
Re: Name/pronoun change inquiry

aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross

Monday, August 22, 2022 at 2:51:13 PM Eastern Daylight Time

To: [REDACTED] Joshua Gray

Cc: jhammond@lexrich5.org Janis Hammond, [REDACTED] Ken Loveless, ngardner@lexrich5.org Nikki Gardner, mhogan@lexrich5.org Matt Hogan, rhines@lexrich5.org Rebecca Hines, chuddle@lexrich5.org Cathy Huddle, tnmoore@lexrich5.org Tifani Moore

Josh,

The accusation that School District Five protocols led to “several students being targeted” is not supported by any evidence in my investigation. Name and/or pronoun changes are not initiated by the staff or school officials. All requests for name and/or pronoun changes are initiated by the student or parent/guardian.

Students requesting their name and/or pronoun be changed must request the change through the school counselor. Name changes in the “Preferred Name” field of PowerSchool will appear on class rosters, state testing documents, parent portal, report cards, and any other student report with the exception of the state transcript. As a result, the school counselor will seek parental permission for the name change of students under the age of eighteen.

All schools in our district follow this procedure. Not all requests for name change are gender non-conforming. However, School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties created and implemented guidance for school administrators and counselors on November 8, 2021, to assist gender non-conforming students (under the age of eighteen) and families on how to incorporate name and/or pronoun changes at school.

This guidance seeks to respect students, parents, and school personnel and ensure a smooth transition for all. **The process is initiated when a student indicates a persistent and consistent effort to have a name and/or pronoun change.**

There are three scenarios in which this guidance is utilized:

Student initiates a name and/or pronoun change without legal documents and parents/guardians are aware of and support the persistent and consistent effort by the student

Student initiates a name and/or pronoun change with legal documents and parents/guardians are aware of and support the persistent and consistent effort by the student

Student initiates a name and/or pronoun change without legal documents and parents/guardians are not aware of the persistent and consistent effort by the student

I have attached the Google Slide presentation used at the November 8, 2021, August 2, 2022, and August 10, 2022, training sessions, as well as the **Student Support Plan** for your review.

School District Five strives to be a place where all students feel loved and can grow. As a result, the District has implemented this guidance as a way to maintain ongoing support for both students and their families.

I have copied the board of trustees as follow up to your email on Friday, August 19th.

--



Dr. Akil E. Ross, Sr.

Superintendent

School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties

o: 803.476.8169 e: aross@lexrich5.org

www.lexrich5.org



"We love and grow our students!"

Attachments:

Gender Non-Conforming Support Plan.pdf 58k

Gender Non-Conforming.pdf 38k

Joshua Gray

Monday, August 22, 2022 at 4:34:03 PM Eastern Daylight Time

To: aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross

Cc: jhammond@lexrich5.org Janis Hammond, ██████████ Ken Loveless, ngardner@lexrich5.org Nikki Gardner, mhogan@lexrich5.org Matt Hogan, rhines@lexrich5.org Rebecca Hines, chuddle@lexrich5.org Cathy Huddle, tnmoore@lexrich5.org Tifani Moore

Akil,

Thank you very much for your quick response to my request. I would appreciate clarification on a few things, after reading your response a few times and reviewing the information that you provided in the attached documents:

1. From your email and the training documents, I believe the concern is primarily regarding students falling into category 3. Students who lack legal name change documents, and whose parents DO NOT support their choice of name or pronoun.
2. It would appear that these documents are focused on formally changing names or pronouns for non-gender conforming students. I believe the students who were identified and brought into the guidance / school counsellor's office last week at Spring Hill High School were not seeking to formally change their names in official databases such as PowerBook, but to continue a practice they had formerly been accustomed to regarding their preferred names and pronouns colloquially in common usage. For example, if I went by my middle name in class, I don't think that would be updated in official documentation.
 - 1.a. In fact, many of these students DO NOT WANT to formally change their names in these databases. These kids are predominantly of category three in your email and training slides, and to formally change their names would, of course, indicate to their parents that they were attempting to use non-gender conforming names or pronouns. For these students, this is precisely what they are trying to avoid.
 2. It is my understanding, as mentioned above, that many of these students had previously been accustomed to using their preferred names and pronouns, and in a meeting last week were told this would no longer be possible. I am assuming that students who go by "Mike," not "Michael" or "Kim" and not "Kimberly" were not contacted by guidance regarding their preferred names. In selecting only a subset of the students who use alternate names from their legal documentation on their drivers' licenses or SSN cards, I was attempting to use the terminology of "targeting" to indicate focusing on a particular subset of a larger group.
3. What I know from first hand accounts from parents of students whose non-gender-conforming friends are impacted students is that, per their accounts, these meetings and discussions did take place and this pragmatically reflects a change in *de-facto* policy or guidance implementation.
4. I don't think it's very difficult to draw a line between the already significant mental health challenges, ostracization, and stigma these students frequently face and the additional challenge, and in some cases danger, these students may face if non-supportive families are contacted regarding their desired name or pronoun changes.

Given, the climate in the district,. I would like to stipulate that this email and all prior and subsequent emails are made In My Opinion And Without Malice, and reflect the numerous conversations I have had with friends and colleagues over the weekend expressing concern for their children's friends who are now faced with the fear of having their non-supportive parents contacted and creating additional stress and potential danger for them at home, where they effectively have no choice but to live. As I know that the mental health of all students is a priority for your administration, I wanted to reach out and share the concerns that were related to me and ask for clarification, and to make a request that we not make these children's lives more difficult than they already are.

Take care,

Josh

IMOAWM

On Mon, Aug 22, 2022 at 2:51 PM Akil Ross <aross@lexrich5.org> wrote:

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Superintendent

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"We love and grow our students!"

--
Joshua R. Gray, Ph.D.

email: [REDACTED]

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