



SOUTH LANE SCHOOL DISTRICT 45J3

Children Come First • Always Learning, Teaching, Caring • Safe, Respectful, and, Inclusive Schools & Community

Dear Lindsay,

*Along with Concerned Individuals – emails within the letter

At the request of the Board, I have read your letter and letters sent by other community members with similar issues. I restated the issues as questions to provide a uniform method for responding to each issue. Please find the answers following each question along with policies or links to additional important information. If you have any remaining questions, please contact me.

All Students Belong

Question: Does “All Students Belong” policy require staff to ask children what gender they identify as?

Answer: As stated in the policy: [ACB All Students Belong](#)

The district prohibits the use or display of any symbols of hate^{5} on [district] [school]^{6} grounds or in any district- or school-sponsored program, service, school or activity that is funded in whole or in part by monies appropriated by the Oregon Legislative Assembly, except where used in teaching curriculum that is aligned to the Oregon State Standards.

In responding to the use of any symbols of hate, the district will use non-disciplinary remedial action whenever appropriate.

The district prohibits retaliation against an individual because that person has filed a charge, testified, assisted or participated in an investigation, proceeding or hearing; and further prohibits anyone from coercing, intimidating, threatening or interfering with an individual for exercising any rights guaranteed under state and federal law.

Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with the lawful use of district facilities pursuant to a lease or license.

The district will use administrative regulation ACB-AR - Bias Incident Complaint Procedure to process reports or complaints of bias incidents.

To learn about how a bias incident must be handled by school personnel, please see the “All Students Belong” administrative rule.

Administrative Rule: [ACB R Bias Incident Complaint Procedure](#)

We also have a non-discrimination policy: [AC Nondiscrimination](#)

Use of Bathrooms and Lockers

Question: What actually is SLSD policy regarding transgender students and bathrooms and locker rooms?

Answer: Students may use any bathroom they choose. Every school also has a single use bathroom for any student who feels uncomfortable with using the bathroom with any other students.

[See ODE Guidance Pg 25](#) : OSBA has not written a policy on Transgender Restrooms.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Question: What is the goal of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs?

Answer: District goal: Create a culture of care and belonging by providing staff and students time, supports and resources. Our core belief is that we want all staff and students to feel happy and proud of their work.

The rationale for using SEL in schools:

For a long time, we’ve seen students at all ages who have a hard time interacting with peers, dealing with frustrations in a reasonable way, and identifying what they need in times of stress. Since returning from the pandemic we’ve seen this challenge grow exponentially at every level.

SEL practices are a way to teach students how to positively interact with each other, how to support their peers and family members, how to identify when they are reaching a breaking point, and what they can do for themselves.

Any human cannot have the capacity to listen and learn unless they feel safe and connected (there is a lot of research behind this). SEL practices help us as staff members to create a safe and calm environment and be able to connect with students on a personal level. While our main job is to teach, that can’t be our first job. *Students don’t care what we know unless they know that we care.* SEL practices help us get there.

What this looks like in practice:

Schools across the district do short mini lessons with students throughout the year. This also aligns with our positive and proactive approach to behavior management. Both in and out of class we help students to know what the expectation is so they aren’t confused. When they don’t meet that expectation, we start first by asking the student why they didn’t comply and then work to re-teach them, rather than immediately giving a

punishment. Oftentimes the reason students aren't doing the right thing is because they don't know how to do the right thing.

Recently Dorena School had an entire morning dedicated to learning about these concepts and how to use the strategies to be better students and teachers. They learned about how their brain responds when in fear or upset, how that affects their thinking, and what they can do to get back on track. The response from students was amazing: One child left to go to the bathroom and on their way back was running quickly and said to a staff member "I have to get back to my class - I'm learning about my brain!"

Confusions:

There is a misperception that by engaging students in SEL work that they somehow will be forced to stray from the morals of their family. While every family has a different set of values and ethics, the SEL practices that we engage in with our students only help them to be better family members, better members of society, and better members of any community of which they are a part (religious or otherwise).

Parent Access to Curriculum

Question: What is the process a parent should use to review the curriculum a teacher is using.

Answer: A parent can request curriculum materials from several staff members if the curriculum has already been in use:

1. The teacher of your child who is teaching the curriculum you wish to review
2. The principal of the school where your child is enrolled
3. The Director of Teaching and Learning

Depending on the request, the staff member may provide the parent with physical textbooks or workbooks, links to websites, and/or online videos.

If we are adopting a new curriculum, the adoption team displays the curricular materials at the district office prior to making a recommendation to the school board. Parents may also inquire and schedule a time to review the materials with the Teaching and Learning office while this material is being displayed. For an example about how to schedule time to see the materials check this link: [Teaching and Learning Materials](#)

Curriculum adoption for each subject/content area occurs every 7 years and is scheduled by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Depending on the subject/content area, this can be a very expensive purchase and process. For that reason, many Oregon school districts delay their curriculum adoption simply because they don't have the funds. SLSD has done this in the past but is currently on track to be aligned with the ODE schedule.

[IIA Instructional Material Resources](#)

ODE reviews any potential programs and provides a list of those that are approved to be adopted. If a district wants to adopt a different program they must go through an exception process.

Question: Are certain curriculum topics opt-in instead of opt-out?

Answer:

According to Oregon Law, parents can opt their children out of any or all sexuality education components. However, parents cannot opt their children out of the entire health course or program without written documentation of a religious or disability-related reason. In those cases, parents would also have to demonstrate to the school district how to comply with the Health Education Standards with alternative instruction.

Parents can also opt their students out of statewide testing requirements.

We do not have any opt-in curriculum. All of our curricula (Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Health) are aligned to age-appropriate state standards. Requiring families to opt-in to any curriculum would be an undue burden on families and an unnecessary requirement. Further, school staff believe such practices would disproportionately deny curricular access to students whose parents are not engaged with their school.

Staff and Parent Communications

Question: Does district policy encourage staff to lie to parents about students' gender pronouns?

Answer: No. Lying would be against the professional ethics of a teacher, administrator or any district employee. South Lane Teacher Standards state that a teacher must "demonstrate sound judgment reflecting integrity, honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness". As a licensed educator in the state of Oregon, teachers and administrators must "maintain the dignity of the profession by respecting and obeying the law, exemplifying personal integrity and honesty" Violation of these standards could lead to discipline of the staff member. If a parent suspects that a staff member has lied to them, the parent should discuss it with the teacher and supervising administrator.

Question: Are there any circumstances under which staff would hide a student's trans identity from parents and if so, what?

Answer: Our staff members make every effort to work collaboratively with parents when students disclose sensitive personal information. Often this is done by counselors, social emotional learning specialists or school administrators. If a staff member withholds any information from a parent it is only when the student has indicated fear of retaliation or emotional harm from the parent. Our staff members proceed cautiously when students indicate fear of harm from a parent. If this is the case, they may involve Department of Human Services (DHS) or police depending on what the student discloses. Staff members work in partnership with counselors and administrators when this is the case.

Question: Has a staff member from Preschool Promise punched a student?

Answer: The district did receive a report that a staff member physically abused a student. Student safety is our #1 concern, so we take these concerns very seriously. As with all serious allegations of this nature we took swift and thorough action. We made sure the students in the classroom were safe while conducting a detailed investigation. This allegation was also reported to local police and to the Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS involved their investigative division (OTIS - Office of Training, Investigations and Safety). In addition, the allegation was reported to and reviewed by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC - the body responsible for issuing teacher licenses). All 4 agencies came to the same conclusion that there was no evidence to support this claim.

Board Meetings

Question: Why does the Board conduct the Board meetings in a small room with limited access?

Answer: The Board has always conducted Board meetings in the Boardroom at the district office. The law now requires that all Board meetings be available to the public virtually. We've installed permanently wired speakers to allow the conversations to be heard. Due to our commitment to prioritizing dollars to the classroom, we don't have this capability in other district spaces. We do have an overflow room where community members can observe the meeting in a space where they can be in community. The reason for silence is so that the Board can engage in dialogue with one another or with staff members.

Question: Why are observers of the Board meetings not allowed to engage in conversation with the Board or one another?

Answer: By law and policy, Board meetings are meetings for the Board to conduct district business in public. They are not meetings with the public for discussion. However, Boards may choose to allow public comment for a limited part of the meeting.

See policy: [BDDH Public Comment](#)

Question: Why is the public comment time limited and why does the Board limit the topics they will allow?

Answer: The Board only has one meeting a month to accomplish all that is required to run the district. Because Board members are volunteers and the staff members present have already worked a full-day, we try to keep the meetings to a reasonable amount of time. For the Board to know about the district, the staff brings reports and presentations to share about what the district is doing for Board members to be able to make informed decisions.

In closing, the Board would like for me to convey the following message:

As school board members, we work to represent the priorities of our community while at the same time making decisions that best serve our students. On every issue that is

brought to the Board, we consider what is the highest priority and how we can best serve all of our students.

From time to time, there arises a group of community members who want to have the Board take action on an issue or they take issue with the way a decision is made or how it is being implemented. The Board determines how much time to hear comments on specific topics based on how much work needs to be accomplished at the remaining Board meetings given the considerations mentioned above.

Please contact me if you have any further questions regarding this communication.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Curtis