



HEALTHY CPS

— OFFICE OF STUDENT HEALTH & WELLNESS —

Guidance to Supporting Transgender, Non-Binary, Gender Non-Conforming and LGBTQ+ Students in Physical Education



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The Guidance to Supporting Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender Nonconforming, and LGBTQ+ Students in Physical Education was developed by the Office of Student Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the Health and Physical Education Department to create safe and supportive environments for all students.

This guidance is an extension of the [CPS Guidelines Regarding the Support of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#) and annual [Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Nonconforming webinar on the Safe Schools Platform](#). The guidance offers additional scenarios, and resources to implement in physical education classes.

At Chicago Public Schools, we center our students and aim to remove any barriers that prevent them from participating at their full potential.



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Terminology

Gender-Affirming Approach - A framework used to create an environment in which transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming youth are able to live as the person they know themselves to be, and achieve healthy development and social, emotional, and academic success.

Gender Dysphoria - A term used to describe the experience of an individual who feels a sense of disconnect between their gender identity, gender expression, and gender assigned at birth. Gender dysphoria is not a mental illness, but rather an internal sense of distress that some transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students feel. Gender dysphoria can be physical (e.g. about aspects of one's body) and/or social in nature (e.g. how other people make assumptions about one's gender).

Binder - A tight undergarment worn to reduce the size of the chest to make it more flat-looking.

Tucking - A technique used to reduce the appearance of external genitalia to make it more flat-looking.

Mx. - is a gender-neutral honorific title for those that don't identify with gender titles of Ms., Miss., Mrs., or Mr.

For more terminology and definitions, please check out [Key Terms: A Guide for Understanding LGBTQ+ Identities](#)



Name & Pronouns

Students are to be addressed by their name and pronouns that correspond to the gender identity they consistently assert at school. A student may want to be affirmed differently in school than in front of their parents or what is recorded in ASPEN. It is best practice to ask all students and staff their name and pronouns privately on the first day of classes or when creating new groups for activities and interactions.

For example:

- Pass out note cards on the first day of classes for students to write their name, pronouns, and accommodations students might need
- Meet with all students one-on-one to ask about their name, pronouns, and any accommodations they might need
- Create quarterly Google Forms that allow you to check in with your students and ask about their name, pronouns, accommodations they might need, and any other information they would like you to know

Never single out a student who you might think may be transgender, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming as it can be harmful to the students and the classroom environment.

We additionally suggest that all teachers introduce themselves to their students with their affirmed name and pronouns. This will be a model and example for students.

Scenarios:

Students are coming back to school after spring break with the start to a new quarter. Ms. Lee, a physical education teacher, has two new students in her classroom. She passes out a form with the following columns for students to fill out:

- Name

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- Pronouns
- Name called in school
- Name called around parent/caregivers
- Any accommodations to succeed in the class
- Favorite physical education activities in the past
- Least favorite physical education activity in the past
- Anything else you would like me to know about?

After receiving this information, Ms. Lee notices that two students go by a different name than their Aspen/Gradebook information. She also has two students that use they/them pronouns, and a student who has asthma.

Ms. Lee writes the name changes and pronouns on the side of the students name in her attendance booklet. Ms. Lee follows up with the student who has asthma to see if they have submitted an asthma report plan to the nurse. She privately practices using “they/them” pronouns out loud in a sentence so that she can use the correct affirming pronouns when she interacts with her students.

Gender Inclusive Language

It’s important to always address students using gender inclusive language so that no student feels left out or othered. **Some examples may include**, “Good morning athletes” or “Welcome everyone” instead of “boys and girls” or “ladies and gentlemen.” It’s important to use this language regardless of whether you know you have transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students in the classroom. Using gender-inclusive language models best practices and allows space for those questioning their gender identity or privately holding a transgender or nonbinary identity.

Scenarios:

- Say, “Team, let’s go” instead of “Boys and Girls let’s go.”

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- Say, “Good afternoon folks!” instead of “Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen!”
- Say, “Estudiantes” instead of “Caballeros y caballeras”

Gender Segregated Activities

Staff should implement co-ed activities that allow students to participate irrespective of gender. **Examples may include:** separating into two equal groups by favorite music genres or by birthdays (January to June and July to December).

Gender segregating activities can cause emotional distress for students who do not fit into the binary of “boy” and “girl” and who are questioning their gender identity. Gender segregation reinforces stereotypes that can be harmful to all students and the classroom environment.

Scenarios:

- Ms. Oz is having her class of 21 elementary students play soccer-like games outside. She needs them to separate into two semi-equal groups. She has her students count off by 2’s, establishing two teams.
- Mx. M is having their volleyball group of 15 high school students split up into two teams. They give their students one minute to split up into two semi-equal groups and get in their places.
- Mr. Fernandez has students practice the PACER to prepare for an upcoming fitness test. He groups students based on their prior scores and provides differentiated practice tasks for each group.

Gender Dysphoria

Students who experience gender dysphoria may have a difficult time participating in physical activities such as sports or physical education. Not all transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students



experience gender dysphoria, but many do. Some students may feel severe stress, anxiety, and/or depression related to their body and/or how others perceive their gender. Some students may not have the language to describe what they're going through, so it may be necessary to connect them with their school counselor/support team for further discussion and support. **Some student actions to watch for that might indicate anxiety/depression are:**

- Walking out during activities
- Finding excuses not to participate
- Wearing an unseasonable amount of layers of clothing
- Not showing up to class

Addressing students' concerns and limitations should be done on a case-by-case basis and should be discussed with the student, physical education teacher(s), and school counselor/support team. This may be done in the context of developing a [CPS Gender Support Plan For Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#).

Transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students should not be asked about their body. When creating a CPS Gender Support Plan, it's best to ask about what accommodations they feel are best for them to allow them to participate.

Questions to Ask & Support:

- How can I support you in this class?
- Is there anything specific you are struggling with in this class?
- What activities or games have been your favorite to do so far?
- Provide the student with learning objectives for the day/week and ask if there are learning activities they would like to do to meet those objectives. What activities can we come up with to meet these objectives?



- Supply the students with a unit syllabus that includes learning activities. Ask the student if any of the activities need to be modified or adjusted.

An optional alternative coursework may be possible for the student, which should be noted in the Gender Support Plan, but should be a last resort option. This request can be included in students' Individualized Education Program (IEP), or determined by a [licensed medical professional](#).

Binders & Tucking

Students may use certain clothing and techniques to mitigate gender dysphoria as everyday practice for their participation in schools (e.g. a chest binder or tucking).

Using a binder or tucking during physical education can have a significant positive impact on students' mental health. They can also pose physical risks or limitations on the student's body. **Note:** Physical education teachers should not single out or ask students if they are wearing a binder or tucking as this is an invasion of privacy.

External Resource for More Information

- [Binding, Packing, Tucking, & Padding](#)
- [Things To Know About Tucking](#)
- [Things To Know About Binding](#)
- [A Binding Guide for All Genders and Gender Expressions](#)
- [B4CK - Educational Resources for Parents and Kids](#)
- [Trans Guy Supply 101 - Chest Binding 101: Everything You Need To Know](#)
- [Children's Hospital Los Angeles - Tips and Tricks: Tucking A Resource Guide for Transgender Youth](#)
- [Point of Pride: Tucking](#)

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Dress Code/Student Attire

All students have the right to wear a physical education uniform that is comfortable, safe, and affirming within the physical education dress code adopted by Principals and Local School Councils. In accordance with the [CPS Physical Education Guidance](#), principals and Local School Councils shall not adopt dress codes that restrict students' clothing, hairstyle, or appearance on the basis of gender. Gender neutral dress codes apply to regular school days as well as any special events including sporting events, ceremonies, prom, etc.

Examples may include:

- Shorts that are fitting and comfortable (usually basketball shorts)
- Warm-up pants
- T-Shirts (usually school shirt or a school event shirt)
- Sports bras
- Binders

Restrooms & Locker Rooms

All students are allowed to use restrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their gender identity. Students are allowed to use facilities in a manner that makes them feel safest and most included in their school. No student will be forced to use a private facility because of their transgender identity, nonbinary identity, or gender expression. Alternative requests made by students for privacy, safety, or other reasons, shall be made available immediately upon consultation with the student. Students are not to be punished for requesting usage of particular bathrooms/locker rooms. **For example:** A student requests to use a single-stall restroom to change, but must walk across the building to use the only single-stall restroom. The student is not to lose points for coming in late or leaving early to change due to the bathroom access.

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Scenarios:

- Harper, a student who identifies as a trans girl, has asked her physical education teacher, Ms. Lin, to use the girls' locker room. Ms. Lin says, "Thank you for letting me know, I will communicate that change with the other P.E. teacher who monitors that locker room." Ms. Lin informs the P.E. teacher who monitors the Girl's+ locker room that Harper will now change in the Girl's+ locker room

Several days later, two students who use the Girl's+ locker room have communicated they feel uncomfortable and unsafe with Harper's presence in the locker room. Ms. Lin explains CPS policy, emphasizes mutual respect, and offers the two students the option of using a private facility to change.

- Alex expresses that they do not want to use the girls or boys locker room to Mrs. Lurp, one of the physical education teachers. They ask if they can have more privacy or a place where no one can see them change.

Mrs. Lurp responds by saying, "Thank you for letting me know. Give me one day to figure it out and I will let you know by the beginning of next class." Mrs. Lurp notices that there is a staff locker room that has a key to it. Mrs. Lurp communicates that Alex will use this private facility to change to the other P.E. teachers. Mrs. Lurp finds Alex before next P.E. class and communicates with them the location of the staff locker room and where to pick up/drop off the key.

A student asks why Alex is getting a special changing room. Mrs. Lurp responds by saying, "It's none of your business, friend" in a playful manner. Mrs. Lurp goes on to change the subject.



- Mx. Depaulia received an email from one of their students' parents requesting that their child, Darian, a student who identifies as non-binary and was assigned female at birth, be allowed to use the Boys+ locker room and restroom. Mx. Depaulia replies by saying that they will honor the request, but they are going to follow up with the student to check-in with them.

Mx. Depaulia checks in with Darian about the parent's request to confirm that they want to use the Boys'+ locker room. Darian confirms this. Mx. Depaulia says, "Great, I will communicate this change to the other P.E. teachers who monitor the Boys'+ locker room." Mx. Depaulia communicates the change to the other P.E. teacher who monitors the Boys'+ locker room.

A couple of days later, Mx. Depaulia receives an email from other students' parents about their children feeling uncomfortable using the "boys' locker room" with a "girl". Mx. Depaulia informs the parents of district policy and offers the option for their students to use a private facility to change. Unfortunately, the parents keep escalating the conversation and Mx. Depaulia forwards the emails to the principal/administration team. Administration replies to the parents with empathy while enforcing district policy, Title IX requirements, and offering an accommodation for their children as needed.

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum

The state of Illinois legally mandates the [teaching of LGBTQ+ history in all Illinois public schools](#). Physical education teachers should also include LGBTQ+ people, history, and events in their curricula. It's important to show the contributions of LGBTQ+ athletes throughout history in sports and fitness to ensure students feel represented in the classroom. It's best practice to ensure diverse representation of LGBTQ+

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figures in the curriculum (e.g. athletes with a disability, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other athletes of color, etc.).

Inclusive Curriculum Resources:

- [Developing LGBTQ+ Inclusive Classroom Resources](#)
- [Youth Development, Sports and Camp Resources](#)
- [Physical Education Curriculum - SHAPE America](#)
- [Online Physical Education Network - Tools for Teaching Physical Education](#)
- [Zinn Education Project - Theme: LGBTQ](#)
- [GSA Network - Implementing Lessons that Matter](#)

Community Agreements

Creating community agreements with your students on the first day of classes, quarterly, or as needed, is an important part of acknowledging every student as part of the community. Rules need to be followed for the safety of the students; outlining them during community agreement building is important for ensuring student buy-in. Community agreements center the humanity and needs of everyone in the space in order to prevent harm and unwanted punitive action.

Suggestions for community agreements:

- No name calling of any kind, even if you're just "playing"
- Keep your hands to yourself
- Respect and affirm everyone by their name and pronouns
- A plan to handle bullying and harmful behavior

Optional Alternative Coursework/Courses

Alternative coursework and courses should be a last resort for students who wish to substitute it for physical education lessons or classes. Physical education teachers must create an inclusive and safe environment for transgender, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, and



LGBTQ+ students in order to prevent alternative courses/coursework from being pursued by students.

Excusal from Physical Education should follow the [“Excusal From Physical Activity Component of Physical Education” in the CPS Physical Education Guidance](#). Documentation of reasoning for alternative coursework/courses from Gender Support Plan, Individualized Education Programs (IEP’s) or [medical license professionals](#) will be honored and respected.

Travel & Overnight Trips

In no case shall a transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming student be denied the right to participate in an overnight field trip because of the student’s identity or presentation. Students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity or in a manner that makes them feel safe, affirmed, and included. Staff should work with the student(s) to determine room-sharing arrangements based on the particular circumstance of the trip. In no case should a staff member inform parents/caregivers of other students about a student’s transgender or nonbinary identity due to privacy protections.

Question to Consider:

- If the student is not out to everyone, how would they like to be affirmed in public (outside of school and educational) environments?
- What does the student need to feel safe and comfortable during the trip?
- What particular accommodations does the student need in order to participate?
- Who would the student feel most comfortable rooming with? Does that student consent to rooming together?



- If a student is participating in a sports competition, it may be beneficial to go over [IESA Member School Publicity Policy](#) or [IHSA Administrative Procedures, Guidelines and Policies](#)

Accommodations for overnight school trips shall be made clear to the student prior to departure for the trip and shall remain confidential.

Bullying & Harmful Behavior

In accordance with [Chicago Public School's Office of Student Protection and Title IX](#), CPS does not allow discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or retaliation on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, and other protected categories as outlined in the [Comprehensive Nondiscrimination Policy](#) to students, faculty, staff, and vendors. Any case of bias-based behavior should be reported.

Faculty and staff are responsible for responding to any transphobia, homophobia, and anti-LGBTQ+ behavior for the emotional, social, and developmental well-being of all students. As a faculty and staff member, it's imperative that one creates a safe environment for all students in the classroom. It's also important to address any harmful behavior using [restorative practices](#).

While naming harm and pursuing accountability can be difficult, leaving it unnoticed is more harmful to all students in the classroom and learning environment.

Naming & Addressing Harm

Naming and addressing harm amongst students in a restorative manner:

- CPS: [Restorative Practices Guide and Toolkit](#) and [Restorative Practices](#)
- GLSEN: [Game Plan for Physical Education Teachers: Creating Safe and Inclusive Classroom for LGBTQ+ Students](#)
- Restorative Resources: [Educator Toolkit](#)

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If bullying and harmful behavior is a recurring issue between two (or more) particular students, school staff should contact both (or all) of the student's school counselor or support team, and follow the school's policy after restorative practices have been implemented.

Naming and addressing harm by staff to students:

Staff should never be the cause of students feeling unsafe; we should be the facilitators and leaders of behavior we wish to see.

Staff should never:

- Call a student by their dead name, or the name they were given at birth that the student does not wish to use.
- Purposely misgender a student in front of students or around faculty/staff
- Use transphobia, homophobia, anti-LGBTQ+, racism, xenophobia and ableist language around students
- Pick on a student
- Use religion as justification for not accepting students

If bullying and harmful behavior is perpetuated by staff to a student, you should report it to the [Office of Student Protection and Title IX Online Complaint Form](#). Let your principal know of the matter. Failure to do so will result in consequences from all the parties involved in failing to report.



Resources

Chicago Public Schools

- [LGBTQ+ Supportive Environment](#)
- [CPS Gender Support Plan](#)
- [Guidelines Regarding the Support of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#)
- [Guidelines Regarding the Support of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals](#)
- [CPS Physical Education Guidance](#)
- [CPS Physical Education Excusal Form](#)
- [Key Terms: A Guide for Understanding LGBTQ+ Identities](#)
- [Supporting Gender Diversity Toolkit](#)
- [Restorative Practices Guide and Toolkit](#)

Center for American Progress Action Fund

- [Fair Play - The Importance of Sports Participation for Transgender Youth](#)

GLSEN

- [Game Plan for Physical Education Teachers](#)
- [Game Plan for Administrators and Athletic Directors](#)
- [Game Plan for LGBTQ+ Athletes and Allies](#)
- [Game Plan for Coaches: Creating Safe and Inclusive Teams for LGBTQ+ Athletes](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Students and School Sports Participation](#)

Trans Care BC Provincial Health Services Authority

- [Binding, Packing, Tucking, & Padding](#)
- [Things To Know About Tucking](#)
- [Things To Know About Binding](#)

Play to Win

- [Improving the Lives of LGBTQ Youth in Sports](#)

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Illinois Elementary School Association

- [IESA Member School Publicity Policy](#) (pg 4)

Illinois High School Association

- [Administrative Procedures, Guidelines and Policies](#) (pg 120)

TransAthlete

- [TransAthlete.com](#)

Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

- [Transgender Athletic Policies](#)

Shape America Society of Health and Physical Educators

- [Transgender Inclusion](#)

Trans Lifeline

- [A Binding Guide for All Genders and Gender Expressions](#)

Trevor Project

- [LGBTQ Youth Sports Participation](#)

Athlete Ally

- [Athlete Ally Resources](#)

Human Rights Campaign Foundation

- [To Win: Improving the Lives of LGBTQ Youth In Sports](#)

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