

# Gender-Inclusive School Communities

A policy and procedure guide to ensure the success of  
transgender students within Pittsburgh Public Schools



**THRIVE**



Pittsburgh  
Public Schools

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**Dear readers,**

The first step to creating safe, welcoming school communities is to build inclusive spaces where all students are accounted for and celebrated. It is with this idea in mind that Pittsburgh Public Schools has recently adopted **Policy 102.3, Nondiscrimination - Transgender and Gender Expansive Students** and that THRIVE of Southwest PA works to provide professional development and support in the area of LGBTQI awareness for educators, youth, families and community groups in the city of Pittsburgh and surrounding counties.

THRIVE's mission is to nurture and empower educational communities where students, educators and families can create and sustain LGBTQI-inclusive environments that promote racial equity through the common values of togetherness, hard work, respect, inclusion, empowering voices and providing intersectional education. That's why we've worked to create this guide for you—to supplement your understanding of the new policy and to explore how it will affect day-to-day operations in our collective pursuit of inclusive educational communities.

Here, you'll find a framework for building gender-inclusive classrooms and schools, terminology and legal concepts the policy covers and ways to engage students and fellow staff in courageous conversations around evolving concepts of gender. We'll also review what privacy and safety look like in this context and provide resources to support you and your students.

Our goal throughout this guide is to be as clear and helpful as possible. As you work toward building an educational environment that respects and honors the experiences of all students, please know that your students will always have an advocate in THRIVE of Southwest PA, and that you will always have us as a resource should you have any questions or concerns. We are here to make the adoption and implementation of a gender-inclusive school environment as smooth as possible for all involved. Our contact information is listed in the **Resources and Central Office Supports** section.

We look forward to serving you, your schools and your students as we continue to foster a community that prizes the potential, well-being and identities of all its members.

Signed,  
Board of Directors  
THRIVE of Southwest PA



## Dear School Leaders and School-based Staff,

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) prides itself on fostering a culture of respect, inclusion and equal educational opportunity for all students. For this reason, I am proud that our Board of Directors adopted a Board policy on June 22, 2016 entitled "Policy 102.3. - Nondiscrimination-Transgender and Gender Expansive Students." This new policy explicitly extends protections to transgender and gender expansive students by supporting the students' rights to participate in school programs and activities free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. It is an extension of the protection against gender identity and expression discrimination that has been codified in PPS Board policy for many years.

To ensure that the policy is implemented with fidelity across all PPS schools, our central office staff is providing trainings to school staff and administrators. Additionally, schools are mandated to establish and maintain both individual and school-level support teams to meet the needs of transgender and gender expansive students. On a larger scale, we have formed a partnership with THRIVE of Southwest Pennsylvania to create ongoing professional development opportunities and supporting documents and tools. This policy and procedures guide is indicative of our partnership and our collective commitment to creating and sustaining respectful and inclusive environments across the district.

The guide is an additional resource to support your on-going learning and includes an overview of Board Policy 102.3, defines important terminology, shares insights on the experiences of transgender and gender expansive students, and outlines school-based expectations and supports available at the District-level and in the community. I appreciate THRIVE for working in partnership with us to ensure that PPS's nondiscrimination policies operate to protect and include transgender and gender expansive students in all PPS schools and programs.

As Superintendent, it is my responsibility to ensure that all school leaders and staff have the tools and supports necessary to implement Policy 102.3 and most importantly, that all students, regardless of gender identity, can achieve success within all Pittsburgh Public Schools. I am confident that this guide will serve as a useful resource as you work together to provide a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students within your buildings and classrooms.

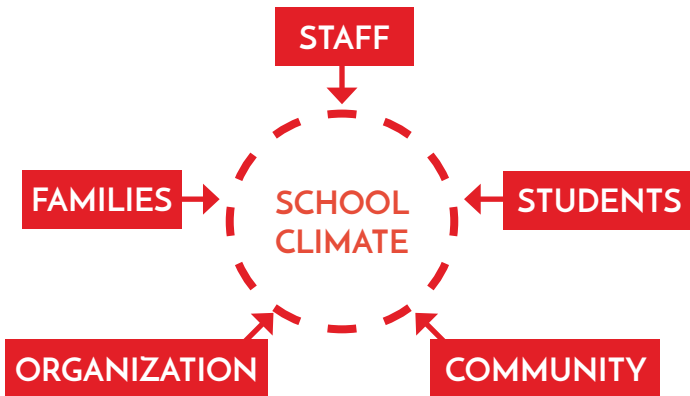
Sincerely,  
Anthony Hamlet, Ed.D.





# WHAT DOES A GENDER-INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

Working toward a more inclusive school environment requires a systems approach that engages all aspects and members of the community in culture change. From the students and staff that comprise the school to families and community members in the surrounding area, all constituents need to be informed about and devoted to the plan of building acceptance and understanding around concepts of gender identity and expression. Gender-inclusive community building also requires an organizational commitment in the form of mission, vision and value statements, as well as administrative policies and procedures. Investments in and assistance from community organizations pursuing similar goals can also go a long way in establishing a clear dedication to gender inclusion.



# What is Gender Inclusion?

Gender inclusion is a broad concept that can be applied in countless ways across the levels of a city district, school community and classroom. To be clear, gender inclusion comprises a wider array of experiences beyond simply showing support for transgender and gender expansive students. Inclusion begins with the recognition that gender is a fluid, evolving concept for many people—and especially for children and adolescents.

Two key concepts that are important to remember are:

- **Not all people who present outside of stereotypically accepted gender roles or expressions identify as transgender or gender expansive;** they might simply like to speak, act or dress a certain way, and gender-inclusive communities provide them the permission to do so alongside those individuals who do identify as transgender and gender expansive as well as individuals who express their gender more traditionally.
- **Not all people will express, define or conceptualize their gender in a way that is intuitive to Western, European culture.** It is important to recognize and understand one's own perspective on certain concepts of gender and how those perspectives have been informed.



**1 in 10** Elementary school students report that they **DO NOT** conform to traditional gender norms.



Ex: Boys who exhibit traditionally feminine traits or girls who exhibit traditionally masculine traits.

*GLSEN & Harris Interactive (2012). Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary Schools Climate in the United States, A Survey of Students and Teachers. New York: GLSEN*

“A positive school climate is the product of a school’s attention to fostering safety; to promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary and physical environment; and to encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting and caring relationships throughout the school community no matter the setting: from Pre-K and elementary school to high schools and universities.”

(National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments)

The foundation of a gender-inclusive community begins with a mentality of providing spaces where all children can develop interests, build skills and pursue passions in any subject area or activity that draws their attention, regardless of gender. Some practical ways you can go about creating this type of environment are to:

- Encourage all students to explore a wide variety of topics and activities as they realize new interests and potential
- Celebrate students’ exploration of hobbies, mannerisms and dress in a way that reinforces their individuality
- Establish opportunities for students to engage in respectful discussions about identity, share personal perspectives and acknowledge cultural differences
- Empower all students to stand in solidarity with their peers who express gender in ways that transcend gender stereotypes or can be seen as expansive
- Recognize students’ talents and areas for improvement in diverse subject areas regardless of gender, rather than letting a student’s gender determine your expectations.

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“ Throughout high school, I was met with quite a bit of support after coming out as transgender. My school allowed me to use the men’s restrooms and attend all boys’ gym classes. And when I graduated, they not only allowed me to wear the “men’s” gown, they also read out my preferred name. ”

Sage, 20, he/him/his  
Burrell High School



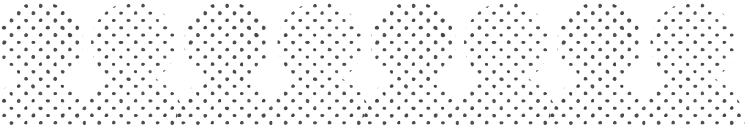
# Building School Climate

A key element in building more gender-inclusive educational spaces is school climate. School climate is a broad concept that involves many aspects of the student's academic and social-educational experience.

## A positive school climate...

- Is critically related to institutional success
- Can improve attendance, achievement, retention and even graduation rates
- Engages students, teachers, families and administrators in strong relationships
- Builds robust connections between schools and their surrounding communities
- Pursues student safety from violence, bullying, harassment and substance abuse
- Provides appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms and school-based physical and emotional health supports
- Establishes a clear, fair disciplinary policy
- Reflects diversity in the curriculum

One major indicator of whether a school has engendered a positive climate is to examine student performance indicators for those students from at-risk populations, such as low-income students, students who are disabled, students who identify as racial or ethnic minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender expansive students. Statistically speaking, across the country, students from these groups have a harder time remaining connected to their school communities, achieving academic success and graduating or pursuing higher education. It is because of these struggles, and their underlying causes, that bolstering and expanding social and academic possibilities for our most vulnerable students is critical. When a school community is created that establishes the potential for success of all students, students who are most at-risk are supported while students who are not at-risk are liberated to participate in a diverse community of learners.



**2 in 10**

**Teachers agree that teachers and other school personnel have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms.**

See GLSEN & Harris Interactive (2012). Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary Schools Climate in the United States, A Survey of Students and Teachers. New York: GLSEN (providing statistical data quantifying the effect of bullying on students who do not conform to gender stereotypes).

“ *My teacher asked preferred pronouns on info cards, first day of class. There’s also a paper posted in every bathroom that states transgender rights to use whichever bathroom we prefer. They also have a “preferred name” section for online profiles where [you] can change [your name] for things that show publicly, i.e. class roster, Blackboard, etc. This process is completed individually online, so it’s private and controlled by the student.* ”

**Rae, 21, he/him/his**

It’s clear that many educators are poised to embrace gender inclusion in their school communities—the next step will be coming together to tangibly implement fundamental policies and practices that make this outcome possible.

## **Students’ Community Impact**

For schools to operate as communities, practices like these need to be adopted by students as well as faculty, staff and administrators. Requiring students to participate in the school community by establishing classroom expectations or a school pledge that highlight gender inclusion is a critical first step in ensuring that students can begin to understand community values. This can also establish a foundation for restorative justice practices that allow students to comprehend the wide impact their actions can have on the well-being of the school community and its members.

# The Faces and Phrases of Transgender and Gender Expansive Students

“Meanings are in people, not in words.”

– I.A. Richards; educator,  
literary critic and rhetorician

We’ve all heard the complaints before: The gay community is adding too many letters to their acronym alphabet soup. African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) is incoherent and unprofessional. Why can’t these people just use normal English?

The truth is, there’s no such thing. American English includes over 33 cultural and regional dialects across the country, from Chicano English to Yeshiva English to the North Midland and Appalachian regional accents. Our individual versions of English (or any languages we speak) are based on factors such as our upbringing, our grammatical education, our geographic region, and our ethnicity or social culture. In Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI) community, a number of words have been borrowed and transformed from communities of color or Standard English in order to express concepts that everyday language might otherwise not be able to articulate.

The most important thing to remember is that language, like sexuality, gender and other social constructs, is fluid; it changes, not only over time, but also from person to person. A number of words have been created to express the LGBTQI experience that have now fallen into disuse—some due to derogatory connotations, and others because newer, more specific words have taken their place.

**This is indeed a new language for some, and it makes sense to treat it that way in an attempt to understand it. Respectfully ask others what these new words mean. Be sure to ask whether you’re using a word correctly, or whether that word is appropriate for a given situation. And, above all, honor its cultural importance.**

Below is an attempt to give some very basic definitions and examples of use for a number of words that describe the LGBTQI community and experience. This is not a comprehensive source of such language, and these definitions are imperfect. The aim is to create a preliminary entry point for continued education on language used within the LGBTQI community. Here are a few rules of thumb to consider when it comes to appreciating the complexities of a cultural dialect:

## Meanings will change from person to person.

### WHAT?

As the Richards quotation expresses, an individual's understanding of words is based in part on past experiences.

Take, for instance, the following phrases: "childhood home," "celebrity," "home-cooked meal," "significant other," "manners." It is very likely that every individual reading this guide has pictured something slightly different than their peers did for each of the above words.

### WHY?

One cannot assume that all LGBTQI individuals will use the same words to express the same ideas, use the same labels as their peers to express their identities or even that two LGBTQI people using the same words or labels perceive their own identity in the exact same way as a peer who employs those same words and labels. Let LGBTQI friends, students and peers lead the way in expressing what these words mean or look like to them.

## The power of identity is—but, in some ways, also is not—expressed via language.

### WHAT?

Consider the pride evoked by Maya Angelou's poem, "Phenomenal Woman." In those lines rests a great strength connected to the experience of moving through the world as a woman of color. However, one's limited language is often unable to fully express that experience in conversation or on paper.

### WHY?

When we dismiss or misuse words from a cultural dialect such as LGBTQI language, we risk having a negative impact on the self-concept, self-worth or identity of another person. Remember: it is never really language that we are ridiculing, but what that language expresses.

At the same time, if a student feels limited by their language, staff can support students by helping them find additional ways of expressing their self-worth and pride.

## No word is “fake” or “not real.”

### WHAT?

Throughout the course of his writing career, William Shakespeare invented over 1,700 new words for the English language by changing their parts of speech, combining words, adding prefixes or suffixes and creating wholly original words. Language is used to express concepts or feelings that are meaningful and personal, or to define and determine new ideas that never existed before. This is the beauty of human civilization and communication as they evolve.

### WHY?

Words created or expressed by the LGBTQI community often aim to articulate non-normative ideas and identities. The word “transgender” exists because society assumes that the norm is something else; a new word was created to describe those whom the norm does not contain.

Other words commonly used within the LGBTQI community convey concepts that exist in cisgender and heterosexual communities, but don’t have a specific word attached to them. For instance, “demisexual,” a word which refers to a person who doesn’t experience sexual attraction for others unless they have developed a strong personal bond with them first.

## Words are important, but communities can’t be reduced to them.

### WHAT?

Behind every word is a real person or real emotion too complex to articulate as simply as one attempts to with a single word or phrase.

### WHY?

When we dismiss a problem or idea as “a transgender issue” or “a gay thing,” we dismiss the identities and feelings of others, ignore and devalue the situation or idea and cut ourselves off from new experiences and opportunities to learn.



## Language of Trans Experiences

**LGBTQI:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex; one of a number of acronyms used to describe the community of people whose gender identity or expression, sexual identity or biological sex characteristics are outside the norm as defined by dominant culture (other acronyms include LGBT, LGBTQ and LGBTQIA+)

**Dominant culture:** The most powerful, widespread or influential culture in an area or society where multiple cultures are present; dominant culture typically defines social norms of identity, behavior, morality and what is valuable

**Gender:** An external construct made up of norms that determine what is expected of men and women in terms of their behaviors, dress, social and physical capabilities, bodies, mannerisms, voice and more; connected to social concepts of masculinity and femininity and who is allowed to practice those versus who is corrected or ridiculed for practicing them

**Gender Binary:** A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two opposite categories, "male" and "female" or "man" and "woman"; often creates unrealistic divisions between men and women while erasing those individuals whose gender is not expressible within these confines

**Gender-Neutral Pronouns:** Pronouns used by individuals who do not identify within the gender binary; examples include they/them/their, zie/hir/hirs, or xe/xem/xyr

Ex: Ask Jamee, they're good at math.

Ex: Zie has a lot of faith in herself

Ex: Xyr book went missing yesterday, but xe found it.

**Gender Stereotypes:** The stereotypical notions we as a culture attach to masculinity and femininity, including how boys and girls (or men and women) should represent themselves to or communicate with others

**Gender Expression:** Refers to the ways in which we manifest masculinity or femininity, some combination of the two or some other concept entirely; can change due to a person's age or experience, social setting, cultural group or other factors

Ex: a woman's choice to shave her legs and underarms, or not to do so; a man's decision to take part in rugged, physically challenging activities, or not to do so; an androgyne person's choice to wear neutral colors and intentionally shapeless clothing

**Gender Identity:** An individual's internal sense of being a man, a woman, both, neither or something outside the gender binary; described by many individuals, whether cisgender or transgender, as hard to articulate or something one just knows; this self-identity may be fluid and evolving throughout one's lifetime

**Gender Assigned at Birth:** The label most individuals are given at birth by medical doctors or family members due primarily to their genitalia and other physical characteristics; popularly expressed in phrases like, "It's a girl!" or "It's a boy!"

## From the Latin for...

Cisgender and transgender are terms that derive from Latin prefixes. The modifier cis- (pronounced "sis"), means "on the same side of." The modifier trans- means "across, beyond, through, or changing thoroughly."

**Cisgender:** Adjective used to describe a category of gender identities wherein an individual's experience of their own gender coincides with their gender assigned at birth; **not a noun**, one would say "a cisgender person" rather than "a cisgender"

Ex: A cisgender woman is someone assigned female at birth who identifies as a woman.

Ex: A cisgender man is someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a man.

**Transgender:** Adjective used to describe a category of gender identities wherein an individual does not identify with their assigned gender at birth; sometimes used as an umbrella term for many individuals who experience gender both inside and outside the binary or who do not conform to typical gender roles or expressions; **not a noun**, one would say "a transgender person" rather than "a transgender"

Ex: transgender man or FTM (female-to-male) transgender person; transgender woman or MTF (male-to-female) transgender person; genderqueer, androgyne, agender or bigender person

**Trans:** An abbreviated term some people use in place of "transgender," may refer to concepts such as trans people, the trans community or trans issues; can also be written as trans\*, with the asterisk signifying the complexity and variety of identities that fall under this umbrella term

**Gender Expansive:** An umbrella term used for individuals that broaden commonly held definitions of gender

Ex: a cisgender man who has a beard and wears masculine clothing, but also wears lipstick and nail polish; a cisgender woman who shaves her head and wears traditionally masculine clothing, but enjoys traditionally feminine activities like cooking or decorating; a person whose sense of their own gender somehow transcends the limits of typical gender identity or expression

**Genderqueer:** A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female as an attempt to "queer," or reevaluate/reinterpret, society's sense of what gender means

Ex: identifying as both a man and a woman (androgyne, bigender), neither a man nor a woman (agender, androgyne, neutrois, non-gendered), non-binary, non-gender-conforming, etc.



**Queer:** An umbrella term sometimes used by LGBTQI people to refer to the entire LGBTQI community, can also be used to define a person's sexual orientation or political perspective; a "reclaimed word" that has been used as a derogatory term for LGBTQI people, so it is advised to follow an individual's lead to see whether or not they use this word to describe themselves before using it with them

**Intersex:** A term used for people who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female; can also be referred to as differences of sex development (DSD), which are medical conditions involving the reproductive system

There are over 40 chromosomal and physical conditions that comprise the intersex population. It is estimated that approximately 1 in 100 births results in an infant whose body differs from standard expectations of male or female, which would mean there are more than 3 million intersex Americans.

Ex: A male who is born with an extra X chromosome (XXY) who is therefore incapable of producing enough testosterone (which helps with maintaining bone strength and the development of male characteristics)

## The Medical and Personal Implications of Being Born Intersex

In the early 20th century, medical doctors pioneered a variety of surgical procedures aimed at normalizing the appearance of intersex infants' genitals, ostensibly so that they could "lead normal lives" or fit expected patterns of human development. These procedures are now considered controversial, as they have often been implemented without the knowledge or consent of the infant's parents, and of course without the consent of the infant.

We include the category of intersex identities in this guide as there is sometimes overlap between the intersex and transgender communities. Whether due to uncertainty in regard to gender identity due to physical ambiguities or simply an expression of gender identity which is independent of one's physical characteristics, there are a number of intersex people who consider themselves to fall under the trans umbrella.

**Transition:** The process via which some individuals go about expressing their transgender identity by aligning their outward manifestations of gender more closely with their internal sense of themselves or society's accepted presentation of one's gender identity; different for everyone due to factors such as personal desire or sense of what one's gender expression should look like, financial ability and medical access; this process may include, but does not necessarily have to include, dressing in clothes typically worn by others who share their gender identity, using a new name or different set of pronouns, adopting mannerisms traditionally expected of a particular gender, modulating one's voice to be lower or higher, taking hormone treatments to modify one's body, undergoing gender affirming surgery or other medical interventions

**Gender Affirming Surgery:** Medical procedure via which a transgender person's physical characteristics and, sometimes, the functions of their existing sex characteristics are modified to more closely align with society's expected body type for their gender identity; also known as "gender confirmation surgery" or "genital reconstruction surgery"; again, it is important to note that not all transgender people, due to their personal beliefs and desires or financial ability, choose to undergo gender affirming surgery or other medical interventions

**Misgendering:** The act by which a person mistakenly labels another individual with an incorrect gender identity due to assumptions they have made regarding that person's appearance, name, behaviors, dress or other elements of expression

Example: "I went out without makeup on and the cashier misgendered me."

**Gender Dysphoria:** The experience some, but not all, transgender and gender expansive individuals have wherein they feel a sense of disconnect between their gender identity, gender expression, gender assigned at birth, physical body or expectations others have of them in these areas; may manifest as feelings of "not fitting in" with a particular gender group, living "in the wrong body" or being restricted by other's perceptions of what their gender or gender expression "should be"

**Stealth, or Passing:** Slang terms used by some individuals to describe the practice of living one's gender identity without openly addressing one's transgender status; in other words, a transgender person who wants to be recognized as the gender identity they perceive themselves as inhabiting without being removed or distanced by the classification of being transgender

Often, living stealth or attempting to pass is a practice directed related to safety. In environments that are hostile to LGBTQI individuals, trans people may remain stealth about their transgender status in order to survive or avoid harm.

**Ally:** In the context of the LGBTQI community, usually a non-LGBTQI person who supports the rights of LGBTQI people socially, emotionally and politically; members of the LGBTQI community can also be allies, such as a lesbian who is an ally to a transgender person

**Deadnaming, or doxxing:** Slang terms used to describe when an individual refers to a transgender person by their birth name or otherwise “outs” them as transgender; the word doxxing comes from an internet practice of revealing a person’s private information, such as their full name, home address or contact information, typically with malicious intent (from the abbreviated “docs” for “documents”)

“Deadnaming” may be used by some transgender individuals, but others consider the term insulting or morbid as they don’t perceive their previous identity, self or experience to be dead. This is another term where one should follow a transgender person’s lead in deciding whether or not to use it.

**Clocking, or reading:** Slang terms, the experience by which a person is publicly recognized as transgender, especially when they are attempting or hoping not to be recognized as such

Ex: “I was at Giant Eagle yesterday and overheard some guy asking his girlfriend if I was a ‘dude’ or a ‘chick.’ I was wearing a dress and everything, but she still read me.”

## Intersectional Identities

These definitions don’t go into detail on sexual identities or orientations, such as gay or lesbian, or physical sex categories, such as male or female. These, along with racial, ethnic and other cultural identities, are certainly a part of the many factors that comprise a person’s self. However, sex and sexual orientation are often conflated with gender identity in ways that are inaccurate.

To be clear, sex is a category comprised of a number of biological factors (such as chromosomes, hormones and sexual anatomy). “Sex assigned at birth” refers to the sex designation listed on one’s original birth certificate. Sexual identity is another term used to describe sexual orientation.

Sexual identity is often determined by gender identity and not vice versa. For instance, a transgender woman who is attracted to women may identify as a lesbian regardless of her physical sex characteristics or gender assigned at birth. However, a cisgender woman who is attracted to women would probably not feel the need to identify as a man simply due to the nature of her sexual and romantic attractions.

Each piece of a person’s identity is an important, valid factor in getting to know them and understanding how they move through the world, and some identifiers, like race or ethnicity, may further impact how a person expresses their gender. However, one should not confuse a person’s sex or sexual orientation with their gender identity.

## Terms and Phrases NOT to Say to Transgender People



**Tranny**  
**Transvestite**  
**Cross-dresser**  
**Transsexual**

Each of these words is an inappropriate label for transgender people. "Tranny" is a term that has historically been used in a derogatory way and, while it has been reclaimed by some trans individuals, it is not a word that cisgender people should use.

"Transvestite" is an outdated term used to describe a person who finds pleasure in wearing clothing, makeup or other accessories associated with a gender other than their own. The practice is a social and personal choice, as opposed to an internal identity.

"Transsexual" generally refers to a person who has undergone gender affirming surgery, and is primarily a medical term. Some individuals may use this term to describe themselves, but it should not be considered an appropriate term to use if a trans person doesn't identify with it.



**Drag Queen**  
**Drag King**

These terms describe individuals who take part in gender play or performance primarily for entertainment purposes. While some drag performers do indeed identify as transgender, that does not mean that all transgender people are drag queens or drag kings or simply performing for sport.



**Transgenderism**  
**Transsexualism**  
**Transvestism**

Each of these words is an outdated medical term from a time when non-normative gender expressions and identities were considered mental health disorders.

While gender dysphoria is still listed in the updated DSM as of 2013, these terms carry the stigma our society so often attaches to mental health issues in a way that the term "gender dysphoria" does not.



## ***Sex Change***

This term, though once accepted, is no longer considered appropriate. New terms that affirm the trans person's agency or identity, such as "gender reassignment surgery" (referring to the trans person's own determination to assign their gender rather than defer to their gender assigned at birth) or "gender confirmation surgery," are now used instead.



## ***Passing***

***Unless a transgender person uses it in conversation first***

To discuss whether or not a trans person "passes" as a cisgender person is to imply that their gender identity or expression is not valid unless it meets stereotypical societal expectations of "proper" gender roles and expressions. This term can also imply that a trans person is attempting to "blend in" or that they are not proud of their transgender identity.



## ***Stealth***

***Unless a transgender person uses it in conversation first***

Similarly, a cisgender person's use of the word "stealth" can imply that a transgender person is attempting to hide their "real identity" or "real gender," as in their gender assigned at birth, or that they are somehow attempting to fool or trick others. This word should only be used if a transgender person displays comfort with the term.



***"What are you really?"***

***"What's your real name?"***

These questions imply that a transgender person does not have the agency to determine their own identity or that their identity is somehow invalid. Whether or not a person's name has been legally changed does not make it any less "real." Also, the use of the word "what," rather than "who," in the first question implies that transgender people (or people of another race, ethnicity or other cultural identifier) are objects.

# Additional Terms and Definitions

**Bullying:** Intentional acts of an electronic, written, verbal or physical nature, or a series of such acts, which result in the creation of an intimidating or hostile educational environment substantially interfering with a student’s ability to take part in educational spaces, activities and programs; these acts may cause students physical, emotional or mental harm, or cause them to fear physical, emotional or mental harm or damage to/loss of personal property; these acts may take place at school or in another setting

**Harassment:** Verbal, written, graphic or physical conduct that is related to a student’s cultural identifier(s)—including race, color, national origin or ethnicity, gender (including gender identity and expression), age, disability, sexual orientation or religion—and severe, persistent or pervasive enough to create a hostile, intimidating or abusive educational environment or endanger an individual’s academic performance or ability to participate in educational programs and activities

**Gender-based bullying or gender-based harassment:** Bullying or harassment that originates specifically from a student’s gender identity or expression or their failure to conform to stereotypical representations of masculinity or femininity; whether this conduct is aimed at cisgender or transgender students, it constitutes sex discrimination under Title IX

**Sex-specific facilities or sex-segregated facilities:** Any facilities or accommodations utilized at school or during school-sponsored activities wherein students can be reasonably separated by sex, such as restrooms, locker rooms, overnight facilities or specific classes





## What Does Being Trans Look Like?

This guide highlights that the experience, identities and expressions of transgender and gender expansive individuals are just as diverse as those of people from any other cultural group. When it comes to self-labels or gender expression, there is a rich variety of words, mannerisms and styles of dress an individual may embrace depending upon the racial or ethnic community from which they come. From the outset, we should never expect that our transgender or gender expansive students will fit a certain mold or act exactly in the same way as their peers. But what are some other things we should keep in mind about transgender and gender expansive students?

### **They aren't a monolith.**

In addition to differences in self-labeling and cultural influences, transgender and gender expansive students may also have radically different feelings on trans issues and experiences, what it means to be trans, what trans expression looks like and what they need in terms of self-care and support.

In order to best be an advocate for transgender and gender expansive students, be sure to recognize their unique individuality and let them guide the conversation on how to assist with their learning, well-being and growth.

## They may or may not choose to transition.

While we've said this before, it bears repeating: due to the wide variety of trans experiences, transition may or may not be something your student prioritizes. For some transgender and gender expansive individuals, simply articulating their gender identity and affirming the way they feel internally is enough without making any changes to their outward presentation.

Those who do choose to transition may do so in any number of ways, from socially transitioning (going by a new name and pronouns or dressing and otherwise presenting themselves consistent with their gender identity) to medically transitioning (taking hormone treatments or undergoing surgical procedures). Family support, financial status and medical access are all strong determining factors in whether or not a student who so desires will be able to transition.

## They are creating new ways of expressing gender every day.

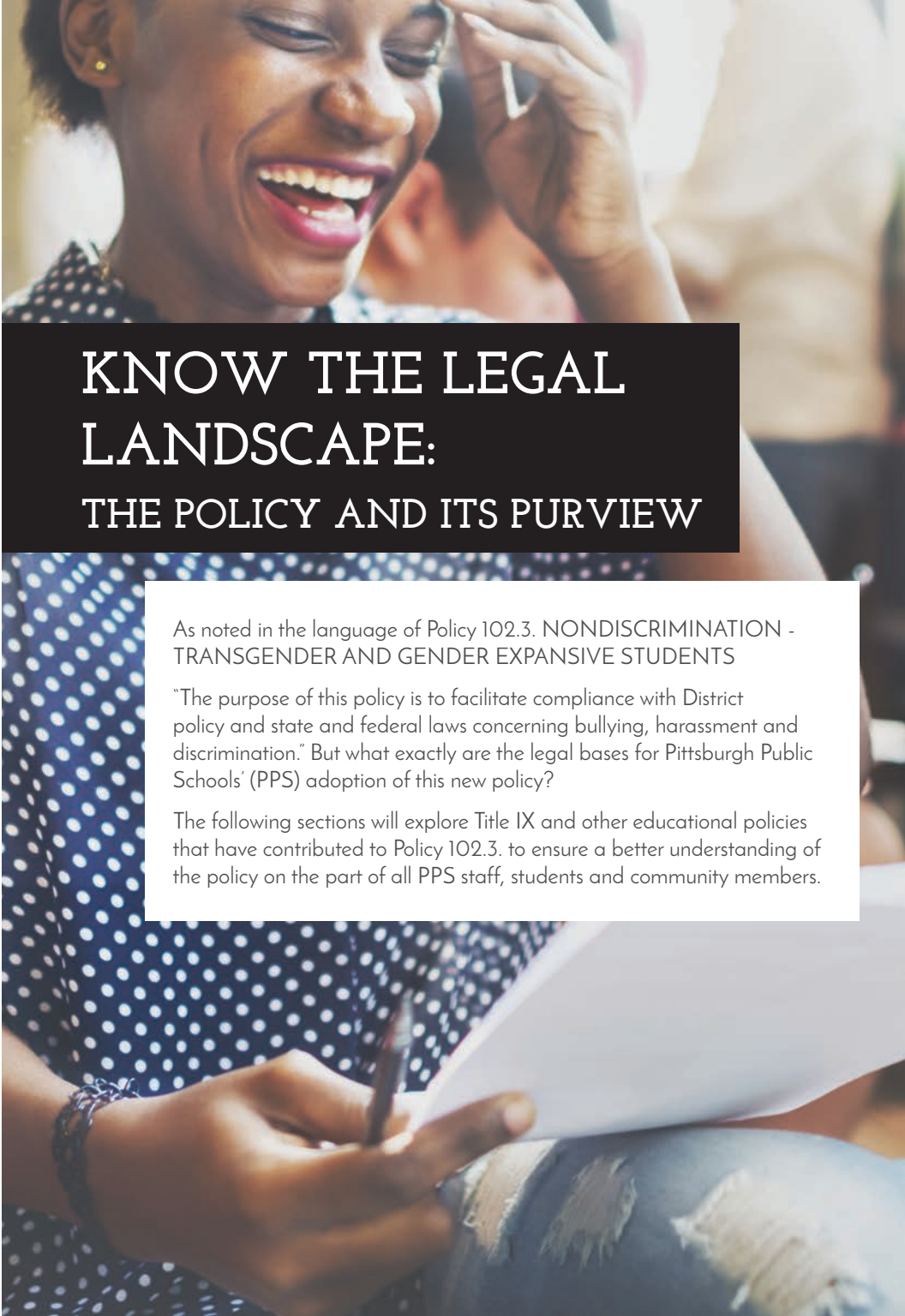
Some transgender and gender expansive students may be comfortable, or even intentionally celebratory of, expressing their multi-faceted understanding of their own gender in unexpected ways.

For instance, a student assigned female at birth who identifies as a boy may choose to wear dresses and makeup to celebrate his femininity. Similarly, a student assigned male at birth who identifies as a girl may present as "butch," with a short haircut and traditionally masculine style of clothing. Students may firmly identify within the gender binary but present as androgynous, or see themselves as gender-neutral while otherwise acting in a way that we consider masculine or feminine. In the end, it's all about their comfort and personal sense of self.

What transgender and gender expansive students exemplify is that there are an infinite number of ways people can present themselves to the world while honoring their individuality and freedom to exist as they see fit.

**The question becomes how to successfully create the right type of school environment to allow and affirm this expression.**





# KNOW THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE: THE POLICY AND ITS PURVIEW

As noted in the language of Policy 102.3. NONDISCRIMINATION - TRANSGENDER AND GENDER EXPANSIVE STUDENTS

“The purpose of this policy is to facilitate compliance with District policy and state and federal laws concerning bullying, harassment and discrimination.” But what exactly are the legal bases for Pittsburgh Public Schools’ (PPS) adoption of this new policy?

The following sections will explore Title IX and other educational policies that have contributed to Policy 102.3. to ensure a better understanding of the policy on the part of all PPS staff, students and community members.

# Title IX and Sex Discrimination

From landmark court cases such as *Brown v. the Board of Education* to the passage of federal legislation like Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, many of our nation's historic legal decisions have tasked schools with being some of the first frontiers to uphold the civil rights of our young people.

"The Board is committed to ensuring that every student has equal access to all components of the educational program."

- PPS Board Policy 102.3 - Nondiscrimination - Transgender and Gender Expansive Students

## Gender Identity And Sex Discrimination

*"The Pittsburgh Public Schools shall treat a student's gender identity as the student's sex for purposes of compliance with Title IX and its implementing regulations."*

In order for optimal compliance with federal regulations under Title IX, schools must legally recognize a student's gender identity and seek to prevent, end and remedy any discrimination the student faces as a result of their gender identity.

If schools require a student or family to provide identification or medical records in order to treat them consistent with their gender identity, those schools may violate Title IX.

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## Equality in Treatment

*PPS recognizes that failure to treat students consistent with their gender identity may create or contribute to a hostile environment in violation of Title IX.*

A school's responsibility, on the part of all staff and community members, is to set a tone and culture of inclusivity.

In order to ensure the individuality, freedom and safety of all students in a school community, all PPS staff are urged to consider the schoolwide effect and impact of their individual perceptions and treatment of transgender and gender expansive students.

# Equality in Access

*When a PPS school provides sex-segregated activities and facilities, transgender students must be allowed to participate in such activities and access such facilities consistent with their gender identity.*

Sex-segregated facilities may include but are not limited to: restrooms, athletics programs and locker rooms, single-sex classes, overnight accommodations, school dances, yearbook photos and graduation ceremonies.

Policy 102.3.-Nondiscrimination-Transgender and Gender Expansive Students addresses instances in which separate facilities may be provided to ensure the safety of all students, though it is important to note that transgender students must never be required to utilize separate facilities as a result of their gender identity. This will be covered in more depth later in this section.



# Privacy in Records

*Nonconsensual disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII), such as a student's birth name or sex assigned at birth, could be harmful to or invade the privacy of transgender students and may also violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).*

Policy 102.3. recognizes that certain school records, such as transcripts, must include a student's legal name. However, this information and any information regarding a student's transgender status should remain confidential unless the student chooses to reveal such information or the information is legally required for a legitimate purpose.

In addition to federal regulations, two District policies play a key role in informing and contextualizing PPS's nondiscrimination policy for transgender and gender expansive students. Staff are encouraged to refresh themselves on these policies in full for a better understanding of how they interact. We will illustrate here their application to best practices for transgender and gender expansive students.

# Equity in Learning

PPS's primary nondiscrimination policy (Board Policy 102 - Nondiscrimination in School and Classroom Practices and Equity in Learning) includes gender identity and gender expression as protected classes of identity. This provides a foundation and responsibility for all District staff to ensure the equitable treatment of transgender and gender expansive students as well as full access for all students to all educational programs, activities and spaces. Instances of discrimination or exclusion due to a student's gender identity, gender expression or transgender status must therefore be handled in accordance with District regulations.

“The Board declares it to be the policy of this District to provide an equal opportunity for all students to achieve their maximum potential...”

(Nondiscrimination in School and Classroom Practices and Equity in Learning)



# Bullying and Harassment

The contemporary educational landscape is thankfully one in which most teachers, administrators and community members are aware of the presence and impact of bullying. Policies and trainings, such as Board Policy 215 - Prohibition Against Bullying/Harassment, have been created to address bullying and harassment on school grounds as well as cyberbullying. There are numerous campaigns devoted to providing safe, affirming school and classroom environments to all students. However, research shows that many educators do not address gender-based bullying as often as it occurs. Why? For one thing, it's a normalized behavior in our society.

Consider the response of children on the playground to a young boy who likes to play with dolls, a young girl who prefers more rough-and-tumble games or a young child whose dress, speech or mannerisms are not totally aligned with the gender expression expected of them. Ideas such as "boys will be boys" or referring to modified push-ups as "girl push-ups" are deeply-held and sometimes second nature for many people in our culture, but they don't always reflect the experiences of students—especially our transgender and gender expansive students.

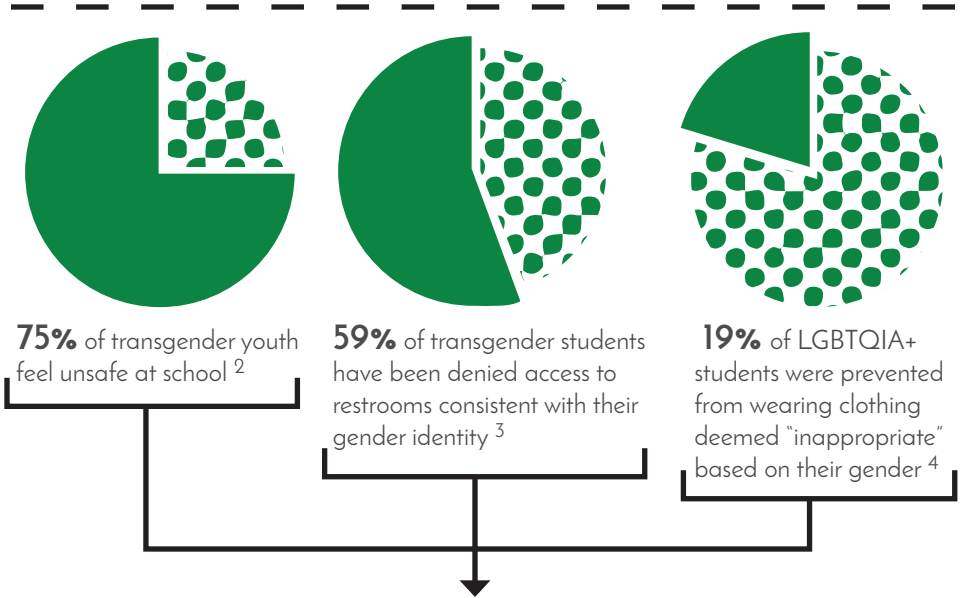
"The Board of Education is committed to providing all students and employees with the right to a safe, positive and civil educational environment..."

(Prohibition Against Bullying/Harassment)

"Harassment of a student for failing to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity constitutes sex discrimination."

(Nondiscrimination - Transgender and Gender Expansive Students)

The District's policy on transgender and gender expansive students is one of many that recognizes that youth and adolescence may be a time of experimentation in dress, behavior and expression for all students—no matter their age, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity. Students can experience gender-based bullying and harassment regardless of whether they identify as transgender or gender expansive. They can be limited by harmful or restrictive expectations of what it means to "act like a man" or "act like a lady." But these instances of harassment and bullying are especially detrimental to the well-being of our transgender and gender expansive students.



GLSEN's 2013 National School Climate Survey has found that **hostile learning environments can have a severe negative impact on the educational success of transgender and gender expansive students.** The study connected experiencing high levels of discrimination with LGBTQI students having lower GPAs, lower self-esteem and less motivation to pursue a college education.

For suggestions on best practices toward building more safe and inclusive school and classroom environments, please refer to the *School Environments—At Every Level* section.

2&3. National Center for Transgender Equality  
4. GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 2013

## Policy 102.3: What It Is, What It's Not

The primary purposes of the District's transgender and gender expansive student nondiscrimination policy are: to foster and support an inclusive educational community for all students, to celebrate each student's individual identity and to assure each student's freedom of expression as a way of securing the safety of all students and families in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. As the policy notes, these intentions aim:

- To ensure that every student has equal access to all components of the educational program
- To facilitate compliance with District policy as well as state and federal laws concerning bullying, harassment and discrimination
- To protect students from bullying, harassment and discrimination in school, on school property, at school-sponsored events and activities, on school buses or vehicles and at bus stops, on school computers, networks, forums and mailing lists and (in certain cases) off-campus
- To include all students, educators, school staff, parents or guardians, volunteers and community members in the creation of inclusive communities



# What It Is

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*The policy affirms a number of key rights for all students.*

- **Privacy**, including the right of transgender or gender expansive students to keep their transgender status private at school or to limit the number of people, including family members, who are made aware of their transgender status

AS WELL AS the right of cisgender students to a private space in which they can be counseled on and challenged to grow in their understanding of gender identity and expression through open, honest discussions with the aim of more deeply understanding the realities of being part of a diverse community

- **Freedom to determine one's own identity**, including the right of transgender or gender expansive students to decide what name and pronouns they would like to be addressed by in the classroom and on certain school documents and communications sent home

AS WELL AS the right of all students to be addressed in a way that respects their individual and cultural identities, via practices such as using nicknames or preferred names on certain school documents or allowing non-native students space to engage in cultural practices such as speaking their first language in a way that doesn't interfere with classroom participation

- **Free expression within the confines of a school's dress code**, including the right of transgender or gender expansive students to wear dress code-appropriate clothing that more closely aligns with their gender identity both in school and at ceremonies such as graduation

AS WELL AS the right of cisgender students to wear any dress-code appropriate clothing in which they are most comfortable and the right of all students to wear any dress-code appropriate clothing of their choice regardless of other aspects of their gender expression (such as facial hair or gender pronouns)



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“ OK I’m Ian. I go to DuBois Area High School, my pronouns are he/him, and I’m seventeen (twelfth grade). My school has actually been pretty supportive of me since I came out. I emailed all of my teachers at the beginning of junior year. The principal had me come in and talk to him, and they changed my name on all of the attendance sheets. I’m also in theater, and I get to perform as male characters in every production we do. ”

Ian, 17, he/him/his

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- **Equal access to physical education classes and intramural or interscholastic athletics**, including the right of a transgender student to participate in school sports in a manner consistent with their gender identity if they so choose

AS WELL AS the right of all students to participate in mixed-gender athletic opportunities as dictated by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA)

- **Safety**, including the right of transgender students to safely use restrooms or locker rooms consistent with their gender identity or to choose instead a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative.

AS WELL AS the right of cisgender students who are uncomfortable sharing certain sex-specific facilities with their transgender and gender expansive peers to access a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative

- **Amendments to one’s permanent record**, as in the case of a transgender or gender expansive student providing evidence of a legal name change or of amendment to their state or federally-issued identification as a means of changing the name listed on their official student record

AS WELL AS the right of all students to access their permanent record and make reasonable appeals regarding its contents

# What It's NOT.

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*While the policy mandates that certain actions be undertaken to guarantee the rights of all students, there are some practices it expressly prohibits. Here are a few examples:*

- The policy aims to build inclusive school communities that allow transgender and gender expansive students to freely express their gender identity, but **under no circumstances should transgender or gender expansive students be forced to disclose their transgender status to anyone, including family members, school staff or other students.**
- The policy allows for students to determine what name and gender marker they would prefer to have listed on certain school documents, such as their ID, classroom roster or in the yearbook, but, **in the interest of safety, school officials should not use a student's preferred name or gender marker on communications sent home unless expressly authorized by the student.**
- The policy affirms that all students are free to dress in the clothing of their choice that aligns most closely with their gender identity, as long as that clothing is considered appropriate within the school dress code; **the policy does not allow for any other metric of clothing appropriateness, and transgender or gender expansive students must not be policed more closely than their cisgender peers in terms of dress code enforcement.**
- The policy requires that all students be allowed to access those sex-segregated facilities that align with their gender identity—such as locker rooms, restrooms, overnight accommodations or single-sex classes. While the policy allows for transgender or gender expansive students to request a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative if they are not comfortable accessing the facilities consistent with their gender identity, **under no circumstances should transgender or gender expansive students be forced to use a separate facility from other students.**
- Similarly, the policy allows for cisgender students to request a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative; in other words, **the policy does not force any student to access facilities, including restrooms, locker rooms or overnight accommodations, in which they may feel unsafe or uncomfortable.**

## What is a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative?

In the event that any student, regardless of their gender identity or expression, requests a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative to a sex-segregated facility, school officials should provide the best alternative possible. Some examples include:

Allowing a student to access a private, single-user staff restroom or office

Allowing a student to change behind a privacy curtain or partition or to change at a different time than their peers

Allowing a student to utilize a private overnight accommodation on a field trip

It is important to note that transgender students who have not disclosed their transgender status publicly may request safe, non-stigmatizing alternatives such as those listed above. In that case, it is the responsibility of school officials to provide the alternative in such a way that will not implicitly reveal the student's transgender status.

- The policy allows, should any objective basis occur that would justify questioning a student's transgender status, for school officials to request information that shows that a student's gender identity or expression is sincerely held. However, it is strongly encouraged that school officials affirm a student's transgender status without placing an undue burden on them to "prove" their identity. It must also be noted that **the policy does not allow for school officials to request that students provide evidence of medical treatments or procedures as evidence of their transgender status.** This will be more deeply covered in the *Faces and Phrases of Transgender and Gender Expansive Students* section.
- Finally, the policy aims to ensure that every student has equal access to all components of the educational program by recognizing and affirming the identity and safety of transgender and gender expansive students. **It does not simply allow students to liberally access sex-specific spaces that are not consistent with their gender identity or flout appropriateness by dressing in a manner that is inconsistent with the dress code.** Sentiments such as these, or any sentiment which dismisses the burdens that transgender and gender expansive students face in environments that typically privilege cisgender students who fulfill stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity, are unwelcome and may create or contribute to a hostile environment in violation of Title IX.

The policy provides clear instructions for two other areas in which they aim not to create or contribute to hostile environments that impact our transgender and gender expansive students: privacy and safety.

## On the Record, Off the Record

The policy makes many mentions of privacy as it pertains to transgender and gender expansive students, particularly in the areas of:

- Disclosing a student's transgender status
- Reflecting a student's preferred name and pronouns in the classroom and on certain school documents
- Communications sent home
- Times of student transition
- Access to school events, programs and facilities

It is of primary importance to note that privacy is, in each of these cases, inextricably linked to the safety of our transgender and gender expansive students. The policy clearly provides a guideline for handling each of the above matters that allows for transgender and gender expansive students to lead the way in modeling what actions should be taken on the part of school staff.



## Here for the Students

The District recognizes that some students and families may have trouble understanding or acclimating to inclusive school communities that affirm the individuality and freedom of transgender and gender expansive students. This is why the policy provides for school Point Teams, who will be staff representatives acting as a resource to counsel and advise any student or fellow staff member who has questions or concerns related to gender identity or expression or the policy as a whole.

But Point Teams can't do it alone. It is the responsibility of all District staff to work as active, compassionate advocates for all students—and especially those students who are not often supported or heard.

For more information on Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Point Teams, please refer to the *School Environments—At Every Level* section.

## Coming Out

As noted earlier, transgender and gender expansive students may choose, for their own comfort and safety, not to reveal to anyone else that they are in fact transgender or gender expansive.

If a transgender or gender expansive student chooses to reveal their transgender status, this is a gesture of extreme trust and confidence. **It is important to recognize the honor of this gesture and not to assume that this authorizes the sharing of a student's private information with any other students or staff, or even the student's family.**

However, those staff members who have the privilege of this information can advocate for transgender and gender expansive students by suggesting that they speak with other adults at the school who could help to ensure their safety, such as the principal, school nurse or security staff, if supportive.

## How to Be Addressed

If a student comes out, it is important to react with respect and compassion, to **ask what name and pronouns they would like to be referred to by** and to ask with whom, if anyone, it would be permissible to share this information.

It is not appropriate to ask more personal questions, such as whether a student intends or hopes to medically transition, unless the student freely or expressly addresses these topics. Even then, it is strongly recommended that counsel or advice offered to students be dictated by their own understanding of what is right for them as opposed to a teacher or staff member's personal opinions.

In the interest of safety, students may choose not to reveal their transgender status to the school community as a whole or even to their family. If this is the case, **ask the student how they would like to be addressed or referred to publicly and privately—perhaps by their legal name or a nickname that would not reveal their transgender status.**

## Communicating with Family Members

It is important to recognize that not all students come from safe or accepting home environments. Some transgender or gender expansive students may well choose to be fully open regarding their transgender status among school staff and their fellow students. **Even in such a case, it is incumbent upon school staff to determine how a student would like to be addressed in communications sent home.**

While it may be uncomfortable at first to be asked to keep this information from family members, it is important to remember that staff are advocates for students and are charged with ensuring their safety.

## Supporting a Student's Transition

Some students may wish to engage in transition. It is important to remember even in this instance to **ask the student to what level, if any, their parent or guardian will be involved in the process**. While some parents may be fully supportive of their student's transition, some may be unsupportive and unaware.

Upon being approached by a student or a student's parent or guardian with **information that a student plans to undergo is in the process of undergoing, or has already undergone gender transition, school officials must inform the student of their right to request a Student Support Team comprised of school staff such as the principal or their designee, counselors, social workers or teachers**. The Support Team will meet with the student to ascertain their desires and concerns regarding their transition and acclimation to the school community and, if necessary, discuss the development of a transition timeline to ensure a safe and accepting school environment. Parents and guardians may be involved at the student's request.

If a student already has a Support Team in place to assist with other needs, the administration is encouraged to check in with the student to determine whether they would like to modify their Support Team in any way as they move forward.

As explored in *The Faces and Phrases of Transgender and Gender Expansive Students*, transition can look different from person to person. For some students, it is enough to be referred to by a preferred name and pronouns and be able to dress in their preferred clothing during the school day. For others who have the financial support and medical access, a physical transition may be desired. It is due to these differences from person to person that the staff **must allow the students to determine whether or not their parent or guardian will or need be involved**.

## A Note on the Age of Consent

The District does not interpret the age of consent to mean that students of a certain age cannot willingly or independently realize their own feelings of being transgender or gender expansive, or that students of a certain age cannot make decisions about the confidentiality of such information.

All staff should recognize and affirm the identity of transgender and gender expansive students and, if the student so chooses, keep their transgender status confidential—whether the student is above the age of 14 or not.



Also, due to these differences, it is important to remember not to make any assumptions beforehand as to what a particular student's transition might look like; the role of staff is to support and advocate on a student's behalf while building inclusive, accepting environments that will make their transition as smooth as possible.

The process of transition, at any level, can be a time of great emotional vulnerability for some students. They may be adjusting to new understandings of themselves and the way they move through the world or experience phenomena such as post-surgical depression. It is critical that staff recognize the importance of affirming and supporting students through this process. One vital way of doing so is to be especially aware of the impact that peers' comments and reactions may have on our students and to encourage our students' peers to be open-minded.

## Building Safe Spaces

As noted earlier, some transgender and gender expansive students may request a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative to the restroom, locker room or other facility consistent with their gender identity. **It is the school's responsibility to provide the alternative option in such a way that will not unnecessarily draw attention to the student's actions and potentially endanger their safety.** Transgender and gender expansive students often already feel that they are "on display" or "easy targets" for unaccepting peers or staff members; we should work to make their access to these facilities as comfortable as possible.

From athletics programs to yearbook photos to what students choose to wear at school dances, the most valuable action that can be taken on the part of school staff is to **model acceptance and normalization of a student's identity.** When staff affirms and validates a student's name, pronouns, dress, mannerisms or expression, it makes it that much easier for a student's peers and fellow staff to follow the example.

# Safe, Inclusive Spaces for All Students

Often when a nondiscrimination policy is adopted, people may respond with accusations of special rights and privileges being extended to marginalized groups. The goal of the introduction was to make it apparent that, in the case of Policy 102.3, protecting the rights of our transgender and gender expansive students ensures that all staff can build safe, accepting school environments for all students. It is also important to remember that guaranteeing the safety of some community members—such as transgender and gender expansive students—may require the temporary discomfort of other community members as they become aware of a variety of lived experiences that have always been a part of society despite having gone unrecognized or unsupported.

School leaders and staff are being tasked with acclimating their school communities to transgender and gender expansive students being allowed to dress, express themselves, use facilities such as locker rooms or restrooms and access other sex-segregated accommodations consistent with their gender identity. Although PPS has a history of extending such rights to transgender students, we understand that this may continue to be a learning process.

Hiccups may occur along the way in the implementation of any new policy; but given that this one is so deeply connected to students' welfare, it is important to address one area in particular: ensuring safe spaces.

But what exactly does this mean? Outlined here are some dos and don'ts when it comes to maximizing student safety in this area.

“School staff who are responsible for supervising student activity in sex-specific facilities are directed to closely monitor such facilities when being used by an identified transgender or gender expansive student in order to foster student safety.”

(Nondiscrimination - Transgender and Gender Expansive Students)



# DO...

Do allow transgender and gender expansive students to access those sex-specific facilities, such as locker rooms or restrooms, consistent with their gender identity.

Do monitor sex-segregated spaces when being used by an identified transgender or gender expansive student in order to deter bullying and harassment.

Do consider your role to be ensuring the safety and privacy of all students, and especially those students who are among our most vulnerable.

Do speak out against bullying, harassment or harmful comments aimed at transgender or gender expansive students and their right to use facilities consistent with their gender identity.

Do offer a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative to any student, including those who are not transgender or gender expansive, who requests it.

# DON'T...

**T** Don't clear out a space before it may be used by a transgender or gender expansive student; if the student requests a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative, it may be provided.

Don't unnecessarily call attention to your presence as resulting from the use of the space by a transgender or gender expansive student, thereby potentially making the student the object of ridicule or unwanted attention from peers.

Don't exert your presence in such a way that transgender or gender expansive students feel unnecessarily policed or monitored in these spaces.

Don't shy away from addressing bullying and harassment or silently affirm harmful comments simply because these discussions are difficult.

Don't attempt to make these students feel guilty or isolated for their discomfort or difference (but do offer them counsel when appropriate).



In summary, each staff person is here to ensure our student's safety and their ability to realize their potential and achieve academic success. The first step in doing so is to create safe, inclusive school and classroom environments that provide a space and voice for all students, including those students who are transgender or gender expansive. As the journey of building a more accepting school culture begins, please remember that the District, THRIVE of Southwest PA and a variety of resources at the local, state and federal levels are here to provide support. Promoting students' freedom and safety is a shared responsibility.

# School Environments: At Every Level



As already noted, adopting and implementing the nondiscrimination policy for transgender and gender expansive students in full will require a culture shift across all levels of our educational environments. THRIVE provides further training on implementing these changes from the macro level of institutional policies and practices down to the micro level of individual interactions between staff members and students. This section explores a few starting points to consider across various levels of the school environment.

Visit [thriveswpa.org](https://thriveswpa.org) to request info about supplemental training opportunities

# Culture and School Leader Responsibilities

From the Superintendent to each principal in the District, it will take the support and energy of every lead administrator in Pittsburgh Public Schools to implement this paradigm shift toward gender-inclusivity. Modeling a desire to learn and to do right by all students are two key first steps that every school leader can engage in as an example to their students and staff.

In this period of uncertainty and adjustment, transgender and gender expansive students will be looking to school leaders for support, encouragement and care. It's up to these leaders, and to all staff members, to ask the questions, set the tone and practice the values of empathy, self-education and inclusivity for all students.

While the policy clearly states that only the Superintendent or designee should communicate with the media regarding matters of student gender identity or expression, school leaders will be the primary agents tasked with communicating with and setting an example in these areas for the students, staff, families and community members in their purview. Protecting the privacy, safety and freedom of transgender and gender expansive students should always be considered top priority in these matters.

It is also important to remember that, while organizations like THRIVE can provide training and resources toward building more inclusive school communities, it is the responsibility of school leaders to set the tone of their school's culture and to implement policies and practices every day.

We know that these conversations and ideas may be difficult or new to some, but only by modeling an inclusive approach and remaining in open, transparent contact with students, staff and families can principals and other administrators lead the way to a new, more accepting paradigm in our schools.

## Building New Dialogue

Including students and families in these conversations is an important way of making institutional practices more transparent, defining school capabilities and expectations and ensuring that students' needs are met.

## Reinforcing PPS Initiatives

There are a number of PPS community values that we can continue to engage our students in as we implement Policy 102.3. Here are two key examples:

For younger students, this is a perfect opportunity to drive home the reminder to Keep Your Hands, Feet and Unkind Words to Yourself.

For older students, this is a great entry point for beginning Courageous Conversations. Remember: Speak Your Truth, What Says Here Stays Here, Open Space and Be Courageous.

## Student Information Systems and eSchoolPLUS

The District's student information system is used to auto-populate federal and state reports, as well as, official documents sent to students' homes, such as transcripts, report cards, truancy letters and mailing labels. It is important to note that some of these require use of a student's legal name, whereas others may be accessed by parents or guardians unaware or unsupportive of a student's transgender status.

The District's student information system eSchoolPLUS has been updated to capture legal/ birth name(s) and/or gender, as well as, the identified name(s) and/or gender of a student. Directions on making a demographic accommodation is available through Information Technology (IT). The system update also includes additional security measures to help protect this type of student information. Both the Legal and IT Departments are also available for consultation in this area. Their contact information is provided in the **Resources and Central Office Supports** section.

School staff should always make a concerted effort to protect the identity of transgender and gender expansive students by ensuring the privacy of all student records and referring to students by their preferred name, pronoun and gender marker on other school documents—such as student IDs, classroom rosters or yearbooks.



More specifically, here are some questions school leaders can begin to explore as they work to create a more gender-inclusive school environment:

- How do the school's policies and administrative regulations emphasize gender as an area of diversity protected and supported by the school?
- What staff training or development is provided to build the capacity of teachers and other staff to honor the gender diversity of all students?
- What written materials and information about gender diversity are publicly and visibly available to staff, students and community members?
- What signage or visuals celebrating gender diversity are present in the school?
- What norming campaigns are being implemented on a school-wide basis to celebrate and safeguard gender diversity?
- How do student information systems allow families and students the ability to self-identify their gender and use preferred names and pronouns?
- Do procedures and forms demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender?
- Are restrooms and other facilities provided in such a way that privacy is offered without stigmatizing any students?

Beginning with these broad concepts in mind demonstrates to your community that the institution recognizes and honors gender diversity while also actively working to reflect a more complex understanding of gender.

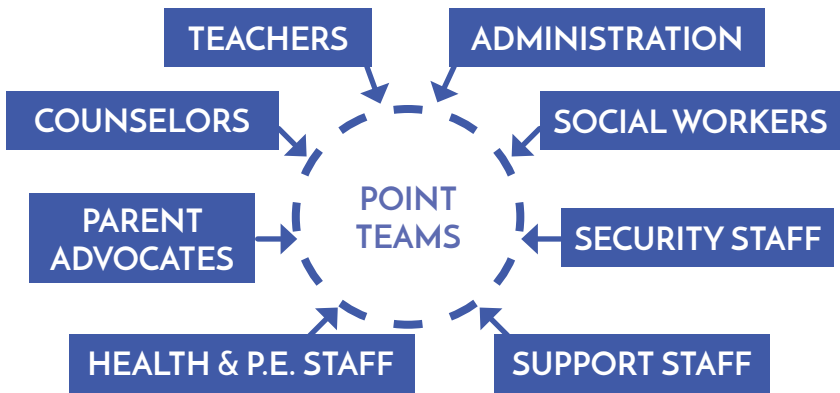
## Check the Box

Many forms and paperwork completed on a daily basis do not reflect a non-binary or inclusive understanding of gender. Oftentimes, they conflate the concepts of gender and sex—for instance, by providing the terms “male” and “female,” which are terms that typically refer to biological sex characteristics, as options for gender markers.

One way to create a more inclusive school environment is to allow students, staff and families the option to self-identify in formal paperwork. What if the boxes under gender read “man,” “woman,” “non-binary,” and “another?” Or what if there were a blank line where people could write in their gender as they describe it?

# Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Point Teams

School Point Teams will be comprised of specially trained staff members charged with being on-the-ground change agents implementing the District’s policy. There are no mandatory members for the Point Team, but it is required that Point Teams be made up of a variety of members from across the school community—including teachers, administration, social workers, counselors, parent advocates, security staff, health and physical education staff and other support staff. A complete listing of Point Team membership should be reported to Assistant Superintendent and to Title IX Compliance Officer Designee John O’Connell.



Transgender and gender expansive students seeking individual supports should be provided a Student Support Team by the school to assist with their needs, such as designating their preferred name and pronouns, designating the student’s preferred facilities, understanding who may be privy to the student’s transgender status and other topics relevant to their ability to equitably access educational programs and spaces. School-level Point Teams are available to assist other constituents at the school—whether they be cisgender students who are uncertain about how the policy affects them or members of the school community as a whole seeking resources on topics of gender identity and expression. Point Teams may also serve as a general resource for transgender and gender expansive students and their families in terms of ensuring that the nondiscrimination policy is properly implemented within an individual school community.

Due to the multifaceted responsibilities of their constituents, Point Teams will be highly present on campus and able to put the policy into action across the breadth of school programs, facilities and activities. Any staff member with questions about the optimal way to proceed under the new policy or best practices for creating inclusive spaces to suit our diverse student community are strongly encouraged to consult their school’s Point Team in addition to the available external community resources.

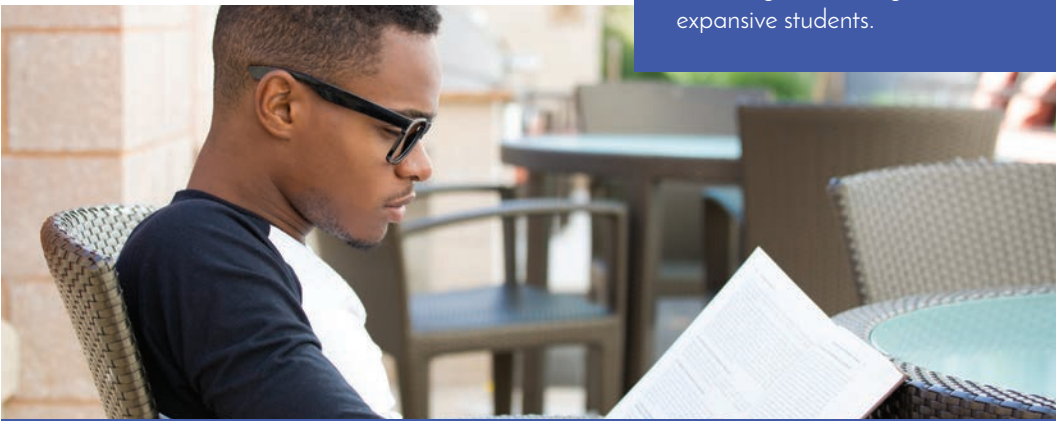
# Building an Inclusive Classroom and Curriculum

Creating a more accepting classroom environment starts before students even arrive, from planning how the room will be arranged and decorated to considering how students will be grouped and addressed once the school year begins. Being intentionally inclusive during casual interactions with students is just as important as ensuring that curriculum provides representation of each student's identity as well as avenues by which they can learn about people who are different from them.

While interpersonal interactions can reinforce the institution's commitment to gender inclusion and build trust between staff and students, a curricular approach establishes new and greater understanding of gender.

## Making Students Stakeholders

It is important that students be invited in to conversations about building inclusive classroom spaces as early as possible. This will not only hold students accountable to act as compassionate community members, but also empower students to enact positive change within the community and restore justice for transgender and gender expansive students.



## Words Speak Loud, Too

While actions are always important, it's equally critical to consider how language is used to shape the environment. For instance, using binary phrases such as "boys and girls" or "ladies and gentlemen" is not the most gender-inclusive option. Try to use some of these more inclusive choices instead.

- |               |          |          |                     |
|---------------|----------|----------|---------------------|
| Folks         | Friends  | Learners | People              |
| Yinz or Ya'll | Students | Class    | Create a class name |

Reflecting all of our students in our language, as well as in our curriculum, will show transgender and gender expansive students that they belong in our school communities.

# Instilling Inclusion through...

## Interactions

**Use language that challenges the gender binary:** Toys are toys, hair is hair, colors are colors, and clothes are clothes.

**Help students understand the difference between patterns and rules:** Who says only girls wear dresses? Do all girls wear them? Do all boys? Do some? or What patterns have you noticed in expectations for youth about gender from peers? From the media?

**Question limited portrayals of gender:** Who decided what things are for boys and what things are for girls? or These are just other people's ideas; they might not be right for you.

**Recognize that gender is in our hearts and minds:** No one gets to tell another person how they feel on the inside.

**Support self-reflection:** Who we are or how others see us on the outside isn't always who we are on the inside. Think of all the special things about yourself that no one could know about just by looking at you!

**Teach empathy and respect:** Have you ever been teased? How does it feel when people tease you or treat you like an outsider?

**Normalize gender diversity:** History is full of examples of gender diversity!

## Instruction

**Explore current curriculum for organic entry points:** Who are LGBTQI scientists, historical figures, mathematicians, or actors relevant to your subject area?

**Don't reinvent the wheel:** What if your word problems or text analyses simply used more inclusive language or didn't reinforce gender stereotypes?

**Utilize literature:** Explore themes of gender diversity or personal perspectives of LGBTQI writers.

**Utilize arts to explore topics:** Seek out LGBTQI artists' representations of the world or have students express their own ideas about gender via art.

**Invite guest speakers:** Students can benefit from hearing the perspective of LGBTQI people and those working toward greater gender equity and inclusion in fields like education, law, medicine and others.

**Include LGBTQI topics in suggestion lists for projects.**

**Use videos and other media that provide more comprehensive, inclusive ideas about gender.**

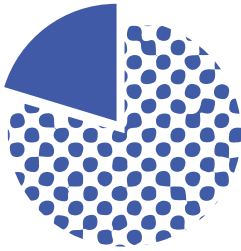
**Create space for students to share and grow in their own understandings and beliefs about gender through discussion.**

Gender-inclusive curriculum is most effective when it seeks to incorporate more accepting, well-rounded presentations of gender throughout a diverse array of assignment types and subject areas. Sources like *The Gender Inclusive School* or *Gender Spectrum* can provide even more suggestions and examples of how to bring students into higher-level conversations about gender.



# Benefits, to All Students, of Gender-Inclusivity

Promoting gender-inclusivity in school communities doesn't just help transgender and gender expansive students; it provides a number of benefits to the student community as a whole. When considering the vast advantages that these practices and discussions lend to each and every student, it becomes apparent that gender-inclusive educational spaces are the right choice—not only in terms of compassion and celebrating diversity, but also in terms of learning.



**Only 19%** of students across the United States were taught positive representations of LGBTQI people, history or events. (GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 2013)



## How Inclusion Helps All Students

- Exposes them to a more accurate account of history and society
- Helps them have a better understanding of people different from themselves as well as those people's contributions to our collective culture
- Encourages them to question stereotypes
- Promotes acceptance

## How Inclusion Helps Marginalized Students

- Validates their existence and experience
- Reinforces their value and self-worth
- Offers them historical and contemporary role models who may encourage new aspirations
- Provides space for their voices, which often go unheard


# Solutions to Common Occurrences

Change isn't always easy—and that's especially true for cultural change. In the process of building new norms and more accepting, inclusive environments, it's likely schools will run into misunderstandings and resistance. To prepare for the day-to-day implementation of the District's nondiscrimination policy for transgender and gender expansive students, examine some issues that may come up in school spaces and potential solutions to these problems.

The following scenarios are based on real events that transpired at schools throughout southwestern Pennsylvania and in national news.

## Elementary School

**Scenario #1:** During free reading time, you notice your classroom aide asking one of the students in your kindergarten class if she's sure she wants to read the book she's selected. You glance at the cover and notice that it's a book about monster trucks. The student begins to hesitate as the aide tells her that she's picked a "boy book."




### Recommended Classroom Responses

Casually enter the conversation and ask the student what book she's chosen. When she shows you, respond excitedly. "Aren't monster trucks so cool? Isn't it great how there are so many things to read about?"

Chat with your aide about the importance of all students being able to explore their interests.

Find books for your classroom library that show children who don't follow gender norms, like "My Princess Boy," "Ballerino Nate," or "A Fire Engine for Ruthie."



### Recommended Administrative Responses

Ensure that all classroom staff, from teachers to aides, are receiving the proper professional development training to instill classroom practices with a sense of gender-inclusivity and honoring students' individual choices

Make a point of supporting and promoting gender-inclusivity as a key element of your school's culture

**Scenario #2:** During a lesson, one of the students in your second grade class raises her hand. You call on her and she asks if boys are allowed to wear nail polish. You notice that one of her cluster partners, a boy, has glittery lavender fingernails. The rest of the class turns all of their attention to the boy in question.

↓  
**Recommended  
Classroom Responses**

Reinforce the idea that there are lots of ways to be a boy or a girl, and that some people even use other words to describe how they feel inside.

Talk about how some boys wear earrings and some girls wear combat boots—clothes and accessories are for everyone to try!

Complement the student on his fingernails to set an example.

↓  
**Recommended  
Administrative Responses**

Define clear expectations surrounding the school dress code. While the school will still determine what type of clothing is appropriate for an academic environment, students may not be restricted from wearing clothes consistent with their gender identity or preferred expression.



**Scenario #3:** It's the first week of first grade, and you notice that one of your students likes to wear baggy clothing in neutral colors and styles their hair in cornrows. This student's peers are unsure whether their classmate is a boy or a girl, but a few of them refer to the student as "he." You call home to ask how the student prefers to be addressed and are told by the student and her parents that she doesn't use labels for herself, but it may be easiest to call her a girl. When you correct her classmates the next day, they ask why she looks like a boy and tell her she should be wearing dresses and pink things.

↓  
**Recommended  
Classroom Responses**

Ask the students if they have ever seen girls or women who wear clothes that aren't pink or aren't dresses.

Decorate your classroom with images of people of multiple gender expressions.

Try using an example from your own life of a way that you don't fit gender norms, and ask the class if there are any ways they might feel differently from other boys or girls.

**Scenario #4:** You overhear a conversation between two colleagues in the teachers' lounge. They're discussing a third grader who has recently begun transitioning publicly and goes by a new name, in addition to gender pronouns and clothing consistent with their gender identity. One colleague continues to refer to the student by their legal name and the incorrect gender pronouns while the other rolls their eyes, saying, "The things we let kids get away with these days."



### Recommended Administrative Responses

Be an advocate for transgender and gender expansive students and set an example for your staff to advocate for these students as well.

Work closely with the School Point Team to take issues affecting transgender and gender expansive students seriously.

Address those staff who seem unwilling to implement District policy personally and privately to discuss the importance of maintaining a safe, inclusive school environment for all students.

### Recommended Classroom Responses

Try to enter the conversation and gently correct them by saying something like, "Excuse me, but do you mean (student's preferred name?)"

Remind your colleagues of the importance of creating safe, accepting educational environments where all students can learn and feel welcome.

Speak to your principal or a member of your school's Point Team about how you might best move forward.

**Scenario #5:** One of your fourth-graders comes back from using the restroom and is visibly bothered. You pull him aside to ask what the matter is, and he tells you that a few of the boys had been talking about a new student at the school, another one of your fourth-graders, and how he “has girl parts.” Your student says they noticed this in the locker room even though the new student was trying his best to change in an area where he wouldn’t be seen. He is unsure what to do—he and the new student had become fast friends, but now he feels lied to and worried that people will make fun of him for being “her” friend. Up until now, you were unaware that the new student is trans.



### Recommended Classroom Responses

Talk to your student about how this can all be pretty confusing—there are some people who say our bodies determine who we are, but really our identity is made up of how we feel inside.

Help him to remember the reasons he became friends with the new student in the first place, and remind him that this doesn’t change who his friend is to him.

Ask him how he would feel if he found out someone was talking about him behind his back and discuss the importance of standing by our friends.

Inform your school’s Point Team so that the issue will be on their radar.




### Recommended Administrative Responses

Create a school culture where staff are encouraged to come to you or their peers on the Point Team to develop action plans for dealing with issues and conversations such as this one.



# Middle School

**Scenario #6:** Identical twin fifth-graders are excited to start a new year at school, the first time that one of them will legally attend as female. While her classmates are used to seeing her as a “girl-boy” (her term for herself) with long hair, makeup, and skirts, there are some changes they weren’t prepared for. When she uses the girls’ bathroom for the first time, a boy new to the school follows her in and tells her that she is really a boy because she has a penis. “If you can use the girls’ room, so can I,” he says. She comes to you for help and you request assistance from the principal, who calls her parents in for an emergency meeting. The principal informs her parents that, from now on, their daughter will use the faculty restroom as a bathroom and changing space, claiming this is the only way her safety can be guaranteed.




## Recommended Classroom Responses

Speak to members of your school’s point team about the importance of not stigmatizing your transgender student and creating a better plan to meet the student’s needs and keep her family informed.

Ask the principal what plan she has to intervene with the boy who harassed your student.

Meet with your student privately to let her know that you support her and to inform her of her resources and advocates at the school.

Work with the principal to ensure that the student has the opportunity to use the bathroom consistent with their gender identity in order to adhere to District policy.



## Recommended Administrative Responses

Always affirm the right of transgender and gender expansive students to use sex-specific facilities consistent with their gender identity.

Never mandate that a transgender or gender expansive student use an alternative facility in the name of their safety.

Defer to the transgender student’s preference; they can determine whether they want a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative or not.

Explain District policy to the new student and make them aware of their rights and the transgender student’s rights under the nondiscrimination policy.

Determine whether a school-wide campaign affirming transgender and gender expansive students in student spaces can be implemented.

**Scenario #7:** A boy in your physical education class who is a bit thinner and shorter than the other boys in class has recently gotten a lot of attention for always playing with the girls and not taking part in contact sports. He prefers things like jogging around the track or cheering others on as they play games. Now the other boys in the class are calling him a “sissy” and some of the girls are attempting to avoid him during gym.



### Recommended Classroom Responses


Reinforce students’ individual choice of activities when they are in physical education class.

Find posters or images for the gymnasium that show students of various genders engaging in sports, such as boys cheerleading, girls playing football, or mixed gender groups of students playing together.

Make it a point to affirm the student in front of his classmates and address his peers who ridicule him so the class is aware that this behavior is unacceptable and unwelcome.

Talk to your student privately about his preferences and find ways for him to engage his interests in your class.

**Scenario #8:** In a lesson on the history of important medical developments, you decide to teach your class about a number of little-known important figures, like Alan L. Hart, the transgender radiologist, medical researcher, and writer. When you mention Hart’s transgender status to the class, a few students laugh or pretend to vomit, and one even yells, “Guess he wasn’t so smart if he couldn’t even fix himself!”




### Recommended Classroom Responses

Make the students aware that these types of negative responses are unwelcome and unnecessary.

Discuss with the students that there was nothing about Hart that needed to be fixed and that transgender and gender expansive people have always existed in society.

Continue to inform your class about transgender and gender expansive individuals who have made important contributions to society through an app like Quist ([www.quistapp.com](http://www.quistapp.com)).



### Recommended Administrative Responses

Support teachers in their efforts to develop and implement an inclusive curriculum.

Seek out resources that staff can use to create more visually- and curricularly-inclusive spaces.

Plan and implement school-wide events that build student and staff knowledge around ideas of gender identity and expression.

**Scenario #9:** As principal, you receive a letter from the mother of a fifth-grade student who is very concerned that an older student who identifies as a transgender man is using the boys' bathroom. She feels that her son is unsafe due to this arrangement and demands that the practice be put to a stop at once.



### Recommended Classroom Responses

Meet with members of the School Point Team to discuss a plan of action and response to the letter.

Meet with the parent to discuss the nondiscrimination policy and the options available to her child to utilize an alternative restroom.

Casually check in with your student who identifies as transgender to assert your support of them and inform them of their right to convene a Support Team.

Direct the younger boy, if necessary, to the Point Team for conversations and clarifications about the issue.

Provide the younger boy with a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative to his usual restroom if he requests one.

Continue to affirm the transgender student's right to use the restroom consistent with his gender identity.

**Scenario #10:** The principal calls you down to her office in the middle of the school day. When you arrive, you find the parents of one of your students in a rage, demanding that their child be brought down to the office immediately. They have been told by a friend who works at the school that their child is "dressing up" and using the girls' restroom and they threaten to take action against the school for not informing them sooner that this was going on.



### Recommended Classroom Responses

Work with the principal to inform the parents of District policy and that their child is free to express their gender in appropriate ways as a student at your school.

Ensure that the student has a support network at the school who affirms them and their gender identity/ expression.

Consult with your school's Point Team on how to work with unsupportive parents and your student's legal rights under the nondiscrimination policy.



### Recommended Administrative Responses

Affirm the student's right to express their gender at school under District policy.

Inform the parents of their child's rights under FERPA and the nondiscrimination policy, which does not explicitly require that parents or family be involved with a student's transition or gender expression at school.

Connect parents with local resources for transgender youth and family members.



# High School

**Scenario #11:** A new student at your school identifies as a boy and uses masculine pronouns, but often wears feminine clothing and makeup both at home and at school. Coincidentally, the boy is also diagnosed with bipolar disorder and oppositional defiance disorder. His family has been very proactive in garnering support for their son from various school staff. His classmates, however, are not as accepting. They taunt him, calling him a sissy and threatening to beat him up if he keeps wearing “girl’s clothes.” His reaction is often to scream back at his harassers and threaten to fight them in return, occasionally requiring teachers to reprimand him or restrain him during class.



## Recommended Classroom Responses

Engage the student with the proper administration to assist with convening a Support Team or counseling services so that they can begin to build healthy coping mechanisms and responses to other students’ harassment.

Be sure to differentiate for your student the fact that they are being disciplined for their aggressive responses, not for their gender expression.

Address the students who have threatened their peer to let them know their behavior is unacceptable and follow the proper channels to ensure that it does not recur.



## Recommended Administrative Responses

Ensure that no one conflates the student’s gender expression with their diagnosis, or that there are no implications that their gender expression is a result of their diagnosis.

Be sure to differentiate for your student the fact that they are being disciplined for their aggressive responses, not for their gender expression.

Maintain close contact with the student’s Support Team, the school Point Team and the student’s teacher(s) to ensure the student’s needs are being met.

**Scenario #12:** One of your students comes to you after class and reveals that they identify as genderfluid and would like to be addressed with they/them/their pronouns. They also want to be able to use both the men's and women's restrooms and locker rooms consistent with the gender they feel most aligned with at any given time.



### Recommended Classroom Responses

Work with your school's Point Team to determine the proper response: perhaps providing gender-neutral restroom or locker room options.

Discuss with your student what they think the best solution might be that will ensure their confidence and safety without causing undue stigma.



### Recommended Administrative Responses

Consider school-wide practices and facilities that may help or hinder inclusion, especially for non-binary and gender expansive students.

Determine where or how gender-neutral restroom options can be provided safely and accessible.

Work proactively with the school Point Team and district Law Department to prepare for gray area issues such as this one.

**Scenario #13:** A trans student in your after-school study group complains to you about a security guard who, although otherwise friendly, always makes sure that the boys' restroom is empty before the student can use it—rushing other young men out and sometimes even entering the restroom to block the doorway so that other students cannot interrupt while your student is using the facility. It's started to get on your student's nerves, and it's become very annoying for his peers as well. The guard has told the student this is being done to ensure his "safety."



### Recommended Classroom Responses

Get in touch with your school's Point Team and suggest a staff training on best practices under the nondiscrimination policy.

If appropriate, speak with the security guard to let them know that this practice may be unintentionally stigmatizing the student they mean to protect.



### Recommended Administrative Responses

Include all staff, not only teachers, in professional development trainings around topics of gender identity and expression.

Keep in mind that school security and physical education teachers may be presented with particular situations affecting transgender and gender expansive students that require special trainings or attention.



**Scenario #14:** You have students pull from a hat to choose their topic for an upcoming group project. One group receives “Transgender Individuals’ Rights Under Pennsylvania Law.” Two members of the group come to you after class to express their discomfort with the topic and ask to be moved to another group.



### Recommended Classroom Responses

Encourage the students to have an open discussion with you about their discomfort with this topic and the underlying reasons for it.

Remind them that feeling challenged in this way is a key element of the educational experience.

Point them toward some sources that will provide a beginner-level overview of the topic.


Speak with the other group members or the full group together to leverage the other students’ interest with moving forward on the project.



### Recommended Administrative Responses

If necessary, support teachers’ development of more inclusive curricula publicly or to students and families who are having trouble understanding the need to address such topics in the classroom.

**Scenario #15:** A young girl who has always been the star student in your physical education classes qualifies for the JV football team during her junior year, making her the first girl in school history to join the team. Her classmates find this typical, because she's always wearing hoodies, baseball caps and baggy jeans; they call her "butch" and "manly." She has a core group of friends who usually help her ignore these comments, but as she's entered adolescence she's begun to ask you if it's normal for a girl to enjoy so many "boy things." One day during practice, she tries to flirt with a boy on the team. He loudly rejects her, yelling, "You act like a dyke! You don't even try to be a real girl!" She runs to the bathroom in tears. When you follow her to see if she's okay, you hear a female teacher telling her that boys would be more attracted to her if she acted "more like a lady." The teacher goes on to suggest that the student wear clothes that flatter her figure and give up football. She then proposes that they pray together so the student can reflect on her options.



### Recommended Classroom Responses


Talk to the student and connect her with the school Point Team or a Student Support Team to ensure that she knows you and others at the school are part of her support system.

Speak with your colleague about District policy and remind them that it is your student's right to dress however she pleases within the requirements of the school dress code.

Speak with the boy who lashed out at the student about better ways to handle a situation where we might feel confused or uncomfortable.

Affirm to your class the idea that people are free to express their gender in any way that makes them comfortable and that there is no one way to "act like a boy" or "act like a girl."

Plan a film discussion around a movie like "Girlfight," "Love & Basketball," "Million Dollar Baby," or "A League of Their Own."



### Recommended Administrative Responses

Clearly address and honor every student's right to take part in mixed gender athletic opportunities as stated by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA), whether they are transgender or cisgender.

## Calling In Students

While these responses detail actions that can be taken by classroom teachers, school administrators and counseling or support staff, it is vital that all staff remember to practice restorative justice techniques that include students in responding to these issues. When all students are tasked with becoming agents of change and equity within the school community, student success becomes a shared and celebrated goal.



**Scenario #16:** A student comes to you and reveals that she is in the process of socially transitioning, going by a new name and feminine pronouns and re-introducing herself to peers as a young woman. However, she is still in the early stages of recognizing and becoming comfortable with her identity, so she continues to wear masculine clothing and a traditionally masculine hairstyle. In the realm of gender stereotypes, she is visibly “still a boy.” She asks if she can use the girls’ restroom and changing area because she would feel more comfortable in those spaces.



### **Recommended Classroom Responses**

Connect the student with a Student Support Team so they can work with her to develop a timeline and plan of action for her transition.

Ask the student if you are allowed to talk about this subject publicly and how she would like to be addressed in class and in communication with her parents or guardians.

Affirm the student’s right to use sex-specific facilities consistent with her gender identity, but determine with the student and school Point Team if a safe, non-stigmatizing alternative might be more suitable in the interim.



### **Recommended Administrative Responses**

Work proactively with the school Point Team and district Law Department to prepare for gray area issues such as this one.

# Bullying, Harassment and Requests for Support Services

When responding to instances of bullying or harassment or when a transgender or gender expansive student requests support services, staff are reminded to follow District policies already established. Those procedures are listed below for reference, and all staff are reminded that they may contact their school's Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Point Team for further assistance.

- Since reports of bullying and harassment based on a student's gender identity or expression fall under the District's general guidelines for addressing bullying and harassment, here are a few initial reminders about District expectations in these cases:
- Students, staff and other third parties, such as family members, should immediately report any incidents of bullying and harassment to the school principal (or, as comfortable, to another to another school employee who will inform the principal).
- If the school principal is the subject of a complaint, reports should be made to another employee within the school or directly to the Compliance Officer.
- If another school employee is the subject of a complaint, the report shall be forwarded immediately to the Office of Human Resources.
- At no time should a written statement be necessary to open a bullying/harassment investigation or as a part of the bullying/harassment investigation process.
- A full Bullying/Harassment Packet should be completed whether or not a coinciding criminal investigation of the incident is pending or concluded.



For more information regarding bullying/harassment response procedures, staff should refer to the administrative regulations accompanying Board Policy 215 - Prohibition Against Bullying/Harassment. Issues of immediate safety of the student or release should be directed to school police at 412-529-3520.

### **Sex and Gender Discrimination under the Prohibition Against Bullying/Harassment**

Determine whether the conduct, as it is complained of, constitutes bullying and/or harassment as defined by Board policy.



Contact and inform the parent or guardian of both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.



Principal, or their designee (assistant principal, school counselor/social worker, etc.), begins collecting information.



Complete written report utilizing forms in the Bullying/Harassment packet, and provide to Compliance Officer or designee.

### **Following Up on a Bullying/Harassment Investigation**

Share results of the Compliance Officer or designee's investigation with parents/guardians of both the victim and the perpetrator.



Refer both students to SAP (Student Assistance Program) to ensure that the conduct will not become a barrier to learning for either student.



If bullying/harassment has indeed occurred or is substantiated, implement appropriate corrective action to ensure conduct does not recur.



## Meeting Students' Requests for Support Services or Accommodations

When a student approaches a staff member requesting an accommodation



The student should be referred to a social worker or counselor who will meet with them to discuss the requested accommodation.



The social worker or counselor may contact the student's home to discuss the request further with the student's parent or guardian, if the student grants permission to do so.



The social worker or counselor will then work with the Student Support Team to assist in providing supports for the student.

## Remember, You're Not Alone

Requests for supports and accommodations made by transgender or gender expansive students will follow the same District procedure as any general student request. However, staff should not feel lost or alone in this process of administering support.

The District has provided for expert Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Point Teams to be a major part of creating inclusive environments and helping Student Support Teams to provide appropriate supports and accommodations for our students. These staff members will receive specialized training to ensure that they are positioned to provide meaningful assistance in this process.

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**Below is a list of suggestions from the District on how to handle specific requests for support services:**

**Restrooms:** With the approval of the transgender or gender expansive student, a Student Support Team may implement a "buddy system" or utilize teacher monitors to ensure student safety in school restrooms.

**Locker Rooms:** At a transgender or gender expansive student's request, the school may choose to implement separate changing schedules or install privacy curtains or partitions to allow for student privacy.

**Facilities Signage:** Any staff, Support Team members or Point Team members wishing to install gender-neutral signage on school facilities should contact their principal, who in turn may request this change from their Assistant Superintendent. All requests of this type shall be reviewed by the District's Chief Operating Officer or designee.



When a school is made aware of a student's transgender or gender expansive identity, the school shall offer to convene a Student Support Team. Typically these teams are made up of the school principal or designee, social workers or counseling staff and other pertinent staff such as the student's classroom teacher. By providing an individual Student Support Team, the school allows for an individualized strategy to be created that is tailored to that student's unique needs, such as:

- Designating their preferred name and pronouns
- Designating the student's preferred facilities
- Understanding who may be privy to the student's transgender status
- Other topics relevant to their ability to equitably access educational programs and spaces.

Support Teams also exist to communicate the school's expectations for students and serve as an open channel of communication between the student and their institution. Students may request a Support Team meeting at any time.

Student Support Teams exist to provide for the unique needs of all students, whether those needs have to do with gender identity and expression, difficulties with adjusting to the school environment, learning difficulties or any other issue or combination of coinciding issues that may arise in the school environment. Students should have a role in choosing or approving Student Support Team members as well as selecting a staff member who will provide them and their parent/guardian, if supportive, with regular updates.

Teachers, other staff and family or community members with more general concerns about the successful implementation of the policy at their school should contact the School Point Team. Any individuals wishing to lodge a formal complaint may do so according to the guidelines and administrative regulations accompanying Board Policy 102 - Nondiscrimination in Classroom Practices. These complaints may be forwarded to the Office of Student Support Services, the Office of Human Resources (if employee conduct is involved) or the Law Department.

# Resources and Central Office Supports

While staff are encouraged to approach their school's Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Point Team as their first-level resource, below are additional resources that can assist with answering policy-specific questions, providing professional development on related topics or administering services and supports to our students.

## POINT TEAMS

To determine which members of your school's staff are a part of the Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Point Team, contact your main office.

### **Information Technology**

*(Updating Student Records)*

412-529-3871

### **Law Department**

*(Updating Student Records,  
Administrative Regulation)*

Board Office:

412-529-3782

Downtown Office:

412-391-9890

### **Office of Human Resources**

Chief Human Resource Officer

412-529-3691

### **Title IX Compliance**

**Officer, District-wide**

Assistant Superintendent of  
Student Support Services

412-529-3950

### **Title IX Compliance Officer**

**Designee, District-wide**

Director of Student Support

412-529-3918

# Resources for Professional Development

## ADVOCACY NETWORKS

### **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**

247 Fort Pitt Blvd  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
412-681-7736  
[aclupa.org/chapters/greaterpittsburgh](http://aclupa.org/chapters/greaterpittsburgh)

### **Lambda Legal**

*National legal organization pursuing  
LGBTQ civil rights*

120 Wall Street, 19th Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
212-809-8585 (W)  
212-809-0055 (F)  
[lambdalegal.org/states-regions/pennsylvania](http://lambdalegal.org/states-regions/pennsylvania)

### **PA Youth Congress**

*Youth-led policy advocates for  
LGBTQIA citizens in PA*  
413 Walnut Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
717-743-1035  
[payouthcongress.org](http://payouthcongress.org)

### **THRIVE of Southwest PA**

*Cultivating inclusive schools in  
southwest PA*  
P.O. Box 10565  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235  
[community@thriveswpa.org](mailto:community@thriveswpa.org)  
[thriveswpa.org](http://thriveswpa.org)

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

### **Gender Spectrum**

*Resources for creating gender-  
sensitive, inclusive environments*  
510-788-4412  
[info@genderspectrum.org](mailto:info@genderspectrum.org)  
[genderspectrum.org](http://genderspectrum.org)

### **Welcoming Schools**

*Creating safe and welcoming schools  
for all children and families*  
[welcomingschools.org](http://welcomingschools.org)

### **GLSEN**

*Championing LGBTQ issues  
in education*  
110 William St, 30th Floor  
New York, NY 10038  
212-727-0135  
[glsen.org](http://glsen.org)

### **Teaching Tolerance**

*Diversity, Equity, and Justice*  
[tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org)

# Community Resources for Youth

## ADVOCACY NETWORKS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### **Community Human Services**

*(formerly Project Silk)*

**Connecting LGBTQ youth of color to community resources**

414 Atwood St  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412-683-4323

### **Garden of Peace Project**

*Uplifting, upholding, and empowering LGBTQIA+ individuals*

801 N Negley Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
412-879-0477  
gardenofpeaceproject.org

### **PGH Equality Center**

5840 Ellsworth Ave. Suite 100  
Pittsburgh, PA 15232  
pghequalitycenter.org

### **National Center for Transgender Equality**

1400 16th St NW, Suite 510  
Washington D.C. 20036  
202-642-4542  
transequality.org

### **New Voices Pittsburgh**

*Dedicated to the health and well-being of Black women and girls*

The Beatty Building  
5907 Penn Ave, Suite 340  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
412-450-0290  
newvoicespittsburgh.org

### **Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR)**

81 South 19th Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203  
412-431-5665  
paar.net

## ARTS AND EDUCATION

### **Dreams of Hope: Queer Youth Arts**

412-361-2065  
dreamsofhope.org

### **ReelQ: Pittsburgh Lesbian & Gay Film Festival**

412-422-6776  
reelq.org

## CRISIS RESOURCES

### **Trevor Lifeline**

*Suicide prevention resources for LGBTQ youth*

1-866-488-7386  
thetrevorproject.org

## HEALTH SERVICES AND TESTING

### **Center for Adolescent and Young Adult Health**

Oakland Medical Building  
3420 Fifth Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412-692-6677  
(ask specifically for "gender care")  
chp.edu/our-services/aya-medicine

### **Central Outreach Wellness Center** *Medical health and HIV/STD testing services, specializing in health issues affecting LGBTQ people and people of color*

127 Anderson St #101  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212  
412-322-4151  
centraloutreach.com

### **Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC**

4401 Penn Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15224  
412-692-7618  
chp.edu

### **Metro Family Practice** *Offers HIV and LGBTQ comprehensive care*

1789 S Braddock Ave #410  
Pittsburgh, PA 15218  
412-247-2310  
mchcpgh.org

### **Persad Center** *Mental health, wellness, community programs, and advocacy*

5301 Butler St #100  
Pittsburgh, PA 15201  
412-441-9786  
<https://persadcenter.org>

### **Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force (PATF)**

5913 Penn Ave, 2nd Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
412-345-7456  
patf.org

## YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

### **PFLAG Pittsburgh** *Uniting LGBTQ people with family, friends, and allies*

5701 Fifth Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15232  
412-833-4556  
pflagpgh.org

# School Point Team Members

Please use this space to list the members of your school point team.

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