Dignity for All Students Act

The Dignity for All Students Act requires school districts to put in place procedures for the creation of school environments free of discrimination and harassment.

Any type of harassment on school property and at school functions is prohibited. Harassment is defined 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. It also includes conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably cause or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his/her physical safety. The district is committed to promoting a nurturing school culture that promotes positive interpersonal and intergroup relations and respect for diversity among students and between students and staff, providing all students with a supportive and safe environment in which to grow and thrive academically and socially.

The Dignity for All Students Act prohibits the following:

1. Student harassment by school employees or students on school property or at a school function. This prohibition extends to cyber bullying; verbal or written threats through any form of electronic communication such as email, chat room, discussion group, instant messaging, or social networking sites on or off school property.
2. Student discrimination by school employees or students based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.

Reporting Discrimination or Harassment

Any person who has or learns of an incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination against a student should report it to the Dignity Act Coordinator of the building in which the act took place.

Any person having reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been subjected to discrimination or harassment, who acts reasonably and in good faith in reporting such information or initiates informal or formal proceedings, has immunity from any civil liability that may arise. No school employee may take, request or cause retaliatory action against a person who, acting reasonably and in good faith, makes a report or initiates informal or formal proceedings.

Requirements of School Districts

1. The Eastport-South Manor Central School District is committed to creating environments that are free from discrimination and harassment.
2. A copy of the anti-bullying and harassment policy is available at your child's school.
3. Trained professionals in each building support programs to discourage discrimination and harassment. Furthermore, guidelines are designed to:

- Raise awareness and sensitivity of school employees to potential discrimination or harassment
- Enable employees to prevent and respond to discrimination
- Support the development of non-discriminatory instructional and counseling methods

4. Members of each school's staff will be trained to handle human relations in the areas of discrimination and harassment. In the district, the team consists of the Dignity Act Coordinators, School Psychologists and principals.

If you or anyone you know has knowledge of discrimination or harassment, please contact the building principal of your child's school. For further information, please refer to the following resources: Board Policy Number 0115: Student Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Intervention.

The New York State Education Department's Dignity for All Students Act website:
http://www.stopbullying.gov
New York State Education Law Article 2 sections (10-18)

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