***Gordon School's Policy and Practices for a Gender Inclusive Community***
***September 2019***

*Over the past eighteen months, Gordon faculty and administration have been creating a clear, forward-looking set of policies to ensure that Gordon can continue to be a safe place for students of all genders. Endorsed by the Board of Trustees last June, "Gordon School's Policy and Practices for a Gender Inclusive Community," is informed by research and best practices and serves as a set of guidelines to support and affirm all students and families.*

*This policy is shared with families in the pages that follow, and there will be three meetings where parents can talk through any questions they may have.*

*The meetings will be with Carly Allard, Gordon's Health and Wellness Director, Judith Gnys, Gordon's psychologist, either Maryanne Pieri, Early Childhood and Lower School Director or Gabe Burnstein, Middle School Director, and Lynn Bowman, Assistant Head of School:*

*Wednesday, September 25th, 8:15am, especially for Lower School parents*
*Thursday, September 26th, 8:30am, especially for Early Childhood parents*
*Wednesday, October 2nd, 8:20am, especially for Middle School parents*
*Parents are welcome to come to whichever morning works for them.*

*Your RSVP at [www.gordonschool.org/gendersafe](www.gordonschool.org/gendersafe) will help these meetings be a success!*

**Gordon School's Policy and Practices for a Gender Inclusive Community**
**Adapted from *Safe is Not Enough: Better Schools for LGBTQ Students* by Michael Sadowski**

## Introduction

In alignment with Gordon's Statement on Inclusivity, it is Gordon School's intention to provide a school community safe for people of all genders. The policies and practices outlined in this document do not anticipate every situation that might occur related to one's gender as the needs of each person are unique. While this policy focuses mostly on supporting students and families, *The Gordon School Personnel Handbook For All Employees* contains more specific policies to support the gender identity of faculty and staff. Through policy, practice, professional development, and parent education, Gordon aims to create an informed and affirming environment in which all children can develop a healthy self-image and thrive as confident, self-aware learners who are able to engage with and work well with others. In all academic divisions, faculty and administration take a student's lead in acknowledging and affirming their gender identity and are aware that gender may present in different ways.

Gordon recognizes that gender is not binary and that while many people identify as female/women/girls or male/men/boys, some people identify as both, neither, fluid, or use other language to describe their gender. Members of the Gordon community are expected to honor a person's gender identity as the person articulates and expresses it. This expectation holds true for staff, faculty, families, students, and guests of the Gordon community. When possible, Gordon will aim for gender neutral and inclusive practices. Any existing programming or spaces that are separated by gender will be made accessible to the student based on their asserted gender.

For the purposes of the policy, *asserted gender* refers to the way that one may self-identify, articulate, and/or express their gender. Asserted gender does not need to match their assigned sex at birth, nor be fixed. We acknowledge that how someone asserts their gender may vary based on one's age and developing sense of self.

## Students and Families Seeking Support Regarding Gender Identity

As is the case when any child or family is seeking support, teachers and administrators are available to speak with the student and/or family. If a child asserts their gender identity as different than that which was assigned at birth, the home-school partnership may proceed as follows:

School administrators will develop and implement a Gender Affirmation Plan. As the plan describes, "The purpose of this document is to create shared understandings about the ways in which the student's authentic gender will be accounted for and supported at school." As part of

the development and implementation of this plan, communication to the following may occur: students, faculty, staff, administration, school psychologist, class families, and other potential constituencies.

In **Early Childhood and Lower School**: All communication plans will be based on the needs of the individual child. Communication among any or all potential constituencies will be considered in partnership with the family, teacher(s), the Division Director. No official documents will be changed unless it is deemed necessary to do so by a parent/guardian and permissions are granted. There may be situations where family beliefs differ from the child's self-identification and we will work with the family to determine the best course of action.

In **Middle School**:  All communication plans will be based on the needs of the individual child who will be an active participant in developing this plan, its timeline, and level of disclosure. Gordon will make every effort to partner with the student and their family. However, it is possible that a student could ask that the school move forward in all aspects of the plan without contacting home. If this request arises, school staff will work with the student to preview the potential outcomes of such a decision. For example, "What are the benefits versus the downsides of having family members hear about this from someone else?" The school will also offer to reach out directly to families on the student's behalf or to be present when the student shares this information, though not require this communication channel in order to proceed. If, after discussing all of these options, the student still requests that the school move forward and not contact the family, the school will follow best practice and honor the confidentiality of the student.

## Use of names and pronouns
We are responsive and alert to how students identify and describe themselves. Members of Gordon's community will use the names and pronouns specified by the student. While inadvertent mistakes may occur, Gordon employees are expected to achieve fluency over time. Changes on official school records do require parent/guardian permission.

In **Early Childhood and Lower School:**  Teachers confer with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss and support the student if there is a desire to change the student's name and/or pronouns.

In **Middle School**: When indicated by the student, a student's teacher will be in conversation with the student about what names and pronouns they would like others to use when addressing them. The teacher, with the student's consent, or the student may also communicate the change(s) with the following: parent(s)/guardian(s), faculty, students, class families, coach(es), school nurse, school psychologist, staff, administrators, and/or other potential constituencies. Court orders, other legal documentation, or parent(s)/guardian(s) permissions are not necessary in order for name and pronoun changes to go into effect.

## Use of restrooms

All students are expected to use the restroom that aligns with their asserted gender or to access single-stall facilities instead. While any student seeking greater privacy may use "all gender" single-stalls, no student will be required to use it in lieu of a bathroom that is separated by gender.

## Use of locker rooms (Middle School only)

All students are expected to use locker rooms that are consistent with their asserted gender unless greater privacy is wanted. In this case, students may utilize facilities with stalls. Stall options include shower stalls within a locker room, single-stall "all gender" bathrooms, or multi-stall gender separate bathrooms. While any student seeking greater privacy may use stall options, no student will be required to use these in lieu of a locker room that is separated by gender. In interscholastic sports, all students are expected to wear their uniform to school or to change before traveling on the bus to an opponent's school.

## Dress guidelines

The school will enforce gender-neutral clothing policies designed to support student engagement in classroom experiences and will not have different expectations for students based on gender. Students may wear any style of clothes as long as it meets the dress guidelines criteria.

## School activities

In the event that a school-sponsored program is separated by gender, a student has the right to participate according to their asserted gender. This includes all after school programming including athletics. Additionally, Gordon will communicate this policy to these outside program vendors and athletic league partners. Gordon will work with individual vendors on a child by child basis.

## School safety and anti-bullying

Faculty are trained and intentionally teach through an anti-bias curriculum with the goal to prevent bullying of a student based on their real or perceived identities. School personnel will support students' rights to assert their gender identity and expression. Harassment and bullying directed toward a student based on their gender identity and/or expression will be considered a major school violation.

In **Early Childhood and Lower School**: The day-to-day classroom environment is built on the values of working safely and respectfully with each other. The Open Circle social emotional curriculum sets the groundwork for an inclusive community, supports the intentionality to teach students to express their full selves, and prepares students for understanding and calling out

bullying behaviors. When faculty and staff are aware of student to student interaction, both overt and covert, they bring those discussions right into the classroom. Students are trained to be upstanders.

In **Middle School**: The Middle School Advisory program provides a safe and connected space for all students. This program emphasizes community building and character development. When a child initiates a gender transition, the action steps will proactively consider how to use the Advisory program and other school structures to address potential challenges and create "a safe place to belong."

## Privacy and confidentiality

A student has the right to confidentiality. A student also has the right to discuss and express their gender identity as they choose as long as they do so within the established structures of the school (i.e. dress guidelines, class participation expectations). Gordon will not externally share information about a student's gender without the student's consent.

Information about students' identity (including, but not limited to, sex assigned at birth and gender identity) is shared only on a 'need-to-know' basis.  Teachers and staff are expected to have confidentiality when discussions of students take place.  Those needing to know may include school administrators, faculty members who teach that student, and other staff who directly engage with the specific student.

## Implementation and accountability

Gordon will continue to work towards more inclusive language in all of its communications. Ongoing professional development for staff/faculty, student education, and parent education is provided for all members of the Gordon community including topics related to gender.

Implementation of this policy will be overseen by the leadership team in collaboration with the Director of Health and Wellness.

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## Glossary of Terms*
### Adapted from *Trans Student Educational Resources* and *Human Rights Campaign*

**Ally:** Someone who advocates and supports a community other than their own. Allies are not part of the communities they help. A person should not self-identify as an ally but show that they are one through action.

**Cisgender/cis:** Adjective that means "identifies as their sex assigned at birth" derived from the Latin word meaning "on the same side." A cisgender/cis person is not transgender. Cisgender does not indicate biology, gender expression, or sexuality/sexual orientation. Note that cisgender does not have an "ed" at the end.

**The Gender Binary:** A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed "male and female", in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who defies their sex assigned at birth, but particularly those who are gender-variant or do not fit neatly into one of the two standard categories.

**Gender-Expansive:** Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system.

**Gender Expression/Presentation:** The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. (typically referred to with terms such as masculine, feminine, and/or androgynous). Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth. Someone with a gender nonconforming gender expression may or may not be transgender.

**Gender Fluid:** An identity that may be used by a person who does not identify with a fixed gender. Their gender identity may be changing or "fluid." Some people who identify as gender fluid may identify as male, female, both, neither, and/or (an)other gender identity/identities.

**Gender Identity:** One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity. For transgender people, their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity are not necessarily the same.

**Gender Neutral/Agender:** An umbrella term encompassing many different genders of people who commonly do not have a gender and/or have a gender that they describe as neutral. Many agender people are trans. As a new and quickly-evolving term, it is best to ask how someone defines agender for themself.

**Gender Non-conforming:** A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. Not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming. Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional – that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming.

**Genderqueer:** An identity commonly used by people who do not identify or express their gender within the gender binary. Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither male nor female, may see themselves as outside of or in between the binary gender boxes, or may simply feel restricted by gender labels. Not everyone who identifies as genderqueer identifies as trans or nonbinary.

**Nonbinary (Also Non-Binary):** Preferred umbrella term for all genders other than female/male or woman/man, used as an adjective (e.g. Jesse is a nonbinary person). Not all nonbinary people identify as trans and not all trans people identify as nonbinary. Sometimes (and increasingly), nonbinary can be used to describe the aesthetic/presentation/expression of a cisgender or transgender person.

**Sex/Sex Assigned At Birth:** The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate.) A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. AFAB and AMAB are acronyms meaning "assigned female/male at birth." No one, whether cis or trans, gets to choose what sex they're assigned at birth. This term is preferred to "biological male/female," "male/female bodied," "natal male/female," and "born male/female," which are defamatory and inaccurate.

**Transgender/Trans:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Note that transgender does not have an "ed" at the end. Trans is a prefix or adjective used as an abbreviation of transgender, derived from the Latin word meaning "across from" or "on the other side of."

**Trans Woman/Girl and Trans Man/Boy:** Trans woman/girl generally describes someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman/girl. Trans man/boy generally describes someone assigned female at birth who identifies as a man/boy. This individual may or may not actively identify as trans. Many trans individuals prefer a space between trans and woman/girl or man/boy, others do not. Often it is good just to use woman/girl or man/boy. Sometimes trans women identify as male-to-female (also MTF, M2F, or trans feminine) and sometimes trans men

identify as female-to-male (also FTM, F2M, or trans masculine). Please ask before identifying someone. Use the term and pronouns preferred by the individual.

**(Gender) Transition:** The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender (gender identity) with its outward appearance (gender expression). Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions. Transition can include: coming out to one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgery. It's best not to assume how one transitions as it is different for everyone.

*Terms and definitions last modified as of March 2019. Since language is ever evolving and changing, this glossary and document will be periodically updated. Please see Additional Resources below for the most up to date information on language, research, support, and more.*

**Additional Resources:**

https://www.genderspectrum.org/resources/

http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/definitions/definitions-for-adults/

https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms

https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender

http://www.transstudent.org/definitions/

http://www.transstudent.org/gender/ (The Gender Unicorn)