

**STUDENTS****DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT****Student Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

The Board of Education is committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality. The Board recognizes that discrimination, harassment, hazing and/or bullying, are detrimental to student learning and achievement. These behaviors interfere with the mission of the district to educate its students and disrupt the operation of the schools. Such behavior affects not only the students who are its targets but also those individuals who participate and witness such acts.

To this end, the Board condemns and strictly prohibits all forms of discrimination, harassment, hazing and/or bullying on school grounds, school buses and at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events.

Discrimination, harassment, hazing and/or bullying that takes place at locations outside of school grounds which can be reasonably expected to materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school or impinge on the rights of other students are prohibited, and may be subject to disciplinary consequences. In some instances, bullying, discrimination, hazing and/or harassment may constitute a violation of an individual's civil rights.

**Definitions****Bullying**

Bullying is understood to be a hostile activity which harms or induces fear through the threat of further aggression and/or creates terror. In order to facilitate implementation of this policy, provide meaningful guidance and prevent behaviors from rising to a violation of law, this policy will use the term bullying (which is usually subsumed under the term "harassment") to describe a range of misbehaviors such as harassment, hazing, intimidation or discrimination. The accompanying regulation provides more guidance regarding the definition and characteristics of bullying.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination is the act of denying rights, benefits, justice, equitable treatment or access to facilities available to all others, to an individual or group of people because of the actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression) of that individual or group.

**Hazing**

Hazing is an induction, initiation or membership process involving harassment which produces public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule or creates a situation where public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule is likely to occur.

**Harassment**

Harassment has been defined in various ways in federal and state law and regulation. The Board recognizes that these definitions are important standards, but the Board's goal is to prevent misbehavior from escalating in order to promote a positive school environment and to limit liability.

The Dignity for All Students Act defines harassment as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation or abuse including cyberbullying, that (a) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or (b) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; or (c) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or (d) occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct of threats, intimidation or abuse might reach school property. Acts of harassment and bullying shall include, but not be limited to, those acts based on a person's actual or perceived: race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression). For the purposes of this definition the term "threats, intimidation or abuse" shall include verbal and non-verbal actions. Cyberbullying shall mean harassment or bullying as defined above, including paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) where such harassment or bullying occurs through any form of electronic communication.

### **Prevention**

The school setting provides an opportunity to teach children, and emphasize among staff, that cooperation with and respect for others is a key district value. A program geared to prevention is designed to not only decrease incidents of bullying but to help students build more supportive relationships with one another by integrating the bullying prevention program into classroom instruction. Staff members and students will be sensitized, through district-wide professional development and instruction, to the warning signs of bullying, as well as to their responsibility to become actively involved in the prevention of bullying before overt acts occur.

Instruction concerning awareness and sensitivity to discrimination and harassment and instruction concerning civility in the relationships of people of different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, sexes or gender expression or identities will be included in the instructional program K-12 concerning tolerance, respect for others and dignity.

In order to implement this program, the Board will designate at its annual organizational meeting a Dignity Act Coordinator for each school building. The role of the Dignity Act Coordinator in each school building is to coordinate and enforce this policy.

### **Intervention**

Intervention by adults and bystanders is an important step in preventing escalation and resolving issues at the earliest stages. Intervention will emphasize education and skill-building.

Successful intervention may involve remediation. Remedial responses to bullying and harassment include measures designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior and protect the target. Remediation may be targeted to the individual(s) involved in the bullying behavior or environmental approaches which are targeted to the school or district as a whole.

In addition, intervention will focus upon the safety of the target. Staff is expected, when aware of bullying, to either refer the student to designated resources for assistance, or to intervene in accordance with this policy and regulation.

### **Provisions for Students Who Do Not Feel Safe at School**

The Board acknowledges that, notwithstanding actions taken by district staff, intervention may require a specific coordinated approach if the child does not feel safe at school. Students who do not feel safe at school are limited in their capacity to learn and reach their academic potential. Staff, when aware of bullying, should determine if accommodations are needed in order to help ensure the safety of the student and bring this to the attention of the building principal. The building principal, other appropriate staff, the student and the student's parent will work together to define and implement any needed accommodations.

The district recognizes that there is a need to balance accommodations which enhance student safety against the potential to further stigmatize the targeted student. Therefore, each case will be handled individually. The student, parent/guardian, and school administration will collaborate to establish safety provisions that best meet the needs of the targeted student. Follow-up discussion and/or meetings will be scheduled, as needed, to ensure that safety concerns have been adequately addressed and to determine when and if accommodations need to be changed or discontinued.

### **Training**

The Board recognizes that in order to implement an effective bullying prevention and intervention program, professional development is needed. The Superintendent, the Dignity Act Coordinators and the District Professional Development Team will incorporate training to support this program in new teacher orientation and the annual professional development plan, as needed. Training opportunities will be provided for all staff, including but not limited to teachers, teaching assistants, teacher aides, administrators, bus drivers, cafeteria and hall monitors and all staff who have contact with students. The Dignity Act Coordinators will be trained in accordance with state requirements and will continue their professional development so as to successfully support this policy and program.

### **Reporting and Investigation**

Although it can be difficult to step forward, the district cannot effectively address bullying if incidents are not reported. Students who have been bullied, parents whose children have been bullied or other students or staff who observe bullying behavior are encouraged and expected to make a verbal and/or written complaint to any school personnel in accordance with the training and guidelines provided. At all times, complaints will be documented, tracked and handled in accordance with the regulation(s) and procedures accompanying this policy, or, if applicable, the regulation and procedures accompanying the Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy or the Sexual Harassment Policy and the district's Code of Conduct. If a staff person is unsure of the reporting procedure, he/she is expected to inquire about how to proceed by speaking with their supervisor. Incidents will be included in the Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) system when applicable.

There shall be a duty for all school personnel to orally report any incidents of student-to-student, staff-to-student and visitor-to-student bullying and/or discrimination that they observe to their building principal, the principal's designee, or the Dignity Act Coordinator in the school building no later than one

school day after any incident is observed and to file a written report with the principal, the principal's designee, or the Dignity Act Coordinator in the school building not later than two school days after making such oral report. In addition, there shall be a further duty for all school personnel to orally report any incidents of student-to-student, staff-to-student and visitor-to-student harassment, bullying and/or discrimination of which they are made aware by oral or written report to their building principal, the principal's designee, or the Dignity Act Coordinator in the school building no later than one school day after receiving such report and to file a written report with the principal, the principal's designee, or the Dignity Act Coordinator in the school building not later than two school days after making such oral report. The building principal, the principal's designee, or the Dignity Act Coordinator will refer the information to appropriate district staff for investigation as designated in the regulation and procedures accompanying this policy. A district employee may be deemed to have permitted unlawful discrimination or harassment if he/she fails to report an observed incident, whether or not the target complains.

The results of the investigation shall be reported back to both the target and the accused in accordance with the accompanying regulation. If either of the parties disagrees with the results of the investigation, they can appeal the findings in accordance with the regulation that accompany this policy.

#### **Disciplinary Consequences/Remediation**

While the focus of this policy is on prevention, bullying acts may still occur. In these cases, offenders will be given the clear message that their actions are wrong and the behavior must cease. Student offenders will receive in-school guidance in making positive choices in their relationships with others. If appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken by the administration in accordance with the district's Code of Conduct, as applicable. If the behavior rises to the level of criminal activity, law enforcement will be contacted.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of bullying shall be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors, and must be consistent with the district's Code of Conduct.

#### **Non-Retaliation**

All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint in conformity with state law and district policies, who have acted reasonably and in good faith, have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.

#### **Dissemination, Monitoring, Review, and Reporting**

This policy, or a plain language summary, shall be published in student registration materials, student, parent and employee handbooks, and posted on the district's website. A bullying complaint form will be available on the district's website. The district will ensure that the process of reporting bullying is clearly explained.

Each year, as part of the annual review of the Code of Conduct, this policy will be reviewed to assess its effectiveness and compliance with state and federal law. If changes are needed, revisions will be recommended to the Board for its consideration.

The Board will receive the annual VADIR report, for each building and for the district as whole. Based on the review of the data, the Board may consider further action, including but not limited to modification of this policy and additional training.

The district will ensure that reporting of information to the public will be in a manner that complies with student privacy rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Cross-ref: 0100, Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination  
0110, Sexual Harassment  
4321, Programs for Students with Disabilities  
5300, Code of Conduct  
5710, Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting  
9700, Staff Development

Ref: Dignity for All Students Act, Education Law, §10 – 18  
Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §12101 *et seq.*  
Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000d *et seq.*  
Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000e *et seq.*; 34 CFR §100 *et seq.*  
Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*  
§504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §794  
Individuals with Disabilities Education Law, 20 U.S.C §§1400 *et seq.*  
Executive Law §290 *et seq.* (New York State Human Rights Law)  
Education Law §§313(3), 3201, 3201-a  
*Tinker v. DesMoines Independent Community School Dist.*, 393 US 503, (1969) *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*, 526 U.S. 629 (1999)  
*Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District*, 524 U.S. 274 (1998)  
*Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, 524 U.S. 775 (1998)  
*Burlington Industries v. Ellerth*, 524 U.S. 742 (1998)  
*Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.*, 523 U.S. 75 (1998)  
*Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools*, 503 U.S. 60 (1992)  
*Meritor Savings Bank, FSB v. Vinson*, 477 U.S. 57 (1986)

CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
White Plains, New York

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