

The Somers Central School District Dignity Act Summary:

The Board of Education is committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes respect, dignity, and equality and recognizes that discrimination, such as harassment, hazing, and bullying, make learning difficult. These behaviors interfere with the District's mission to promote social emotional learning and impact not only those who are targeted, but also those who participate in and witness such acts. Because of this, the Board condemns and prohibits all forms of discrimination on school grounds, school buses, and at all school-sponsored activities, programs, and events. Discrimination, harassment, hazing or bullying that takes place outside of school grounds, but which can reasonably be expected to impact or interfere with the learning environment in school, may be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Key Definitions:

Bullying- When a person or group engages in an activity which harms or causes fear through the threat of further aggression and/or creates terror.

Discrimination- Denying rights, benefits, justice, equal treatment, or access to facilities available to all others, to an individual or group of people because of the group, class, or category to which that person belongs. This discrimination can be based on race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation or gender. (including gender identification and expression)

Harassment- The creation of a hostile environment by ones actions or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that does or could reasonably be expected to interfere with a student's educational performance, mental, emotional, or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that causes or could reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her safety. This harassment may be based on any characteristic, including those listed above under discrimination.

Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Other Forms of Discrimination:

At the center of the School District's strategic vision is a focus on the "whole child." In support of this vision, the District offers a wide variety of programs and experiences for students aimed at supporting their social-emotional growth. We believe these efforts and others are critical in the prevention of all forms of discrimination. Below is a bulleted list of some of the components that support this work:

- A strong k-12 counseling program.
- Targeted curricula aimed at emphasizing empathy, tolerance, and respect for others.
- A training program involving all staff to respond sensitively and consistently to bullying.
- Clear school-wide and classroom rules about bullying consistent with the District's code of conduct.
- Adequate supervision, particularly in less structured areas such as in the hallways, cafeteria, school bus and playground.

Investigation of Complaints of Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination:

Whenever a complaint of harassment or other forms of discrimination is received whether verbal or written, it will be subject to preliminary review and investigation. This investigation will be conducted by the Dignity Act Coordinator of the school involved. The Dignity Act Coordinator may recommend certain accommodations for the target to help alleviate the situation and may also recommend specific disciplinary action against the accused where appropriate. Each situation will be handled on a case by case basis.

If any party is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and subsequent action on the part of the Dignity Act Coordinator, they may file a complaint with the Director of Human Resources & Student Services who will initiate a district level investigation. Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the district-level investigation may appeal to the Superintendent of Schools by submitting a written request to the Superintendent within 30 days.

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