



Twin Falls School District #411
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WILEY J. DOBBS, PH.D. SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dear Twin Falls School District Patrons:

Last week the Obama administration issued new guidelines about transgender students in the nation's schools. The new guidelines state transgender students should be allowed to use bathrooms and locker rooms consistent with their gender identity and should not be required to use separate facilities. The guidelines also suggest schools should not require documentation such as a doctor's note that a student is transitioning and that schools should treat students in ways that are consistent with their gender identities; e.g., using the students' preferred names and pronouns. It is important to point out that this guidance does not have the force of law behind it.

The Twin Falls School District (TFSD) works closely with attorneys from the Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA) when adding or revising school district policies. Earlier this school year, the ISBA recommended school districts adopt a non-discrimination policy, and provided a model. In October of 2015, the TFSD Board of Trustees approved two policies entitled "Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation" and "Equal Education, Nondiscrimination, and Sex Equity." The Associated Press last year reported that very few school districts had adopted the ISBA policy. Our administrative team and our school board members were motivated to take this action for two major reasons. It is our desire to avoid costly future legal problems and remain in compliance with federal requirements that are linked to funding. But also, we want our schools to be safe places for all students.

In recent years, we have experienced a few situations involving transgender students attending schools in our district. It has been, and will continue to be, our practice as outlined in our policy, to meet with the parents and the student to work out issues and potential situations together. We consider the needs and rights of all students during these meetings as well as affordability when it comes to any decision that is made.

The Idaho High School Activities Association (IHSAA) has detailed rules about transgender students participating in sports. For example, IHSAA Rules and Regulations 2015-2016 state: "A male-to-female transgender student athlete who is taking medically prescribed hormone treatment under a physician's care for the purposes of gender transition may participate on a boys team at any time, but must complete one year of hormone treatment related to the gender transition before competing on a girls team." The IHSAA rules include requirements for medical documentation that a student is transitioning.

In summary, we believe with these policies and practices in place, our district's patrons are better protected from the burden of costly legal battles. We are certain that this aspect of the Title IX law will continue to become more defined through court rulings. Issues such as privacy considerations in bathrooms and locker rooms and affordability of retrofitting old school buildings for individual locker rooms most certainly need further legal work. We will respond to those changes as necessary. We will continue to work with each situation individually to ensure all students' rights are protected, solutions are such that they don't "break the bank," and that all students feel welcome and respected within the halls and classrooms of our schools.

Wiley J. Dobbs, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

It is our goal to be transparent with our community and, as such, we invite you to stay up-to-date with our policies and board decisions. Links to both our policy manual and board meeting agendas can be found on our website at http://www.tfsd.k12.id.us/tfsd/Your_District/yourdistrict.html

Bernie Jansen,
Twin Falls School District #411 Board Chairman

Wiley Dobbs,
Twin Falls School District #411 Superintendent