

Law Day 2013

Dignity For All Students

The New York State Dignity For All Students Act (Dignity Act) was signed into law on September 13, 2010. The intent of the Dignity Act is to provide all public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, taunting or intimidation, as well as to foster civility in public schools.

Dig-ni-ty - [díg'ní-tē]
noun

1. The quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect.
2. Poise and self-respect

The Dignity Act explicitly provides that no student must be subjected to discrimination and/or harassment by employees and/or students on school property or at a school function based on his or her actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity or expression), or sex.

As the original New York state law was taking effect in July 2012, an amendment to the new law expanded the Dignity Act to help protect students from cyberbullying as well as other

forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination.

Effective July 1, 2013, the law requires school districts to have a plan in place to deal with cyberbullying and to act when cyberbullying occurs. School officials must investigate reports of cyberbullying, on or off campus, when it creates or would create a substantial risk to the school environment, substantially interferes with a student's educational performance or mental, emotional or physical well-being, or causes a student to fear for his or her physical safety. The law also requires current and future school employees to be trained to identify and reduce the incidences of harassment, bullying, cyberbullying and discrimination.

The Dignity Act is another example of recognizing the existence of harassing behavior and discrimination and addressing the problem through changes in the law. It is a current continuation towards the ideal of equality under the law.

*Next installment: **Future Equality***

Newspaper Activity: Resolving Conflicts

Use the newspaper (print or electronic) as a resource to find a current conflict among individuals or groups of people that involves discrimination, bullying or cyberbullying. As a class and/or family discuss the possible solutions and work on finding the best compromise.

Student Assessment: What is the most interesting thing you learned about the Dignity For Students Act? Explain.