



## VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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### Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

#### Parent Memo

The Dignity for All Students Act (The Dignity Act) went into effect on July 1, 2012. Its intent is to create more nurturing school environments free of discrimination and harassment of students by students and by school personnel.

The Dignity Act defines harassment as “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 physical safety...” New York Education Law § 11(7).

Under the Dignity Act, harassment includes conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person’s actual or perceived:

- Race
- Color
- Weight
- National origin
- Ethnic group
- Religion
- Religious practice
- Sex
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

The list of characteristics above is not exclusive- harassment may include conduct based on other characteristics as well. Also note that harassment may be based on actual **or perceived** characteristics, for example, a student’s perceived sexual orientation.

#### **From the NYS Education Department’s Brochure on the Dignity Act:**

*Q: Who is protected by the Dignity Act?*

*A: All public elementary and secondary school students are protected by the Dignity Act.*

*Q: What does the Dignity Act prohibit?*

*A: The Dignity Act prohibits the harassment and discrimination of students by students and by school personnel.*

*Q: How does the Dignity Act relate to bullying and hazing?*

*A: Bullying and hazing are forms of harassment and discrimination.*

*Q: What physical spaces are covered by the Dignity Act?*

*A: The Dignity Act applies to behavior on school property (including athletic fields, playgrounds, and parking lots), in school buildings, on a school bus/vehicle, as well as at school-sponsored events or activities.*

*Q: How does the Dignity Act relate to the school's Code of Conduct?*

*A: The Code of Conduct must be amended to reflect the prohibition of discrimination and harassment of students by students or staff-- in age appropriate plain language.*

For more on the Dignity Act, see these resource websites:

<http://nyscenterforschoolsafety.org/>

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/>

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/ssae/schoolsafety/sdfsca/#sciencebased>

If you have questions or concerns that are Dignity Act related, please contact the Dignity Act Coordinator for your school:

<b>School</b>	<b>Dignity Act Coordinator</b>	<b>Extension</b>
Berea Elementary	Katherine Gusmano	11647
East Coldenham Elementary	Alexandra Riker	12006
Montgomery Elementary	Melinda Sulzbach	14645
Walden Elementary	Diane Smith	15645
Middle School	Catherine Heil	16241
High School	James Hession	17647

You can access the Dignity for All Students Complaint Form on the district website or through your Dignity Act Coordinator.