

Policy Information

Series 5000 - Personnel

Dignity for All Students Act

Policy # 5186, 1.86

POLICY

2013 - 6215 & 5186

Personnel

SUBJECT: DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT

The Board of the Genesee Valley Educational Partnership (the “Partnership”) recognizes that learning environments that are safe and supportive can increase student attendance and improve academic achievement. A student's ability to learn and achieve high academic standards, and a school's ability to educate students, is compromised by incidents of discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to bullying, taunting and intimidation. Therefore, in accordance with the Dignity for All Students Act, Education Law, Article 2, the Partnership will strive to create an environment free of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment and will foster civility in the schools to prevent and prohibit conduct which is inconsistent with the Partnership's educational mission. Since cyberbullying is a form of bullying, the term "bullying" as used in this policy will implicitly include cyberbullying even if it is not explicitly stated.

The Partnership condemns and prohibits all forms of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex by school employees or students on school property and at school-sponsored activities and events that take place at locations off school property. In addition, any act of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment, outside of school sponsored events, which may reasonably be expected to materially and substantially disrupt the educational process may be subject to discipline.

Dignity Act Coordinator

At least one (1) employee at every Partnership site shall be designated as the Dignity Act Coordinator(s). The Dignity Act Coordinator(s) will be thoroughly trained to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (identity or expression) and sex. The Board shall appoint Dignity Act Coordinators who are employed by the Partnership and who are licensed and/or certified as a classroom teacher, school counselor, psychologist, nurse, social worker, administrator/ supervisor or District Superintendent. Administration will share the names, contact information and site of each appointed Dignity Act Coordinator with all Partnership personnel, students, and parents/persons in parental relation. The means by which this information will be provided will include:

- a. Listing such information in the Code of Conduct and updates posted on the Internet website, if available; and
- b. Including such information in the plain language summary of the Code of Conduct provided to all persons in parental relation to students before the beginning of each school year; and
- c. Providing such information to parents and persons in parental relation in at least one (1) Partnership or school mailing or other method of distribution including, but not limited to, through electronic

communication and/or sending such information home with each student and, if such information changes, in at least one subsequent Partnership or school mailing or other such method of distribution as soon as practicable thereafter;

d. Posting such information in highly visible areas of school buildings;

e. Making such information available at the Partnership and school-level administrative offices.

If a Dignity Act Coordinator vacates his/her position, another school employee shall immediately be designated for an interim appointment as Coordinator, pending approval by the Board of Education, within thirty (30) days of the date the position was vacated. In the event a Coordinator is unable to perform the duties of the position for an extended period of time, another school employee shall immediately be designated for an interim appointment as Coordinator, pending return of the previous Coordinator to the position. The Partnership must provide the change in information to parents or persons in parental relation as soon as practicable. The change in name and/or contact information of the Dignity Act Coordinator will not constitute a revision to the Code of Conduct so as to require a public hearing.

Training and Awareness

Training will be provided each school year for all Partnership employees in conjunction with existing professional development training to raise staff awareness and sensitivity of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment directed at students that are committed by students or school employees on school property, at a school function, or off school property when the actions create or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment or where it is foreseeable that the conduct might reach school property.

Training will include ways to promote a supportive school environment that is free from bullying, discrimination and/or harassment. Training shall:

a. Raise awareness and sensitivity;

b. Address social patterns and the effects on students;

c. Inform employees on the identification and mitigation of such acts;

d. Provide strategies for effectively addressing problems of exclusion, bias and aggression;

e. Include safe and supportive school climate concepts in curriculum and classroom management; and

f. Ensure the effective implementation of school policy on conduct and discipline.

Instruction in grades Kindergarten through 12 shall include a component on civility, citizenship and character education. Such component shall instruct students on the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and contributions to, the community. For the purposes of this policy, "tolerance," "respect for others" and "dignity" shall include awareness and sensitivity to bullying, discrimination and/or harassment and civility in the relations of people of different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, genders and sexes. Such component must also include instruction on the safe and responsible use of the Internet and electronic communications.

Rules against bullying, discrimination and/or harassment will be included in the Code of Conduct, publicized District-wide and disseminated to all staff and parents. Any amendments to the Code will be disseminated as soon as practicable following their adoption. New teachers shall be provided a complete copy

of the current Code upon their employment. An age-appropriate summary shall be distributed to all students at a school assembly at the beginning of each school year.

Reports and Investigations of Bullying, Discrimination and/or Harassment

The Partnership will investigate all complaints of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment, either formal or informal, and take prompt corrective measures, as necessary. School employees who witness or receives a report (oral or written) of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination must orally notify the District Superintendent, Principal, or their designee no later than one (1) school day after witnessing or receiving a report of such incident. The employee must then file a written report within two (2) school days after making the oral report. Upon the recommendation of the District Superintendent, every appointed Dignity Act Coordinator is designated as a person to whom employees may report harassment, bullying and/or discrimination. Upon receipt of a report of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination, a Dignity Act Coordinator shall promptly transmit the report to a Partnership Principal. If, after an appropriate investigation, the Partnership finds that this policy has been violated, corrective action will be taken in accordance with Partnership policies and regulations, the Code of Conduct, and all appropriate federal or state laws. The District Superintendent, Principal or their designee shall notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when it is believed that any harassment, bullying and/or discrimination constitute criminal conduct.

The Partnership will annually report material incidents of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment which occurred during the school year to the State Education Department. Such report shall be submitted in a manner prescribed by the Commissioner, on or before the basic educational data system (BEDS) reporting deadline or such other date as determined by the Commissioner. SED has developed a form for gathering data titled, "Reports of Incidents Concerning School Safety and the Educational Climate" which can be found on the NYSED website.

The Principal of each primary and secondary school shall provide a regular report (at least once during each school year) on data and trends related to harassment, bullying and/or discrimination to the District Superintendent and in a manner prescribed by, as applicable, the Partnership, BOCES or charter school. There is no need for schools or BOCES to submit this report to the State Education Department.

Prohibition of Retaliatory Behavior (Commonly Known as "Whistle- Blower" Protection)

Any person who has reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been subjected to bullying, discrimination and/or harassment by an employee or student, on school grounds or at a school function, who acts reasonably and in good faith and reports such information to school officials or law enforcement authorities, shall have immunity from any civil liability that may arise from making such report. The Board prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed at complainants, victims, witnesses and/or any other individuals who participated in the investigation of a complaint of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment.

Education Law Sections 10-18, 801-a, 2801 and 3214
8 NYCRR Section 100.2

Board Adopted
10/17/12
Board Approved Revision
8/20/14