

CODE OF CONDUCT

DASA ANNUAL NOTICE TO PARENTS

Dignity for All Students Act

In 2010, New York State approved the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) to help ensure that schools have the tools and resources to afford all students an educational environment in which they can thrive. A statewide task force developed guidelines for implementation of a program effective July 1, 2012.

About DASA

Q: Who's protected under the Dignity Act?

A: The Act applies to the protection of all public elementary and secondary school students and prohibits the harassment and discrimination of students by students and by school personnel.

Q: How does the Dignity Act relate to bullying?

A: Bullying is a form of harassment.

Q: What physical spaces are covered?

A: The Dignity Act applies to behavior on school property (including athletic fields, playgrounds, and parking lots), in school buildings, on a school bus or in a school vehicle, and at school-sponsored events or activities.

Q: Doesn't Pal-Mac already have anti-bullying programs?

A: Yes, Pal-Mac has many excellent programs in place. The DASA requirements would not eliminate these programs. They would provide structures for even more comprehensive and consistent training and intervention.

Q: How does the Dignity Act relate to a school's Code of Conduct?

A: The Code of Conduct has been amended to reflect the prohibition of discrimination and harassment of students by students or staff.

Q: Does the Dignity Act require any training?

A: Yes. The Dignity Act mandates that schools provide training for all employees to increase awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or harassment and civility in the relations of all people.

NYS DASA website: www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact

Pal-Mac's Code of Conduct has been amended to reflect the requirements of the DASA as follows:

Q:What is the definition of bullying?

A: Bullying is a form of harassment that consists of inappropriate persistent behavior including, but not limited to: threats of intimidation of others, treating others cruelly, terrorizing, coercing, stalking, or habitual put-downs and/or badgering of others, whether done directly, indirectly, face-to-face or remotely through electronic communication (i.e., "Cyber-bullying").

Q:What is the definition of cyber-bullying?

A: Cyber-bullying is a form of bullying which occurs via electronic communication; on the Internet, on cellular phones or other similar media. It can involve, but is not limited to: sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive, private information about another person; pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; intentionally excluding someone from an online group.

Q:What is the definition of sexting?

A: Sexting is the slang term for the use of a cellular phone or other similar electronic device to distribute pictures or video of sexually explicit images. It can also refer to text messages of an obscene nature.

Q:What is the best way for students to deal with Bullies?

A: The best way to deal with a bully is to not reply to him/her. A bully is looking for a reaction, so if you are the target of a bully try to ignore him/her and report the incident to an adult.

Bullies want power. They also like to have an audience. Since bullies are influenced by how other people react, bystanders can help discourage a student from being bullied. Bystanders need to let bullies know that their behavior is not acceptable. Bystanders are important in stopping students from being bullies and have a responsibility to report incidents to a school employee.

Report it to an adult. Bullying and harassment may be reported to any staff member of the school including counselors, teachers, administrators, aides, bus drivers, and coaches.

All harassment and bullying complaints, whether informal or formal, verbal or written, will be investigated. To the extent possible, complaints will be treated confidentially, although limited disclosure may be required to complete a thorough investigation. Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of bullying and/or harassment are prohibited. However, any student who is determined to have falsely accused another of bullying and/or harassment shall be subject to disciplinary consequences.

If, after investigation, harassment, bullying or retaliation is confirmed, the District will take proper steps to prevent recurrence of the behaviors. Disciplinary actions will follow the Code of Conduct.

Q:In addition to discipline, what are some other strategies that may be used by school officials?

A: Strategies may include but are not limited to:

1. Discussion with the accused, informing him or her of the District's policies and indicating that the behavior must stop now;
2. Students who bully may need help recognizing their behavior, taking responsibility for their behavior, developing empathy and perspective taking abilities, and finding ways to make amends.
3. Consulting with a school counselor for follow-up;
4. Conducting training for the students where the behavior occurred, calling attention to the consequences or engaging in such behavior;
5. Requesting a letter of apology to the victim;
6. Writing letters of caution or reprimand;
7. Separating the parties; or
8. Providing proper support for the involved parties.