

From: [Colleen Gleason-Epple](#)
To: [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission](#)
Subject: Gender Identity Support Policy - further details
Date: Tuesday, November 19, 2024 8:15:28 PM

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Hi,

Thank you again for providing me with an opportunity to present to your group this evening. We are in unprecedented times with the upcoming government administration. Trump has threatened the rights of LGBTQ+ people, especially our Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Non-conforming members. After the election, crisis calls went up by 700% at The Trevor Project, a national crisis hotline for LGBTQ+ youth. The mental health of LGBTQ+ youth is negatively impacted when anti-lgbt and anti-trans laws are pushed. This is going to be a scary 4 years for this community, for our community. Now, more than ever, we must come together to protect the LGBTQ+ youth in Sudbury. While we cannot control what the federal government does, we do have a say in how well protected our LGBTQ+ students at Sudbury Public Schools are.

As I mentioned, the Sudbury Public Schools School Committee (SC) will be starting to discuss policies around equity, including gender identity support at their meeting at 12pm on Thursday, 11/21. SC is currently looking at two versions of gender identity policies that other school districts have already adopted. The first version was adopted by school districts such as Framingham, Natick, and Somerville around 2016. This policy is an example of one that is well-intentioned, but lacks the attention to detail of the policies updated in 2021. This is Framingham's policy:

This policy was adopted and approved by the Framingham School Committee in Open Session on April 26, 2023 File: JBD - GENDER IDENTITY SUPPORT

The Framingham Public Schools strive to provide a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment in which all students can thrive and succeed. All students need and deserve a safe and supportive learning environment to progress developmentally and academically.

Framingham Public Schools support and respect students' individual differences. For students who identify as gender nonconforming and/or transgender a supportive strategic plan to address legal and social emotional issues will be developed by a team of school personnel who are familiar with the student. This team will include the school administrator, school counselor, social worker and nurse. The plan will address the student's needs for the entire educational program, including before and after school activities.

A critical component of the student's support plan may include name changes and gender identity markers used in communication with and about the student and in written communication with the family or legal guardian/s. Framingham Public Schools will not require legal documentation to change the student's name or gender on the educational record.

Framingham Public School's administration and staff will follow the referenced procedures for supporting the student and developing the support plan. The plan will be reviewed and revised on an as needed basis.

References:

[An Act Relative to Gender Identity \(Chapter 199 of the Acts of 2011\)](#)

MGL c.4, s5

MGL c. 76, § 5

603 CMR [26.00](#)

603 CMR [1.00](#)

603 CMR [23.00](#)

603 CMR § [23.04](#)

603 CMR §§[23.01](#) and [23.07](#).

The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 USC 1232g

First reading: January 19, 2016; second reading: February 2, 2016

The second version was adopted by Weston, Westford, and Cambridge around 2021. Here is Weston's current policy:

TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS

The Weston Public Schools prohibits discrimination (see Policy AC Harassment Non-Discrimination Policy) on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation; and ensures that all students have equal right of access and equal enjoyment of the opportunities, advantages, privileges, and courses of study. This includes students' rights to a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment.

Consistent with this policy and applicable laws and guidance, school staff will create and reinforce a culture where transgender and gender nonconforming students feel safe, supported, and fully included. Additional procedural guidelines to address, at minimum, the following areas will be created by the Superintendent of Schools or designee: transitions, privacy, confidentiality and student records, names, pronouns, gender markers on student records, restrooms, locker rooms and changing facilities, physical education classes, intramural and interscholastic athletic activities, dress codes, professional development, and other gender based activities, rules, policies and practices, and trainings.

DEFINITIONS

The following terms are defined to assist in understanding this policy, and not for the purpose of labeling students. Students may prefer other terms to describe their gender.

Gender identity: a person's innate and deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of having a particular gender, which can include being male, female, non-binary, another gender or no gender. Gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth.

Gender expression: the manner in which a person represents or expresses gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, or other appearances and mannerisms.

Gender nonconforming: a term used to describe people whose gender expression differs from social expectations. Terms "gender queer," "agender," or "bigender" are also used.

Non-binary: a term used to define people whose gender is not exclusively male or female, including those who identify with a gender other than male or female, as more than one gender, or no gender.

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

Transitioning: the process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another. Transitioning is different for everyone and may or may not involve legal or physical changes

STUDENT TRANSITIONS

A student chooses when to transition. When a student transitions and shares that information with the school, the school shall offer to meet with the student and the parents/guardians/caregivers of the student if the student wishes for them to be involved in the process, or in the case of a younger student, with the student and the student's parents/guardians/caregivers, to develop a plan that will help create a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment at the school for the student. Schools shall carefully consider every aspect of transition planning outlined in the procedural guidelines, and any planning considerations raised by the student and/or their guardian(s); and shall submit a personalized plan for the transition in writing to the school principal.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Protecting the privacy of transgender and gender nonconforming students shall be a top priority for school staff. Information about a student's status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth may constitute confidential medical information. Disclosing this information to other students, the student's parents/guardians, or other third parties may violate privacy laws. The fact that a student may have chosen to disclose their gender identity or transition status to school staff or other students does not otherwise authorize staff to disclose confidential information about the student.

NAMES AND PRONOUNS

Every student has the right to choose and be addressed by a name and pronouns that correspond to the student's gender identity, regardless of sex assigned at birth or the name that appears on their birth certificate.

School staff shall accurately record and use the student's chosen name and pronouns that are consistent with the student's gender identity. However, unless the student has requested otherwise, when communicating with the parent/guardian of a student, all staff shall use the student's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student's gender assigned at birth.

School staff shall work with the student and the parents/guardians/caregivers of the student if the student wishes for them to be involved in the process, or in the case of a younger student, with the student and the student's parents/guardians/caregiver, to develop a plan for appropriately communicating any name and/or pronoun change within the school.

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Court orders are not required to update student records to reflect changes in a student's name and gender markers. Any changes of a student's name and/or gender marker within the student records shall be made upon request of the student and/or parent/guardian, depending on the student's age/grade, as set out in the student records regulations 603 CMR 23.01; 603 CMR 23.08. For students under 14 years old, only the parent/guardian may request the change. For students who are 14-17 years old, or who have entered ninth grade, the student may alone or with the aid of parents/guardians, make decisions about any student records.

FACILITIES

A student may access restrooms, locker rooms, changing facilities, and other gender segregated facilities that correspond to the student's gender identity. All schools shall have designated restrooms designed for use by one person at a time, which are accessible to students regardless of gender. The District shall also incorporate such facilities into construction or renovation plans. Any student, regardless of the reason, shall be provided with access to a single use restroom. No student will be required to use gender-neutral facilities because of their gender identity or expression.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES, INTRAMURAL AND INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

In those instances where there are gender-segregated classes or activities, as opposed to co-educational classes and activities, each student will be allowed to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity. Furthermore, unless precluded by state-level or interscholastic policies, all students shall be permitted to participate in intramural and interscholastic athletics in a manner consistent with their gender identity.

DRESS CODE

A student must be permitted to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity and gender expression, including nonconforming genders, within the constraints of the dress codes adopted by the school. School staff shall not enforce a school's dress code more strictly against transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students than other students, or hold transgender students to standards that are specific to genders with which they do not identify.

OTHER GENDER-BASED ACTIVITIES, RULES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

School staff should review and evaluate all gender-based activities, rules, policies, and practices currently in use; and strive to replace each with non-gendered alternatives. If there is a clear and sound pedagogical purpose to retain a gender-based activity, rule, or practice, then each student must be allowed to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity. Nonbinary and gender nonconforming students may participate in designated male or female activities, unless precluded by state-level or interscholastic policies.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The District shall conduct training for all staff members on their responsibilities under applicable laws and this policy, including training for new school employees. This policy shall be covered during annual, mandated training.

PUBLICATION

This policy shall be distributed annually to students, parents/guardians, and staff. This policy shall be included or referenced in any student codes of conduct, disciplinary policies, student handbooks, and school websites.

Adopted: 3/22/2021

As you can see, there is a stark difference between the two policies. One of the main reasons these two versions are different is due to when they were adopted. In 2021, we collectively know so much more about how to support gender identity in public schools than we did in 2016. The 2016 policies are vague. It does not make sense for the school committee to pursue the less updated gender identity policy.

Furthermore, the 2021 policies offer our Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Non-conforming students increased protections at SPS. Unfortunately, these increased protections are necessary to keep students safe. LGBTQ+ students are at significantly higher risk for abuse if they come from a non-affirming home. As noted in the 2021 policy, the goal of school staff is always to work with the family to support the student whenever possible. However, in instances where a student discloses that it is not safe to be out at home, the updated policies provide protection for that student and allow Sudbury Public Schools to continue to be a safe place for them. The 2021 policies also provide additional rights for students to ensure that they feel safe and supported by SPS throughout each part of their school day.

In addition, it is important to note that at minimum the state guidance says that every school district should have a gender identity policy. Sudbury should adopt a robust policy, like Weston's, that mirrors the current guidance DESE has given in 2021. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/genderidentity.html>

What can you do? Please send an email to Mandy Sim and Karyn Jones by this Wednesday, 11/20 and urge the school committee to pursue the most recently adopted gender identity policies, in line with Weston, Westford, and Cambridge. We believe that SPS adopting these policies sends a clear message to the LGBTQ+ youth of Sudbury that SPS has their back. Below are Karyn Jones and Mandy Sim's contact information.

Thank you,
Colleen

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