ❖ The Dignity Act seeks to provide the state's elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus, and/or at a school related function.

Dignity for All Students

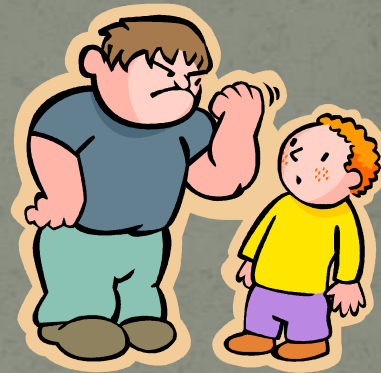
No student shall be subjected to harassment or bullying (including cyberbullying) by employees or students on school property or at a school function;



Dignity for All Students

Nor shall any student be subjected to threats, intimidation or abuse based on his/her actual or *perceived*:

- race
- color
- weight
- national origin
- ethnic origin
- religion
- religious practice
- disability
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- sex
- other



Dignity for All Students

For purposes of this policy, and the implemented Code of Conduct, school property means

- in or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, parking lot or land contained within the real property boundary line of the District's elementary or secondary schools
- in or on a school bus;



A school function shall mean

- ❖ a school-sponsored extracurricular event or activity regardless of where such event or activity takes place, including those that take place in another state

Harassment and Bullying

Creating a hostile school environment by conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse (including cyberbullying), that:

- Has/would have the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, benefits, or mental, emotional, or physical well being

OR

- Reasonably causes/may cause a student to fear for his/her physical safety

OR

- Causes or would be expected to cause physical injury or **emotional harm** to a student.

Emotional Harm

- “Emotional Harm” is harm to a student’s emotional well-being through creation of a hostile school environment that is so severe and pervasive as to unreasonably and substantially interfere with a student’s education.

Staff Reporting Responsibilities:

- School staff are required to verbally notify the building level administrator or DASA coordinator within 1 school day of witnessing/receiving a report.
- A completed written report must be submitted within 2 school days of witnessing/receiving a report.
- Any person who has reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been subjected to discrimination, bullying, intimidation, or harassment by an employee or student, on school grounds or at a school function, who acts reasonably and in good faith and reports such information to school officials or law enforcement authorities, shall have immunity from any civil liability that may arise from making such report.

Prevalence of Bullying and Cyberbullying

- Latest Statistics:
- 1 out of every 3 teens are bullied.
- Bullying is now more prevalent on-line than face to face.
- 64% of students that are bullied do not report that it is happening.
- More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student.
- The reasons for being bullied reported most often by students were looks (55%), body shape (37%), and race (16%).

Where is this happening?

If you witness it, address it and report it:

Halls

Cafeteria

Playground

Bus

Locker Room

Athletic Field

Concert



Classrooms

Field trips

Sidewalk

Gymnasium

Library

School Events

****On-line**

Responding

If you witness it, address it immediately:

Types of incidents that are occurring:

- Physical Contact (kicking, punching, tripping, pushing, taking belongings, spitting, etc.)
- Verbal Threats/Intimidation (gossiping, name-calling, put-downs, taunting, making threats)
- Psychological Abuse (non-verbal actions, spreading rumors, social exclusion)
- Cyberbullying – defined as harassment or bullying through any form of electronic communication (Facebook, Twitter, texting, sexting, other social media websites).

Signs A Student is Being Harassed

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares, bedwetting
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

Signs A Student is Being Harassed

- Not wanting to participate in extra-curricular activities
- Anxious, fearful, over-reactive
- Makes negative comments about him/herself
- Loses things, needs money
- Injuries, bruising, damaged clothing, broken things
- Unhappy, irritable, little interest in activities
- Expresses threats to/about others
- Has no, or fewer, friends (isolated)
- Cries easily

Who Are Targets of Harassment?

Often, victims :

- Are shy
- Have no/little social support
- Are physically different
- Are intellectually different
- Have disabilities
- Express differing views on social or political issues
- Dress style is out of “the norm”
- Are of a minority
- Are from low-income families



Characteristics of those who harass

- Have little concern for others' feelings
- Do not recognize impact of their behavior on others
- Are aggressive with siblings, parents, teachers, friends, and animals
- Are bossy and manipulative to get own way
- May possess unexplained objects and/or extra money
- Are secretive about possessions, activities, and whereabouts
- May hold a positive attitude towards aggression; it's fun, entertaining



Characteristics of those who harass

- Easily frustrated and quick to anger
- Come from an abusive home
- Come from a intolerant home
- Low achieving, need to feel more important; feel highly about themselves
- Often physically stronger
- Have trouble following rules
- Are encouraged by others, and often work in tandem
- May have been victims previously
- Have the opportunity (school climate)

How to promote positive social-emotional learning in your classrooms:

- Stop the class when you see a bullying behavior and create a teachable moment
- Acknowledge students when they demonstrate empathy
- Teach your students to recognize bullying, victim, and bystander behaviors
- Promote the acceptance of differences and the value of diversity in your lessons
- Teach younger students the difference between tattling and telling an adult when someone needs help
- Help students list possible strategies when dealing with these situations
- Continue to be positive role models for your students

Available Resources

- American Psychological Association:
www.apa.org/helpcenter/bullying.aspx
- Anti-defamation league:
www.adl.org/combatbullying/BeAnAlly.pdf
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning:
<http://casel.org>
- Connect Safely: www.connectsafely.org
- Cyberbullying Research Center: www.cyberbullying.us
- International Bullying Prevention Association:
www.stopybullyingworld.org
- Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility:
www.morningsidecenter.org
- National Bullying Prevention Center:
www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org