

The Dignity for All Students Act

The Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act) was signed into law on September 13, 2010. The intent of the Dignity Act is to provide all public school students with an environment free from discrimination and harassment, including bullying, taunting or intimidation, as well as to foster civility in public schools. The Dignity Act took effect on July 1, 2012.

What kind of conduct or behavior is prohibited by the Dignity Act?

The Dignity Act prohibits harassment against students by students and/or employees on school property, or at a school function. The Dignity Act further prohibits discrimination against students by students and/or employees on school property or at a school function based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (defined to include gender identity or expression), or sex.

The Dignity Act also creates a framework for promoting a more positive school climate through, among other things, training/professional development and classroom curricula.

Who is protected under the Dignity Act?

The Dignity Act protects all New York State public school students from discrimination and harassment by students and/or employees on school property or at a school function.

What is the relationship between bullying and harassment?

Bullying is a form of harassment.

Does the Dignity Act address issues related to cyberbullying and/or conduct that occurs off school property?

The Dignity Act prohibits discrimination and harassment of students on school property, including at school functions, by any student and/or employee. However, harassment may include, among other things, the use, both on and off school property, of information technology, including, but not limited to, e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, cell phones, gaming systems and social media websites, to deliberately harass or threaten others. This type of harassment is generally referred to as cyberbullying.

Although the Dignity Act does not specifically address cyberbullying, it, like bullying is considered a form of harassment.

What does The Dignity Act require schools to do to meet this new mandate?

- Develop policies intended to create a school environment that is free from discrimination or harassment.
- Develop guidelines for school training programs to discourage discrimination or harassment that are designed to:
 - Raise awareness and sensitivity of school employees to potential discrimination or harassment and;
 - Enable employees to prevent and respond to discrimination or harassment.
- Develop guidelines relating to the development of non-discriminatory instructional and counseling methods and require that at least one staff member be trained to handle human relations issues.

How does Manhasset Secondary School meet these new requirements?

- The district's code of conduct was revised and adopted in June 2012 to specifically include "Student Rights and Responsibilities under The Dignity Act" and "Remedial Measures to Incidents under The Dignity Act." Prohibitive student conduct now includes and defines Harassment, Bullying, cyberbullying, defamation, discrimination, and intimidation.
- One employee in every school building has been designated as a Dignity Act Coordinator, and has been trained in methods to respond to human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practices, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.
- Training was held for Faculty and staff prior to the start of school on August 30, 2012.
- Grade level assemblies, as well as group guidance sessions will take place in September to inform and educate our students about The Dignity Act.

Manhasset Secondary School Dignity Act Coordinator:

- Mr. Peter Vercessi, Grades 7-12 (516) 267 - 7502

In addition, Dr. Dean Schlanger, Principal and Ms. Jane Grappone, Director of Guidance has received the training.

What is the role of the Dignity Act Coordinator?

The Dignity Act Coordinator is the point person for the Dignity Act in their school. Students who have been subjected to discrimination or harassment, parents whose children have been subjected to such behavior or other students or staff who observe such behavior, are encouraged and expected to make a report to the Dignity Act Coordinator.

Where can I find out additional information concerning The Dignity Act?

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/resources.html>