

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Policy No. 0103

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY

BASIC COMMITMENTS

Inclusive Environments for LGBTQIA+ People

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Education affirms its intent to maintain a school environment that is welcoming to everyone, including members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Systemic transphobia, biphobia, and homophobia can push LGBTQIA+ youth out of school and individuals that are intimidated, bullied, and/or harassed based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression can suffer long-lasting negative educational and mental health outcomes. For example, according to the Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, youth who experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression were five times more likely to attempt suicide than other youth and creating inclusive and affirming environments for transgender and non-binary youth by respecting their pronouns is associated with lower rates of attempting suicide in youth as well.

The intent of this Policy is to ensure that the entire PGCPSS community, including educators, staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers can learn and interact in school communities that accept diversity and promote educational equity. The Board of Education affirms its commitment to maintain a safe environment conducive for learning and to foster learning environments that honor, respect and accept the diversity of the student body, staff, parents, and caregivers.

The Board of Education acknowledges that creating LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in our school system is not complete with any one action but depends on a systematic shift and by increasing the understanding of sexual orientation and gender diversity, recognizing that this creation requires appropriate communication, professional development, and a commitment from the Board, school staff, students, and the overall community.

II. POLICY PURPOSE

To establish a policy to promote an environment across Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) that is safe, welcoming, and affirming for all PGCPS students, staff, parents, and caregivers regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

III. DEFINITIONS

1. *Gender Expression* - The manner in which a person represents or expresses their gender to others often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.
2. *Gender Identity* - A person’s deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender. One’s gender identity can be the same or different than the sex assigned at birth. Gender identities may include, “male,” “female,” “androgynous,” “transgender,” “gender queer,” “non-binary,” and many others, or a combination thereof.
3. *Gender Diverse* (Formerly referred to as gender non-conforming) - A term for people whose gender identity differs from the stereotypically expected norms associated with their sex assigned at birth. This includes people who identify inside or outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders.
4. *Gender Transition* - The process by which a person goes from living and/or identifying as one gender to living and/or identifying as another. Some people may personally identify as a different gender but may not seek to change their public life. Most transgender individuals will undergo gender transition through a process commonly referred to as “social transition,” whereby they begin to live and identify as the gender consistent with their gender identity. For some people, the experience of gender transition involves medical intervention, including hormone therapy and surgery. Each person’s gender transition is different and not all transgender people undergo medical interventions as part of their transition.
5. *LGBT or LGBTQIA+* - An umbrella term referring to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer/questioning. The acronym includes the plus symbol (+) in reference to other identities that do not conform to dominant societal norms around sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.
6. *Sexual Orientation* - The inner feelings of who a person is attracted to emotionally and/or physically, in relation to their own gender identity. Some people may identify as “asexual,” “bisexual,” “gay,” “lesbian,” “pansexual,” “queer,” “straight,” and many more.

7. *Transgender* - Individuals whose sex assigned at birth does not match their internalized sense of their gender identity.

IV. **STANDARDS**

1. The Board of Education prohibits discrimination in all PGCPs activities on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression as well

as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, genetic information, citizenship status or disability.

2. Restroom and Locker Room Accessibility

- a. Students and staff shall have access to restrooms, locker rooms or changing facilities that correspond to their gender identity.
- b. A student or staff who does not wish to use a shared facility shall be provided with a safe alternative, which may include, but not be limited to:
 - i. access to a single stall or gender-neutral facility;
 - ii. addition of a privacy partition or curtain;
 - iii. use of a nearby private restroom or office; or
 - iv. a separate changing schedule
- c. A transgender or gender diverse student and staff shall not be required to use a separate, non-integrated space when the student has not requested access to such a space. Under no circumstances shall students and staff be required to use sex-segregated facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity.

3. Physical Education Classes, Intramural and Interscholastic Athletics

- a. All students shall be permitted to participate in physical education classes and intramural sports consistent with their gender identity in accordance with Administrative Procedure 5183. Students shall be permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics in accordance with the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) guidelines.

4. Use of Names/Pronouns

- a. The Board of Education recognizes the right of students and staff to be referred to by the name and by the pronouns that correspond with their gender identity. The Board of Education encourages students and staff to normalize pronouns so that the usage is not limited to members of the LGBTQIA+ community, however, the decision of students and staff to use pronouns that correspond with their gender identity is a personal choice.
- b. Schools shall allow all students and staff to use their chosen or preferred name and gender pronouns that reflect their identity, regardless of whether they have undergone a legal name change process.
- c. PGCPS shall ensure that school staff use a student's or staff's preferred name and pronouns consistent with the student's gender identity in its student and staff information systems, except where the school is legally required to use a student's legal name and gender assigned at birth.
- d. Inadvertent slips in the use of names or pronouns may occur; however, staff or students who intentionally and persistently refuse to respect a student's or staff member's gender identity by using the wrong name and/or gender pronoun are in violation of this Policy and may face disciplinary action.

5. Privacy

- a. School staff shall not disclose information that may reveal a student or staff member's LGBTQIA+ status to others, including parents and other school staff, unless legally required to do so or the student or staff member has authorized such disclosure. School staff should recognize that providing support for a student, even when the family is non-supportive, is critical.

6. Transitioning in the Workplace

- a. Staff who transition on the job can expect the support of the PGCPS administrators and Human Resources staff. Each transgender individual is likely to have different preferences about making their gender transition known to their coworkers and the specific steps and timing of a transition may vary.

- b. For sex-specific jobs, transgender employees will be classified and assigned in a manner consistent with their gender identity, not their sex assigned at birth.

7. Dress Codes

- a. Students and staff shall have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity and gender expression, within the constraints of the dress codes adopted by the school. Dress codes shall be gender-neutral (i.e. not specific to any particular gender) and school staff shall not enforce a school's dress code more strictly against transgender and gender non-conforming students and staff than other students and staff.

8. Professional Development and Training

- a. All PGCPS staff shall complete training on topics relating to the LGBTQIA+ community, including procedures for preventing and responding to bullying, harassment and discrimination based on gender identity/expression. PGCPS will provide additional training and guidance to staff where needed.

9. Parent Involvement

- a. In some cases, transgender and gender nonconforming students may not openly express their gender identity at home because of safety concerns or lack of acceptance. Matters of gender identity can be complex and may involve familial conflict; if this is the case, and support is required, the CEO will designate the appropriate Office as necessary to support the student.

V. IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1. The Chief Executive Officer shall develop administrative procedures consistent with this Policy and monitor its implementation by providing reports to the Board, as needed.

VI. REFERENCES

- 1. Board Policy 0101, Educational Equity
- 2. Board Policy 0102, Culturally Proficient Schools and Central Offices

3. Board Policy 0125, Nondiscrimination
4. Administrative Procedure 4170, Discrimination and Harassment
5. Administrative Procedure 5143, Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation
6. Administrative Procedure 5183, Transgender and Non-Confirming Students
7. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
8. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
9. MPSSAA Guidance for Participation of Transgender Youth in Interscholastic Athletics

VII. HISTORY

1. Adopted 03/24/2022