



The Birches Academy of Academics and Art Transgender Student Policy

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines to:

- 1) foster a learning environment that is safe and free from discrimination, harassment and bullying; and
- 2) assist in the educational and social integration of transgender students in our school.

These guidelines are intended to be interpreted in light of applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as Board policies, procedures and school rules.

These guidelines are not intended to anticipate every possible situation that may occur, since the needs of particular students and families differ depending on the student's age, developmental level and other factors. Administrators and school staff are expected to consider the needs of students on a case-by-case basis, and to utilize these guidelines and other available resources as appropriate.

B. Definitions

The following definitions are not intended to provide rigid labels for students, but to assist in discussing and addressing the needs of each student. The terminology in this area is evolving, and preferences for particular terminology vary widely. Administrators, school staff, volunteers, students and others who interact with students are expected to be sensitive to the ways in which each transgender student may wish to be identified. However, for the sake of brevity, these guidelines refer to "transgender students."

1. *Gender identity* – A person's gender-related identity, appearance, or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth.
2. *Gender expression* – The manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.



3. *Transgender* – An adjective describing a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned sex at birth.
4. *Transition* – The process by which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another. For most elementary and secondary students, this involves no or minimal medical interventions. In some cases, transgender students under the age of 18 are in a process of social transition from one gender to another.

C. Addressing the Needs of Transgender Students

Gender-related identity may be displayed by providing evidence including, but not limited to, medical history, care or treatment of the gender-related identity, consistent and uniform assertion of the gender-related identity, or any other evidence that the gender-related identity is sincerely held as part of a person's core identity.

For the purposes of these guidelines, a student will be considered transgender if, at school, he/she consistently asserts a gender identity or expression different from the gender assigned at birth. This involves more than a casual declaration of gender identity or expression, but it does not necessarily require a medical diagnosis.

The following procedure will be used to address needs raised by transgender students and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s):

1. A transgender student and/or his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) should contact the Dean of School or the Dean of Students.
2. A meeting should be scheduled to discuss the student's particular circumstances and needs. In addition to the student (if appropriate), parent(s)/guardian(s) and Dean of School and/or Dean of Students, other participants may include the student's current or anticipated teacher, school psychologist, and others who can assist in developing a plan for that student.
3. A plan should be developed by the school, in consultation with the student (if appropriate), parent(s)/guardian(s) and others as appropriate, to address the student's particular needs. If the student has an IEP or a 504 Plan, the provisions of these plans should be taken into consideration in developing the plan for addressing transgender issues. However, the IEP or 504 Plan should remain separate documents.



4. The school may request documentation from medical providers or other service providers as necessary to assist staff in developing a plan appropriate for the student. However, the student may not have been assessed by a professional.
5. Consensus should be sought in the plan's elements. If the parties cannot reach an agreement about the elements to be included in the plan, the Dean of School will resolve any outstanding issues.
6. The resulting plan should be viewed as fluid in that follow-up meetings and revisions to the plan are likely.

D. Guidance on Specific Issues

1. **Privacy:** The student plan should address how to deal with disclosures that the student is transgender. In some cases, a student (and/or his parent(s)/guardian(s)) may want school staff and students to know, and in other cases the student/family may not want this information to be widely known. School staff should take care to follow the student's plan and not to inadvertently disclose information that is intended to be kept private or that is protected from disclosure (such as confidential medical information).

School staff should keep in mind that under FERPA student records may only be accessed and disclosed to staff with a legitimate educational interest in the information. Disclosures to others should only be made with appropriate authorization from the administration and/or parents/guardians.

2. **Official Records:** Schools are required to maintain a permanent record for each student, which includes legal name and gender. This information is also required for standardized tests and official school unit reports. This official information will only be changed upon receipt of documentation that a student's name or gender has been changed in accordance with applicable laws. Any requests to change a student's legal name or gender in official records should be referred to the Dean of School.

To the extent that the school is not required to use a student's legal name or gender on school records or other documents, the school should use the name and gender identified in the student's plan.

3. **Names/Pronouns:** A student who has been identified as transgender under these guidelines should be addressed by school staff and other students by the name



and pronoun corresponding to their gender identity that is consistently asserted at school.

4. Restrooms: A student who has been identified as transgender under these guidelines should be permitted (but not required) to use the restrooms assigned to the gender which the student consistently asserts at school. A transgender student who expresses a need for privacy will be provided with reasonable alternative facilities or accommodations such as using a separate stall or a staff facility. However, a student shall not be required to use a separate non-communal facility over his/her objection.
5. Other Gender-Segregated Facilities or Activities: As a general rule, in any other facilities or activities when students may be separated by gender, transgender students may participate in accordance with the gender identity consistently asserted at school.
6. Dress Code: Transgender students may dress in accordance with their consistently asserted gender identity, consistent with any applicable requirements in the dress code or school rules.
7. Safety and Support for Transgender and Transitioning Students: School staff are expected to comply with any plan developed for a transgender student and to notify the Dean of School or other designated support person for the student if there are concerns about the plan, or about the student's safety or welfare.

School staff should be sensitive to the fact that transgender and transitioning students may be at higher risk for being bullied or harassed, and should immediately notify the Dean of School if he/she becomes aware of a problem.

E. Staff Training and Informational Materials

1. The Dean of School and/or Dean of Students may institute in-service training and/or distribute educational materials about transgender issues to school staff as he/she deems appropriate.
2. Teachers and other staff who have responsibilities for a transgender student with a plan will receive support in implementing the plan.