

Welcome Letter from Parent

Dear Fellow Parents:

In March 2016, my 11 year old son got off the school bus and was chased by some children who were throwing rocks at him. To avoid being hit by a rock, he ran into the street where he was hit head on by a car. While he made it out alive and well, this opened the door to the deeper story of bullying that Alex had tried to tell me at various times.

I immediately started to blame myself with a million “What if I did this...” questions. It took a lot of family and friend’s to finally make me realize, it was not my fault. Yes, I could have done things differently, but who’s to say it wouldn’t have the same outcome.

My advice for parents is to first, **LISTEN!** Listen to everything your child tells you and take nothing lightly. What you may think is a minor issue can escalate rather quickly. **DON'T BLAME YOURSELF.** It's not your fault. Things happen that we can't prevent. Although you may think that you could have done it better, you did everything that you felt was right at the time, and that's all you can do. **DON'T WAIT.** If you feel like your child is being bullied, or may even be a bully. Don't wait until something bad happens to take action. Handle it now! **TALK.** Talk to your children. Ask questions. Sometimes they may be afraid to tell you, not because they don't trust you but they may feel embarrassed or even think that its not a 'big deal'. Be the change and voice our children need to help raise awareness and put an end to childhood bullying!!

Warm Wishes,
Melissa Howell



What is The Dignity Act?

- The New York State Dignity For All Students Act (DASA / Dignity Act) was sign into law on September 13, 2010 by Governor David Paterson
- The Act was **implemented** in school districts statewide on **July 1, 2012**
- The Act was updated in 2013 to include “**cyberbullying**” or virtual harassment through social media, e-mail, texts or other means of technology.
- The Dignity Act 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, nation or origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practices, disability, sexual orientation or gender
- The Dignity Act amended 2801 of the New York State Education Law mandating that all Boards of Education include language in their respective district Codes of Conduct that complied with the Dignity Act
- All schools must partake in a professional development training seminar on issues related to harassment and discrimination
- Mandates that one employee of **EACH school** building be trained as ‘**DASA Coordinators**’ which mandates that the individual report all incidents of bullying to the State Education Department within one report at the end of each school term



Warning Signs of Bullying

- If the child becomes **angry, sad or distressed** when or after using the computer or cell phone
- Begins to **withdraw** from family, friends and/or activities they previously enjoyed
- Unexplained drop in grades/ loss of concentration
- Refuses to go to school, specific classes or activities
- **Change in mood**, behavior, sleep, appetite or shows signs of depression or anxiety
- Changes in child’s self esteem

What Can Parents Do As A Preventative?

- Talk about bullying in conversation- it tells your child that you are aware of it and you are interested in how it may affect them or their friends. Try to remain non-judgmental, which may be difficult if your child confides in you that they are being bullied, but it is beneficial to react in a way that encourages the child to trust you even more. It can be helpful to start the conversation with something generic, possibly with a situation that you heard or found online and begin to ask curious, open-ended questions.
- Some examples of open-ended questions are: “**What does bullying mean to you?**” “**Why do you think people bully?**” “**What does your school do about bullying?**” “**Whom would you talk to if you felt you were being bullied?**” Remind them that they could always talk to you about bullying.
- Explain DASA to your child. It is important that they know their rights and if they know that bullying is against a New York State Law, they may feel better reporting it or talking to you about it. You can add that cyberbullying is included in the law and explain that cyberbullying is anything mean or hurtful said online, inappropriate pictures being posted, hate pages or any method of hurting someone emotionally through any means of technology. Advise them that they can report bullying to any teacher or faculty member in school that they feel comfortable with and that you can schedule a meeting together.



If Your Child Tells You They Are Being Bullied:

- If a child is being bullied it is of great importance for them to talk to someone about it. Difficult, hurtful, stressful feelings kept in can turn inward and lead to depression and/or anxiety. It is a huge protective factor for a child to have at least one non-judgmental adult to talk to.
- Create a safe environment for your child by listening nonjudgmentally, giving him/her your undivided attention and offering words of support, such as “I am here for you” “Nobody has the right to make you feel that way” “I’m sorry you are going through this- you are not alone, although it may feel that sometimes.” Acknowledging their feelings will let them know their feelings are important and will not be dismissed.
- Thank your child for confiding in you and let them know how much that means to you. Tell them you are proud of them for talking about their feelings, especially the hard ones. Reassure them that you are there to help.
- Before a child tells a parent about bullying, they have usually tried to ignore it or help themselves first, so it may not be helpful to tell them to stand up for themselves or ignore the person. When a child tells a parent about bullying they are looking for the parent to guide them to a solution that makes them feel empowered.
- By involving the child in the process you are creating the feeling of empowerment and allowing them to be part of the solution.
- It is usually best to work through the school and not to call another parent.
- Let your child know that they are not alone and that there are many people who care. Explain that although bullying happens to many students- it is NEVER okay. You can look at the school page online to see who the DASA Coordinator is and ask your student if they know that person. If it is not listed you may call the school to find out.



The Long Island Coalition Against Bullying

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The Long Island Coalition Against Bullying is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization dedicated to emphasizing the importance of bully free communities on Long Island through education, increased awareness and therapeutic outlets.

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Bullying: A Parents Quick Guide