

**WATERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
25 MESSALONSKEE AVE.
WATERVILLE, ME 04901**

TRANSGENDER AND GENDER EXPANSIVE STUDENTS

A. Purpose and Scope

The district will strive to 1) foster a learning environment that is safe, affirming, and free from discrimination, harassment and bullying for all students; and 2) assist in the educational and social integration and development of transgender and gender expansive students in our schools. This policy is intended to be interpreted in light of applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as Board policies, procedures and school rules.

This policy is not intended to anticipate every possible situation that may occur, since the needs of particular students differ. In addition, the programs, facilities and resources of each school also differ. Administrators and school staff are expected to utilize this policy within the context of the individual needs of the student.

This policy applies to all conduct and communications identified in the Board's policy JICK – Bullying in Schools.

B. Definitions

The following definitions are not intended to provide rigid labels for students, but to assist in discussing and addressing the needs of students. Administrators, school staff, volunteers, students and others who interact with students are expected to be sensitive to the ways in which particular transgender and gender expansive students may wish to be identified.

1. Sexual orientation – Sexual orientation is defined in the Maine Human Rights Act as an individual's "actual or perceived heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality or gender identity or expression." Transgender and gender expansive people may have any sexual orientation.
2. Gender identity – Gender identity is defined in the Maine Human Rights Act as gender-related identity, appearance, mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of an individual, regardless of the individual's assigned sex at birth.
3. Gender Expansive – An umbrella term used to describe people who expand notions of gender expression and identity beyond what is perceived as the expected gender norms for their society or context. Some gender-expansive people identify with being either male or female, some identify as neither, and others identify as a mix of both. Gender expansive people include those with transgender and nonbinary identities as well as those whose gender in some way is seen to be stretching society's notions of gender.
4. Gender expression – The manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, through such means as behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice and/or mannerisms.
5. Transgender - an adjective describing a person whose gender identity and/or expression is different from the gender assigned at birth.

C. Addressing the Needs of Transgender and Gender Expansive Students

The school district is committed to addressing the needs of transgender and gender expansive students. As with all students, if a transgender or gender expansive student needs additional support, the student and/or the parent or guardian may contact school personnel in order to make an individual plan for the student. An individual support plan aims to engage the student, and possibly the parent or guardian, in creating a supportive plan that reflects and responds to the individual needs of the student in the school community. The administration will develop procedures for staff to follow to provide support for transgender students. School staff shall comply with any plan developed for a transgender student and shall notify the building administrator or other designated support person for the student if there are concerns about the student's safety or welfare.

1. Waterville Public Schools shall accept a student's assertion of their gender identity when there is consistent assertion of gender identity or any other evidence that the student's gender identity is sincerely held as a part of their core identity. An educational institution in no case should require medical or mental health records as proof of a student's gender identity.
2. If Waterville Public Schools has a genuine question about the student's assertion the institution may request additional information (not medical records) supporting the student's stated gender identity.
3. In the event that a student and their parent or legal guardian do not agree with regard to the student's gender identity or gender expression, the school shall abide by the wishes of the student with regard to their gender identity and gender expression while at school.

D. Policy on Specific Issues

1. Privacy: All students have a right to privacy. This includes the right to keep private one's transgender status or gender non-conforming presentation at school. In some cases, a student may want school staff and students to know that they are transgender or gender expansive, and in other cases the student may not want this information to be widely known. Accordingly:
 - a. The student's plan shall be kept confidential and shared only with individuals attending the plan development meeting, the Superintendent, others with a bona fide need to know, and, if necessary, the District's legal counsel.
 - b. As part of the development of a student's plan, the discussion should include what information may be shared, to whom the information may be shared, and how the information should be shared.
 - c. School staff should take care to follow the student's plan and not to inadvertently disclose information that is intended to be kept private or that is protected from disclosure (such as confidential medical information, the student's transgender status, their legal name, or sex assigned at birth).
 - d. School staff should keep in mind that under FERPA, student records may only be accessed and disclosed to the parents/guardians and to staff with a legitimate educational interest in the information. Disclosures to others should only be made with appropriate authorization from the administration and/or parents/guardians.
2. School Records: Schools are required to maintain a large number of records for students. If a student makes a legal change in their name and/or gender, appropriate documentation should be provided to the building

administrator and records will be changed. All decisions regarding name changes will be made in accordance with the Name Usage policy.

3. Names/Pronouns: Students shall be addressed by school staff, substitutes, volunteers, and other students by the name and pronoun corresponding to their gender identity as asserted at school.
4. Restrooms, Locker Rooms and Other Gender-Segregated Facilities: Students shall be permitted to use restrooms, locker rooms and changing facilities corresponding to the gender identity which the student asserts at school. The district will provide reasonable alternative facilities such as a separate stall or a staff facility in accordance with a student preference for greater privacy. A student shall not be required to use a separate, non communal facility over their objection.
5. Gender-Segregated Facilities or Activities: As a general matter, Waterville Public Schools should try to avoid gender-based activities, policies, and practices except where they serve an important educational purpose. In other facilities, activities, policies or practices when students may be separated by gender, students shall be able to participate in accordance with the gender identity asserted at school. Interscholastic athletic activities should be addressed through the Maine Principals Association Transgender Participation Policy, and district staff will support students navigating the eligibility process to try to ensure a respectful and supportive process for the students.
6. Dress Code: If schools have a dress code, the dress code shall be gender neutral. Students must dress consistently with any applicable requirements in the dress code or school rules.
7. Discrimination, harassment and bullying are prohibited within the district. School staff should be sensitive to the fact that transgender students are at higher risk for discrimination, harassment and bullying, and should immediately notify the appropriate administrator if they become aware of a problem. The administration will address all such concerns in accordance with applicable policies and complaint procedures, including Policies AC, ACAA, ACAA-R and JICK.

E. Training and Dissemination of Informational Materials

1. The Superintendent and/or building principal shall institute in-service training on this policy and distribute educational materials about transgender and gender expansive issues to school staff on an annual basis.
2. Teachers and other staff who have responsibilities for a transgender or gender expansive student will receive training and support in implementing this policy and, if applicable, in implementing a plan for an individual student.
3. This policy shall be shared annually with employees, volunteers, students, and parents/guardians, and the policy shall be included in student and parent handbooks as well as posted on the district and school websites.
4. The district is committed to providing high quality training for students and parents on this policy and on cultural competency issues relating to transgender people.

ADOPTED: January 14, 2019; First Reading 07/10/2023; Second Reading 08/14/2023

SOURCE: Board Policy