

Transgender Students: FAQ One-Pager

What does it mean to be transgender?

In the most basic sense, transgender (a.k.a. “trans”) students feel that the sex assigned at birth does not fit their gender identity. This is different from one’s gender expression (how you demonstrate your gender) and sexual orientation (physical and emotional attraction). [This chart](#) is helpful for categorizing what can feel like an overwhelming number of terms; see [welcoming schools](#) for more detailed definitions.

Aren’t K-5 kids too young to think or talk about gender?

No. Gender is a screening question for preschool ([AAP, 2018](#)) Note: gender identity is different from sexual orientation; gender identity is about one’s internal sense of gender, while sexual orientation is about attraction. ([Ehrensaft, 2017](#))

Is this increase in trans kids due to social contagion / peer pressure?

No. Trans people have existed throughout history [across the world](#). There’s been an increase in visibility, not frequency. Think of left-handedness. Once it became more socially acceptable, more people started sharing earlier about their identity. The “rapid onset” and “social contagion” studies have been [retracted](#). Transgender identity is not something you can be peer-pressured into in a consistent, persistent way.

What does it mean for a transgender student to “transition”?

Social transition comes first and involves one or more of the following: name, pronouns, dress, hair, binding / packing / padding. This helps trans kids feel a better sense of congruence and has [many positive outcomes](#), and is completely reversible. A small number of trans students [retransition](#). Medical transition is different. Since gender-affirming care is [illegal in Missouri as of 2023](#), supportive families now travel across state lines for this medical care. Working closely with a multidisciplinary medical team, some trans teens [receive puberty blockers](#), and at a later stage, [some take cross-sex hormones](#). Although a major focus of some media and state lawmakers, surgical procedures are [very rare](#) for anyone under the age of 18.

How does the school involve parents if a student expresses a desire to change their name or pronouns?

We believe it is critical schools work together with parents in the education of children. This is particularly the case with some of our most vulnerable students, including LGBTQ youth. Changing a student’s name or gender marker in our system is only possible with parent permission. We encourage and empower students to inform their parents of any changes they wish to make, with careful consideration given to the nature and timing of this communication.

What laws and policies apply to our transgender students while at school?

Our district mission is to be relentless champions for all students. Board Policy AC and Policy ACJ, Title IX, and Dept of Education Office for Civil Rights [guidance](#) (see OCR resolutions with [Arcadia, 2013](#) and [Rhinelander, 2023](#)), provide protections for transgender students. [RSMo. Section 163.048](#) was [signed into law](#) the summer of 2023, and bans transgender athletes from competing in K-12 sports that align with their gender identity.

How can we best support transgender students?

- Respect confidentiality: families are disclosing personal medical information and may not want teachers or other support staff to know.
- Name, gender marker and pronoun changes: Counselors and SCRSs have the form for parents and additional training for these processes.
- Restroom and Locker Room Access: We work with students and families on an individualized basis to determine what is best for each student; ultimately, it is up to students to choose what works best for them..
- Document and intervene against harassment and bullying. [Studies show](#) the targeting is prevalent and harmful.
- Trans and nonbinary students report higher level of belonging when there are supportive school clubs, supportive school personnel, inclusive curricular resources, and comprehensive anti-bullying policies ([GLSEN, 2021](#)).

Who can I ask for more guidance?

[REDACTED] are available to provide additional support in our district.