

Dignity for All Students Act

Dignity for All Students Act or DASA amends the New York Education Law to prohibit harassment and discrimination against students in public schools. It protects against harassment based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. DASA mandates that teachers and staff receive the training they need to properly address issues of harassment and discrimination, and requires the monitoring and reporting of such incidents. Students would receive presentations designed to discourage discrimination.

New York's Students Must be Taught that All People Deserve Dignity & Respect

- Children under the age of 17 are found to have committed the most hate crimes out of any other age category accounting for a full 31% of violent hate offenses, and 46% of property related hate offenses¹.
- Of all reported hate crimes committed by children under the age of 20, 50.5% are motivated by race, while 24.6% are motivated by ethnicity².
- If the 16 and 17 year old Suffolk students who are charged with the brutal murder of Marcelo Lucero had received the benefits of in-school dignity and respect programming, it is possible that Marcelo would still be with us today.

New York Won't Stand for Discrimination and Harassment in Schools

School can become a nightmare for students who face daily harassment and taunting³.

- 65% of teens have been harassed or assaulted during the past year because of their race, ethnicity, disability, religion, appearance or their perceived or actual gender, sexual orientation, gender expression.
- One-in-three students (34%) and one-in-two teachers (53%) believe that bullying and harassment are a serious problem in their schools.

The Harmful Effect of Discrimination in New York Schools Hurts All Students & Perpetuates Discriminatory Behavior

Many of our most vulnerable youth do not feel safe in school. Ongoing harassment in an unsupportive environment leads students to skip school, lose focus on class work, engage in high-risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse and contemplate suicide.

- Less than half of New York students reported feeling “very safe” at school (44 %).
- Students who experience bullying or harassment at school are more likely to miss classes and entire school days than students who are not victimized by their peers⁴.
- When discriminatory behavior in schools is not recognized, discouraged, and responded to with discussions highlighting the importance of treating all people with dignity and respect, students do not learn that their actions can have devastating effects on another life, as well as their own.

¹. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report (2001). *National Criminal Victimization Survey and Uniform Crime reporting: Hate Crime Reported by Victims and Police*

². Ibid.

³. All can be found on GLSEN's website: www.glsen.org/research

⁴. DeVoe, J. F., & Kaffenberger, S. (2005). *Student reports of bullying: Results from the 2001 School Crime Supplements to the National Crime Victimization Survey*