

“It’s good to be special, brave and unique. There’s not one thing that you need to tweak” (Jackie Swirsky, author, and parent of a gender creative child, Manitoba).

Principles

The principles informing the implementation of the [Guidelines for Supporting and Affirming Trans and Gender Diverse Students](#) set out in this document are as follows:

- The rights and needs of students who are trans and gender diverse are at the centre of, and are to be served by, the guidelines.
- Students have the right to self-identify. Self-identification is the sole measure of a student’s gender identity.
- The voices and experiences of trans and gender diverse students will be included in a collaborative way in decision making.
- Trans and gender diverse students are treated with dignity and respect.
- Trans and gender diverse students, along with the rest of the school community, benefit when parents/guardians and families are supportive of a respectful and inclusive school environment.
- Trans and gender diverse children and youth enrich the school community and challenge harmful gender stereotypes and norms on a wider scale.
- Parents/guardians are key partners in supporting trans and gender diverse students at home, at school, and in the community.
- Gender is a spectrum rather than a binary of male and female. Gender is an important part of a person’s identity, and developing a positive sense of gender identity is part of a person’s development.
- Supporting a trans or gender diverse student may require schools and individuals to revise and realign their views and practices with respect to gender identity and expression, which may have been accepted as “the norm” for a long time.
- The guidelines support a positive, proactive approach that promotes and protects the rights of trans and gender diverse students.



“Almost three-quarters (74%) of participants who had been bullied replied that they had not received any support from school staff. Those who had received no support or been blamed were much more likely to report that the harassment still distressed them” (Taylor et al., *The Every Teacher Project 22*).

Roles and Responsibilities

Every person in the school community plays an important role and has a shared responsibility in creating supportive environments for trans and gender diverse students. It is important that the entire school community recognize diversity as the norm. All divisional and school staff should be proactive and prepare in advance to meet the needs of trans and gender diverse students.

The guidelines in this document support schools and school boards in protecting and respecting students, based on gender identity and gender expression. It is the responsibility of all school members to adhere to the provisions of *The Human Rights Code* (Manitoba). These guidelines apply to

- the entire school community from Kindergarten to Grade 12, including school boards, trustees, superintendents of education, administrators, teachers, guidance counsellors, educational assistants, clinicians, social workers, coaches, student support workers, custodians, bus drivers, librarians, students, parents/guardians, volunteers, visitors, and anyone working in or with the school division or school
- a whole-school approach to planning for and maintaining a safe, caring, and inclusive school climate
- situations that occur outside school hours but have an impact on the learning environment of the school

Each student, educator, school, and school board is responsible to ensure that trans and gender diverse students have a safe learning environment. This includes making sure that any incident of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or violence is given immediate attention.

Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a student’s *actual* or *perceived* gender identity and/or expression are to be handled in the same manner as other discrimination or harassment complaints. School and divisional codes of conduct will provide direction.

An outline of the roles and responsibilities of the various members of the school community follows.



STUDENTS

- Respect the rights of all students with regard to their gender identity and gender expression.
- Support the safety and well-being of all students.
- Celebrate the diversity of the student population.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- Support their child's and other children's academic success and well-being.
- Provide information about their child's beliefs, values, and preferred learning styles, and other relevant aspects of the child's identity.
- Provide information about their culture and family beliefs.
- Contribute to creating safe and inclusive schools by volunteering at school activities and assisting school organizations.
- Teach and learn as true partners in the educational process.
- Provide suggestions for safe, inclusive, and successful schools.
- Respect the rights of all members of the school community with regard to their gender identity and gender expression.
- Celebrate the diversity of the student and community population.

EDUCATORS

- Take personal responsibility to educate themselves (e.g., remain aware of available resources to help connect students to the supports they need), and model respect for, understanding of, and affirmation of diversity in the working and learning environment.
- Ensure curriculum and classroom materials and learning activities contain positive and affirming images of and inclusive and accurate information about history and culture that challenge stereotypes and reflect the accomplishments and contributions of trans and gender diverse persons.
- Participate in developing and implementing an action plan for transphobic incidents.
- Work with parents/guardians as key partners in supporting every student in the classroom.
- In the context of common system access, adhere to confidentiality best practice in the event of disclosure of a student's gender identity or expression.
- Listen to gender diverse students, as they are the "experts" of their experience.
- Ask gender diverse students whether, when, and how they wish to share their experiences.
- Monitor the academic achievement, engagement, attendance, and well-being of trans and gender diverse students.



SCHOOL COUNSELLORS AND STUDENT SERVICES

- Implement comprehensive services to enhance and promote student learning (proactive and responsive services).
- Plan and implement strategies for all students and staff to enhance a positive school climate and facilitate a safe school environment.
- Build capacity through professional learning to meet the needs of trans and gender diverse students (e.g., develop awareness, skills, and knowledge).
- Connect and collaborate with specialized service providers/resources, and identify key contacts to establish consistent referral and timely service.
- Embrace diversity and include trans and gender diverse needs in whole-school planning.
- Provide programming for all students, including trans and gender diverse students, with respect to their educational, personal, social, emotional, and career development.
- Provide individual, small-group, and classroom-based guidance and counselling services for students.
- Work with school staff to support them in responding effectively to the needs of trans and gender diverse students, transphobic incidents, and related issues.
- Refer students and parents/guardians to experts for affirming support.
- Participate in gender transition planning and implementation as required.
- Assist the school principal in identifying and resolving student issues, needs, and problems.
- Advocate for students in planning processes (e.g., student-specific needs, transitions, student support, whole-school approach, and school events).

SCHOOL LEADERS

- Take personal responsibility to educate themselves, and model respect for, understanding of, and affirmation of diversity in the working and learning environment.
- Implement divisional and school policies with respect to human diversity, safe and caring schools, and other relevant areas, including school plans.
- Create a structure and circle of support for students and staff.
- Designate a staff advisor.
- Ensure students' rights and safety are recognized and supported.
- Facilitate trans and gender diverse students' full participation in all school activities.
- Consider accommodations when requested and provide accommodations when it is reasonable to do so.



- Support teachers and other personnel through developing and implementing policies that protect students.
- Facilitate the recognition and use of students' preferred names and pronouns.
- Provide school staff with appropriate professional learning opportunities.
- Work with parents/guardians, students, educators, and community members to build an inclusive, caring, and affirming learning environment that respects trans and gender diverse students and the diversity of all students in the school.
- Facilitate the establishment of community advisory groups, including trans and gender studies experts, affirming service providers and community groups in developing policies, protocols, and practices.
- Identify and recognize special days and events related to trans and gender diverse people.
- Communicate processes to prevent, identify, report, investigate, and resolve gender-based discrimination.
- Provide opportunities for trans, gender diverse, and all students to provide anonymous feedback on school and classroom climate and suggestions for improvement.

SCHOOL BOARDS

- Take personal responsibility to educate themselves, and model respect for, understanding of, and affirmation of inclusion and diversity in the decision- and policy-making environments.
- Ensure that divisional policies, guidelines, and practices are inclusive of all students and respond equitably to the needs of trans and gender diverse students and their families.
- Involve parents/guardians in the development of safe and caring school policies.
- Ensure that all students have equitable access to an appropriate education, facilities, services, and resources.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for divisional and school staff on creating safe learning environments for trans and gender diverse students and their families.
- Promote and celebrate trans and gender diverse communities.



Notes

