

January 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The state of New York approved legislation in 2009 referred to as the *Dignity for All Students Act*, (DASA). This law goes into effect on July 1, 2012 with the goal of protecting students from harassment, discrimination and bullying by other students or school employees. The provisions of the legislation mandate that no student shall be subjected to discrimination based on his or her actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, weight, sexual orientation, sexual identity or gender.

In its most simplistic form, it means that there should not be any bullying within the school environment. Common courtesy, respect, and the Golden Rule of treating others as you wish to be treated should rule the day – every day.

Harassment under DASA is the creation of a hostile environment by:

- conduct or 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; and
- conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for their physical safety.

Note that under DASA, conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse includes but is not limited to that based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.

Our staff members will receive training on the specifics of the legislation and we will review our current practices and policies, such as our Student Code of Conduct, to make certain we comply with the DASA. District's are required to designate and train a Dignity Act coordinator who will be trained in human relations in the areas of the protected categories and serve as a resource for the school.

We have already provided assemblies that have focused on the need to eliminate bullying in our school. We will continue to present awareness sessions to increase the understanding of our learners and create an environment of respect and (cooperation.

You can help by speaking with your children about the effects and problems associated with bullying. Be proactive. Make sure that you've established ground rules for the use of social media. Communicate your expectations and, finally, listen to your children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Mugits, Superintendent