



Policy on Gender Inclusion

Approved by the Emerson School Board of Trustees, Dec. 2017

This policy is created in tandem with the overarching principles found in the Emerson Policy on Diversity. Its purpose is to further clarify and deepen understanding of the school's guiding policy regarding transgender students and gender fluidity. The included definitions are not meant to label but to assist in understanding the rapidly evolving and expanding cultural perspectives on the topic. As such, this policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

THE POLICY

Emerson School shall foster an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and free from discrimination for all members of the community as they express their gender identity. This includes transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals. Discrimination, bullying, and harassment are prohibited; incidents of such will be managed in a manner consistent with the school's expectations of conduct and responsibilities.

Gender Identity

The school respects students' rights to discuss and express their gender identity openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much to share their personal information. The person best situated to determine a student's gender identity is the individual student. In the case where a student is not able to self-advocate, the request to treat the student in accordance with their gender identity will likely come from the student's parents or guardians. Should the child's self-advocacy be in opposition to the parents' or guardians' wishes, we will seek to facilitate a discussion with the family, while taking into account the child's wishes.

Names and Pronouns

When requested by the parent/guardian and/or student, school staff should engage in reasonable and good faith efforts to address students by their chosen name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity, regardless of whether there has been a legal name change. The chosen name, pronoun, and gender markers will be used in unofficial student records (e.g., yearbooks, newsletters, team rosters, etc.). Regarding official student records (e.g., report cards, transcripts), the school will seek to use the name, pronoun, and gender markers requested by the parent/guardian and/or student as well. It should be noted, though, that there may be circumstances in which differences on school records between a student's legal name/gender and requested name/gender may result in complication for the student outside of the school environment.

Activities and Facilities

With regard to gender-based and gender-segregated activities and areas on school grounds, students shall have access to that which corresponds to their gender identity. All students have access to the use of unisex, single-occupant bathrooms. This policy shall be considered when new construction or renovations are planned for the school. Matters of personal privacy, including bathroom and sleeping arrangements for overnight field trips, will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the well-being of the students. The school will seek solutions that are inclusive, respectful, and safe for all students.



Athletic Teams

Presently, many middle school athletic teams follow Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) guidelines which are unclear regarding gender identity in sports participation. We will continue to monitor guidelines and best practices.

Faculty Education

The school shall provide regular training for faculty, administration, and staff members regarding topics of gender identity.

DEFINITIONS

(Adapted from The Roeper School's Policy on Gender Inclusion. These definitions will be revised and updated as necessary.)

Agender: Also called gender blank, gender-queer, gender-neutral, gender-free, genderless, gender void, non-gendered, or null gender. Agender is an identity under the non-binary and transgender umbrella terms. Agender individuals find that they have no gender identity, although some define this more as having a gender identity that is neutral.

Sex: Refers to a person's biological status as male, female or intersex. Intersex is the atypical combination of features that usually distinguish male from female.

Gender: For many people the terms "gender" and "sex" are used interchangeably. However, biological sex and gender are not the same, and gender is not inherently connected to one's physical anatomy. "Gender" refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex.

Gender Expansive: A term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders. Similar in meaning to gender diverse.

Gender Expression: The manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.

Gender Fluidity: Gender fluidity refers to a flexible range of gender expression that can change from day to day. A person may not feel confined to the restrictive boundaries of stereotypical expectations of boys or girls, or males and females; and can change in their expression from one day to the next; or one period to the next.

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 gender assigned at birth.

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. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders. Other terms that can have similar meanings include gender diverse or gender expansive.



Gender Normative: Gender normative also known as cisgender refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity and expression.

Gender Role: Gender role is the set of roles, activities, expectations, and behaviors assigned to females and males by a given society. The American culture recognizes two basic gender roles: masculine (having the qualities attributed to males) and feminine (having the qualities attributed to females). It should be noted that not all cultures have only these two basic gender roles.

Nonbinary Gender: An umbrella term covering any gender identity that doesn't fit within the gender binary. The label may also be used by individuals wishing to identify as falling outside of the gender binary without being any more specific about the nature of their gender.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned sex at birth.

Transition: The process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

Transsexual: Transsexual refers to a person who has changed, or is in the process of changing his or her physical and/or legal sex to conform to his or her internal sense of gender identity. Transsexual can also be used to describe people who, without undergoing medical treatment, identify and live their lives full-time as a member of the gender opposite their birth sex. Transsexuals transitioning from male to female are often referred to as 'MTFs.' Similarly, female-to-male transsexuals are frequently called 'FTMs.'