Wilbraham & Monson Academy

**General Guidelines**

All individuals at WMA, regardless of their gender identity or expression, are entitled to a safe and supportive educational environment. WMA's gender inclusion guidelines are driven by our Community & Belonging objectives. Our approach seeks to ensure we adhere to the latest research in adolescent psychology, as well as remain in compliance with state and federal law.

This policy covers, but is not limited to, exchanges that take place on Academy property (physical and virtual) and at all Academy--affiliated functions and activities. This policy also pertains to the usage of electronic communication and applies to all members of the school community, including, but not limited to, students, employees, parents/guardians, volunteers and guests.

There is no medical or treatment threshold individuals must meet to have their gender identity recognized and respected by all members of the community. WMA recognizes that the needs of individuals will be unique to their particular circumstances. Therefore, to support individuals who seek support and guidance from the Academy, we will make every effort to balance all relevant factors including, but not limited to, the individual's preference, protecting privacy, maximizing social integration, minimizing stigmatization, their safety, and available facilities on campus.

Any individual who needs assistance with this policy, including addressing concerns about student records, school facilities and other activities, should contact the Dean of Students, Director of Community & Belonging, the student's advisor, School Counselors or another trusted adult in the community. Creating a gender-inclusive environment is an ongoing process that requires collaboration, education and a commitment to fostering a safe and supportive school culture for everyone.

This policy guide cannot anticipate every situation in which questions may come up in the implementation of this policy, and the needs of each transgender or gender non-conforming individual should be assessed and addressed on a case--by--case basis. The Academy will continue to provide assistance, support and resources as we work to create a safe and supportive environment for all individuals.

## Terminology

Understanding the terminology associated with gender identity is important to providing a safe and supportive school environment for those whose rights are protected under the law. The following terms are the most commonly used to talk about gender inclusivity, although young people may prefer other terms to describe their gender identity, appearance or behavior. The term "gender identity" is specifically defined in the Mass. General Laws, as amended by An Act Relative to Gender Identity.

- Gender expression: The manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.

- Gender identity: As defined in part at G.L. c. 4, § 7, is "a person's gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth …"

- Gender nonconforming: A term used to describe people whose gender expression differs from stereotypic expectations. The terms "gender variant" or "gender atypical" are also used.

- Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe a person whose gender identity or gender expression is different from that traditionally associated with the assigned sex at birth.

## Education and Training

WMA provides education based on the latest research for faculty and staff on gender diversity, inclusion and sensitivity. The Academy additionally offers optional workshops and spaces for students to increase understanding and promote inclusivity, including during all-school community events and as showcased by our GSA (Gender Sexuality Alliance) affinity space.

## Support and Recognition

WMA’s admission process welcomes and recognizes gender-diverse applicants through its use of third-party application platforms (SAO and Gateway). Transgender and gender nonconforming students may decide to disclose, discuss and express their gender identity openly with all members of the community in appropriate ways.

## School Records and Forms

Under state law, information about a student's assigned birth sex, name change for gender identity purposes, gender transition, medical or mental health treatment related to gender identity or any other information of a similar nature, regardless of its form, is part of the individual's student record (see Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00). This record is confidential, and must be kept private and secure, except in limited circumstances. Every effort should be made to update student records (for example, a student's transcript) with the student's chosen name and not circulate records with the student's assigned birth name. Records with the student's assigned birth name should be kept in a separate, confidential file.

## Accessibility

WMA ensures there are restrooms and changing facilities accessible for gender-neutral and non-conforming students. All school personnel, as well as students, know what facilities these are and can help orient individuals who wish to use them.

## Dress Code

Students may dress in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity within the constraints of the dress code outlined in the Student/Parent Handbook.

## Supportive Services

WMA provides access to a broad range of support services for its gender-diverse students, including individual counseling with on-campus school counselors, affinity group support and referrals to counselors off campus.

## Addressing Bullying and Harassment

As reflected in the Student/Parent Handbook, WMA implements a clear protocol for addressing bullying and harassment based on gender identity or expression. The Harassment Review Board also provides resources for reporting incidents and support for those who experience harassment.

## Family and Community Engagement

The Academy will maintain the privacy of all individuals and their families. WMA will make every effort not to disclose any information that may reveal information about a student's gender identity to others unless legally required to do so or unless the student has authorized such disclosure. We work closely with caregivers in these efforts, recognizing that gender-diverse students in particular benefit from better emotional outcomes when their closest loved ones are involved.

## Review and Update Policies

WMA regularly reviews and updates policies to ensure the policies remain current and inclusive of students, faculty, staff and caregivers. We welcome feedback in assisting the Academy in identifying areas for improvement.