

Meadow Montessori School

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Policy

Meadow Montessori School is committed to providing a school-wide culture of inclusion and respect for difference that embraces all members of our school community regardless of background, age, sexual orientation or gender expression. No meaningful learning or personal growth can occur unless all staff and students feel safe, valued, and free to express their authentic selves.

The over-arching aim of Meadow Montessori School is to promote the emotional, physical and intellectual development of our students in a caring learning environment. Students and staff who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (trans*), and those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity are valued members of our school community. As such, Meadow Montessori has developed this policy to support and affirm the dignity of all staff and students and to ensure the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms as set out in the *BC Human Rights Code* and the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Strategies

Staff Development

The School will provide professional development opportunities for staff to develop awareness, knowledge, skills, and understanding to ensure all learning environments support and advocate for the needs of students whose identity, or perceived identity, is LGBTQ+.

The school will ensure all members of staff use language, educational resources and approaches that are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and respectful of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policies

The school has in place, and reviews regularly, anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies that provide effective procedures to prevent, and respond to, behaviour or language that compromises the physical or emotional well-being of any member of our school community. This includes any action that degrades, labels, or stereotypes students on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender expression, or incites hatred, exclusion, or discrimination on such basis.

Accommodations

Confidentiality and Privacy

The rights and privacy of all students and staff are essential. All students have the right to discuss their gender expression openly.

The administration or any school personnel should not disclose information that may reveal a student is transgender to other parents, students or staff, unless legally required to do so, or unless the parents/guardians of the student have expressly authorized such disclosure.

Where a student approaches a teacher, counsellor or administrator to discuss his/her experience of gender expression, and where the teacher, counsellor, or administrator suspects the student has not revealed this information to his/her parents, the school shall keep such information strictly confidential. The school shall not disclose any information from a student except where required by law.¹

Names and Pronouns

All trans* students will be addressed by the names and pronouns they prefer to use. Legal documentation for the name change is not required, and the student does not need to change official school records for this right to be granted.

School Records

Whenever possible and permitted by law, requests made by a student, or the parent of a student, to change the student's official school record to reflect his/her preferred name and/or gender identity will be accommodated.

Whenever possible, at the request of a student or the student's parent, the student's preferred name and/or gender identity will be included on class lists, timetables, student files, identification cards and communications between the school and home.

School Uniform/Dress Code

Students have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. The school will work with individual families and students to determine what is appropriate for the student and the school.

Physical Education and Sports

All students should be able to participate in physical education classes and team sports in a safe, inclusive affirming and respectful environment. Where possible, students will be permitted to participate in any gender-segregated recreational and competitive activities in accordance with their gender identity. Due to issues of safety, some students may wish to participate in a gender-specific activity that is not aligned with their gender identity. Participation in competitive athletics will be resolved on a case-by-case basis, in keeping with league policies, and with the involvement of the student and his/her parents.

Washroom and Change Room Accessibility

New Building: The use of washrooms and change rooms by trans* students will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the student and parents with the goal of maximizing the student's social integration, safety and comfort, and minimizing stigmatization.

Currently: All of the school's washrooms are gender-neutral.

¹ E.g., see the Independent School Act and s.9 of the Independent School Regulation, BC Reg. 262/89 for rules on disclosure of a student's record. See also the Personal Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Decision Making

Any other area of concern not directly addressed in this policy will be resolved in a manner that involves the student and parents with the goal of maximizing inclusiveness and safety for the student.

Where a student or parent is not satisfied with a decision of the school, they may refer to the school's Appeal policy.

Terms

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned gender at birth. Other similar terms include transsexual and trans. It may also be an umbrella term that includes people who are otherwise gender-nonconforming.

Trans*: When the asterisk is put on the end of trans*, it expands the boundaries of the category to be radically inclusive. It can be understood as the most inclusive umbrella term to describe various communities and individuals with nonconforming gender identities and/or expressions.

Gender Identity: A personal, deeply-felt sense of being male, female, both or neither.

Gender Expression: How a person expresses his or her gender through outward presentation and behaviour. This includes clothing, hair style, body language and mannerisms.

Gender Dysphoria: An intense and persistent discomfort with the primary and secondary sex characteristics of one's assigned birth gender.

LGBTQ+: An acronym and umbrella term used to denote a community of people with varying sexual and gender identities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited, intersex, and asexual.

References:

"Fraser Academy Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy." *Fraser Academy Parent Handbook*. Fraser Academy, 2015. Web. 15 Feb. 2016.

Johnson, Linda S. "The Transgender Student: Guidelines for Independent Schools Working with and Supporting Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students." *National Association of Independent Schools*. National Association of Independent Schools, Apr. 2014. Web. 15 Feb. 2016.

"Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools." *Human Rights Campaign*. The Human Rights Campaign, n.d. Web. 15 Feb. 2016.

"CISVA Elementary School Policy Regarding Gender Expression and Gender Dysphoria." *The Catholic Independent Schools Vancouver Archdiocese*. The Catholic Independent Schools Vancouver Archdiocese, 8 July 2014. Web. 15 Feb. 2016.