



Dignity Act (DA)

Implementation July 2012

(Modified from bullyinginterventionexperts.com)

New York State's Law

- The Dignity Act (DA): It is hereby declared to be the policy of NYS to afford ALL STUDENTS in public schools an environment free of discrimination and harassment.
- Requires districts and schools to prevent, monitor and address bullying by July 2012.
- Prohibits harassment with respect to certain non-exclusive protected classes included but not limited to:
 - * actual or perceived race
 - * weight (size)
 - * ethnic group
 - * religious practice
 - * sexual orientation
 - * sex
 - * color
 - * national origin
 - * religion
 - * disability
 - * gender identity
- <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/>

Bullying is a type of harassment



- An intentional act of aggression, based on an imbalance of power, that is meant to harm a victim either physically or psychologically.
- Usually occurs repeatedly and overtime, however sometimes can be identified in a single event.

Types of Bullying Behaviors

PHYSICAL

- Hitting, punching, tripping
- Kicking, pushing, scratching
- Damaging/stealing property

VERBAL

- Name calling, teasing, taunting
- Making offensive remarks
- Making discriminatory remarks
- Verbally threatening, intimidating

SOCIAL/ EMOTIONAL

- Excluding or threatening to exclude
- Spreading rumors, gossiping
- Ostracizing, alienating
- Using threatening looks or gestures
- Extortion

CYBERBULLYING

- Use of the internet or cell phone to harass and intimidate (email, instant messaging, social networks, chat room exchanges, website posts, cell phones)

Possible Contributing School Factors

- Bullying incidents are too often unnoticed or ignored
- No clear rules and consequences
- Culture of “tattling” rather than “telling” or “ratting” rather than “reporting”
- Little principal involvement with students
- Poor cohesiveness and communication among staff members and between the staff and the principal
- Lack of respect among all constituents

School Risk Factors

- Lack of clear expectations both academic and behavioral
- Lack of commitment or sense of belonging at school
- Academic failure
- Parents and community members not actively involved

School Protective Factors

- Communicates high behavioral and academic expectations
- Encourages goal setting, academic achievement, and positive social development
- Positive attitudes toward school
- Fosters active involvement of students, parents, and community members

The Participants

- The Bully
- The Target/Victim
- The Bystander(s)



The Bully

- May possess a superior trait-attractive, athletic, sociable
- Leads by intimidation
- Have average levels of self-esteem
- Enjoys being in control and likes to subdue others
- Sees slights and hostilities when none are meant
- Lacks empathy
- Displays verbal and/or physical aggressive behavior

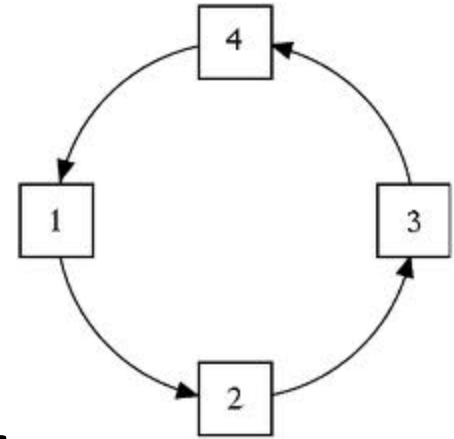
The Victim

- **Passive Victim**-socially awkward, pleasers, compliant, fear of confrontation
- **Provocative Victim**-restless, irritating to others, seen teasing others, likely to fight back but lose, and emotional
- **Cyber Victim**-either passive or provocative, may feel isolated, dehumanized, or helpless at the time of the attack

The Bystander-those who watch bullying happen or hear about it

- **Passively** accept bullying by watching and doing nothing
- **Provide** the audience a bully craves and the silent acceptance that allows bullies to continue their hurtful behavior
- **Instigate** the bullying by prodding the bully to begin
- **Encourage** the bullying by laughing, cheering, or making comments that further stimulate the bully
- **The Upstander-those who support and defend the victim**
 - **Directly** intervene by discouraging the bully, defending the victim, or redirecting the situation away from the bullying
 - **Get help** by rallying support from peers to stand up against bullying or by reporting the bullying to adults

The Bully/Victim Cycle



- Identification with the Aggressor
- Victims who have been repeatedly bullied often have an increase in aggression
- When they are put in a position of control or power they identify with the bully and do onto others what has been done to them
- Thus the victim becomes the bully

What Schools Can Do

- Schools need to implement bullying prevention and intervention strategies that fit their school culture



- Establish a district policy to prevent and intervene in all forms of bullying, cyber bullying, and harassment

Establishing a Bully Intervention Team (BIT)

- Each building level IST is the BIT
- Follows district anti-bullying policy
- Creates a reporting system that uses the tiered interventions identified in the district's RTI Plan, which includes hierarchal consequences for bullying behaviors
- Rewards pro-social behaviors through PBIS

Interventions/Strategies



Interventions must be provided to the victim, the bully and the bystander

Intervention of Strategies are provided to: Parents/Guardians, Teachers, Teacher Aides/Monitor/ Bus Drivers



Action Plan

- Use the district developed data collection plan for interviews, questionnaires, and surveys
- Review and interpret data
- Use the data driven intervention/prevention plan
- Implement intervention training for all constituents (this power point and the RTI Plan presentation)
- Effective reporting system
- Use the hierarchy of consequences
- Continually re-assess the effectiveness of the plan

Reporting

- Develop a 24/7 district-wide anonymous reporting system that is publicized
- Primary goal is to create a culture where students feel comfortable reporting to a responsible adult
- Those who need to be trained to report include students, administration, security personnel, teachers, coaches, bus drivers, aides, custodial staff, parents

What sites and events are covered by DA?

- DA applies to public schools, BOCES, and charter schools.
- DA applies to incidents on school property (in a school building, athletic playing field, playground, parking lot, school bus)
- DA applies to public school sponsored functions (school sponsored extracurricular events or activities)

Requirements of DA

- Designation of “DIGNITY ACT COORDINATOR” to be trained in non-discriminatory instructional and counseling methods and in handling human relationships (IST Coordinator)
- At least one employee in every building/school and be BOE approved.
- Name and contact must be shared with all school personnel, students, and parents/guardians
- If the Coordinator vacates his/her position it must be immediately filled by an interim pending approval of a successor.



- Staff training to raise awareness and sensitivity of school employees of harassment and discrimination.
- Promote civility and a safe, nurturing environment
- Prevent harassment, discrimination, or bullying by students or employees.
- Provide a response to students who are harassed, and bullied at school.

Education Law 801 Requires:

- Sensitivity and tolerance curricula for students
- The curriculum must include instruction in:
 - * civility
 - * citizenship
 - * character
 - * honesty
 - * tolerance
 - * personal responsibility
 - * respect for others
 - * dignity for all

Code of Conduct Revision

- Districts must revise the code of conduct to create a school environment free from harassment, and discrimination.
- Districts are required to provide an age appropriate version of the policy written in **plain language** to be included in the code of conduct.

- The code of conduct shall include, but is not limited to:
- Provisions prohibiting discrimination and harassment against any student, by employees, or students on school property or at a school function, that creates a hostile environment by conduct, with or without physical contact and/or by verbal threats, intimidation, or abuse, of such a severe nature that:

- (1) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits or mental, emotional and/or physical wellbeing or
- (2) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his/her physical safety.

- Such conduct shall include, but is not limited to, threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight (size), national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex.



Video

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHesl-9Nun4>