

Administrative Procedure 7:10: Accommodating Transgender and Gender Expansive Students

This Administrative Procedure sets forth the District’s protocol to address the needs and concerns of transgender and gender expansive students to ensure a safe, affirming, and healthy school environment where every child can learn. This Procedure is intended to ensure that all students are welcomed, valued, included, and respected; to help our schools ensure safe learning environments free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying; and to promote the educational and social integration of transgender and gender expansive students. This Procedure guides school staff through the common needs of transgender and gender expansive students but every student is different and that includes transgender and gender expansive students. The support for each student must be assessed and addressed individually based on the student’s specific requests and needs.

This Procedure is supported by District Policies 7:10 (Equal Educational Opportunities), 7:20 (Harassment of Students Prohibited), 7:160 (Student Appearance), and 7:180 (Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment).

I. Definitions¹

Understanding the terminology associated with gender identity is important to providing a safe and supportive school environment for students. These definitions are provided not for the purpose of labeling students but rather to assist in understanding this Procedure and the District’s legal obligations.

Cisgender: Cisgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Identity: Gender identity is a person’s internal, deeply-felt sense of being male, female, something in between, or something else. Gender identity is not determined by body parts or sex assigned at birth.

Gender Expression: Gender expression is an individual’s characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine, both or neither.

Gender Expansive (also called Gender Nonconforming, Gender Variant, or Gender Creative): Gender expressions that fall outside societal expectations for one’s sex assigned at birth.

Gender/Sex Assigned at Birth: Typically, the assignment of “male” or “female” at birth by a medical professional based on visible body parts. This binary assignment does not reflect the natural diversity of bodies or experiences.

Non-Binary Gender: A term that reflects gender identities that do not fit within the binary of male and female. Individuals may identify as both genders, neither, or some mixture thereof. Some

¹ These definitions are taken from the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago “Terminology for Discussing Gender.”

terms under this umbrella: genderqueer, gender fluid, agender, bigender, etc. Some non-binary folks may use they/them/theirs or other neutral pronouns.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation is the gender or genders to which one is romantically, emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted. Sexual orientation is distinct from, and unrelated to, gender identity.

Transgender/Trans: Individuals with an affirmed gender identity different than their sex-assigned-at-birth. Transgender can be used as an umbrella term that encompasses diversity of gender identities and expressions. Applies to identity, not body parts.

Transition: The process whereby people may change their gender expression, bodies, and/or identity documents to match their gender identity. Transition can be social, medical, and/or legal and is different for every individual. In children, adolescents, and adults, it is increasingly common for gender transition to be an ongoing process.

II. Gender Support Teams and Planning

The District's Superintendent shall establish a School-wide Gender Support Team to support transgender and gender expansive students. This team shall consist of the following: Principal or Assistant Principal, School Social Worker, School nurse, a teacher, and other staff to be identified by the Superintendent if needed.

The Gender Support Team shall meet within ten (10) business days of a request by a student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or an enrolled middle school student to develop or revise a Gender Support Plan but shall meet sooner in the case of exigent circumstances. Generally, both parent(s)/guardian(s) and student will be included in discussions with the Gender Support Team. In the event that a middle school student expresses concerns about disclosure to a parent(s)/guardian(s), the Gender Support Team shall work closely with the student to assess the degree to which the student's family is accepting in order to avoid inadvertently putting the student at risk of greater harm. The Gender Support Team shall create a plan for addressing the student's expressed needs for safety that prioritizes the emotional, health, and educational success of the student.

At all times, the Gender Support Team shall respect the self-determination of the student and shall develop a written Gender Support Plan for the student's academic, social, and emotional success. This Gender Support Plan shall address the expressed wishes of the student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s), access to restrooms and other gender-segregated facilities, accommodations for affirming the students preferred name and gender identity, disclosure to the student's gender identity to teachers, confidentiality of gender transition in student records and information systems, staff training, and other supports as necessary.

The Gender Support Plan will be included in the student's temporary file which shall only be accessible to staff assigned to the student as designated in the plan, or as otherwise required by law. The plan will be reviewed annually but may be reviewed and updated as necessary. If requested, when transfer or graduation occurs, the Gender Support Plan shall document the

decision for the Gender Support Team's role in communicating with the new school about gender-specific accommodations.

All members of the District-wide gender support team shall be trained in the social, emotional, and academic support of transgender and gender expansive children and adolescents. The content of this training shall be in-depth and in-person, and be medically accurate, evidence-based, and reflect current best practices.

Neither a Gender Support Team nor a Gender Support Plan is required in order for a student to receive supports at school. Students and parents who do not desire to meet with the Gender Support Team or to have a Gender Support Plan, but would like to receive supports from school, can meet with the Principal.

III. Confidentiality

All students have a right to privacy. To ensure the safety and well-being of transgender students and gender expansive students, school personnel shall not disclose a student's transgender identity, birth name, sex assigned at birth, or other information that may reveal a student's transgender identity to anyone, including but not limited to other staff members, to other students or parent(s)/guardian(s) of other students, unless such a disclosure has been authorized by the student or their parent(s)/guardian(s). If such a disclosure is necessary, it shall be documented in writing, via the Gender Support Plan or otherwise, and discussed with the student in advance. School staff should only discuss a student's transgender identity with one another if it is necessary to support the student's social, emotional, and academic success. The student's transgender identity can be disclosed to any District employee or official with current demonstrable educational or administrative interest in the student.

The fact that a student chooses to disclose their transgender identity to school staff and/or other students does not authorize the school staff to disclose the student's transgender identity or any medical information about the student to others.

In some cases, transgender students may feel more supported and safe if other students are aware that they are transgender. In such cases, District staff should work closely with the student, family, and other staff members on a plan to inform and educate the student's peers and shall document the plan. It may also be appropriate to engage external resources to assist with educational efforts.

IV. Names and Pronouns

All students have the right to be addressed by a name and/or pronouns that correspond to their gender identity. A student can request that all school staff and fellow students refer to the student by a name and/or pronouns that correspond to the student's gender identity. At the request of parent(s)/guardian(s), the District will change the student's name and/or gender marker in the District's electronic database and will use the student's preferred pronouns. The parent(s)/guardian(s), must submit a request to the District office where school registration forms are submitted or to the Gender Support Team.

Within ten (10) days of submission of the request, the District shall change the student's name and/or gender marker (if applicable) in the District's electronic database. This will result in the student's name and/or gender marker being changed in District records for all purposes, including but not limited to student rosters, student technology logins, email systems, student identification cards, yearbook, and awards. If the District changes the student's name and/or gender marker pursuant to a request, the Superintendent or designee shall be the only person in the District to have access to the student's birth certificate, which is required by Illinois Missing Children Records Act. The District will coordinate with the District's schools to ensure that the schools' records are appropriately amended within the schools. A student's preferred pronouns will be used for the student.

Students are not required to obtain a court ordered name change and/or submit medical or psychological documentation as a prerequisite to being addressed by the name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity or to having their preferred name and/or gender marker included in the student database. An intentional and persistent refusal by school staff to respect a student's gender identity is a violation of District Policies 7:10 and 7:20.

V. Gendered Facilities & School Sponsored Programs

Transgender and gender expansive students shall have access to gendered facilities and school-sponsored programs that are consistent with the student's gender identity. This includes, but is not limited to, access to multi-stalled gendered restrooms, locker rooms, and school programs, trips, and athletic programs.

Regardless of gender identity, any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements when requested by a student and/or a student's parent(s)/guardian(s). This may include use of a privacy partition or curtain, provision to use a nearby secure-access restroom, and/or a single user restroom.

All students shall be permitted to participate in physical education classes, intramural sports, clubs, and school events that correspond with their gender identity and/or in ways that make them feel safest and most included.

VI. Dress Codes

A student whose gender expression is different from expectations based on the student's sex assigned at birth shall not be considered disruptive of the educational process or in interference with the maintenance of a positive teaching/learning climate. All students shall be permitted to wear gender-affirming clothing to school, including at school events such as dances and graduation.

The District may not adopt dress codes that restrict students' clothing or appearance on the basis of gender, including at school events such as dances and graduation.

VII. Training

At the beginning of the school year following the adoption of this Administrative Procedure, all school staff shall be comprehensively trained on this procedure and on gender-affirming approaches to education. School staff shall have subsequent in-depth, in-person annual training on supporting transgender and gender expansive students. The content of these trainings shall be medically accurate, evidence-based, and reflect current best practices.

Within ninety (90) days of their start date, all new employees who are hired by the District shall be trained on this procedure and on gender-affirming approaches to education. All substitute teachers and other temporary school staff shall also be trained on this Procedure at the beginning of their first contract following the adoption of this Procedure.

VIII. Discrimination & Harassment

No student shall be denied equal access to education on the basis of their gender identity. Allegations involving violations of this Administrative Procedure shall be reported in the manner consistent with all applicable River Forest School District 90 Board Policies including, but not limited to, Board Policies 7:20 and 7:180.

IX. Curriculum & Pedagogy

All teachers, administrators, staff, and support staff shall use a gender-affirming approach within their classrooms, within the school buildings, and at school activities and events. A gender-affirming approach is a framework used to create environments in which all students are able to identify and express their gender and achieve healthy development, as well as social, emotional, and academic success. This approach includes affirming students' gender identities, being flexible during gender transition processes, and being conscious of gendered-language used throughout the day, if any.

School staff shall create inclusive lessons so that all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Where appropriate, school staff are encouraged to develop age-appropriate lessons for students about gender diversity and acceptance whether or not they are aware of transgender or gender nonconforming students in their classes. However, it is essential that an individual student's gender transition or personal gender history never be the subject of a class lesson unless specifically directed in writing, such as in the student's Gender Support Plan.

School libraries shall also include accurate information on gender diversity, as well as gender-affirming children's books, young adult fiction, fiction, non-fiction, multimedia, etc.

As a general matter, school staff shall evaluate all practices that divide students on the basis of gender and maintain only those that have a clear and sound pedagogical purpose, if any. Gendered practices can have the effect of marginalizing, stigmatizing, and excluding students, whether they are transgender, gender expansive, or not. Whenever students are separated by gender in school activities or are subject to otherwise lawful gender-specific practices, students shall be permitted to participate in such activities in accordance with their gender identity and/or in ways that make

them feel safest and most included. A clear strategy to support the student will be developed in partnership with the student in advance of the activities and may be documented in the student's Gender Support Plan.

X. Online Accessibility & Publication

The District shall make this Administrative Procedure available on its website and accessible to the public. The District shall also ensure that its website includes information accessible to students and parent(s)/guardian(s) about making a request to meet with the Gender Support Team. The website may also provide information about gender transition and related resources. Administrative school staff who may receive emails, phone calls, or in-person questions about this Administrative Procedure should have the contact information of the Gender Support Team and should refer all questions to the Gender Support Team.

XI. Resources

The District's Gender Support Plan template is available: [here](#)

Additional information regarding supporting students, including transgender and gender expansive students can be found at:

welcomingschools.org

glsen.org

ilsafeschools.org

luriechildrens.org/en/specialties-conditions/gender-development-program/resources