



## Guidelines for Support of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

Updated 7/15/2024

The need to provide support to transgender and gender nonconforming students arises whenever the school learns that a student is transgender or gender nonconforming and consistently asserts at school a gender identity that is different from the student's sex assigned at birth. These guidelines are intended to help schools ensure a safe learning environment free from discrimination and harassment, and to support the educational and social needs of transgender and gender nonconforming students. Because these guidelines do not anticipate every situation that may occur, the needs of each student must be assessed on a case-by-case basis, utilizing the *Support Plan for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students*.

### Definitions

1. *Gender Identity*: an individual's inner sense of gender, which may be different from or the same as a person's sex assigned at birth.
2. *Sex assigned at birth*: the sex designation recorded on an infant's birth certificate should such a record be provided at birth.
3. *Transgender*: a term that describes people whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth.
4. *Gender transition*: the process in which transgender individuals begin asserting the sex that corresponds to their gender identity instead of the sex they were assigned at birth. During gender transition, individuals begin to live and identify as the sex consistent with their gender identity and may dress differently, adopt a new name, and use pronouns consistent with their gender identity. Transgender individuals may undergo gender transition at any stage of their lives, and gender transition can happen swiftly or over a long duration of time.
5. *Gender expression*: how a person manifests their gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, or mannerisms. It is usually an extension of their gender identity.
6. *Gender nonconforming*: a term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. Other terms that can have similar meanings are gender diverse or gender expansive.
7. *Sexual orientation*: an individual's physical or emotional attraction to the same and/or the opposite gender. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and straight are all examples of sexual orientations. A person's sexual orientation is distinct from a person's gender identity and expression.

## Discrimination/Harassment

It is the policy of Mesa Public Schools (MPS) to maintain a safe and supportive learning and educational environment that is free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes gender identity.

Complaints alleging harassment, bullying, or discrimination based on an individual's gender identity should be handled in accordance with the procedures set forth in [Policy 1-201 Equal Educational Opportunity and Non-Discrimination \(Students\)](#) or [Policy 5-409 Prohibition on Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying](#), as appropriate. Title IX complaints should be directed to an appropriate building administrator using Title IX complaint form (sex-based discrimination), [harassment or bullying form](#), as appropriate.

## Privacy

Except as set forth herein, school personnel should not disclose information that may reveal a student's transgender or gender nonconforming status. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), only those school employees with a legitimate educational interest should have access to a student's records or the information contained within those records. Disclosing confidential student information to other employees, students, parents, or other third parties may violate privacy laws, including but not limited to FERPA. Transgender and gender nonconforming students have the ability, as do all students, to discuss and express their gender identity openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much of their private information to share with others. Using the *Support Plan for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students*, administrators or their designees should work closely with students in developing an appropriate support plan regarding the confidentiality of the student's transgender or gender nonconforming status.<sup>1</sup>

## Preferred Names/Pronouns

Every student has the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun 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. A transgender student is **not** required to provide verification that the student is undergoing or has undergone medical treatment for the purpose of gender transition, as a condition for changing a student's name and/or gender markers in the District's records. 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, electronic records, Webex and other remote learning identifiers, etc.) with the student's chosen name and appropriate gender markers. In some circumstances, school administrators may be specifically required by law to record a student's name or gender as it appears on documents such as a current birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity. In those instances, school staff and administrators shall record this information on the protected identity screen on Synergy (see below) to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of the information. All records that are not specifically required by law to match government-issued documents

---

<sup>1</sup>Administrators must obtain permission from the student before sharing private information regarding their gender identity and this permission should be documented on the *Support Plan for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students* form. Students should be informed that if they are requesting to change information in Synergy, parent(s) will be notified, although their consent is not required.

shall be updated upon a student's written request. Parent(s)/legal guardians will be notified if changes are made in Synergy to the student's education records, although their consent is not required.

Any change to a student's gender designation in the student information record should be reviewed with the Synergy Integrity Specialist in the Information Systems Department so that the Information Systems Department is aware of the change and what effects the change may have for student reporting purposes.

### **Legal Name Change**

MPS must maintain for each enrolled student an official student record that includes the student's legal name. The student's legal name must be used in all official student records, including a transcript, and reports to the Arizona Department of Education. A student's legal name will be changed by MPS in its official student records upon receipt of documentation that the legal name has been changed pursuant to applicable law. The documentation required for a legal change of name is a court order, valid birth certificate, or valid passport demonstrating the student's new legal name.

Any change to a student's legal name should be reviewed with the Synergy Integrity Specialist in the Information Systems Department so that the Information Systems Department is aware of the change and what effects the change may have for student reporting purposes.

### **Activities and Facilities**

When a school provides sex-segregated activities and facilities, transgender students must be allowed to participate in such activities and access such facilities consistent with their gender identity. This includes, but is not limited to, restrooms, locker rooms, shower facilities, and single-sex classes. A school may make individual-user options available to all students who voluntarily seek additional privacy. It may not, however, *require* transgender students to use facilities inconsistent with their gender identity or to use individual-user facilities when other students are not required to do so.

### **Sports and Physical Education**

Transgender and gender nonconforming students should be permitted to participate in physical education and sports in accordance with the student's gender identity that is consistently asserted at school. However, in conformity with Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) § 15-120.02, interscholastic or intramural athletic teams or sports "designated for 'females,' 'women,' or 'girls' may not be open to students of the male sex." Additionally, participation in competitive athletic activities that are restricted to students of a specific gender may require authorization from the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA), as explained in their Constitution, Bylaws, Policies and Procedures at Section 41.9.

### **Gender Segregation in Other Areas**

As a general rule, in any other circumstances where students are separated by gender in school activities (e.g., overnight field trips), students should be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity consistently asserted at school. Activities that may involve the need for accommodations to address student privacy concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

## Dress Codes

Schools are required to enforce the Student Dress and Grooming standards set forth in [Policy 5-302](#) and [procedure 5-302.A](#). Students have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity that is consistently asserted at school, within the constraints of the adopted dress code.

## Synergy – Protected Student Identity

Synergy now has the ability to protect a legal identity and display a preferred identity in student data. The following fields can be protected: student last name, student first name, student middle name, suffix, birth date, birthplace, birth verification and gender.

To protect a legal identity the school must first complete the process on the legal website and verify the student data in Synergy is the correct legal identity information as indicated on the birth verification provided by the parent/guardian. After completing the *MPS Support Plan for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students*, the administrator sends an email to [synergy@mpsaz.org](mailto:synergy@mpsaz.org) requesting the legal identity for student #xxxxxx be protected. The email needs to include the legal name and gender and the preferred name and gender. The Synergy administrator will make the change in the system, update the active directory, and notify the school when all tasks are complete.

**The protected legal identity can be viewed by select staff roles on the Student screen> Protected Information tab:**

The screenshot shows the Synergy Student Information System interface. At the top, the student's name is "Doe, Jane" and the role is "Teacher". The "Protected Information" tab is selected and circled in red. Below the tab, there are fields for "Last Name" (Doe), "First Name" (Jane), "Middle Name", "Suffix", "Penn ID" (388882), "State Student Number", "Grade" (10), "Gender" (Female), and "Custody".

The "Legal Identity" section is expanded, showing a note: "Only protected information appears on this tab. The fields on this tab page are reserved for legal identifying information and should be considered confidential. Selection of the autofill checkbox will populate these fields with corresponding values. The user will need to verify and/or change values according to legal documentation. When the record is saved, the system will validate the values displayed on this tab against those in corresponding fields. Please note that these fields will be used for State Reporting if your system has been configured to do so." Below the note, there are fields for "Legal Last Name" (Doe), "Legal First Name" (John), "Legal Middle Name", "Legal Suffix", "Legal Gender" (Male), "Legal Birth Date" (08/02/2001), "Legal Birth State" (Arizona), "Legal Birth Country" (United States of America), and "Legal ID Verification" (Birth Certificate (gov't issued)).

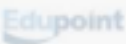
Two red arrows point from the "Protected Information" tab to the "Legal Identity" section. A red box highlights the upper fields (Legal Last Name, Legal First Name, Legal Middle Name, Legal Suffix, Legal Gender) with the text "Preferred identity is listed in the upper fields." Another red box highlights the lower fields (Legal Birth Date, Legal Birth State, Legal Birth Country, Legal ID Verification) with the text "Legal protected identity is in the lower fields."

**When a student has a legal protected identity the preferred identity will display on screens and reports from within Synergy, TeacherVUE and the parent/student portals:**

**Student Profile**  
Doe, Jane -- Homeroom: N/A

Year: 2018-2019  
Report: STU201

**General Information**

Student Name <b>Doe, Jane</b>		Perm ID <b>356862</b>	Gender <b>F</b>	Grade <b>10</b>	No Photo    On file
State ID	Last Name Goes By		Nick Name		
Birth Date <b>08/02/2001</b>	Birth Place		Leave Date	Enter Date <b>08/08/2018</b>	
Home Phone	Home Language <b>English</b>	Resolved Race/Ethnicity <b>White</b>			

The STU204 Student Transcript can be produced showing the legal identity, the protected identity and/or suppressing the gender. Options are selected on the STU204 screen when printing a transcript:

**Identity Options**

Student Identification

**Preferred Identity (Default):** The report will print student name and gender information as it appears on the Student > Demographics tab page.

**Legal Identity:** The report will print student name and gender information as it appears on the Student > Protected Information tab page, if values exist. If no values exist on the Student > Protected Information tab page, then the report will print student name and gender as it appears on the Student > Demographics tab page.

**Legal Identity:** The report will print student name and gender as it appears on the Student > Demographics tab page.

If the user does not make a selection, the report will print name and gender as they appear on the Student > Demographics tab page.

Suppress Gender