

## **Working Together to Ensure Maximum Implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act**

In July 2010, the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) was signed into law to combat bias-based bullying, discrimination and harassment in public schools, and to ensure the right of every public school student to learn in a safe, welcoming, and caring environment.

Eastern Suffolk BOCES, the Suffolk County Inter-Faith Anti-Bias Task Force, and the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association joined together and have been working in collaboration to ensure the guidelines and goals established by DASA are being effectively implemented in public schools throughout Suffolk County.

One of their joint initiatives was to facilitate a forum, which coincided with the fifth anniversary of the introduction of DASA, where Suffolk County school districts' Dignity Act coordinators and district DASA coordinators could share their best practices in the areas of disseminating information to staff, students, and parents; the training of staff and students; prevention and response to events; and response to violations.

Through an open dialogue, forum attendees shared and received valuable insight into effective practices, and the tools to enhance their own processes. "We believe that the best product is created through collaboration, and we are grateful to the Suffolk County Inter-Faith Anti-Bias Task Force for sponsoring a forum where the best thinkers from Suffolk County came together," said Suffolk County School Superintendents Association President Lars Clemensen. "From this collaboration was born a resource guide of best practices in the county for making sure students are free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination."

While there is much good work going on in schools across Suffolk County in compliance with DASA, there is always more that can be done and shared. As an outgrowth of this successful forum, a DASA resource guide, which is a compilation of best practices utilized in Suffolk County public schools for the past five years, was created. This comprehensive resource guide, which is being shared with all Suffolk County school districts, will serve as an informative and valuable tool to support and enhance the work being done to implement DASA and protect the rights of all children attending public schools.

"The Dignity for All Students Act defines the necessary components to ensure that students are treated with dignity within the school walls and at school events," said ESBOCES Chief Operating Officer Julie Davis Lutz, Ph.D. "It is our hope that this resource guide and the ongoing work that we do with students and staff ensure that this happens in all aspects of their lives, both within and beyond the school doors."

"This resource guide is a collaboration between the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission, the Suffolk County Anti-Bias Task Force, Eastern Suffolk BOCES and the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association," said Suffolk County Human Rights Commission Chairman Rabbi Steven Moss. "As acts of bullying occur every day in schools, it is vital that schools provide a safe haven for those who have been bullied, a procedure to report these incidents, and then a method to deal with

them by those in authority. This useful resource guide will assist those school personnel who want to understand how they can continue and improve their implementation of DASA for the sake of their students. A special and sincere thank you to all involved in this important project.”

For more information on best practices for the implementation of DASA in public schools, visit the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association website at [www.suffolksuperintendents.org](http://www.suffolksuperintendents.org).