

POLICY

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

File Code: 5145.7

GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION

The board of education believes that a school culture that supports student achievement, respects the values of all students and fosters understanding of gender identity and expression within the school community is a safe learning environment. New Jersey law and district policy require that all programs, activities, and employment practices be free from discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Therefore in keeping with these mandates the board is committed to creating a safe learning environment for all students and to ensure that every student has equal access to all school programs and activities.

The board believes that fostering this understanding successfully requires cooperation and good communication between the parents/guardians, school administration, school staff and the school community. The chief school administrator shall ensure that students with gender identity or expression concerns and their parents/guardians shall be given the opportunity to discuss these issues and participate in the educational planning and programming for their student. The chief school administrator may consult the experiences and expertise of qualified school staff as well as external resources where appropriate.

To proactively plan for a safe learning environment free of discrimination and harassment students and parents/guardians of students with gender identity and expression concerns are encouraged to alert the school district and schedule a meeting with the chief school administrator. Upon request, the chief school administrator shall schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian and the student for the purpose of evaluating the needs of the student and planning any accommodations that may be considered to facilitate a respectful and comfortable school program that supports the student's achievement.

Definitions:

- A. "Gender Identity" is a person's deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity.
- B. "Transgender" is a term which describes people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from their assigned gender at birth.
- C. "Gender expression" refers to the way a person expresses gender to others in ways that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.
- D. "Gender non-conforming" refers to gender-related identity and/or gender expression which does not conform to the social expectations

or norms for a person of that gender assigned at birth.

- E. "Transition" refers to the process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

The board shall make every effort to maintain a safe and supportive learning and educational environment that is free from harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and free from discrimination on account of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, domestic partnership status, nationality, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait of any individual, genetic information, or refusal to submit to a genetic test or make the results of a genetic test known, disabilities, social or economic status, pregnancy, childbirth, pregnancy-related disabilities, actual or potential parenthood, family status or other distinguishing characteristic.

Complaints alleging discrimination shall be reported to the school affirmative action officer according to board policies (2224, 4111.1/4211.1 and 6121 Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action).

Any student experiencing or observing harassment, intimidation and bullying is encouraged to report the incident to a member of school staff. Any staff member observing or receiving a report of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall report the incident to the principal the same day the incident is observed or the report received according to board policy 5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying. All reported incidents of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying shall be promptly investigated and resolved according to law and board policy.

Confidentiality and Privacy

School personnel may not disclose information that may reveal a student's transgender or gender non-conforming status, except as allowed by law. Under the Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA), only those school employees with a legitimate educational need may have access to a student's records or the information contained within those records. Disclosing confidential student information to other employees, students, parents, or other third parties may violate privacy laws, including but not limited to FERPA. Transgender students have the ability, as do all students, to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and decide when, with whom, and how much of their private information to share with others.

Students who do not want their parents/guardians to know about their transgender status shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, notifying parents/guardians carries risks for the student, such as being kicked out of the home. Prior to notification of any parent or guardian regarding the transition process, school staff should work closely with the student to assess the degree to which, if any, the parents/guardians will be involved in the process and must consider the health, well-being, and safety of the transitioning student. The school counselor shall balance the rights of the student needing support and

the requirement that parents/guardians be kept informed about their child. In accordance with law, parents/guardians and/or the appropriate local officials shall be informed when there is any suspicion of injury or harm to the student or other students.

Coordination of School Accommodations

In planning appropriate accommodations for a student who is transitioning, the chief school administrator, parents/guardians and the student and other qualified staff or consultants as necessary shall meet to discuss actions that the district and school personnel may take to create safe learning environment, including:

A. Names/Pronouns

School staff shall be directed to address the student by the name and pronoun corresponding to their gender identity that is consistently asserted at school. Students are not required to obtain a court ordered name and/or gender change or to change their pupil personnel records as a prerequisite to being addressed by the name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity. To the extent possible and consistent with these guidelines, school personnel shall make efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the student's transgender status.

School documentation such as student IDs shall be issued in the name that reflects a student's gender identity that is consistently asserted at school.

B. Sports and Physical Education

Transgender students shall be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as are all other students.

Generally, students may be permitted to participate in physical education and sports in accordance with the student's gender identity that is consistently asserted at school. Participation in competitive interscholastic athletic activities will be resolved on a case-by-case basis and according to the standards established by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA).

C. Restroom and Locker Room Accessibility

The district aims to support transgender students while also ensuring the safety and comfort of all students. The chief school administrator together with the parents/guardians, student and other qualified staff or consultants shall evaluate options for the use of restrooms and locker rooms by the transgender students and consider the following factors, including, but not limited to:

1. The transgender student's preference;
2. Protecting student privacy;
3. Maximizing social integration of the transgender student;
4. Minimizing stigmatization of the student;
5. Ensuring equal opportunity to participate;
6. The student's age; and
7. Protecting the safety of the students involved.

Generally students may have access to the restroom or locker room that corresponds to the gender identity or expression that they consistently assert at school and no student shall be forced to accept an accommodation with which he/she disagrees. A transgender or transitioning student who expresses a need or desire for increased privacy may be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall, gender neutral restroom. Any alternative arrangement shall be provided to the extent possible in a way that protects the student's ability to keep his or her transgender status confidential.

A transgender student should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with the student's gender identity or expression consistently asserted at school.

D. Gender Segregation in Other Areas

As a general rule, in any other circumstances where students are separated by gender in school activities (i.e. overnight field trips), students may be permitted to participate in accordance with the gender identity or expression consistently asserted at school.

Activities that may involve the need for accommodations to address student privacy concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis considering the factors set forth above.

E. Dress Code

Students have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity or expression that is consistently asserted at school, within the constraints of the school policy for student dress (5132 Student Dress). School staff shall not enforce a school's dress code more strictly against transgender and gender nonconforming students than other students.

F. Privacy

The chief school administrator and/or his or her designees are expected to work closely with the student and his or her parents/guardians in formulating an appropriate plan regarding the confidentiality of the student's transgender or transitioning status that works for both the student and the school. Privacy considerations may also vary with the age of the student.

Where the transgender or transitioning student feels more supported and safe when other students are aware that they are transgender or transitioning, school staff shall be given guidance and training appropriate for facilitating a respectful school climate. School personnel may be directed to work closely with the student, parents/guardians, other family members and other staff members on a plan to inform and educate the student's peers. It may also be appropriate to engage external resources to assist with educational efforts.

Resources for Transgender or Transitioning Students

If a school staff member observes that a gender identity issue is creating challenges for a student at school or if a student indicates an intention to transition, the staff member shall alert the school counselor and encourage the student to meet with the school counselor if appropriate. School staff shall make every effort to support the student and encourage the support and respect of student peers and staff during school.

When a student indicates an intention to transition, the school counselor, as appropriate, shall offer assistance and provide the student, and/or their parents/guardians as appropriate, with information, resources and referral services regarding the issues associated with gender identity and expression and/or formal gender transition. The school counselor shall also provide information regarding gender transition planning at school. The counselor shall coordinate the measures planned and taken at school for supporting the student and creating a sensitive supportive environment at school. These measures may include:

- A. Making resources available to parents/guardians who have additional questions or concerns;
- B. Developing age-appropriate lessons for students about gender diversity and acceptance: and
- C. Staff training surrounding vigilance to prevent possible harassment, intimidation and bullying issues that may arise for transgender or transitioning students.

Reports of harassment, intimidation and bullying shall be promptly investigated and resolved according to board policy 5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying.

Official Records

To the extent that the school is not legally required to use a student's legal name or gender on school records and other documents, the school shall use the name and gender preferred by the student.

Each school is required to maintain a permanent student record of each student, which includes the legal name of the student as well as the student's biological gender. In addition, schools are required to use a student's legal name and gender on standardized tests and reports to the State Education Department.

A student's permanent student record may be changed to reflect a change in legal name or gender only upon receipt of documentation that such legal name and/or gender have been changed pursuant to applicable law. The following documentation may be provided:

- A. A court order or birth certificate demonstrating the student's new name.
- B. For a legal change of gender, the student must provide a birth certificate indicating the student's legal gender, or a valid passport indicating the student's legal gender.

Adopted:

Key Words

Gender Identity, Transgender, Gender Expression, Gender Non-conforming

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 2C:16-1 Bias intimidation
N.J.S.A. 2C:33-4 Harassment
N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq. Law Against Discrimination
N.J.S.A. 18A:6-5 Inquiry as to religion and religious tests prohibited
N.J.S.A. 18A:6-6 No sex discrimination
N.J.S.A. 18A:26-1 Citizenship of teachers, etc.
N.J.S.A. 18A:26-1.1 Residence requirements prohibited
N.J.S.A. 18A:29-2 Equality of compensation for male and female teachers
N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14 Harassment, intimidation, and bullying defined through -19 definitions
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-20 Discrimination; prohibition
N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.1 et seq. Managing for Equality and Equity in Education
N.J.A.C. 6A:30-1.1 et seq. Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
N.J.A.C. 6A:32-12.1 Reporting requirements
N.J.A.C. 6A:32-14.1 Review of mandated programs and services
Executive Order 11246 as amended

29 U.S.C.A. 201 - Equal Pay Act of 1963 as amended

20 U.S.C.A. 1681 - Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

42 U.S.C.A. 2000e et seq. - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunities Act of 1972

Comprehensive Equity Plan, New Jersey Department of Education

Doe v. Regional School Unit 26, No. 12-582 (Me. Jan. 30, 2014)

NJSIAA, Constitution, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, Transgender Policy (pg. 75),
<http://www.njsiaa.org/resources/njsiaa-handbook>

Possible

Cross References:

*2224 Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
*4111 Recruitment, selection and hiring
*4111.1 Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
*4131/4131.1 Staff development; inservice education/visitations/conferences

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| *4211 | Recruitment, selection and hiring |
| *4211.1 | Nondiscrimination/affirmative action |
| *4231/4231.1 | Staff development; inservice education/visitations/conferences |
| *5131 | Conduct/discipline |
| *5131.1 | Harassment, intimidation and bullying |
| *5145.4 | Equal educational opportunity |
| *6121 | Nondiscrimination/affirmative action |
| *6145 | Extracurricular activities |

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.

The following organizations provide support to transgender individuals:

- GLSEN (The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) model policy. GLSEN is a prominent organization supporting GLBT youth. They have resources about creating safe and supportive environments for students.

- The Trevor Project is the leading national organization focused on crisis and suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth.

Resources For Parents, Educators, And Service Providers:

Founded in 1972 with the simple act of a mother publicly supporting her gay son, PFLAG is the nation's largest family and ally organization.

PFLAG Resources

- Welcoming our Trans Families and Friends
Download this free guide (PDF) to get the basics on what being transgender means, how to talk about it, and how to find the resources that can support you.

- Find a PFLAG Chapter,
There are more than 350 chapters of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) across the U.S. Find one near you right now.

Partner Organizations Resources

- National Center for Transgender Equality
Knowing and using correct language can be very important to transgender and gender non-conforming people, just like everyone else. Here is a handy terminology guide regarding gender identity.

- American Psychological Association
This downloadable pamphlet from the APA answers questions about transgender people, gender identity and gender expression.

Parent and Educator Resources

- Gender Spectrum
Raising children who don't fit neatly into male or female boxes brings a wealth of questions and uncertainties. Here you will find information and support to assist you in your search for answers.

- Trans Youth Equality Foundation

The Trans Youth Equality Foundation is based in Maine, but offers education, advocacy and support for transgender and gender non-conforming children and youth and their families everywhere by sharing information about the unique needs of this community and partnering with families, educators and service providers to help foster a healthy, caring, and safe environment for all transgender children.

- Families in TRANSition: A Resource Guide for Parents of Trans Youth
Families in TRANSition: A Resource Guide for Parents of Trans Youth is the first comprehensive Canadian publication (created by Central Toronto Youth Services) to address the needs of parents and families supporting their trans children. It summarizes the experiences, strategies, and successes of a working group of community consultants – researchers, counselors, parents, advocates as well as trans youth themselves.

- Matt Kailey, author of My Child is Transgender: 10 Tips for Parents of Adult Trans Children

This gentle and easy-to-use FAQ gives people an accessible set of guidelines that can be used in everyday life.

- Working with Transgender Youth (Lambda Legal & Child Welfare League of America)

Like all young people in care, transgender youth are entitled to bias-free attention to their unique needs and to be safe in their placements and services. This guide, created by Lambda Legal and the Child Welfare League of America, provides child welfare professionals who work with transgender young people with education about transgender issues and tools to help prepare them to work sensitively with these clients.

- Trans Youth Family Allies (TYFA)

TYFA works to empower children and families by partnering with educators, service providers and communities, to develop supportive environments in which gender may be expressed and respected. They envision a society free of suicide and violence in which all children are respected and celebrated.