



VOICE CHARTER SCHOOL

DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT POLICY (“Dignity Act”)

In accordance with New York State’s Dignity for All Students Act (Education Law §§ 10-18 and § 2801(4)) (“Dignity Act”) and applicable regulations, VOICE Charter School is committed to providing an educational environment that promotes respect, dignity, and equality among its students, faculty and administration. The key principle in the Dignity Act relates to material incidents of harassment and discrimination, particularly those that are based on a student’s race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (defined to include gender identity or expression), or sex. VOICE believes that harassment and discrimination on the basis of economic status is equally intolerable. VOICE recognizes that acts of discrimination and harassment, including bullying, taunting, or intimidation, and isolation, whether in person or through the use of electronic means or information technology (“cyberbullying”), are detrimental to student learning and achievement. Such behavior affects not only the students who are its targets, but also those individuals who participate in, and witness such acts. To this end, VOICE prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment, including, but not limited to, bullying, taunting or intimidation, including isolation, against students by students or employees on school property and at school-related and extra-curricular events or activities including, but not limited to, transportation to/from school and school-related functions. VOICE recognizes that constitutional issues may arise regarding charter schools’ restriction of student speech, when regulating in these areas (*e.g.*, bullying, cyberbullying and sexting), but that student expression that materially and substantially disrupts the work and discipline of the school may be regulated and prohibited. VOICE’s Student Disciplinary Code of Conduct (the “Code”) is intended to reflect these standards and ideals and to incorporate prohibited conduct under the Dignity Act.

VOICE will post this policy and the Code on its website, and distribute the Code to each student at least annually.

Dignity Act Coordinator

Patrick Ford and Hakeem Mir are designated as The Dignity Act Coordinators (“DAC”). VOICE will make the DAC’s contact information available to all school personnel, students and persons in parental relation, through posting on VOICE’s website together with the Code, and by a posting in the main office. Additionally, at least annually, the DAC’s name and contact information will be provided to parents and persons in parental relation by a mailing or notice sent home with students. If the DAC vacates his or her position or is unable to fulfill the



responsibilities of the position, the Board shall designate a successor or interim DAC within thirty (30) days of the date the position was vacated.

VOICE recognizes that when adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior, they send the message that it is not acceptable, and that research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. The DAC is the point person for the Dignity Act at VOICE. The DAC's work should focus on the premise that no student be harassed or discriminated against due to their actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity or expression), sex or economic status. In addition, the DAC should work to ensure that all students are provided with a safe, supportive, and positive school climate, drawing on such resources and curricula as are appropriate. This should include, but not be limited to, immediate intervention upon receiving a report of harassment or bullying, involve other adults where appropriate, separating the students, making sure everyone is safe, meeting any immediate medical or mental health needs, and modeling respectful behavior when intervening.

Staff Training and Code of Conduct

All administration, staff and faculty are expected to maintain a climate of mutual respect and dignity for all students regardless of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex or economic status, which will strengthen students' confidence and promote learning. They are also expected to confront issues of discrimination and harassment or any situation that threatens the emotional or physical health or safety of any student, school employee or any person who is lawfully on school property or at a school function. Administration, staff and faculty are also expected to address personal biases that may prevent equal treatment of all students in the school or classroom setting, as well as to timely report incidents of discrimination and harassment that are witnessed or otherwise brought to a staff member's attention. VOICE's Code of Conduct for staff shall reflect these ideals and expectations.

VOICE shall provide training to faculty, staff and administration regarding the Dignity Act and the school's policies.

Curriculum

VOICE recognizes that the New York State Education Department has considered charter schools exempt from the provisions of Education Law § 801-a, which has, as a result of the Dignity Act, been amended to require other public schools to include particular curricula in support of the Dignity Act. VOICE also recognizes the importance of integrating the principles of the Dignity Act into its curriculum in an age-appropriate manner. VOICE will incorporate into its educational program instruction targeted at prevention of harassment and discrimination



prohibited by the Dignity Act in an effort to protect the civil rights and health and safety of its students. Such curricula shall support the development of a school environment that is free of discrimination and harassment including, but not limited to, instruction that raises awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or harassment based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex and economic status. Such instruction shall be provided in an age-appropriate manner. The DAC shall be a part of the development of such curricula.

Reporting of Incidents

VOICE shall submit to the Commissioner of Education an annual report of material incidents of discrimination and/or harassment that occurred in such school year in accordance with Education Law § 15 and applicable regulations, through the BEDS system or other form designated by the Commissioner of Education.