



**Dignity for All Students (DASA) Policy**  
**Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls**  
**2023-2024 School Year**

**What is the Dignity for All Students (DASA) Act?**

New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) seeks to provide the State's public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidations, taunting, harassment and bullying on school property, a school bus and/or at a school function. Under DASA, all students are protected, regardless of actual or perceived race, sex, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity, gender expression, weight, ethnic group, religious practice and sexual orientation.

Pursuant to the Dignity Act, reports of harassment, bullying, and/or discrimination may include, but are not limited to:

- A report regarding the denial of access to school facilities, functions, opportunities, or programs, but not limited to, restrooms, changing rooms, locker rooms, and/or field trips.
- A report regarding the application of a dress code, specific grooming, or appearance standards.
- A report regarding the use of a name(s) and pronoun(s) or the pronunciation of name(s)
- A report regarding any other form of harassment, bullying, or discrimination

In 2019, the Dignity for All Students Act, or DASA, was amended by the CROWN Act to add the definition of race that includes traits such as hair texture and protective hairstyles such as locs, braids, and twists in order to protect students' access to their public education regardless of how they choose to wear/style their hair.

The CROWN Act, which stands for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair, prohibits racial discrimination based on hair texture and protective hairstyles. While DASA already protects the right of all students to learn in schools free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying, it is now clarified that those rights include self-expression through hairstyle.

Under DASA and the CROWN Act, schools are responsible for ensuring that:

- teaching staff and other school personnel are aware of the Crown Act
- school personnel understand that formal disciplinary action against students based on their natural hair texture and protective hairstyles is prohibited
- school personnel understand that, given their inherent position of authority over students, they are responsible for preventing racial discrimination and supporting all students' access to school, participation in activities, and inclusion for opportunities inside and outside of the classroom



- The CROWN Act helps to promote school belonging and engagement for all students; reduces disparities in school discipline; increases educational engagement and academic success; and protects students, regardless of gender or gender identity.

### **Why DASA?**

Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls (ALCHS) recognizes that a safe, supportive and responsive learning environment is essential for improving student attendance, social emotional development and academic achievement. Albany Leadership prohibits discrimination, harassment or bullying/cyberbullying of students, on or off school property, by school employees or other students.

- All ALCHS students are expected to demonstrate a Sister's Keeper mindset and report incidents of discrimination, harassment and bullying to a teacher, principal or other staff member.
- All ALCHS parents/guardians have the responsibility to teach their children respect and dignity towards themselves and others. Parents also have the responsibility and right to report incidents of discrimination, harassment, bullying and cyberbullying that are witnessed or otherwise brought to their attention. All incidents should be reported in a timely manner to school officials.

### **Your DASA Team**

NYS law requires that every school have a Dignity Act Coordinator who is trained to respond to reports of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and discrimination. If you are a student, or parent/guardian of a student who is a victim of bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination, or harassment; or if you have witnessed bullying, discrimination or harassment, please contact our Dignity Act Coordinator:

Amy Lecakes  
School Counselor  
[alecakes@albanyleadership.org](mailto:alecakes@albanyleadership.org)  
518-694-5300  
Extension 222

### **The DASA Process**

Once an incident has been reported, the following steps will be taken:

- Complaint is filed by student/parent with the DASA team
- Families of all involved parties will be notified of the DASA investigation
- The DASA team will conduct a full investigation.
  - The DASA team will meet with the alleged "bully" and parent/guardian to discuss allegations



- The DASA team will speak with any additional involved students, teachers and parents/guardians, as well as review any relevant evidence (screenshots, classroom video footage)
  - ALCHS reserves the right to involve law enforcement if necessary in the process of the investigation.
- Families of all involved parties will be contacted regarding the investigation results and discuss interventions and follow up
  - Possible interventions will include but are not limited to; school based consequence, restorative session with involved parties, supervised transitions, etc.
  - Assistant Principal/Designee (Dean) will schedule follow up meetings with bully and target after two weeks.

After a full DASA investigation, should further evidence show that the student is found to be engaging in behaviors prohibited under the DASA Act or harassment/retaliation based on the findings of the investigation, a long term out of school suspension (OSS) may be the immediate course of action. A mandatory meeting will take place with the student, their family, the Principal, Assistant Principal/Designee (Dean) before the student can return to classes.

Should the student continue to harass/retaliate or engage in behaviors prohibited under the DASA act against the same student, or others, the school reserves the right to meet with the family to re-consider whether ALCHS is the appropriate choice for the student and family.

### **Important Definitions**

**Bullying:** Any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth, group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social or educational harm. (Center for Disease Control)

**Cyberbullying:** Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites. Examples of cyberbullying included mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles.

([www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov))

**Harassment:** The creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidating, or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably or substantially interfering with a student's education performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional, or physical well being; 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 abused based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. (Definition under the Dignity Act)

**Sexual Harassment:** Conduct that is sexual in nature, unwelcome, an denies or limits a student;s ability to participate in or benefit from a school's educational program.

Examples of sexual conduct include;

- Making sexual propositions or pressuring students for sexual favors
- Touching of a sexual nature
- Writing graffiti of a sexual nature
- Displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures, or written materials
- Performing sexual gestures or touching oneself sexually in front of others
- Telling sexual or dirty jokes
- Spreading sexual rumors or rating other students as to sexual activity or performance; or circulating or showing emails or websites of a sexual nature

(US Department of Education)

Albany Leadership Charter School for Girl's Code of Conduct outlines expectations for behavior as well as the potential consequences for bullying, harassment, and various forms of discrimination as outlined in the Dignity for All Students (DASA) Act.

#### **Additional Resources:**

The New York State Center for School Safety

- <https://www.nyscfss.org/dignity-for-all-students-act>

Understanding the CROWN Act

- <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/student-support-services/understanding-crown-act.pdf>

Stop Bullying.gov

- <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

#### **ALCHS DASA Coordinator**

Amy Lecakes

School Counselor L-Z

[alecakes@albanyleadership.org](mailto:alecakes@albanyleadership.org)

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