

WVCSD EdTalk: November 23, 2022
Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

Every student has the right to go to school in a place that is safe, friendly, respectful, and cares about them.

The context of alleged bullying among students is extremely important. What can appear to be haphazard and thoughtless behavior may actually be far more dangerous if there is further activity, possibly even occurring online. It is imperative for adults to determine whether or not an occurrence is part of a pattern of purposeful, recurrent acts of cruelty. Online bullying is a little more complicated, but it can also be very harmful and serious, which makes it vital for parents to keep a close eye on what their children are doing on social media. Repeated bullying is associated with a significantly increased risk of developing anxiety, upset, depression, trauma, social rejection, and low grades.

That is the primary position of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), passed into law in New York in 2010, and intended to protect all students. The goal of DASA is to make schools safe and supportive places where students can learn and concentrate without worrying about being treated unfairly or being verbally or physically harassed by classmates or school staff. DASA states that no student shall be subjected to harassment or discrimination by employees or students on school property or at a school function based on their actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, or expression.

DASA Highlights

Q. Who is protected by the Dignity Act?

A. All public elementary and secondary school students are protected by the Dignity Act.

Q. What does the Dignity Act prohibit?

A. The Dignity Act prohibits the harassment and discrimination of students by students and school personnel.

Q. How does the Dignity Act relate to bullying and hazing?

A. Bullying and hazing are forms of harassment and discrimination.

Q. What physical spaces are covered by the Dignity Act?

A. The Dignity Act applies to behavior on school property (including athletic fields, playgrounds and parking lots), in school buildings, on a school bus/vehicle, as well as at school-sponsored events or activities. The Dignity Act of 2013 has been expanded to include cyber-bullying

defined as harassment by any form of electronic communication, and include incidents occurring off school property that create or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment.

Q. How does the Dignity Act relate to the school's Code of Conduct?

A. The Code of Conduct has been amended to reflect the prohibition of discrimination and harassment of students by students and staff – in age-appropriate plain language.

If you have questions or concerns related to the Dignity for All Students Act, contact the DASA coordinator in your child's school:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Ms. Jeanette Myrick, School Counselor
(845) 987-3170, ext. 14645

Sanfordville Elementary School

Ms. Grace Ceysen, School Counselor
(845) 987-3300, ext. 13600

Warwick Valley Middle School

Ms. Patricia DuBois, School Psychologist
(845) 987-3100, ext. 16645
tdubois@wvcsd.org

Warwick Valley High School

Ms. Tamara Scotto, School Psychologist
(845) 987-3050, ext. 12641

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

As part of the second grade social studies unit on community and citizenship, students held their very own election for a second grade mascot! Led by second grade teachers Catherine Hobart and Shannon Kennedy, students "campaigned" for their mascot of choice. Mrs. Kennedy's class nominated a friendly squirrel the students named Kevin. Kevin was inspired by an actual squirrel who regularly stops by Mrs. Kennedy's window. Mrs. Hobart's class nominated Silly Sally, their class stuffed animal. Activities included students making campaign posters, decorating their classrooms, and inviting classes from other grades to visit their rooms. After taking a tour of the rooms, viewing campaign posters, and speaking to the various "campaign committees," the students from these other grades voted for their favorite mascot in booths that were set up in the Media Center. Congratulations to Kevin the Squirrel!

Sanfordville Elementary School

Brittany Anderson's classes enjoyed "Thanksgiving Movement Stations" during their physical education throughout the week leading up to Thanksgiving. These fun stations included: a Turkey Hunt, a Pilgrim Hat Toss, the Turkey Bowl, the Pumpkin Drop off, Turkey Day Football, the Turkey Jump, and the challenge of Stack the Dinner Cups!

Carla Overbey, her third grade students, and their classroom aides collaborated to plan, prepare, serve, and enjoy a Thanksgiving feast in their classroom. Mrs. Overbey integrated student learning in all content areas over the last two weeks. Students learned the significance of the first Thanksgiving and even wrote about how grateful they are for many things in their lives. Together they talked about family traditions and celebrations, and they planned their classroom celebration. Students hand-wrote invitations to teachers, service providers, secretaries, and the principal to ask them to join in on their celebration. Leading up to the feast, students learned to read recipes, measure ingredients, and actually prepare the sides. Mrs. Overbey cooked a delicious turkey at home for the feast! Students helped to set the tables and welcomed their guests as they arrived at their feast! Everyone sat together to eat turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, green bean casserole, gravy, bread, cranberries, apple cider, and desserts.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Our seventh and eighth graders interested in lead roles in our upcoming play participated in our annual Cabaret. Students prepared and performed solos for an audience of family and friends. These performances served as their auditions for lead roles in our upcoming Warwick Valley Middle School Drama Production. The audience was entertained by about a dozen solo performances and a few group performances. To end the entertaining evening, Ms. Hanson announced this year's musical. We are excited to share that the Warwick Valley Middle School Musical for the 2022-2023 school year is NEWSIES!

Warwick Valley High School

Many of our high school students had the opportunity to participate in civic engagement. The Youth in Government program had 18 students participate in the annual steering convention. WVHS members prepared speeches to run for 11 mock political positions/offices across the local, state, and federal government levels. Six students qualified to be one of the leading candidates for the general election vote in early 2023. These six individuals will run against a candidate from another participating school.

- Christian Katsabanis will be running for New York State Attorney General.
- Lena Jodry will be running for the New York State Assembly.
- Liam Kevins will be running for Orange County Family Court Judge.

- Robert Morris will be running for the New York State Assembly.
- Abby Gatdula will be running for Orange County District Attorney.
- Tanya Sinha will be running for Orange County Judge.

The video editor will film each student's speech and compile it into a single video. It will be distributed and shown in all Orange County social studies classes. The winners will have the opportunity to chaperone their corresponding position and be elected “officially” in the spring of 2023.