

DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT (DASA)

All students have the right to go to a school that is safe, welcoming and comfortable.

The biggest characteristic that needs to be demonstrated at Newfane High School is that of dignity...to ourselves and to others. On July 1st, 2012 the Dignity for All Students Act went into effect across our state. The Act is designed to make sure that all students feel safe within school and at all school functions.

Here are the basics on what the Act means:

Goal of the Act—Create a safe and supportive school climate where students can learn and focus, rather than being discriminated against or harassed with words or actions by other students or school personnel.

Who is protected—All students in public schools in NYS are protected

What does it prohibit—The Dignity For All Students Act prohibits harassment and discrimination of students by other students and school personnel. The Act includes cyberbullying and makes it a school issue if the cyberbullying disrupts a student's ability to learn. Cyberbullying is defined as the use of the Internet and related technologies to harm other people, in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner. In serious cases, school administrators are obligated to contact law enforcement.

Where does it apply—To any behavior on school property, in school buildings, on school transportation and at any school sponsored activity. **According to the New York State Education Department, students may also be disciplined for conduct that occurs outside of the school that may endanger the health or safety of pupils within the educational system or adversely affect the educative process.**

So what does this mean to us?

We need to be more careful about how we talk, text, post and behave around each other. We need to realize that treating others poorly may negatively impact the lives of those targeted, and we have no right to take away any student's right to be free from discrimination or harassment. Some key thoughts follow:

Tolerance—we must accept differences among other people

Sensitivity—we must understand that our words and actions can offend and hurt others

Respect for others—we must always show that all students have the right to learn and feel welcome and safe at school.

What follows is a list to help us understand that showing dignity means treating people with all sorts of different characteristics with respect. We have known this before, but now it is a New York State law that we must never treat students inappropriately because of any of the following:

Race	Weight	National Origin	Ethnic group
Religion	Religious practices	Mental abilities	Physical abilities
Sexual orientation		Gender identity or expression	Gender

The Challenge

Basically, this act is a long way of getting to the idea expressed most simply in *The Golden Rule*: treat others as you would like to be treated. Don't treat another student poorly because of how they look, act, who their friends are, or because of the color of their skin, religion or where they came from. Never use physical actions or words in any way to disrespect others and take away their **freedom to learn and feel safe in our school**.

What to do

If you or someone you know is being discriminated against or harassed, take action. You can help. Talk to someone.

At school, you can talk to any of our staff members, including:

Mr. Adams, Principal
Mr. Young, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Technology
Deputy Birmingham, SRO Officer
Mrs. Hinton, School, Counselor
Mrs. Miller, School, Counselor
Mrs. Botzer, School Psychologist

There is also an **Investigative Form** located online at our school website under **Dignity for All Students Act**, and at the main office that you can fill out if you feel someone is being targeted. Return this form to the main office and the incident will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken to address the situation.