



V. A. 25. Gender Support and Inclusion Policy for Transgender, Gender-Diverse, and Transitioning Students



**Purpose:**

This policy aims to ensure that the West Warwick Public Schools complies with state and federal regulations and provides a safe and supportive learning environment for all students, including transgender, gender-diverse, and transitioning students. This policy aims to:

- Foster an inclusive and discrimination-free educational environment for all students, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
- Ensure compliance with state and federal laws regarding bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- Promote the integration of transgender and gender-diverse students into the educational community while respecting their privacy.
- Enhance communication between educators and parents/guardians to support students' educational development and well-being.
- Provide processes and structures to support student communication with families. It is in the best interest of students and families to work together around gender identity. Students who have strong working relationships with their families are at decreased risk for self-harm. The school will make every effort to support students in engaging in communication with their parents or guardians.

Definitions:

Bullying: Any form of harassment or discrimination, including physical or emotional harm, based on race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or any other distinguishing characteristic.

Gender Expression: How a person represents gender to others, including behavior, clothing, hairstyles, and mannerisms.

Gender Identity: A person's deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their gender may or may not align with their assigned sex at birth.

Gender Diverse: Individuals whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, including those who identify outside traditional gender categories.

Risk: A licensed school mental health provider will work with the school team to determine risk. School staff should work closely with the student to assess the degree to which, if any, the family will be involved in the process and must consider the health, well-being, and safety of the transitioning student. Safety risks include threats to a student's physical and mental health or well-being, including but not limited to threats of homelessness, suicidal ideation resulting from potential rejection from family, physical abuse, verbal abuse, etc. <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep14-lgbtkids.pdf>



al Orientation: A person's romantic or sexual attraction to people of the same or opposite gender or
ple genders

Secondary Team: student, school counselor, social worker or psychologist, administrator, and the parent or guardian when the student is ready

Elementary Team: student, parent or guardian, social worker or school counselor, and administrator

Transgender: An umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity or expression differs from their assigned sex at birth

Transition: The process through which an individual changes their gender presentation or identification

Protocols for Students Who Identify as Transitioning, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse Acceptance of Gender Identity:

- The school shall accept a student's assertion of their gender identity based on a consistent assertion or other evidence that it is sincerely held. Note: Sometimes, a student may opt to not assert consistently and uniformly their gender identity because of the threat of discrimination or violence, or for other reasons.
- Elementary and secondary schools shall work with transitioning students and their families to create a supportive environment.

1. **Elementary School Students:** If school staff believe that a gender identity issue is presenting itself and creating challenges for a student at school, or if a student or parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student indicates an intention on behalf of the student, the school should make every effort to work with the student and the child's parents. Where the student has expressed an intention to transition, the school should meet with the family to prepare for a formal gender transition at school and put in place measures for supporting the child and creating a sensitive, supportive environment.
2. **Secondary School Students:** If school staff believe that a gender identity issue is presenting itself and creating challenges for a student at school, or if the student or parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student indicates an intention, the school should make every effort to work with the student. Generally, notification to a student's parent(s)/guardian(s) about their gender identity, expression, or transition is unnecessary, as they are already aware and supportive. However, some transgender students do not want their parents to know about their transgender status. These situations must be addressed on a case-by-case basis and require schools to balance the goal of supporting the student with the desire that parents be informed about their children. In these circumstances, the school administration will inform the superintendent. If the superintendent believes additional steps may be needed, the superintendent will guide the team. If the school licensed mental health provider determines that notifying the family carries risks for the student, it should work closely with the student to assess the degree to which, if any, the family will be involved in the process and must consider the age, health, well-being, and safety of the student

Official School Records:



- If not legally required, the school shall use the name and affirmed gender of the student on official

At no time, however, shall the school shall use the name and assigned gender of the student on official records and documents.

Legal name and gender changes are required only on records following applicable law.

- Practices shall be adopted to prevent inadvertent disclosure of confidential information when legally required to use a student's legal name or gender.

Dress Codes:

- Students have the right to dress according to their gender identity within the parameters of the dress code.
- Dress codes shall be enforced equally for all students, regardless of gender identity.

Restroom, Locker Room, and Changing Facilities:

- Transgender and gender-diverse students shall have access to facilities aligning with their gender identity.
- No student shall be required to use facilities conflicting with their gender identity.
- Reasonable alternative arrangements must be provided for any students seeking increased privacy.

Physical Education and Athletics:

- Students may participate in sex-segregated physical education and athletic activities consistent with their gender identity following the Rhode Island Interscholastic League Guidelines.
- Guidance from the Rhode Island Interscholastic League regarding gender identity participation shall be provided.

Other Gender-Based Activities:

- Students shall be permitted to participate in activities according to their gender identity.
- Voluntary requests for single-occupancy accommodations shall be honored to protect the privacy of any student who requires it.

Discipline:

- Students shall not be disciplined or excluded for expressing their gender identity or deviating from gender stereotypes.

Safety Plan:

- Bullying or harassment claims shall be documented and addressed according to the district's Harassment Policy.
- Effective measures shall be taken to end harassment based on gender identity, gender diversity, or gender transition.

Other Issues:

School Records of Former Students:

- Former students' names and gender changes on records shall be handled similarly to current students.

Education and Training:



Education and training about gender diversity shall be incorporated into the curriculum at developmentally appropriate levels and staff development.



Communication with the School Community:

- School policies and materials shall include gender identity/expression.
- The school community shall be informed about state and federal laws regarding transgender and gender-diverse students.

Support Plan:

- A support plan will be developed with the child and the support team
- If the student is elementary-aged, the parents will be immediately involved
- At the secondary level, the support team will determine if there are safety concerns in reporting to parents. The ultimate goal is to include the families in the process. This may take several meetings. If safety cannot be guaranteed, the student's decision will not be revealed to the family.
- When there are safety concerns, the Superintendent will be notified through receipt of the safety plan.
- For students over 18, the student decides who is notified, including their family members. Their confidentiality will be respected.
- The plan shall be monitored, and follow-up actions will be taken to ensure effectiveness.
- The plan will not include any medical or physical transition support outside school. The school will not advise on medical or surgical transition.

Timeline:

This policy shall be implemented according to the following timeline:

- Initial Planning Meeting
- Training for School Staff
- Follow-up Meeting

References:

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (1974).

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq.

Dear Colleague Letter: Transgender Students (May 13, 2016).

Guidance for Rhode Island Schools on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students, Rhode Island Department of Education (March 2016).

Policy Adopted:

6/12/18

Revision Dates:



2/08/2023



West Warwick Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, color or handicap in accordance with applicable laws.

