



Model Policies and Equitable Practices

Educational Philosophy

Staunton City School Board is committed to providing **equal opportunity** for **every** student to achieve maximum intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth and to ensuring that each student be equipped to communicate effectively with other people, to be competent both in the workplace and in higher education and to feel confident of the ability to make creative and constructive decisions in their life.

Nondiscrimination

The Staunton City School Board is committed to nondiscrimination with regard to sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, color, national origin, disability, religion, ancestry, age, marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, disability, status as a veteran, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law. This commitment prevails in **all** of its policies and practices concerning staff, students, educational programs and services, and individuals and entities with whom the Board does business.

Our Progress in Educational Equity to Date

As we continue to strengthen an inclusive and caring climate, all students should feel safe, welcome and supported by our school community. Since 2017, Staunton City Schools has made continual strides in creating equitable and inclusive spaces for our students, staff and families. Below are some highlights of that work.

2017:

✓	Superintendent presents Diversity and Inclusion Plan to the School Board for approval to address inequities in SCS and the high school name. The plan includes a partnership with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC).
✓	With VCIC's guidance, SCS begins comprehensive diversity and inclusion training for all employees.
✓	SCS launches Alternative Suspension Center to address student discipline differently. Using restorative justice practices, suspended students do schoolwork at the center and learn to resolve conflicts before returning to their home school.
✓	SCS launches cycle of continuous school improvement through classroom observations and by providing constructive feedback to teachers about their instructional techniques.

2018:

✓	SCS forms equity teams of teachers and staff at every school trained by VCIC to ensure ongoing diversity and inclusion training for staff and equitable and inclusive teaching practices.
✓	VCIC leads focus groups with students to discuss experiences in our schools and feelings about the high school name.
✓	VCIC leads focus groups with school staff, community organizations and citizens about SCS culture and feelings about the high school name.
✓	Bessie Weller Elementary, a school with a higher rate of students from economically disadvantaged families, becomes accredited after 7 years of no accreditation and meets or exceeds all academic benchmarks.
✓	School board votes to remove the name of Confederate General Robert E. Lee from the city's high school and restore the original name, Staunton High School.
✓	Staunton City Schools University begins: an internal professional development mechanism designed to continuously improve teacher expertise.
✓	Bus drivers gain access to the school division's employee insurance benefits. Previously, bus drivers were the only employee group without access to these benefits.

2019:

✓	Ware Elementary recognized as the 2018 National ESSA Distinguished Title 1 School due to high academic performance and reduced achievement gaps between reporting groups for two consecutive years.
✓	Middle school math progression excels in all reporting groups.
✓	On-time graduation rate reaches 98% for black students and 90% for students with economic disadvantages or disabilities.
✓	SCS opens an Equity First Fund to address issues of equity for students and staff immediately, including out-of-pocket student fees, student technology needs, diversity training opportunities for staff and students and more.
✓	SCS opts out of the regional Genesis Alternative Program. Students instead go to SCS' Alternative Suspension Center and then return to their home school.
✓	SCS enters into a mental health partnership with the University of Virginia and the Virginia Department of Education for SCS mental health professionals to receive training through UVA. This partnership also provides a pipeline of applicants for hard-to-staff positions.

2020:

✓	SCS bridges the digital divide for students, providing every family in need of at-home technology tools with Chromebooks and internet hotspots to keep up with schoolwork.
✓	Virginia Department of Education releases data confirming no disproportionality among black student suspensions compared to non-black student suspensions in SCS.
✓	After years of trying, SCS qualifies for the Community Eligibility Provision, allowing every student in the school divisions to eat breakfast and lunch for free.
✓	Creation of the first SCS Equity Committee, which will develop the school division's first-ever equity plan.

2021:

✓	Will provide Upstander training to elementary, middle and high school students through VCIC. Students will learn how to stand up to bullying, including discrimination of any kind.
✓	Monthly administrator meetings will include discussion, resources and activities for staff around diversity and inclusion.

Model Policies for the Treatment of Transgender Students

In 2020, the VA General Assembly enacted HB 145 and Senate Bill 161, which is now Code of Virginia [§22.1-23.3](#), Treatment of Transgender Students; policies.

The Code of Virginia [§22.1-23.3](#) states: The Department of Education shall develop and make available to each school board model policies concerning the treatment of transgender students in public elementary and secondary schools that address common issues regarding transgender students in accordance with evidence-based best practices and include information, guidance, procedures, and standards relating to the following 8 areas. These model policies reflect best practices, as endorsed by medical and educational professionals, including, but not limited to the National Education Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association.

In addition, on June 16, 2021, USED issued a notification of interpretation clarifying that the Office of Civil Rights will enforce the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender identity though Title IX.

A review of applicable policies reflects that inclusive language, including gender identity, has been present in our policies prior to this school year. Links to those policies are listed below. July 2021 policy updates, when approved by the Staunton City School Board, will be posted on our website as soon as possible.

Topical Area	Where to Find in SCS Policy	Policy Revision Date
Compliance with applicable nondiscrimination laws	Policy AC Nondiscrimination	June 2020
	Policy JB: Equal Educational Opportunities/Nondiscrimination	June 2020
	Policy GBA and JFA Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation	June 2020, July 2021 (revised order of policy)
Maintenance of a safe and supportive learning environment free from discrimination and harassment for all students	Policy AC Nondiscrimination	June 2020
	Policy JB: Equal Educational Opportunities/Nondiscrimination	June 2020
	Policy GBA and JFA Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation	June 2020, July 2021 (revised order of policy)
	AD Educational Philosophy	July 2021 (revised to gender neutral pronouns)
	Policy AE School Division Goals and Objectives	April 2019
	Policy CH Policy Implementation	August 2013
	Policy IJ Guidance and Counseling Program	May 2018
Prevention of and response to bullying and harassment	Policy JFC Student Conduct	July 2021
	Policy GCL Professional Staff Development	July 2021
Maintenance of student records	Policy JO Student Records	June 2018
	Policy JOA Student Transcripts	April 2017

Topical Area	Where to Find in SCS Policy	Policy Revision Date
Identification of students	Policy AC Nondiscrimination AD Educational Philosophy Policy AE School Division Goals and Objectives Policy CH Policy Implementation	June 2020 July 2021 (revised to gender neutral pronouns) April 2019 August 2013
Protection of student privacy and the confidentiality of sensitive information	Policy AC Nondiscrimination AD Educational Philosophy	June 2020 July 2021 (revised to gender neutral pronouns)
Enforcement of sex-based dress codes	22.1-2709.6 has indicated that school boards may institute dress or grooming codes, but if they do, they need to maintain gender neutrality. The same set of rules and standards have to apply regardless of gender.	Dress codes are normally addressed in regulations from the superintendent rather than in policy enacted from the school board Gender neutral dress code implemented in June 2020
Student participation in sex-specific school activities, events, and use of school facilities.	Policy AC Nondiscrimination AD Educational Philosophy Policy AE School Division Goals and Objectives Policy CH Policy Implementation Policy JB: Equal Educational Opportunities/Nondiscrimination Policy IA Instructional Goals and Objectives Policy IICA Field Trips Policy IGDA Student Organizations Policy JFCB Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity	June 2020 July 2021 (revised to gender neutral pronouns) April 2019 August 2013 June 2020 June 2020 May 2021 June 2012 June 2013

Student Participation in School Activities and Events

Schools shall eliminate or reduce the practice of segregating students by gender to the extent possible. Students have the right to equitable access to programs, activities and events that include but are not limited to acknowledgements, dances, assemblies, after-school programs, extracurricular activities, intramurals, non-competitive sports leagues and field trips.

When designing lessons, groups, activities, etc. ask:

✓	<p>What is the educational benefit of “boys” and “girls” designation in this activity, lesson, etc.?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead, allow student choice/self selection into a work group, activity, etc. • This should include thinking about lining up by gender for bathrooms--why is it necessary and vital to do this?
✓	<p>When are gender markers on documents necessary? If there is not a bona-fide reason to use gender markers, then don't use them.</p>
✓	<p>Any single-gender activity or program should NOT be premised on generalizations or stereotypes about different talents, capacities or preferences for any gender.</p>
✓	<p>When providing gender-specific activities such as PE classes, students will be allowed to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity.</p>

For any school program, event, or activity, including extra-curricular activities that are segregated by gender, SCS shall allow students to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity.

✓	<p>What school programs, events, or activities exist that are separated by gender? Is there a bona-fide reason for this separation?</p>
✓	<p>Family life classes: Participation in family life class is a family decision.</p>
✓	<p>Some processes require legal names and sex assigned at birth. How will we support students?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things like standardized testing do require legal names and sex assigned at birth. This information will be treated as confidential information and care will be taken to ensure it is not disclosed except to those who need to know. • The VDOE has expanded gender choices to include “non-binary” as a third option to “male” and “female”. • Class rosters, student ID cards: students can use the name and gender as they want it to appear. • Ask yourself, why does gender matter for this activity, etc.?

✓	Carefully consider when gender-specific attire is used. Ask yourself, “Why is this necessary?” Ex. choir outfits, graduation robes, etc. “Tradition” is not a bona-fide reason. If there is a bona-fide reason, students will be allowed to use the attire that aligns with their gender identity.
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When planning overnight field trips:

✓	Schools will not force a student into single-occupancy accommodations that are not required for other students.
✓	Alternative accommodations will be made available to any student who requests them.
✓	Policies and procedures involving privacy when changing attire and showering will be shared in advance with students and families.

Athletic participation regulated by the Virginia High School League (VHSL), as well as middle school athletics, shall be in compliance with policies and rules outlined by the VHSL [VHSL Handbook and Policy Manual 2021-22](#) [VHSL Criteria for Transgender Appeals](#).

Access to Facilities

All students are entitled to have access to restrooms, locker rooms, and changing facilities that are sanitary, safe and adequate so they can comfortably and fully engage in their school programs and activities.

✓	Students should be allowed to use the facility that corresponds with their gender identity.
✓	When gender-inclusive, single user restrooms or private changing areas are available, these restrooms or areas will be available to all students without special codes or keys.
✓	For locker rooms that do not have private changing areas, reasonable accommodations for requests for increased privacy will be made.
✓	At the request of any student, schools will offer alternative arrangements such as a separate changing schedule, use of a nearby private area, access to a staff member's office, not requiring a change of clothes for PE or offering alternatives to in-person physical education.
✓	Ensure that the accommodation(s) offered are non-stigmatizing and minimize loss instructional time.
✓	Ensure that any information related to accommodations should be handled in such a way as to protect the student's privacy relating to their gender identity.

FAQs

Is there any set amount of time that is required before using a students' preferred name and gender pronouns?

No, this should be done without any sustaining evidence, such as no minimum duration.

Does this mean that school staff cannot address an expressed gender identity if there are concerns that the expressed gender identity is being used for an improper purpose?

No, If school staff believe that this expressed gender identity is being used for an improper purpose, it is appropriate for school staff to address the concern with the student.

What if students and parents are not in agreement regarding a student's gender identity?

School counselors and others will work with families to create a response that is respectful of the student and supports the student's well-being, sense of safety and belonging and their academic success. Staunton City Schools will continue to support counselors, administrators and families in ways to work together to ensure every student's well being.

[VISTAS Online: Best Practices for School Counselors Working with Transgender Students](#)

[NASP: Gender Inclusive Schools: Counseling and Supporting Families](#)

Are groups, agencies, etc. that rent school facilities required to follow school policies?

Our current rental/lease agreement outlines expectations for care and use of our facilities, equipment and cleaning. No weapons, drugs, alcohol, smoking or vaping are permissible at any time on any Staunton City Schools property.

What about bathrooms?

A key recommendation from the VDOE Model Policy is that transgender students be allowed to access restrooms and locker rooms, corresponding to their gender identity. This is important because every child needs to feel safe while using the bathroom. According to *Gender Spectrum*, “too many students avoid using bathrooms out of fear that another student will mistreat or hurt them, physically or emotionally. The consequences can be severe, impacting a child’s health, well-being and their ability to concentrate on learning. For a variety of reasons however, there will remain a small percentage of students who would prefer a more private space than many school bathrooms allow. Whether for cultural or religious reasons, a particular health issue, concerns related to gender or simple modesty, schools should work actively to identify private options that are available to any student who requests access to them. Regardless of the student’s underlying reason for using it, such options must be free of stigma; a student who uses a private space should not be ridiculed or singled out by staff or students. Providing private bathrooms should be one of many ways in which schools meet a diversity of student needs. At the same time, a private bathroom space must be optional; no child should be required to use such a space.”

School boards are recommended to allow for different options to accommodate privacy, and should be available to any student, not just students who are transgender.

- We have private bathrooms for use in school clinics. Additionally, multiple bathrooms have been identified as “all genders” in each school building. These designated bathrooms are not stigmatizing, as anyone can use them, at any time, and are located in areas that minimize loss of instructional time.
- At the middle and high school, there are options for private showers for anyone that wants to use them.

Schools continue to have the ability to address inappropriate bathroom use according to existing discipline practices and policies.

Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals decision: [Gavin Grimm v Gloucester County School Board No. 19-1952](#)

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for employment discrimination “on the basis of sex” includes protection for sexual orientation and gender identity.

- Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the School Board’s argument that a policy prohibiting transgender students from using the bathroom that matched their gender identity was needed to protect student privacy.

The following terms may be helpful to familiarize yourself with as students, colleagues and families may use these terms to describe themselves, or their family members. It is important to respect a person's self-reflection as we work together to build and maintain an inclusive, respectful community where all members know they have space where they belong, are accepted for who they are, and can thrive and grow.

Terminology

- **Cisgender:** A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender:** A set of social, psychological, and emotional traits that classify an individual as typically masculine or feminine, although the social construct of gender may be more diverse across a continuum rather than as a binary system.
- **Gender-expansive/gender-diverse/gender-fluid/gender-nonbinary/agender/gender queer:** Terms that convey a wider, more inclusive range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the social construct of a binary (two discrete and opposite categories of male and female) gender system.
- **Gender Expression:** The manner in which a person represents or expresses their gender identity or role to others, often through appearance, clothing, hairstyles, behavior, activities, voice, or mannerisms. Gender expression may change over time and from day-to-day and is not necessarily related to the person's gender identity.
- **Gender Identity:** A person's internal sense of their own identity as a boy/man, girl/woman, something in between, or outside the male/female binary. Gender identity is an innate part of a person's identity and can be the same or different from the sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender Nonconforming:** A person who does not conform to gender stereotypes. Their gender expression differs from expectations associated with the sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender Transition:** The process of shifting toward living according to their gender identity, rather than the sex assigned at birth. Transitions can be at different levels, including social transition, such as new names, pronouns, appearance, and clothing. Some people may undergo medical transitions, such as hormone therapy or surgery.
- **LGBTQ+:** An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and others."
- **Sex Assignment:** A label, generally "male" or "female," that is typically assigned at birth on the basis of a cluster of physical and anatomical features. Intersex refers to someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female.
- **Transgender:** A self-identifying term that describes a person whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth. A transgender girl is a girl who was presumed

to be male when she was born, and a transgender boy is a boy who was presumed to be female when he was born. Note that there is a wide range of gender identities in addition to transgender male and transgender female, such as nonbinary.

Resources

The VDOE has created a [Gender Diversity](#) webpage with additional information and resources.

[Teach Pride, Reach Wide Toolkit](#) from Fel Agrelius(she/her) of The Spahr Center Madera, CA

This toolkit was designed to help build the skills to become strong allies and advocates in our classrooms for LGBTQ+ students. Questions about this toolkit can be directed to Fel Agrelius, Director of LGBTQ+ Youth Programs, at agrelius@thespahrcenter.org.