

**LDA of NYS Position  
Statement on Harassment and  
Discrimination in our Classrooms**

**January 10, 2002**

The Learning Disabilities Association of New York State (LDANYS) is a statewide parent driven organization, representing thousands of individuals who have learning disabilities and their families throughout the state. A learning disability is a neurobiological disorder, which is developmental in nature. A learning disability manifests itself as a chronic condition in many aspects of learning and behavior across the lifespan and its impact upon an individual's ability to function can be significant. LDANYS supports measures that guarantee all students in New York State's public schools a learning environment free from harassment and discrimination. There is currently no law on the books in New York State that addresses the underlying issue of discrimination in our public schools in all its forms. The SAVE school safety law was a good first step but more is needed to ensure every student feels safe enough to stay and learn in school. Schools must be free from hate-based harassment and discrimination whether in the form of verbal taunts or physical attacks, to ensure a safe, effective learning environment.

**LDA of the Capital District  
(Wildwood Programs)**  
2995 Curry Road Extension  
Schenectady, NY 12303

**LDA of  
Central New York**  
722 West Manlius Street  
East Syracuse, NY 13057

**LDA of the  
Genesee Valley**  
339 East Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Rochester, NY 14604

**LDA of the  
Mohawk Valley**  
401 Columbia Street  
Utica, NY 13502

**LDA of  
New York City, Inc.**  
27 West 20<sup>th</sup> Street,  
Room 303  
New York, NY 10011

**LDA of the  
Southern Tier**  
112 Nanticoke Avenue  
Endicott, NY 13760

**LDA of Western  
New York**  
2555 Elmwood Avenue  
Kenmore, NY 14217

Students with learning disabilities are frequently the targets of bias-based harassment from their peers who do not understand the reality and severity of their disability. Some may think that the teasing and bullying that kids experience in school is just part of growing up and that "kids will be kids". However, such actions often go too far. When students no longer want to come to school, their grades suffer, they fear for their physical well-being or contemplate suicide, a serious infringement upon a student's right to an education occurs. Violent behavior may arise within these students who are taunted on a regular basis as well. These incidences have frequently been ignored or have gone unnoticed by school districts in the past but no longer can we allow this to happen. LDANYS encourages measures that require school districts to implement preventative and punitive measures and require reporting mechanisms that hold districts accountable as well. As such, LDANYS is supporting The Dignity for All Students Act, sponsored by Member of Assembly Steve Sanders, and Senator Tom Duane. The Dignity Act is necessary because it provides:

- A Statewide policy specifically prohibiting bias harassment and discrimination in schools.
- Training for teachers and students on dealing with differences and bias harassment.

- Mandatory statewide reporting on bias incidents in schools.
- Funding to help school districts implement these measures.

We've witnessed some very extreme and devastating circumstances that arose as a result of students being taunted and harassed on a regular basis such as the school shootings that have plagued our country. Without the recognition that this issue is significant and very real, the possibility that these horrific events could repeat themselves, even in New York, will continue to threaten our schools and our children.