

## 0115 DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT POLICY

Students are the focal point of all School District operations. The Board of Education is committed to providing an educational environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality. The Board recognizes that harassment and bullying are detrimental to student learning and achievement. They 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.

The goals, objectives, aspirations and prohibitions of this policy are also incorporated in the School District's Code of Conduct, as amended to reflect the *Dignity for All Students Act*, and in its policy regarding sexual and other harassment.

The Board of Education and district staff will work together to achieve the following goals in compliance with the *Dignity for All Students Act*:

1. No student shall be subjected to the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that 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 wellbeing;; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse includes but is not limited to conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.
2. This policy shall apply to 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, email, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, gaming systems and social media websites, to deliberately harass or threaten others.
3. All school employees shall be made aware of the *Dignity for All Students Act* and its significance. Prompt intervention by peers and adults (specifically including parents as well as School District personnel) is an important step in preventing bullying and resolving issues at the earliest stages before bullying escalates. School District personnel should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, humiliating or demeaning another person. When made aware of bullying, staff should intervene promptly to de-escalate the situation, and focus on the safety of all involved individuals. Incidents of bullying should promptly be reported to a building administrator.
4. Faculty shall be made aware of their role as essential partners, including the following responsibilities:
  - a. To maintain a climate of mutual respect and dignity for all students regardless of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex, which will strengthen students' confidence and promote learning.
  - b. To confront issues of discrimination and harassment or any situation that threatens the emotional or physical health or safety of any student, school employee or any person who is lawfully on school property or at a school function.
  - c. To address personal biases that may prevent equal treatment of all students in the school or classroom setting.
  - d. To report incidents of discrimination and harassment that are witnessed or otherwise brought to a staff member's attention in a timely manner.
5. All students shall be made aware of the *Dignity for All Students Act* and its significance. Principals in each school shall be responsible for informing students and staff on a yearly basis of the terms of this policy, including the procedures for filing a complaint and the impact of bullying on the target and bystanders.
6. All students shall be informed that they can, with a sense of safety and security, report instances that violate the *Dignity for All Students Act*.
7. The reporting and investigative procedures created pursuant to the Board of Education's existing policy with respect to sexual and other harassment shall be utilized for concerns raised under the *Dignity for All Students Act*.
8. Students who are believed to have been the victims of bullying should be referred to appropriate resources for counseling and other follow-up. Where it is concluded that a student has been the victim of bullying, parents/guardians should be advised of the conclusion, of the findings on which it is based, and of the actions taken or to be taken.
9. In-service training shall be provided for all staff on a regular periodic basis to help them understand the correct response to violations of the *Dignity for All Students Act*. Topics shall include, but not be limited to, research-based activities and procedures for prevention and intervention; specific procedures in response to bullying/harassment/discrimination; required documentation and reporting of complaints and incidents. Training opportunities will be provided for all staff, including but not limited to bus drivers, cafeteria and hall monitors and all staff who have contact with students.
10. A *Dignity for All Students Act* Coordinator shall be named for each school building.
11. In addition to disciplinary consequences for violations of the *Dignity for All Students Act*, there shall be measured, balanced, and age appropriate responses to the discrimination and harassment of students by students and/or employees on school property, including school functions, with remedies and procedures focusing on intervention and education. Such

remedial responses should place the focus of discipline on discerning and correcting the reasons why discrimination and harassment occurred. The remedial responses should also be designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior, and protect the target of the act. Appropriate remedial measures may include, but are not limited to:

- a. peer support groups; corrective instruction or other relevant learning or service experience;
- b. supportive intervention;
- c. behavioral assessment or evaluation;
- d. behavioral management plans, with benchmarks that are closely monitored; and
- e. student counseling and parent conferences.

12. Beyond individual focused remedial responses, school-wide or environmental remediation can be an important tool to prevent discrimination and harassment. Environmental remediation strategies may include:

- a. supervisory systems which empower school staff with prevention and intervention tools to address incidents of bullying and harassment;
- b. school and community surveys or other strategies for determining the conditions contributing to the relevant behavior;
- c. adoption of research based, systemic harassment prevention programs;
- d. modification of schedules;
- e. adjustment in hallway traffic and other student routes of travel;
- f. targeted use of monitors;
- g. staff professional development;
- h. parent conferences;
- i. involvement of parent-teacher organizations; and
- j. peer support groups.

13. Building and central administrators shall review and periodically implement anti-bullying programs in each school at classroom, grade-wide and school-wide levels. As individual reports of bullying are received and investigated, additional or follow-up programming shall be considered and, as appropriate, implemented.

14. This policy, or a plain language summary, shall be published in student handbooks and the School District's Code of Conduct, and posted on the District's website. This policy shall be reviewed as part of the periodic review of the School District's Code of Conduct. If changes are needed, revisions will be recommended to the Board for its consideration.

First Reading: May 16, 2012

Second Reading: June 6, 2012

Third Reading & Adoption: June 19, 2012

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**North Salem Central School District**