



Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students Policy

The Cottonwood School (the “Charter School”) is committed to fostering an educational environment that is safe, welcoming, and free from stigma and discrimination for all students, regardless of gender identity or expression; facilitating compliance with local, state and federal laws concerning bullying, harassment, privacy and discrimination; and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to express themselves and live authentically.

The purpose of the The Cottonwood School Governing Board approving this Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Define Gender, Gender Identify, Gender Expression, Gender Nonconforming, Intersex, Nonbinary/Genderqueer, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Transgender, and Transition
2. Outline Guiding Principles and Requirements of the Charter School
3. Establish Privacy and Confidentiality
4. Outline the Requirements of Pupil Records
5. Establish the Authorization to Use Name and Gender With Which the Student Identifies
6. Outline the Requirements of the Student’s Preferred Name and Pronoun
7. Outline the Requirements of Student Safety
8. Establish Restroom Accessibility
9. Outline Sports, Athletics, and Physical Education Requirements
10. Establish Access to School Activities and Programs
11. Establish Course Accessibility and Instruction
12. Outline the Training and Publication of the Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students Policy

1. Definitions: These definitions are provided not for the purpose of labeling students but rather to assist in understanding this policy and the legal obligations of the school. Students may or may not use these terms to describe themselves or their experiences.

- **Gender:** A person's actual or perceived sex, including a person's gender identity and gender expression.
- **Gender Identity:** A person’s gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not different from that traditionally associated with the person’s physiology or assigned sex at birth. Gender identity may include being female, male, another gender or no gender. The responsibility for determining an individual’s gender identity rests with the individual. Children typically begin to understand their own gender identity by age four, although the age at which individuals come to understand and express their gender identity may vary based on each person’s social and familial development.

- Gender Expression: A person's gender-related appearance and behavior whether or not stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth. Gender expression refers to external cues that one uses to represent or communicate one's gender to others, such as behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, mannerisms, or body characteristics.
- Gender Nonconforming: One's gender expression, gender characteristics or gender identity that does not conform to gender stereotypes "typically" associated with one's legal sex assigned at birth, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. Students who adopt a presentation that varies from the stereotypic gender expectations sometimes may describe themselves as gender nonconforming, gender queer, gender fluid or nonbinary.
- Intersex: An umbrella term used to describe natural bodily variations, which can include external genitalia, internal sex organs, chromosomes or hormonal differences that transcend typical ideas of male and female.
- Nonbinary/Genderqueer: An umbrella term for people with gender identities that fall somewhere outside of the traditional conceptions of strictly either female or male. People with nonbinary gender identities may or may not identify as transgender, may or may not have been born with intersex traits, may or may not use gender-neutral pronouns, and may or may not use more specific terms to describe their genders, including but not limited to agender, genderqueer, gender fluid, Two Spirit, bigender, pangender, gender nonconforming or gender variant.
- Sex: It includes, but is not limited to, a person's sex assigned or presumed at birth based on physical characteristics commonly associated with males or females, and is inclusive of a person's gender.
- Sexual Orientation: It means heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality and is considered to be a person's romantic, emotional, mental and/or sexual attraction to another person based on the gender of the other person.
- Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the gender they were assigned or presumed at birth. Some individuals who identify as transgender have medically transitioned, are undergoing gender affirming surgeries and hormonal treatments, while others do not choose any form of medical transition. There is no uniform set of procedures that are sought. Individuals may identify as female, male or nonbinary, may or may not have been born with intersex traits, may or may not use gender-neutral pronouns and may or may not use more specific terms to describe their genders, including but not limited to agender, genderqueer, gender fluid, Two Spirit, bigender, pangender, gender nonconforming or gender variant. A transgender girl is a girl who was thought to be a male when she was born. A transgender boy is a boy who was thought to be female when he was born.
- Transition: The unique process in which one goes from living and identifying as one gender to live in alignment with one or more dimensions of the gender with which one identifies. Gender transition can occur at any age and can include social, medical and/or a legal transition.

2. Guiding Principles and Requirements: The school shall accept the gender identity that each student asserts. There are no medical or mental health diagnoses or treatment thresholds that students must meet in order to have their gender identity recognized and respected. Students

may initiate a process to change their name, pronoun, attire and access to School programs, activities and facilities. The school shall customize support to optimize each student's access according to their gender identity.

- 3. Privacy and Confidentiality:** All persons, including students, have a right to privacy. This includes keeping a student's actual or perceived gender identity and expression private. Such private information shall be shared only on a need to know basis.

Students have the right to openly discuss and express their gender identity and expression, and to decide when, with whom, and how much information to share.

School personnel may encounter situations where students have not publicly disclosed their gender identity; therefore, school personnel must be mindful of the confidentiality and privacy rights of students when communicating with others, so as to not reveal, imply or refer to a student's gender identity or expression. To ensure confidentiality when discussing a particular concern such as conduct, discipline, grades, attendance or health, school personnel should focus on the concern, not the student's gender identity or expression. For example, describe the matter in terms of the underlying issue (behavior/conduct, grade issue, attendance issue, health concern) without referring or linking to gender identity or expression.

When communicating with a student's parent, legal guardian, or educational rights holder ("parent"), school personnel should be aware that the student may not have disclosed their gender identity to their parents. When school personnel find it important to discuss a student's gender identity or expression with parents (if, for example, the student is being bullied based on their gender identity or expression), school personnel should consult and work closely with the student to assess the degree to which, if any, the parent is aware of the student's gender identity or expression and is supportive of the student, and school personnel shall take into consideration the safety, health and well-being of the student in deciding whether to disclose the student's gender identity or expression to parents.

- 4. Pupil Records:** The School is required to maintain in perpetuity mandatory permanent pupil records which include the legal name and sex of the student as indicated on official government issued documents such as birth certificates, passports and identification cards/permits. Mandatory interim pupil records may include, but are not limited to, progress and grade reports, transcripts, assessment data, health records, Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and Section 504 Plans. Permitted pupil records may include, but are not limited to, objective counselor and/or teacher ratings, standardized test scores older than three years, routine discipline data and verified reports of relevant behavior patterns. Per California law, student enrollment forms allow a parent to designate their child's gender as male, female or nonbinary.

The School will change a student's name and gender, or that of a former student, on pupil records when the name and/or gender of the student are changed. The student or former student may document the gender change by any of the following: State issued driver's license, birth certificate, passport, social security card, court order indicating a name change or a gender

change or both. The new name and/or gender are the student's legal name and gender for all purposes, including school registration. Upon the submission of proper evidence of the aforementioned documentation, the student's legal name and/or gender in all school records shall be changed to reflect the legal name and/or gender change.

- 5. Authorization to Use Name and Gender With Which the Student Identifies:** The School shall permit students to use the name and gender with which they identify on school records, including pupil records. The records may include, but are not limited to, identification badges, classroom and homeroom rosters, certificates, programs, announcements, office summons and communications, team and academic rosters, diplomas, newspapers, newsletters, yearbooks and other site-generated records.

Upon authorization, the School shall input the student's name and gender with which they identify in the appropriate fields of the School's electronic data system to indicate how the student's name and/or gender will appear on documents issued by the school. If the authorization does not amount to a legal change in name or gender, the change will be reflected in the preferred name section of the School's electronic data system.

After the school receives and verifies the contents of the completed legal authorization, the School shall change the name and/or gender of the student in the School's electronic data system and enter or cross-reference the name as AKA in the cumulative folder and registration card. This change is effective for School records only. If a student were to transfer to another school, the student should inquire at that school about a similar process.

- 6. Names/Pronouns:** Students shall be addressed by the name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity asserted at school without obtaining a court order, changing their pupil records or obtaining parent/legal guardian permission.

Students shall be known by their name and gender of identity. However, there may be situations (e.g., communications with the family, state or federal records, pupil records where a name or gender with which the student identifies isn't authorized, and assessment data) where it may be necessary and recommended for staff to be informed of the student's legal name and gender. In these situations, staff should prioritize safety, confidentiality and respect of the student in a manner consistent with the law.

If school personnel are unsure how a student wants to be addressed in communications to home or in conferences with parents/legal guardians/educational rights holders, they may privately ask the student how they want to be referred to when communicating with parents/legal guardians. For communications with a student's parent/legal guardian, educational rights holders, school personnel should refer to this policy's prior section on "Privacy and Confidentiality."

Every effort should be made to use names and pronouns consistent with a student's gender identity. While inadvertent slips or honest mistakes may occur, the intentional and persistent refusal to respect a student's gender identity is a violation of School policy and may constitute discrimination under State law.

- 7. Student Safety:** School staff must ensure that students are provided with a safe school environment that is free of discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation, which may include providing interim safety and emotional support measures. School staff and families should work together to resolve complaints alleging discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation based on a student's actual or perceived gender identity or expression.

School staff shall take all reported incidents of bullying seriously and take appropriate measures to ensure that the bullying stops.

School administration shall respond immediately to incidents of discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation by taking actions that include, but are not limited to the following: a) intervening to stop the behavior; b) investigating and documenting the matter; c) determining and enforcing appropriate interim measures and corrective actions; and d) monitoring to ensure that the behavior does not reoccur.

School staff should take all reasonable steps to ensure safety and access for students and support students' rights to assert their gender identity and expression. Interim safety measures may include increased monitoring of the parties, providing options for the parties to avoid or minimize contact in academic and extracurricular settings, safety plans, training and educational materials to address climate, and provision of support resources (e.g., academic support, counseling, health and mental health services).

Students shall not be disciplined on the basis of their actual or perceived gender identity or expression.

Students shall be informed they have the responsibility to report incidents of discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation to the designated site administrator or Title IX/Bullying Complaint Manager in cases where they may be a target or witness.

Students shall be informed of their role in ensuring a school environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation.

In addition to or instead of filing a complaint at a site, any student or their duly authorized representative has the right to file a discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation complaint involving gender identity and expression under the Uniform Complaint Procedures with the School's Principal, Julie Haycock, JulieH@Inspireschools.org.

- 8. Restroom Accessibility:** Schools may maintain separate restroom facilities for male and female students. Students shall have access to restrooms that correspond to their gender

identity. Students who identify as nonbinary should be granted access to the facility which they find best aligns with their gender identity.

If a student desires increased privacy, regardless of the reason, the administrator shall make every effort to provide the student with reasonable access to an alternative restroom such as a single-stall or all-gender restroom. The use of a restroom should be determined by the student's choice; no student shall be compelled to use an alternative restroom. For safety reasons, students should be given access to a restroom that allows reasonable access for appropriate supervision by staff. Regardless, all students are expected to exemplify appropriate behavior in restrooms.

- 9. Sports, Athletics and Physical Education:** When conducting physical education classes and fitness evaluations, teachers will address and evaluate students by their gender identity.

Performance on the state physical fitness test (Fitnessgram) is evaluated by the State of California in accordance with the sex reported. Students are to be tested according to their gender identity when students identify with a gender different from that in their pupil records. Test administration on this instrument allows for a designation of nonbinary or for students to not disclose their gender to the test administrator. However, the Healthy Fitness Zone charts, or health-related standards used to evaluate performance, are based on female and male genders only. In these events, physical education teachers shall make every effort to maintain confidentiality of student information.

Participation in competitive athletics, intramural sports, athletic teams, competitions and contact sports shall be facilitated in a manner consistent with the student's gender identity and in accordance with the California Interscholastic Federation constitution and bylaws. Students who identify as nonbinary should be granted the opportunity to participate in athletic activities they find best align with their gender identity.

- 10. School Activities and Programs:** Students have the right to equitable access to activities and programs in their school. Students may not be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to harassment or other forms of discrimination on the basis of their actual or perceived gender identity or expression in any program or activity. These activities and programs may include, but are not limited to, cheer class, homecoming, prom, spirit day, celebrations, assemblies, acknowledgments, field trips, afterschool activities and programs, and all extra-curricular activities.

- 11. Course Accessibility and Instruction:** Students have the right to equitable learning opportunities in their school. Students shall not be required to take or be denied enrollment in a course on the basis of their actual or perceived gender identity or expression in any educational and academic program.

- 12. Training and Publication:** The School shall conduct training for all staff members on their responsibilities under applicable laws and this policy, including teachers, administrators,

counselors, social workers, and health staff. Information regarding this policy shall be incorporated into training for new school employees.

This policy will be distributed annually to students, parents/guardians and staff and it will also be included in any student codes of conduct, student handbooks and school websites.