

# The Dignity for All Students Act



*“An Agent for  
School Climate Change”*



Huntington Schools  
**Parent University**  
*January 8, 2013*



**No student shall be subjected to harassment, discrimination, or bullying by employees or students.**



# What is the Dignity Act?

**IT'S THE LAW!**

- Took effect July 1, 2012
- Addresses issues related to harassment and discrimination or bullying in schools—including Code of Conduct.

# WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

1. To understand the Dignity Act.
2. To raise awareness and understanding of what's in our Code of Conduct.
3. To raise awareness and sensitivity to potential acts of bullying, discrimination and harassment directed at students that have a direct and negative impact on their school functioning.
4. To inform parents about our District's goals and progress in implementing the Dignity Act.
5. To discuss what parents can do to help.
6. *To ensure that our schools have a safe and supportive school climate!*

# HUFSD Code of Conduct

- No student shall be subject to discrimination or harassment based on a person's actual or perceived **race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity or sex** by school employees or students on school property, on a school bus, or at a school function.
- Now includes cyber-bullying
- Please refer to the Code of Conduct in the School Calendar.

# DEFINITIONS

## HARASSMENT

The creation of a hostile environment by:

- Conduct
- Verbal threats
- Intimidation or abuse

# HARASSMENT

- Words or actions that have 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 that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety.
- Includes Sexual Harassment

Such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse includes, but is not limited to conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person's **ACTUAL** or **PERCEIVED**:

- Race
- Color
- Weight
- National Origin
- Ethnic Group
- Religion
- Religious Practice
- Disability
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender (which includes a person's actual or perceived sex, as well as gender identity and expression)

# What is Bullying?

Unwanted, aggressive behavior in child, adult or child/adult interactions that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

The behavior is **repeated**, or has the potential to be repeated over time.

- Imbalance of power
- Intent to cause harm
- Repetition

# Conflict vs. Bullying

## CONFLICT

- Equal power between the students
- Shows remorse.
- Modifies their behavior when they have hurt someone.
- Demonstrates ability to self-monitor.

## BULLYING

- Imbalance of power between the students.
- Does not show remorse.
- Does not modify their behavior after they have hurt someone.
- Does not self-monitor.

Please consider that...

*Not every negative interaction  
is bullying.*

# EXAMPLES OF BULLYING

include but are not limited to:

- Verbal: Name calling, teasing, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting and threatening to cause harm.
- Social: Spreading rumors about someone, excluding others on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone and embarrassing someone in public.
- Physical: Hitting, punching, shoving, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's things and making mean or rude hand gestures.

# What our schools are doing to help a student who is being harassed or bullied

*Presentations have been made at  
all buildings for all staff:*

- *Teachers*
- *Coaches*
- *Aides*
- *Monitors*
- *Security*
- *Administrative staff*
- *Bus drivers*

# Highlights of Staff Presentation:

- ❖ *Reminding staff that when an adult responds quickly and consistently to discrimination, harassment or bullying behavior, a clear message is sent that those behaviors are NOT acceptable.*
- ❖ *Stressing to staff that modeling respectful behavior when intervening is of the utmost importance.*
- ❖ *Emphasizing that we should not ignore or minimize the situation, or assume that children can work this out on their own.*
- ❖ *Reminding staff to always model respectful behavior in their interactions with students and colleagues.*

# Educating Students about the Dignity Act

- ❖ Classroom discussions
- ❖ Assemblies for reinforcement and acknowledgement of positive choices
- ❖ Small group discussions (e.g. athletic teams, specialty groups, clubs)
- ❖ Teachers are incorporating discussions about character education, civility and citizenship into their lessons
- ❖ Morning announcements
- ❖ Exploring additional ways to involve students in leading this initiative

# *Highlights of Student Presentations*

- Explanation of the Dignity Act
- Definitions and Examples of Bullying & Harassment
- Differentiation between conflict and bullying
- Helping our students make better choices with regard to judgment and stereotypes of others
- Careful choosing of the words we use in our everyday lives
- What to do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed or you witness what you perceive to be bullying or harassment
- Creating an environment where everyone feels accepted and not judged.

# If you think your child is being targeted:

- ❖ Listen carefully and calmly to their perception of what is happening.
- ❖ Reserve judgment and be cautious about labeling an issue before collecting more information. This models problem solving and decision making skills.
- ❖ Assure them that we will work together to change the situation. Convey optimism that this goal will be accomplished.
- ❖ Share your concerns with the teacher, dean, school counselor or other school employee closest to the situation who may be able to provide further information and who will bring this to the principal's attention. **Call an administrator in urgent situations.**
- ❖ Encourage your child to self-advocate and seek help at school whenever they feel uncomfortable.

# Helping your child choose beneficial behaviors

- ❖ Model the behaviors in our words and our actions
- ❖ Use “genuine dialogue” to discuss issues and share perspectives. (This encourages them to share their thoughts with you.)
- ❖ Invite your child to choose appropriate language and ways of handling conflicts that demonstrate respect for others. (How would it feel to walk in their shoes?)
- ❖ When you see incidents of disrespectful behavior on television or encounter it in your day to day experiences, discuss what you see with your children. Encourage them to tell you what they think first.

# Learning to be Reflective

*“We judge others by their behavior.  
We judge ourselves by our intentions.”*

Ian Percy

# Our Pro-Active Approach

- *Children are learning through their experiences, and don't always make good choices of behavior.*
- *Our goal and responsibility is to help children to self-monitor and learn from their mistakes.*
- *We set limits to communicate that life is full of choices and every choice has its consequence.*
- *When children understand the reason for limits, they are more likely to accept them.*
- *Encourage children to understand where their rights end and others' rights begin.*

# Inviting Positive Behavioral Choices

We internalize behaviors or regulations in one of two ways:

- **Integrated** – Accepted as your own. Becomes part of who you are.
- **Introjected** – Forced upon you. “Swallowing a rule instead of digesting it.
- When a behavior is introjected, the person responds with compliance or defiance.

# Social Emotional Skills

- **Self-awareness**—accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence
- **Self-management**—regulating one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately
- **Social awareness**—being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources

# Social Emotional Skills

- **Relationship skills**—establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed
- **Responsible decision-making**—making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community

# Partnering with Community Organizations

Lions Club International: direct instruction grant

## **Lions Quest K-6**

- Positive youth development program and teaching materials. 11 elementary teachers, social workers and psychologists were trained.
- Sharing of concepts and materials in collegial circles and professional development sessions.
- Future support anticipated from Melville Lions Club

# IN SUMMARY....

WE HAVE A LEGAL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP MAINTAIN A CLIMATE OF SAFETY, RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY.

WE INVITE STUDENTS TO BE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTORS AND SAY:

**“I AM SAFE”**

**“I AM RESPECTFUL”**

**“I AM RESPONSIBLE”**

*Thank you for working with us to reach our goal*