The New York State Dignity For All Students Act

www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/

July 1, 2013

Presented August 25,
and
September 3, 2015

July 1, 2012

- The Dignity Act was signed into law on September 13, 2010 and took effect on July 1, 2012.
- Amended again effective July,1, 2013
- **And on July 20, 2015-Transgender and GNC students**

DASA seeks to provide public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus and/or at a school function.

Focus Populations

Discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying against any student ,including, but not limited to, discrimination based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex, is prohibited

The Dignity Act provided the following to assist with it's implementation:

Curriculum:
* To teach anti-bullying and tolerance

Code of Conduct:
* Updated definitions including cyberbullying

Reporting:
* Outlines requirements for all reporting

Dignity Act Coordinator:
* BOE approved
* Contact Information available.
* Receives all reports and follows up as needed

Employee Training:
* In social patterns behavior recognition and mitigation.

Retaliation is Prohibited

District Dignity Act Coordinators

District
Mr. Michael Cancilla

Buliding Dignity Act Coordinators

High School-Mr. Daniel Johnson

Middle School-Mr. Scott Benton

Wilson Elementary-Mr. John Diodate

Coursework and Training Future Teachers and Administrators

Effective January 2014, amendments the Dignity Act to required that:

• **School professionals** applying for a certificate or license on or after July 1, 2013 must complete training on the social patterns of harassment, bullying and discrimination.

• Anyone applying for an **administrative** or **supervisory** service, **classroom teaching** service or **school service certificates** must complete training in Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Prevention and Intervention.

What does this mean for me as a classroom teacher?

➢ **Know what to look for…**
    Characteristics of bullies and victims
    Early warning signs
    Effects of bullying on bullies and victims

➢ **Prevention and Intervention**
    Creating a positive, inclusive learning environment
    Education for students and teachers
    Reporting procedures
    Discipline approaches

➢ **Communicating with families and the community**

Characteristics of a Positive Learning Environment

- Caring, firm but fair attitude.
- Students know what to expect from you.
- Classroom procedural rules.
- High expectations for students.
- Students are given responsibilities in the classroom.
- Students have potential for success.
- Classroom climate of cooperation.
- Positive group identity.
- Students accept diversity.

- Consistent follow-up and enforcement of the rules.
- Preparedness and organization.
- With-it-ness "having eyes in the back of your head".
- Your focus in the classroom (switching from group to individual).
- Variety in teaching styles
- Appropriate pacing and smooth transitions.
- Cooperation with parents.

Environmental Aspects to Consider

Physical Environment
- ➢ Safe, clean, and comfortable
- ➢ Inviting (seating arrangements, wall posters, color, positive quotes etc.)

Instructional Environment
- ➢ High academic expectations with strong student supports
- ➢ Well managed classrooms

Emotional Safety
- ➢ Sense of belonging
- ➢ Safe to take risks and express emotions

Steps you can take...

➢ Get to know students

➢ Establish respect as an expectation

➢ Collaboratively identify classroom norms

➢ Collaboratively identify behavior consequences

➢ Reinforce positive behavior

➢ Outlets for expression

➢ Class meetings

Class Meetings at the Elementary Level

➢ Bruised but Beautiful Apple

➢ My Wrinkled Heart

➢ Tell me about yourself!

Benefits of a Positive Learning Environment

➢ Creates a climate of safety, control, and a sense of community within the classroom
➢ Better communication exists within the school community
➢ Positive learning environments improve academic achievement in the following ways…
- Increased classroom participation
- Increased attendance rates/decreased school avoidance
- Higher standardized test scores and overall GPAs
- Decreased drop-out rates

Creating an Inclusive Environment

➢ Understand the needs of **targeted populations.**
➢ Recognize the important role **diversity** and multiculturalism play in education.

Understanding Targeted Populations

Students with Disabilities
- ➢ Walk a mile in their shoes
- ➢ What would it be like to have autism?

Immigrants
- ➢ What are the cultural barriers?
- ➢ Similarities and differences?

LGBTQ
- ➢ What kind of harassment is most common? Verbal? Cyberbullying?
- ➢ Is it possible that these comments are being made unintentionally?

Students in foster care or have incarcerated parents
- ➢ What would it be like to grow up without your parent(s)? Brothers and sisters?
- ➢ What if students are not comfortable in their new home?

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

Guidance For Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students
JULY 20, 2015

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/documents/ Transg_GNCGuidanceFINAL.pdf

The New York State Education Department ("NYSED") is committed to providing all public school students, including transgender and gender nonconforming ("GNC") students, with an environment free from discrimination and harassment.

- **It prohibits discrimination based on sex with respect to admission into or inclusion in courses of instruction and athletic teams in public schools.**

New Definitions

Assigned Sex at Birth: the sex designation, usually "male" or "female," assigned to a person when they are born.

Cisgender: an adjective describing a person whose gender identity corresponds to their assigned sex at birth.

Gender expression: the manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, or mannerisms.

Gender identity: a person's gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth. Everyone has a gender identity.

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

Gender nonconforming (GNC): a term used to describe people whose gender expression differs from stereotypic expectations. The terms "gender variant" or "gender atypical" are also used. Gender nonconforming individuals may identify as male, female, some combination of both, or neither.

Sexual Orientation: a person's emotional and sexual attraction to other people based on the gender of the other person. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity. Not all transgender youth identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, and not all gay, lesbian and bisexual youth display gender-nonconforming characteristics.

Transgender: an adjective describing a person whose gender identity does not correspond to their assigned sex at birth.

Transition: the process by which a person socially and/or physically aligns their gender expression more closely to their actual gender identity and away from that associated with their assigned sex at birth.

Understanding School Climate and Transgender Students
Educators play an essential role in advocating for the well-being of students and creating a supportive school culture.

Understanding Gender Identity

- The person best situated to determine a student's gender identity is the individual student.
- For very young students –the parents should determine this.
- Work closely with the student and family in addressing the confidentiality of the student's transgender status.
- These situations are on a case-by-case basis and will require schools to balance supporting the student and the requirement to inform parents about their children.
- The paramount consideration- the health and safety of the student.
- It's recommended schools accept a student's assertion of his/her/their own gender identity. Confirmation of a student's asserted gender identity is usually as simple as a statement from the student.

Gender Transition

"Gender transition" describes socially and/or physically aligning gender expression more closely to their true gender identity, and away from that associated with their assigned sex at birth.
There is no threshold medical or mental health diagnosis or treatment requirement that any student must meet in order to have his/her/their gender identity recognized and respected by a school.
School personnel should speak with the student first before discussing a student's gender nonconformity or transgender status with the student's parent or guardian.

Common Areas of Concern Relating to Transgender Students

1: Names and Pronouns

Determining which name and pronoun to use in referring to a transgender student may be one of the first things a schools must address to create a supportive environment.

2: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Student Records

New York State Education Law prohibits the unauthorized release of a student's personally identifiable information. FERPA   protects the privacy of student educational records personally identifiable information.

When a transgender or GNC student new to a school is using a chosen name, the birth name should be kept confidential by school and district staff.
Generally, records with the student's birth name should be kept in a separate, confidential file.
In the case of a transgender student, a school nurse should use the chosen name, and use the birth name only when necessary .

3: Gender-Based Activities, Rules, Policies, and Practices

Gender-based policies, rules, and practices can have the effect of marginalizing, stigmatizing, stereotyping and excluding any student.
School districts should consult with their attorneys to review such policies, rules and practices.

The use of restrooms, changing facilities, and participation in extracurricular activities are among the more important issues in this area. The United States Departments of Education and Justice have stated that: under **Title IX prohibiting a student from accessing the restrooms that match his gender identity is prohibited sex discrimination.**

Alternative accommodations, such as a single "unisex" bathroom or private changing space, should be made available to students who request them, **but should never be forced upon students**, nor presented as the only option.

<u>Physical education</u>
Where there are sex- segregated classes, students should be allowed to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity.

Resources, Education, and Training for School Districts and Communities

The New York State Education Department is committed to providing all public school students including transgender and GNC students with an environment free from discrimination and harassment, to fostering civility, and to ensure that every student has equal access to educational programs and activities.

Such efforts will help to ensure that the school community understands the importance of a safe and supportive school environment for all students. NYSED encourages schools to continue to have an open dialogue with their school community when working together to foster an inclusive school environment.

For additional information and resources regarding transgender students in schools please see below for available government and advocacy resources:

New York State Education Department:

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/

Importance of Diversity in Education

➢ Prepare for ever-changing world

➢ Promote a culture of acceptance

➢ Creates curiosity and propels personal growth

Websites

www.stopbullying.gov
www.cyberbullying.us

and
Resources

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/resourceguide.html

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/sedl/SEDLguidelines.pdf

Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act)
Glossary and Acronym Guide

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/rgappendixa.html

Stay Informed

- Review the Dignity For All Homepage at
  www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/

- Review this document on the District Homepage, revise current district policies , procedures and the Code of Conduct to ensure compliance .

Continue to:

- Be Diligent
- Observe
- Monitor
- Respond
- Maintain accurate documentation
  and

Keep your DAC informed updated on all unacceptable behavior.

THE END

Thank You
From

The Wilson Central School District