

## Dignity for all Students Policy

Ascend Charter Schools and its board of trustees are committed to providing a safe and productive learning environment within the schools and at school-sponsored events. In accordance with New York State's Dignity for All Students Act, the school is committed to promptly addressing incidents of harassment of and/or discrimination against students that impede students' ability to learn. These include bullying, taunting, or intimidation in all their myriad forms.

**Students' Rights.** No student shall be subjected to harassment or discrimination based on the student's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex, by school employees or by students on school property, on a school bus or at a school function. Harassment may include, among other things, the use, both on and off school property, of information technology such as email, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, gaming systems and social media websites to deliberately harass or threaten others. This type of harassment is referred to as cyber bullying, and it is considered a form of harassment, like bullying.

In addition, the schools reserve the right to discipline students, consistent with our Code of Conduct, who engage in the harassment of students off school property under circumstances where such off-campus conduct: 1) affects the educative process; 2) actually endangers the health and safety of our students; or 3) is reasonably believed to pose a danger to the health and safety of our students. This includes written and/or verbal harassment, including cyber bullying, which materially and substantially disrupts the work and discipline of the school and/or which school officials reasonably forecast as being likely to materially and substantially disrupt the academic work and culture of the school.

**Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC).** Each school will designate a staff member to be the Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC). The DAC is trained to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and sex. The DAC will be accessible to students and employees for consultation and advice.

**Curriculum.** The school shall conduct bullying and cyber bullying education as part of its character education curriculum in every grade. The instruction is age appropriate, and is intended to support maintenance of an environment that is free of bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

**Professional Development.** Each school shall provide annual professional development to all employees on the Dignity for all Students Act and this policy, which shall address the social patterns of harassment, bullying, and discrimination, including but not limited to those acts based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex; the identification and mitigation of harassment, bullying and discrimination; and strategies for effectively addressing problems of exclusion, bias, and aggression in educational settings.

**Reporting and Investigating.** All staff are responsible for notifying their immediate supervisor or the school director of harassment of which they have been made aware within one school day, and must file a written report within two school days of the notification.

Any student who believes that s/he is being subjected to harassment, as well as any other person who has knowledge of, or witnesses, harassment, shall report the harassment to the school director.

The school director shall promptly investigate the complaint and take appropriate action which may include, if necessary, referral to the board of trustees or a board designee. Discipline, follow-up, and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged harasser and victim shall be made to ensure that harassment has not resumed and that those involved in the investigation of allegations of harassment have not suffered retaliation.

Material incidents of discrimination and harassment on school grounds or at a school function will be reported to the State Education Department as required by law.

**No Retaliation.** The board and the schools prohibit retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the reporting and investigation of allegations of harassment. All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint in conformity with state law and this policy, who have acted reasonably and in good faith, have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.