

The Dignity for All Students Act

New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (The Dignity Act) seeks to provide the State's students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus and/or at a school function.

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Please scroll down to see an excerpt from the Mt. Pleasant Cottage School UFSD Code of Conduct and the Bill of Rights and Responsibilities of Students.

Excerpt from Code of Conduct

Mt. Pleasant Cottage School UFSD

- “Bullying” is understood to be a hostile activity which harms or induces fear through the threat of further aggression and/or creates terror. In order to facilitate implementation of this policy, provide meaningful guidance and prevent behaviors from rising to a violation of law, this 'policy will use the term bullying (which is usually subsumed under the term "harassment") to describe a range of misbehaviors such as harassment, hazing, intimidation or discrimination. The accompanying regulation provides more guidance regarding the definition and characteristics of bullying.
- “Discrimination” is the act of denying rights, benefits, justice, equitable 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 (as enumerated in the *Definitions* section, under Harassment, below).
- “Hazing” is an induction, initiation or membership process involving harassment which produces public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule or creates a situation where public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule is likely to occur.

“Harassment” means 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 wellbeing; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; 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, sexual orientation, gender or sex (Education Law Section 11[7]).

Under the Dignity act, there are currently 11 protected classes, groups or characteristics. The Dignity Act prohibits any discrimination based on actual or perceived characteristic. Although not required to be listed in the Code of Conduct, school districts may choose to add the definitions of the 11 protected classes, groups or characteristics, (particularly to the student’s plain-language version of the Code of Conduct), if they are not already listed:

- “Race” means a group of persons related by a common descent or heredity. For purposes of enumeration the U.S. Census Bureau uses terms such as: “White/Caucasian”, “Black/African American/African descent. “Asian”, “Bi-racial”, “Hispanic/Latinos” etc. to describe and classify the inhabitants of the United States.
- “Color” means the term refers to the apparent pigmentation of the skin, especially as an indication or possible indication of race.

- “Weight means aside from the obvious meaning in the physical sciences, the word is used in references to a person’s “size”.
- “National Origin” means a person’s country of birth or ancestor’s country of birth.
- “Ethnic Group” means a group of people who identify with each other through a common heritage including language, culture, and often a shared or common religion and or ideology that stresses ancestry.
- “Religion” means specific fundamental beliefs and practices generally agreed to by large numbers of the group or a body of persons adhering to a particular set of beliefs and practices.
- “Religious Practice” means a term including practices and observances such as attending worship services, wearing religious garb or symbols, praying at prescribed times, displaying religious objects, adhering to certain dietary rules, refraining from certain activities, proselytizing, etc.
- “Sex” means the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. (MALE and FEMALE denote “sex”.)
- “Gender” means the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. (MASCULINE and FEMININE denote “gender”).
- “Sexual Orientation” means the sex to which a person is sexually attracted. Someone attracted primarily or exclusively to members of the same sex is characterized as homosexual. A person with a strong or viable attraction to both genders is characterized as bisexual or pansexual.

Student Rights

Students have the right to be treated with Dignity, respect, courtesy and compassion in school.

This Means: No one will laugh at them, hurt their feelings, nor talk down to them.

Students have the right to be safe in school and expect their property to be safe.

This Means: No one will carry weapons, use illegal drugs or alcohol, hit, threaten, or hurt anyone, steal nor destroy their property.

Students have the right to be respected for their individual differences in school.

This Means: No one will treat them unfairly nor discriminate against them for any reason, including but not limited to social, economic, racial or cultural differences, or handicapping conditions.

Students have the right to learn about themselves and others, to hear and to be heard in school.

This Means: They will be free to appropriately express their feelings and opinions.

Students have the right to be helped to learn self-control in school.

This Means: They will be provided assistance in developing appropriate choices for responding to problems.

Students have the right to learn and be educated to the best of their abilities.

This Means: Others will assist them to reach their full potential.

Student Responsibilities

Students have the responsibilities to treat others with dignity, respect, courtesy and compassion.

This Means: I shall not laugh at, insult, put down, nor hurt the feelings of others.

Students have the responsibility to help keep school safe.

This Means: I shall not carry weapons, use illegal drugs or alcohol, fight, threaten, or hurt others, steal nor destroy the property of others.

Students have the responsibility to respect others as individuals.

This Means: I shall not treat others unfairly nor discriminate against them for any reason, including but not limited to social, economic, racial or cultural differences or handicapping conditions.

Students have the responsibility to learn about themselves and others in school.

This Means: I shall not prevent others from appropriately expressing their feelings and opinions.

Students have the responsibility to exhibit self-control in school.

This Means: I shall accept guidance from others in making appropriate choices to resolve my problems and to allow others their rights.

Students have the responsibility to participate in the educational process and to allow others to participate as well.

This Means: I shall cooperate in my educational program by attending regularly and working to the best of my ability.

*Note: The Mount Pleasant Cottage School District uses a non-coercive approach when dealing with student discipline problems. It is our belief that students can learn to behave appropriately when motivated through strong relationships with the adults in their lives.