



MMA Gender Identity Inclusion Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

MMA staff strive to ensure that all students are safe and included at school and that they are free from harassment and discrimination. In February 2017, the Board approved the Gender/Sexual Orientation Policy. The purpose of these guidelines is to set out a philosophy and practices which pertain to the equity, dignity, and respect of transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students.

This guideline document includes:

- A. MMA Staff Roles and Responsibilities

- B. Glossary

- C. Guidelines
 - 1. Student-centered Planning and Decisions
 - 2. Student Privacy and Confidentiality
 - 3. Use of a Student's Name(s) and Pronoun(s)
 - 4. Changes to Official School Records
 - 5. School Uniform
 - 6. Classroom and Student Gender-inclusive Activities
 - 7. PE Classes, Outdoor Education and Athletic Teams
 - 8. Washrooms and Change Rooms
 - 9. Field Trips and Overnight Accommodations

10. Inclusive Learning: Students, Staff, Faculty and Families

D. Checklist for Student Support Team and Social Transitions

E. Resources

A. MMA STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In support of diversity and inclusion, MMA staff are responsible for:

- a) Respecting each student's right to their self-determined gender identity and gender expression.
- b) Establishing a safe environment for all students by communicating and upholding clear expectations surrounding behaviour and language, and by addressing discrimination and harassment directly.
- c) Being well informed about gender identity, gender expression, and school practices that are gender-inclusive.
- d) Whenever appropriate, using classroom resources that represent transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students in a positive and accurate manner.

B. GLOSSARY

Gender Identity: An individual's inner sense of being a girl/woman, boy/man, neither, both, or in between. This cannot be decided by others and is an internal experience.

Gender Expression: The ways an individual presents their sense of gender to others (for example, through clothes, hairstyle, mannerisms, etc).

Both gender identity and gender expression can be thought of as spectrums and can be fluid for some people.

Sex: A biological classification that is assigned at birth based on physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia.

Cisgender (Cis): A term used to describe people whose gender identity aligns with what they were assigned at birth.

Transgender (Trans): An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of people whose gender identity differs from what they were assigned at birth. This may include trans girls, trans boys, gender non-binary, and Two Spirit people, however, some gender non-binary and Two Spirit people may not self-identify as transgender.

Non-binary: A term used to describe people whose gender identity exists outside of the gender binary of woman/girl and man/boy. Other words that people may use to self-describe their experience include gender non-conforming, gender queer, gender fluid, agender, bigender, gender creative among others.

Two Spirit: A term that refers to a cultural and spiritual identity used by some Indigenous people to describe the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spirits. This identity is not limited to gender identity but encompasses both gender variance and sexuality.

Transition: A term most commonly used to refer to someone transitioning from one gender identity to another. A transition may include social aspects such as a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, and a request that people use a correct pronoun when referring to them. A transition may, but does not always, include medical care such as hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery, and/or counselling.

C. GUIDELINES

1. Student-Centered Planning and Decisions

MMA supports student-centered planning and recognizes each student is unique and has varying needs. Supports for transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students are not a 'one size fits all' solution. Additional accommodations may be necessary to address a student's individual concerns.

Requests for support are to be fulfilled on a case-by-case basis by a Student Support Team made up of an administrator (principal/vice principal), the counsellor, and/or the staff member(s) with whom the student feels comfortable. The student may initially reach out to a staff member with whom they are most comfortable.

The Student Support Team will:

- a) Connect with the student, listen to concerns, and identify needs (see Checklist on page X).
- b) Involve the student in a collaborative decision-making process to identify and implement support systems.
- c) Include the student and their parents/guardians, as possible, if problems arise to resolve conflicts over the process and/or implementation.

Complaints of harassment or discrimination will be addressed to promote a safe and welcoming community environment.

2. Student Privacy and Confidentiality

MMA staff have the utmost respect for a student's right to privacy regarding gender identity; which is personal and confidential in nature. Each student has the right to choose when and with whom they disclose this information. It would not be considered appropriate to ask questions about a student's gender identity, sexual orientation or transition. It is also important to note that a student may not be "out" with their family, parents and/or guardians.

In order, to respect a student's right to privacy:

- a) Speak to the student discretely if clarification regarding name/pronoun/gender identity is required.
- b) Clarify if the student is "out" with their family, parents and/or guardians.
- c) Use the student's preferred name and pronoun.
- d) Ensure all staff on call have correct information regarding the name/pronoun of students with whom they are working.
- e) When communicating with parents/guardians, use the student's legal name unless you have permission otherwise.

3. Use of a Student's Name(s) and Pronoun(s)

At MMA we recognize that individuals have the right to self-identification and to decide the name(s) and pronoun(s) by which they would like to be addressed. This applies to all students, including those who have not legally changed their name and/or gender designation on any official documents.

MMA also recognizes that some students are gender non-binary and may not identify as either male or female. Gender neutral pronouns (e.g. they/them/their and xe/xem/xyr) may be used by these students.

Role of MMA staff:

- a) Model the use of the student's chosen name/pronoun.
- b) Own any mistakes made in regard to a student's name/pronoun by apologizing and correcting the use of the name/pronoun.
- c) As all students may not be "out" beyond the MMA community, follow the student's lead in determining the preferred name/pronoun to use when communicating with their family, parents and/or guardians.

Please note that refusal to acknowledge and respect a person's gender identity is a type of discrimination.

4. Changes to Official School Records

All Ministry of Education documents require the use of legal name and gender designation that match that of government-issued identification. Changes to Ministry of Education documents and reports would require a legal change of name and/or gender designation. However, students can request to have changes made to reflect their gender identity and chosen name on records such as class lists, ID cards, timetables, student files, and report cards.

Role of MMA staff:

- a) Upon a student's request, make changes to student information and official records whenever possible.

b) When communicating with parents/guardians, use the student's legal name unless you have permission otherwise.

5. School Uniform

At MMA all students have the right to choose uniform items that align with their gender identity. This may include dressing in a manner that is not consistent with societal expectations of femininity or masculinity.

Role of MMA staff:

a) Respect the student's right to express their gender identity through school uniform and appearance.

6. Classroom and Student Gender-Inclusive Activities

MMA staff support gender-inclusive classroom and student activities. Whenever possible, staff will avoid grouping students by gender in order to support gender diversity and allow for the full participation of all students.

Role of MMA staff:

a) Use alternative methods of grouping students; for example, pinnies or numbers as opposed to gender.

b) Use non-gendered terms to address your students; for example, 'students', 'children', 'class name', 'everyone', 'folks' etc., rather than 'boys and girls', 'ladies and gentleman'.

c) Where possible, use posters, books, and curriculum that portray a variety of gender expressions.

If there is a circumstance in which gender must be used as a method of separation, transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students can choose to be part of the group which aligns with their gender identity, but this is not a requirement. Use inclusive practices if a group must be separated by gender e.g. by also offering a group for all genders.

7. PE Classes, Outdoor Education and Athletic Teams

At MMA, every student should feel welcome and safe participating in PE classes, outdoor education, and athletic teams.

Role of MMA staff:

- a) Every student has the right to be part of regular PE classes and Outdoor Education. This includes transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students. Transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students should not be asked to participate in an online PE class or other out of school program.
- b) Create mixed gender PE classes and mixed gender teams to reduce gender-segregation.
- c) If gender segregation in PE, outdoor education, or athletic teams cannot be avoided, transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students have the option to participate in the activity or team that aligns with their gender identity.

For athletic teams, BC School Sports has a separate policy for the inclusion of transgender students. Please refer to the BC School Sports Handbook 2017-2018, Section 35.0.0 Student Athlete Gender for more information at:

<http://www.bcschoolsports.ca/sites/default/files/Complete%20Version%20INTERACTIVE.pdf>

8. Washrooms and Change Rooms

All students at MMA will have safe access to washrooms and change rooms, and all students can access the single-user washrooms that are available throughout school properties. Transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students have the right to use the washroom and change room that aligns with their self-determined gender identity. Those students who desire additional privacy have access to a single-user washroom. This washroom can also be used as a change room for students who prefer this option.

9. Field Trips and Overnight Accommodations

At MMA transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students have the right to participate in all field trips, including those with overnight accommodations. Where there are shared accommodations, MMA supports a student's choice of accommodation that aligns with their self-determined gender identity.

The Student Support Team is encouraged to consult with the transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit student and to support their choice of accommodation that aligns with their self-determined gender identity. If requested by the transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit student, private accommodation will be provided as possible.

Role of MMA staff:

- a) When planning field trips, strive to use venues that provide gender inclusive washrooms and change rooms, as possible, and to phone ahead to confirm what facilities are available and/or can be made available.
- b) Within all field trip notices and permission slips sent home with students, include what washrooms and change room facilities are available.
- c) As always, respect the privacy and confidentiality of the transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students.

10. Inclusive Learning: Students, Staff, Faculty and Families

MMA supports integrated and inclusive learning opportunities for students, their families, staff, and faculty.

For Students:

- a) Provide classroom materials and activities that are developmentally appropriate, contain positive images and accurate information about gender diversity, including gender identity and expression. Curriculum resources including lesson plans for K-12 can be found at: <https://www.sogieducation.org/sogi3>
- b) Include a mix of both specific lesson plans regarding gender diversity, as well as, an integrated approach across all curriculum.

For Families:

- c) Ensure that school forms and communications to families reflect gender diversity, including gender identity and expression.
- d) Provide facilitated education and dialogue sessions open for families, parents and/or guardians when possible.

For Staff and Faculty:

- e) Provide ongoing and iterative professional development opportunities to increase and enhance staff and faculty's awareness around gender identity and expression.
- f) Equip staff and faculty with the tools to support transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit students and families.

11. Open, Transparent and Accountable

MMA will ensure the Gender/Sexual Orientation Policy and the Gender Identity Guidelines are readily accessible to students, their families, parents and/or guardians, and staff and faculty.

MMA will adopt an aspirational approach that establishes and defines appropriate expectations, language, and behaviours in order to prevent discrimination and harassment.

Disputes will be resolved in a manner that involves the transgender, gender non-binary, and two spirit student, their family (as possible), and the Student Support Team. All complaints of discrimination or harassment will be taken seriously and addressed.

D. Checklist for Student Support Team and Social Transitions

The following checklist is to assist the Student Support Team in its role to support a transgender, gender non-binary, or two spirit student who is in the process of a social transition. It is intended as a guideline to follow, rather than a strict and prescriptive list of actions. Each student is unique and has varying needs. Additional accommodations may be necessary to address a student's individual concerns and requests for support are to be fulfilled on a case-by-case basis

☐ 1. Identify and establish the Student Support Team made up of an administrator (principal/vice principal), the counsellor, and/or the staff member(s) with whom the student feels comfortable.

☐ 2. Meet with the student and/or their parent/guardian to discuss:

- o Any change in name and pronoun.
- o Student confidentiality and privacy, including the level of information to be shared with staff and students with regards to the student's name and pronoun changes.
- o Requested updates to student records.
- o Which washrooms and change room the student plans to access.
- o Participation in P.E. class, outdoor education and athletic teams.
- o Participation in field trips.

☐ 3. With permission and in consultation with the student and their parents/guardians, as possible, inform the student's teachers about the correct name(s) and pronoun(s) to use. Consider how this information will be shared and whether staff and faculty would benefit from a planned workshop.

☐ 4. With permission and in consultation with the student and their parents/guardians, as possible, inform the student's classmates about the correct name(s) and pronoun(s) to use. Consider how this information will be shared and whether the class, and/or other students, would benefit from a planned workshop.

☐ 5. Follow up with the student and their parents/guardians, as possible, during and after the social transition to discuss additional supports to ensure the plan is being carried out in an affirming way.

☐ 6. Follow up with the student's teachers and staff members and address any concerns regarding full inclusion of the student.

E. Resources

The list below includes resources that the Student Support Team may wish to pass on to the transgender, gender non-binary, or two spirit student and their parents/guardians:

- Qmunity – A provincial LGBTQ resource centre that provides one-to-one support to youth and parents, referrals to direct services, and provides drop-in programs twice per week for youth aged 10-25. [Qmunity.ca]
- PFLAG Victoria – A chapter organization of PFLAG Canada that support for parents, family, friends, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered, and two-spirit persons. [PflagCanada.ca]
- TransCare BC - A resource program run through the Provincial Health Services Authority that provides transgender, gender non-binary, or two spirit individuals and families with information and resources around gender-affirming healthcare and counselling. [Phsa.ca]

Acknowledgements:

Maria Montessori Academy would like to thank the members of TransFocus for their contributions and support in developing the MMA Gender Inclusion guidelines.