

The board believes that it is essential for Williamston Community Schools to foster an educational environment for all students that is safe, welcoming, and free from stigma and discrimination, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Furthermore, the board requires understanding and compliance with local, state and federal laws concerning bullying, harassment, privacy, and discrimination. Lastly, it is important that all students have the opportunity to express themselves and live authentically.

Title IX Legal Statute:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally-funded education programs and activities. The United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has issued guidance recognizing that Title IX protects transgender students against discrimination based on their gender identity.

Scope:

This policy covers conduct that takes place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles, during a student's commute to and from school, and at bus stops. This policy also pertains to usage of electronic communication that occurs in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles and at bus stops, and on school computers, devices, networks, forums, and mailing lists, as well as any electronic communication that is directed at a student and which substantially interferes with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school. This policy applies to the entire school community, including educators, school and district staff, students, parents, and volunteers.

Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination:

Discrimination, bullying, and harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression is prohibited within the Williamston Community Schools. It is the responsibility of each school and all staff to ensure that all students, including transgender and gender nonconforming students, have safe school environments. The Superintendent shall ensure that any incident of discrimination, harassment, or bullying is given immediate attention, including investigating the incident, taking age and developmentally appropriate action, and providing students and staff with appropriate resources and supports. Enforcement of anti-bullying policies should focus on education and prevention rather than exclusionary discipline. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a student's actual or perceived gender identity or expression are to be taken seriously and handled in the same manner as other discrimination, bullying, or harassment complaints (See Policy 8260 and 8260-R Anti-Bullying.)

Privacy/Confidentiality:

The Superintendent shall ensure that all personally identifiable and medical information relating to transgender and gender nonconforming students shall be kept confidential in accordance with applicable state, local, and federal privacy laws. School staff shall not disclose any information that may reveal a student's transgender status to others, including the student's parents or guardians and other school staff, unless legally required to do so, unless the student has authorized such disclosure, or unless a school official determines that disclosure is necessary to prevent immediate harm to the student's health or safety. In the rare instance that a school is legally required to disclose a student's transgender status, the school shall provide the student an opportunity to make that disclosure him or herself, where practicable. This would include providing the student with support services the student may need to make the disclosure in a safe and supportive environment. Transgender and gender nonconforming students have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and what private information to share. The fact that a student chooses to use a different name, to transition at school, or to disclose their transgender status to staff or other students does not authorize school staff to disclose a student's personally identifiable or medical information.

Media and Community Communication:

When communicating to the media or community about issues related to gender identity or expression, the Superintendent shall designate a single spokesperson to address the issue. Rather than directly commenting on the issue, other district and school staff shall direct parents and the media to the designated spokesperson.

Names, Pronouns, and School Records:

Every student has the right to be addressed by a name and pronouns that correspond to the student's gender identity. Regardless of whether a transgender or gender nonconforming student has legally changed their name or gender, schools will allow such students to use a chosen name and gender pronouns that reflect their identity. It is recommended that school staff privately ask transgender or gender nonconforming students how they want to be addressed in class and in the school's communication with the student's parents or guardians. Some transgender and gender nonconforming youth may feel most comfortable being addressed by gender-neutral pronouns or just referred to by their names (without pronouns).

If the student has previously been known at school by a different name, the school administration will direct school personnel to use the student's chosen name and appropriate pronouns. To ensure consistency among administrators and staff, every effort will be made to immediately update student education records (such as attendance reports, class rosters for substitutes, school IDs, transcripts, electronic records, etc.) with the student's chosen name and appropriate gender markers. Records with the student's birth name and gender will be kept in a separate, confidential file. School staff or administrators may be specifically required by law to report a

student's legal name or gender. In those instances, the Superintendent shall ensure practices are developed to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of such confidential information.

Access to Gender-Segregated Activities and Facilities:

With respect to all restrooms, locker rooms or changing facilities, students shall have access to facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Schools may maintain separate restroom, locker room or changing facilities for male and female students, provided that they allow all students equal access to facilities that are consistent with their gender identity. Students, including non-binary students, should determine which facilities are consistent with their gender identity. Any student who is uncomfortable using a shared gender-segregated facility, regardless of the reason, shall, upon the student's request, be provided with a safe and non-stigmatizing alternative. This may include, for example, addition of a privacy partition or curtain, provision to use a nearby private restroom or office, or a separate changing schedule. However, requiring the transgender or gender nonconforming student to use a separate space threatens to publicly identify and stigmatize the student as transgender and should not be done unless requested by a student. Under no circumstances will students be required to use gender-segregated facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity. Where they exist, schools shall designate facilities designed for use by one person at a time as accessible to all students regardless of gender. However, under no circumstances may a student be required to use separate facilities because the student is transgender or gender nonconforming. The district is encouraged to incorporate single-user facilities and greater privacy into new construction or renovation, and to assess ways to increase privacy for all students in existing facilities.

Physical Education Classes and Intramural and Interscholastic Athletics:

All students shall be permitted to participate in physical education classes and intramural sports in a manner consistent with their gender identity. Furthermore, students shall be permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics in a manner consistent with their gender identity to the extent possible under the guidelines established by the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA).

Other Gender-Based Activities, Rules, Policies and Practices:

As a general matter, schools should evaluate all gender-based activities, rules, policies, and practices including classroom activities, school ceremonies, and school photos — and maintain only those that serve an important educational purpose. Students shall be permitted to participate in any such activities or conform to any such rule, policy, or practice consistent with their gender identity.

Dress Code:

Schools may enforce dress codes pursuant to district policy, but any such dress codes may not be based on gender. Students shall have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity

and expression, including maintaining a gender-neutral appearance 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 and gender nonconforming students than other students.

Student Transitions:

The school shall accept the gender identity that each student asserts. There is no medical or mental health diagnosis or treatment threshold that students must meet in order to have their gender identity recognized and respected. The assertion may be evidenced by an expressed desire to be consistently recognized as the sex consistent with their gender identity. Students ready to socially transition may initiate a process to change their name, pronoun, attire, and access to preferred programs, activities, and facilities consistent with their gender identity. Each student has a unique process for transitioning. The school shall customize support to allow each student's equal access to the district's educational programs and activities.

Training and Professional Development:

The district shall conduct training for all staff members on their responsibilities under applicable laws and this policy, including teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, and health staff. Information regarding this policy shall be incorporated into training for new school employees. To the extent funding is available, the Superintendent shall implement ongoing professional development to build the skills of all staff members to prevent, identify and respond to bullying, harassment and discrimination. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Terms, concepts, and current developmental understandings of gender identity, gender expression, and gender diversity in children and adolescents
2. Developmentally appropriate strategies for communication with students and parents about issues related to gender identity and gender expression that protect student privacy
3. Developmentally appropriate strategies for preventing and intervening in bullying incidents, including cyberbullying, classroom-management practices, curriculum, and resources that educators can integrate into their classrooms to help foster a more gender-inclusive environment for all students
4. School and district policies regarding bullying, harassment, discrimination, and suicide prevention and responsibilities of staff

Source Documents:

1. Michigan Board of Education Statement and Guidance on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students, September, 2016
2. GLSEN Model District Policy On Transgender and Gender Non Conforming Students Revised February, 2016

3. The School District of Philadelphia: 252 Transgender and Gender Non Conforming Students
4. Ann Arbor Public Schools: Policy 5011: Transgender and Non Conforming Students. June 28, 2017 (draft)

Adopted:

Williamston Board of Education
Williamston, MI 48895

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