

Incidents of Bias & Connection to the Dignity for All Students Act

Hastings-on-Hudson UFSD

Mission Statement

The Hastings-on-Hudson UFSD is committed to creating a safe environment where individuals feel valued and respected, one that encourages understanding, the building of community, and “lifelong learning.” New York State’s Dignity for All Students Act (“DASA” of the “Dignity Act”) seeks to provide the State’s public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, on the school bus and/or at a school function. The Dignity Act prohibits harassment or discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived race, hairstyles and traits associated with race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.

The Dignity Act provides specific guidance for schools to promptly and thoroughly investigate reported incidents of bias, bigotry, and hatred. This guidance establishes standards and expectations that are applicable in all instances, but developmentally adaptable to each individual incident. Our goal as a district is to promote healing and understanding whenever an incident of bias occurs.

Definitions:

Bias Incident: Such incidents involve acts of biased conduct, speech, or expression that have a significant impact on targeted persons but do not rise to the level of criminal action and will be handled by the Hastings-on-Hudson UFSD through the required Dignity for All Students Act protocols and/or the District’s Code of Conduct.

Microaggression: Microaggressions can be defined as everyday slights - verbal, nonverbal, and environmental - that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to targeted persons based solely upon their perceived membership in a marginalized group. Microaggressions, which can be either intentional or unintentional, may highlight or reinforce feelings of bias, isolation, or marginalization for an individual when seen in the broader context of that individual’s life and experiences. An act need not be intentional to qualify as a microaggression.

Hate Crime: The FBI has defined a hate crime as a “criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.” Acts such as physical assault, vandalism, and arson may fall into the category of hate crimes, and any act must be motivated by bias against the targeted individual or group to qualify as a hate crime. Hate crimes are addressed in partnership with local authorities and/or the judicial system.

Reporting an Incident of Bias: *The Hastings-on-Hudson UFSD faculty receives annual Dignity for All Students Act training. A student may report an incident of bias verbally to any faculty member. It is recommended, however, that bias incidents be reported directly to the building assistant principal using the [incident reporting form](#). The assistant principals have been trained, and formally appointed, as DASA coordinators.*

Our Philosophy and Commitments:

Investigate and identify the act: It is important to follow the [investigation guidance](#) provided under the Dignity for All Students Act. Our investigations will be prompt and thorough.

Communication: In speaking with students and members of the faculty, we commit to using clear language and avoid using ambiguous terms. This will avoid fueling confusion, fear, distrust, and misinformation.

- Key points in the incident response:
 - Be specific and reiterate that any act is unacceptable
 - Further state that the school stands for respect and inclusivity

Ensure the Safety and Support for All: We believe in restorative practices that enable healing for individuals and for the community.

- Ongoing support impacted students and/or staff
 - Counseling, Transparency, Follow up
- Respect the confidentiality of the matter

Ensure Consequences and/or Learning Opportunities are Timely and Appropriate

- Ensure that the consequences and/or learning opportunities are **appropriate for the behavior displayed**.

- Ensure that consequences and/or learning opportunities are **consistent with the District's Code of Conduct**.

Promote and Sustain Healing

Find ways to gather together and share messages of unity and healing

Reporting Tools

If your child has been the target of a bias incident (or has witnessed a bias incident) please complete the [incident reporting form](#) or contact your building assistant principal. Your confidentiality is important and every effort will be made to protect your privacy, as appropriate.