

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXPLANATION OF THE ENCLOSED FLYER RE: DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS

All students have the right to go to a school that is safe, welcoming, considering and caring.

The biggest characteristic that needs to be demonstrated at Pratt Elementary School is that of dignity...to ourselves and to others. On July 1st, 2012 the Dignity for All Students Act went into effect across our state. The Act is designed to make sure that all students feel safe within school and at school functions.

Here are the basics on what the Act means:

Goal of the Act—create a safe and supportive school climate where students can learn and focus, rather than being discriminated against or harassed (bothered) with words or actions by other students or school personnel.

Who is protected—All students in public schools in NYS are protected.

What does it prohibit—The Dignity Act prohibits harassment and discrimination of students by other students and school personnel.

Where does it apply—To any behavior on school property, in school buildings, on school transportation and any school sponsored activity.

So what does this mean to us?

We need to be much more careful about how we talk, text, post and behave around each other. We need to realize that treating others poorly has a huge impact on the lives of those targeted, and we have no right to take away any student's right to be free from discrimination or harassment. Some key thoughts follow:

Tolerance—we must accept differences among other people

Sensitivity—we must understand that our words and actions can offend and hurt others

Respect for others—we must always show that all students have the right to learn and feel welcome at school

What follows is a list that might help us understand that showing dignity means treating people with all sorts of different characteristics with respect. We've known this before, but now it is a New York State law that we must never treat students badly because of any of the following:

Race	Weight	National Origin	Ethnic group	Religion	Religious practices
Mental abilities			Physical abilities		Sexual orientation
	Gender identity or expression			Gender	

The Challenge

Basically, this act is a long way of getting to the idea expressed most simply in *The Golden Rule*: treat others as you would like to be treated. Don't make fun of someone for how they look. Ever. Don't treat another student badly because of the color of their skin, where they came from, or their religion. Don't pick on anyone for the score they got on a test, or how good or bad they are in physical education. Don't use words that define someone based on who you think they like. Ever. Never use physical actions or words to make others feel badly about themselves or takes away their freedom to learn in our school.

What to do

If you or someone you know is being discriminated against or harassed, take action. Talk to someone. At school, you can talk to any of our staff members, including:

Mr. Hoar, Pratt Principal, Dignity Act Coordinator

Mr. Rogers, Pratt School Counselor

Mr. Bradley Pritchard, Jr/Sr High Principal

Mrs. Deborah Farese, Director of Curriculum and Pupil Services