
LAKE WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

TO: Principals
FROM: Matt Gillingham, Director of Student Services
SUBJECT: Supporting Transgender Students
DATE: February 10, 2015

The Lake Washington School District recognizes and values the diversity of our community and therefore has established as part of its mission policies to provide:

- “A positive, harmonious environment in which diversity is respected and encouraged.” ([ACA: Human Dignity](#))
- “A safe and civil educational environment that is free from all types of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation.” ([JFD: Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying of Students](#))
- An environment that does “not discriminate in its educational programs.” ([AC: Nondiscrimination](#))

While these policies guide the work of our district in supporting all of our students, they do not speak to some of the specific aspects of how to create a safe inclusive environment for transgender, transitioning, or gender non-conforming students. The following guidance is meant to provide more detailed direction for our schools in this regard and was based on guidance from the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Definitions:

“Gender identity” is a person’s deeply felt internal sense of being male or female, regardless of sex assigned at birth.

“Gender expression” is the manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, or mannerisms.

“Transgender” is a general term used to describe a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s sex assigned at birth.

“Transitioning” is the process in which a person changes their gender expression to better reflect their gender identity.

“Gender nonconforming” is a term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations about how they should look or act based on the sex they were assigned at birth. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders.

Official Records

Students and their families may request a change to a student’s official records either by providing documentation of a legal name or gender change via court-order or state or federally-issued identification, or by providing a written, signed statement explaining that the student has exercised a common-law name change and has changed their name for all intents and purposes and that the change has not been made for fraudulent reasons.

Schools will use the name and gender that the student identifies with on those records or documents where it is not legally required to use the student’s legal name and gender, such as the student’s permanent school record. Schools will need to notify the data services team when they make a change to a student’s name in order to ensure proper management of student records.

If there are situations where a school is required to use a student’s legal name, standardized testing for example, then schools will take steps to avoid inadvertent disclosure of the student’s gender status.

Confidential Health or Educational Information

Information about a student’s gender status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth may constitute confidential medical or educational information. Disclosing this information to other students, their parents, or other third parties may violate privacy laws, such as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. §1232; 34 C.F.R. Part 99).

Therefore, to ensure the safety and well-being of the student, school employees will not disclose a student’s transgender or gender nonconforming status, or gender assigned at birth to others, including parents and other school personnel, unless the school is (1) legally required to do so or (2) the student has authorized such disclosure.

Communication and Use of Names and Pronouns

Students will not be required to change their official records or obtain a court-ordered name and/or gender change in order to be addressed by the name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity. Schools will have an appropriate employee privately ask the transgender or gender non-conforming student how they would like to be addressed. That information would need to be communicated with appropriate teachers and staff and may be included in the student information system in order to assist the use of the proper name and pronouns.

When communicating with parents of transgender or gender nonconforming students, school employees should be cognizant of gender pronouns and refer to the student by name whenever practicable.

Restroom Accessibility

Students should be allowed to use the restroom that corresponds to the gender identity they assert at school. Students should not be required to use a restroom that conflicts with their gender identity. A student shall be given access to an alternative restroom (such as the staff lounge or nurses' station) upon expressing a need for increased privacy.

Locker Room Accessibility

Use of locker rooms by transgender or gender nonconforming students should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with the goal of maximizing transgender or gender nonconforming student social integration, providing an equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes and athletic opportunities and ensuring the student's safety.

Reasonable alternatives to locker room conditions include, but are not limited to:

- use of a private area (e.g., nearby restroom stall with a door, an area separated by a curtain, an office in the locker room, or a nearby health office restroom);
- a separate changing schedule (i.e., utilizing the locker room before or after the other students).

Any alternative to locker room conditions should be provided in a manner that allows the student to keep his or her transgender or gender nonconforming status private. No student, however, should be required to use a locker room that conflicts with his or her gender identity.

Sports and Physical Education Classes

All students will have the opportunity to participate in physical education and athletic programs/opportunities in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity.

A student may seek review of his or her eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics by working through the [Gender Identity Participation procedure](#) set forth by the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA).

Dress Codes

Students will be allowed to dress in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity and/or gender expression within the constraints of the dress codes adopted at their school and within the constraints of the District guidelines for dress as they relate to health and safety issues. Schools will not restrict a student's clothing choices on the basis of gender.

Other School Activities

In any school activity or other circumstance involving separation by gender (i.e., class discussions, field trips), students will be permitted to participate in accordance with the gender identity they assert at school. Teachers and other school employees should make every effort to separate students based on factors other than gender where practicable.