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Understanding the CROWN Act

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.

Simply put, the CROWN Act protects students' rights to wear or treat their hair however they desire, without the threat of racial discrimination or loss of access to school, participation in activities, and inclusion in opportunities inside and beyond typical classrooms. School administrators can work to create a culturally responsive and sustaining school environment that reflects the diversity of its students, including their hairstyles, and supports student self-expression. The enactment of the CROWN Act provides the opportunity for districts and schools to engage students, staff, and the community in the process of revisiting and revising their codes of conduct and dress codes to include the provisions of the CROWN Act and the Commissioner's Regulations regarding DASA (100.2 (jj), (kk)).

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; and
- 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.

Resources for implementing and educating about the CROWN Act

Conducting classroom small group discussions with students instead of large assemblies will enhance and support student understanding of the CROWN Act and lead to richer discussions and conversations.

The following age/grade appropriate books and films can be used in classrooms to engage students and build understanding of the impact of racial discrimination, harassment, and bullying based on hairstyles.

Elementary School

Hair