

# Dignity for All Students Act



**EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2012**

# What is the Dignity Act?



- The Dignity for all Students Act is the new Article 2 of the State Education Law, effective July 1, 2012. It explicitly prohibits *discrimination* and *harassment* in schools and requires instruction in civility, citizenship, and character education.
- The underlying intent of the Act is to expand the concepts of tolerance, respect for others, and dignity in order to assure a school environment that supports student learning.

# Dignity for All Students Act



- Goal : to create a safe and supportive, positive school climate where students can learn without fear of being discriminated against or harassed physically or verbally.

# Dignity for All Students Act



- Prohibits harassment and/or discrimination of students by **employees** or **other students** on **school property** or at **school functions** based upon a student's **actual** or **perceived**
  - race
  - color
  - **weight**
  - national origin
  - ethnic group
  - religion
  - religious practice
  - disability
  - **gender** (including gender identity and gender expression)
  - sex

# Important terms



- **Harassment:** 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 well being; 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 safety.

# Important Terms



- **Gender:** socially constructed roles, behaviors and activities that a given society considers appropriate for men or women
- **Gender Identity:** one's self-concept as being male or female
- **Gender Expression:** the manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms

# DASA Requirements



- Reviewed and revised Code of Conduct to prohibit discrimination and harassment of students by employees and other students.
- Provide Code of Conduct summaries to parents and students at the beginning of 2012-2013 school year, in age-appropriate language.
- Provide information to all staff regarding the Dignity Act, including the identification of harassment and discrimination. Increase awareness of policies.

# DASA Requirements



- Designate and train staff members “Dignity Act Coordinators”.
  - These people will need to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and sex.
  - Dignity Act Coordinators for Wynantskill UFSD:
    - ✦ Mary Yodis, Assistant Principal
    - ✦ Amy Murphy, School Counselor
    - ✦ Kim Herzl-Betz, School Psychologist



# DASA Requirements



- Character Education plan expanded to include instruction on tolerance, respect for others and dignity. Includes increasing awareness and sensitivity.
  - Integrated through K-5 Second Step program.
- Establish a school-wide positive behavior program.
  - PBIS is a systemic prevention program which supports positive social behaviors. Increases the positive school climate.

# Definitions and Distinguishing:



- Bullying
- Conflict
- Drama

# Is this Conflict, Drama, or Bullying?



- Scenario 1:
- Hanna has been dating Joe for several months. They get into an argument. Hannah tells her best friend Meg about the argument. Meg thinks that she can help fix the problem and seeks the advice of her friend Rick. Shortly afterwards, Rick tells Joe that Megan told him about the argument when Joe tells Hannah (his girlfriend) that Megan (Hannah's friend) talked to Rick about their argument. Hannah gets mad at Meg and won't talk to her.

# Conflict, Drama, or Bullying?



- Two friends are working together on a class project. They disagree about how to divide up the work. One friend gets very upset and calls his friend a stupid jerk. The next day in school, the two barely speak to each other.

# Drama, Conflict, or Bullying?



- A group of students sit together at lunch. They frequently joke around. One of the kids doesn't usually understand the joking. Sometimes the students make fun of him when he is confused by their joking.

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# Reporting



- Forms can be found on the website or in the main office
- Forms can be given to the DAC's: Mary Yodis, Amy Murphy, or Kim Herzl-Betz
- The DAC's will follow-up with the alleged bully and victim, and bystanders
- Follow-up paperwork will be completed by the DAC and filed for future reference.