

Anti-Bullying Resources for Parents and Students

A. Statement of Purpose

Sharon Springs Central School District believes children have the right to be educated in a safe, happy and supportive environment. This page is a resource to all parents, highlighting anti-bullying efforts being made across the country and at SSCS. The goal is to make school a place where every student feels included by their peers and accepted for who they are.

Dignity for All Students Act

A new regulation named the Dignity for All Students Act went into effect July 1, 2012 in New York State. Its purpose is to ensure that elementary and secondary public school students have the right to attend school in an environment that is free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying, including cyberbullying.

NYSED DASA page New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) prohibits actions — such as aggression, threats, and intimidation — that interfere with another student’s educational performance both at school and district event, 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.

An important addition to the act is a provision regarding cyber bullying. Cyber bullying includes any electronically transmitted messages that are intended to harass, bully, or discriminate against another student. This type of bullying is prohibited and may be subject to disciplinary consequences by the school, even if the incident happens outside of school time and off of school grounds.

1. DASA Requirements

DASA creates a framework for sensitivity and diversity training to promote a positive school environment. The Act requires that at least one person at every school be thoroughly trained to handle harassing behaviors that may be related but not limited to a person’s actual or perceived: race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practices, disability, sexual orientation, gender and sex.

2. Key Definitions from DASA

Bullying- Bullying is a hostile activity which harms or induces fear through the threat of further aggression and/or creates terror. Bullying may be premeditated or a sudden activity. It may be subtle or easy to identify, done by one person or a group. Bullying often includes the following characteristics:

- a. Power imbalance - occurs when a bully uses his/her physical or social power over a target.
- b. Intent to harm - the bully seeks to inflict physical or emotional harm and/or takes pleasure in this activity.
- c. Threat of further aggression - the bully and the target believe the bullying will continue.

d. Terror - when any bullying increases, it becomes a “systematic violence or harassment used to intimidate and maintain dominance.” (Barbara Coloroso, *The Bully, The Bullied & The Bystander*, 2003)

3. There are at least three kinds of bullying: verbal, physical and social/relational

- Verbal bullying (which can be delivered orally, electronically or in writing) includes name calling, insulting remarks, verbal teasing, frightening phone calls, violent threats, extortion, taunting, gossip, spreading rumors, racist slurs, threatening electronic communications (“cyberbullying”), anonymous notes, etc.
- Physical bullying includes poking, slapping, hitting, tripping or causing a fall, choking, kicking, punching, biting, pinching, scratching, spitting, twisting arms or legs, damaging clothes and personal property, or threatening.
- Social or relational bullying includes excluding someone from a group, isolating, shunning, spreading rumors or gossiping, arranging public humiliation, undermining relationships, teasing about clothing, looks, giving dirty looks, aggressive stares, etc.

4. Harassment

The Dignity for All Students Act (§§10-18 of Education Law) defines harassment as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse, including cyberbullying, 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; conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation, or abuse might reach school property . The harassing behavior may be based on any characteristic, including but not limited to a person’s actual or perceived: race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression). Gender identity is one’s self-conception as being male or female, as distinguished from actual biological sex or sex assigned at birth, and Gender expression is the manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.

5. Hazing

Hazing is an induction, initiation or membership process involving harassment which produces public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule or creates a situation where public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule is likely to occur.

B. Dignity Act Coordinator and Reporting

The School Board has designated **School Guidance Counselor, Brenda Stetin, as the Dignity Act Coordinator**. The Role of the Dignity Act Coordinator (“DAC”) is to coordinate and enforce this policy in

conjunction with school administration. The DAC shall be thoroughly trained in methods to respond to human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression and sex. The DAC in conjunction with administration, shall be responsible for coordinating employee training, supporting implementation of district policy, ensuring inclusive curriculum to reinforce and promote tolerance and a harassment free environment. The DAC shall also serve as an accessible resource to students and staff related to this policy or prevention and response strategies.

1. Reporting and Investigation:

The District recognizes its ongoing commitment to provide a safe and positive educational climate free from bullying and harassment and will publicize its policies and reporting expectations for incidents of harassment or discrimination. To ensure effective and timely redress to incidents of bullying and harassment, students who have been harassed, students or staff who have witnessed what they believe to be an incident of bullying or harassment are encouraged and expected to promptly make a written or verbal complaint to school personnel in a manner consistent with publicized school-wide practices and guidance as soon as possible after the incident. The district can't effectively address harassment or bullying if incidents are not reported.

Once the school knows of an alleged incident of harassment, there must be a timely investigation to determine what occurred. The results of the investigation shall be reported back to both the target and the individual accused of harassing or discriminatory behavior or conduct. If either of the parties disagrees with the results of the investigation, they can appeal the findings to administration.

The District will make a bullying complaint form available on its website, the Main Office, Guidance Office and Special Programs Office. The district will promptly and equitably investigate all complaints, formal or informal, verbal or written. In order to assist investigators, individuals should document the bullying as soon as it occurs and with as much detail as possible including: the nature of the incident(s); dates, times, places it has occurred; name of perpetrator(s); witnesses to the incident(s); and the target's response to the incident.

If, after appropriate investigation, the district finds that a student, an employee or a third party has violated this policy, prompt corrective and possibly disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the code of conduct, applicable collective bargaining agreement, district policy and state law. If the reported behavior constitutes a civil rights violation, the complaint procedure associated with related antidiscrimination policies will be followed, as applicable. If either of the parties disagrees with the findings of the initial investigation, an appeal may be made to the Superintendent that will act in accordance with the guidance procedures developed by a district wide task force.

2. Disciplinary Consequences/Remediation:

Even with prevention and education, instances of discrimination or harassment may still occur. Should such an instance arise, the individual engaging in the harassing or discriminatory conduct must be advised that their actions and conduct will not be tolerated and that their behavior must be changed immediately. Students who engage in harassing or discriminatory conduct will receive guidance on making positive choices and support to understand how their actions have negatively impacted other student(s) and must not continue. As appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken by district

administration in accordance with the district's Code of Conduct. If the discriminatory or harassing behavior rises to the level of criminal activity, law enforcement will be contacted. Progressive discipline consequences will be considered in response to instances of discrimination or harassment and the individual imposing consequences shall consider the nature and severity of the misconduct, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors, prior interventions and the student's response and must be imposed in a manner consistent with the district's Code of Conduct.

Anti-bullying websites

Stop Bullying Now - <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

Dealing with bullying - http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/bullies.html

Anti-Bullying Network - <http://www.antibullying.net/>

Medline Plus: Bullying - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/bullying.html>

Education.com: Bullying at School - <http://www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing/>

Teaching Tolerance: Bullying - http://www.tolerance.org/search/apachesolr_search/bullying

Glossary of Terms (Net Cetera) - <http://www.onquardonline.gov/tools/learn-terms.aspx>

Microsoft's Online Safety and Privacy Education - <http://www.microsoft.com/protect/>

Addictions Care Center of Albany - <http://www.theacca.net/>

NYS Office of Cyber Security - <http://www.dhses.ny.gov/ocs/awareness-training-events/>
