



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 23, 2016

Michigan Board of Education Releases Controversial New LGBTQ Guidelines

Michigan's Board of Education has drafted a set of guidelines that asks schools to allow students to make their own decisions regarding which bathrooms they use, the gender by which they want to be identified, and the names by which they'd like to be called. The guidelines, which seem to explicitly remove parents and doctors from the decision-making process, have been signed by State Superintendent Brian Whiston.



The *Daily Caller* reports that the board “quietly issued” the [statement and corresponding guidance](#) on February 23 without a press release. The public has only until April 11 to comment on the guidance before the board finalizes it on May 10.

The statement defines gender identity as “a person’s deeply held internal sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender, regardless of the biological sex they were assigned at birth,” and allows students to make decisions based on the gender with which they identify. The statement also identifies some of its students as gender nonconforming (GNC), which is defined as those “whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations of the biological sex they were assigned at birth.”

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The Board of Education statement presents eight recommendations to ensure that GNC students are treated fairly and equally without discrimination “based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.” Those recommendations include adopting and enforcing policies that protect those students from harassment and bullying, providing staff with professional development opportunities on issues affecting LGBTQ students, and supporting the formation of extracurricular student-led clubs geared toward students who fall within those categories.

The statement then explains that the Board of Education has provided additional guidance to ensure that transgender and GNC students are receiving “the same educational opportunities as their peers.” That guidance instructs schools to be cognizant of the specific needs of the gender-nonconforming students and makes recommendations involving a number of areas, including use of pronouns and dress code.

Notable items that are missing from the guidance are considerations based on students’ ages, as well as input from parents and medical professionals.

“The responsibility for determining a student’s gender identity rests with the student. Outside confirmation from medical or mental health professionals, or documentation of legal changes, is not needed,” the guidance states.

One recommendation states that students who request an alternative name are permitted to have that name added to the district’s information management systems alongside the legal name.



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“School staff should 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 guidance reads.

It also outlines a process for maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the students, including keeping the students’ preferences from their parents: “Transgender and GNC students have the right to decide when, with whom, and to what extent to share private information,” the guidance explains. Thus, “when contacting the parent/guardian of a transgender or GNC student, school staff should use the student’s legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student’s assigned sex at birth, unless the student or parent/guardian has specified.”

The guidance claims that its purpose is to help accomplish the state’s strategic goals of “reducing the impact of high-risk factors and providing equitable resources and access to quality educational opportunities to meet the needs of all students.”

As such, the guidance does not permit schools to simply offer single-stall bathrooms as the only option for gender-confused students, as they are not inclusive enough.

“Alternative and non-stigmatizing options, such as an all-gender or single-user restroom (e.g., staff bathroom or nurse’s office), should be made available to students who request them, but not presented as the only option,” the guidance states.

Perhaps the most shocking component of the guidance is its inclusion of locker rooms.

“A student should not be required to use a locker room that is incongruent with their gender identity,” the guidance states. “Locker room usage should be determined on a case-by-case basis, using the guiding principles of safety and honoring the student’s gender identity and expression.”

And students who are uncomfortable sharing a locker room with those of the opposite sex can ask for an “adjusted changing schedule” or “use of a private area in the facility.”

It’s not clear whether the policy includes showers in the locker room, and a call to the superintendent’s office for clarification has not been returned.

The state Board of Education defends its guidance by stating it “recognizes the need for all students to have a safe and supportive school environment to progress academically and developmentally, and believes school administrators, teachers, staff, families, and students all play an important role in creating and sustaining that environment.”

But efforts by the state Board of Education to ensure that Michigan GNC “progress academically and developmentally” may be undermined by policies such as the ones found within the guidance.

The American College of Pediatricians (ACPeds) released a position statement on March 21 entitled “Gender Ideology Harms Children” in which it contends that any policies that foster the belief that gender dysphoria is anything beyond a psychological problem are in fact harmful. The ACPeds observes that schools and lawmakers should “reject all policies that condition children to accept as normal a life of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex. Facts — not ideology — determine reality.”

The authors of the position statement make several scientific observations, including that human sexuality “is an objective biological binary trait.” Children who use hormones to attempt to mimic a sexuality that is not their own have a number of dangerous physical and mental risks, the position statement advises, adding that “conditioning children into believing a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful” can be classified as child abuse.



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As of March 23, there are nearly 900 [comments](#) on the public comment forum regarding the guidance, and a quick perusal reveals that a majority of parents are outraged. Parent Joel Lindman wrote,

This policy is totally unacceptable. Have you lost your collective minds. As a parent of sons and a daughter I will not let my children attend a school that puts this policy in place. You are recklessly using my tax dollars to promote a liberal social agenda that disregards common sense and creates unsafe environment for children. The following is right from your proposal “The responsibility for determining a student’s gender identity rests with the student.” At what age does a student determine his or her identity? Your policy competently leaves the parents on the sideline. Perhaps the Board members should share bathrooms with each other.

Lindman’s comment was followed by those of a number of other parents who agreed.

Others begrudged not just the policy, but what they observe is a violation of parental rights. “These new policy standards are a slap in the face to parental rights,” declared Casey Armitage. “The State does not have a place in deciding what is best for our children.”

A number of parents threatened to either homeschool their children or place them in private school if the standards are adopted. One parent, identified as Meghan R., wrote, “If this passes we will ensure our children never attend public school here in Michigan.”

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