Policy and Practice
Leading the Way in Supporting Transgender and Nonbinary Students in Independent Schools

www.friendscouncil.org
Why We are Here

As Friends schools, we are all:

- Guided by Quaker values or “testimonies”: SPICES (Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, Stewardship)
- Student centered
- Focused on respect for and appreciation of difference
- Committed to social justice and equity work
- Actively looking to protect those who are vulnerable

Friends Council Strategic Initiative: To develop programs and partnerships to address issues of equity, community, and justice in Friends schools. Under this initiative that Friends Council has been in communication with Quaker schools as they explore how to support transgender and gender nonbinary youth.
Welcome on behalf of Friends Council on Education

The first Quaker school was founded by William Penn in 1689. The school’s purpose was to gather students from all walks of life that they might imagine a more ideal society together.

National association of 78 schools in 22 states

Friends Council’s mission is to support the Quaker character of Friends schools through a variety of professional development offerings, resources and best practices.
We Are Here For Them

When asked what we can do any trans* student, they told us that we should be:

“Letting the student know that at least there are faculty members that are by their side, giving options for the bathroom and locker room, making sure other kids aren't giving them a hard time, and really listening to what the student is saying and what pace they want everything to happen.”
Introductions

Maria Alonso
Westtown School

Jason Craige Harris
Friends Seminary

Rachel Kane
Sidwell Friends

Edna-Anne Valdepeñas
George School

Betsy Torg
Friends Council
Stating Our Support: Policy Development

“I think it is important for all students to feel supported in expressing their gender identities and having a statement/policy is a big part of that.” - student

What was the process for writing your school’s policy?
What models did you use?

- George School (May 2015)
- Westtown (Summer 2015)
- Sidwell Friends (Fall 2016)
- Friends Seminary (Fall 2017)
Showing Our Support: “Best”? Practices

“Schools can help by providing a safe space and equal opportunities, as well as supporting the gender non-conforming students.” - student

- Assume you have trans* community members
- School Forms and Documents
- Pronoun use
- Facilities
- Sports / League Policies
- School trips with overnights
- Intentionality around when gender is used
- School photos and yearbook photos
- Curriculum
To make students feel supported, we should focus on “educating the staff, parents, and students about gender diversity/identity and making sure the student feels safe and cared for.” - student

Community education for gender inclusion requires proactive, ongoing opportunities for all constituencies of the school to develop and assess their awareness of gender and sexuality diversity. Such education equips them to affirm and advocate gender-inclusive cultures and practices.

Constituencies include:
- Administrators, Faculty and Staff
- Trustees
- Students
- Parents/Guardians
- Substitutes, Coaches and Athletic Directors
Community Education: Faculty/Staff

- Orientation workshops for new faculty/staff, including vocabulary
- Mandatory training for all faculty/staff with inside/outside facilitators
- Specialized training on school policies for and policy review by administrators
- Send faculty/staff to off-campus conferences and workshops
- Grade team curriculum review projects
- Reading groups focused on gender inclusion and trans awareness
- Division-specific workshops on developmentally appropriate strategies for gender-inclusive education
- Teaching gender-neutral pronouns as part of English pronoun curriculum
- Pronoun exercises at the beginning of semester in each class
Community Education: Families

- Community conversations and workshops with gender & sexuality diversity experts
- All school read/reading groups focused on gender inclusion & sexuality diversity
- Grade-level parent meeting and conversation
Community Education: Students

- Divisional assemblies on gender and sexuality diversity with a focus on student storytelling
- Grade-level workshops; orientation workshops
- LGBTQIA+ affinity student groups; Gender and Sexuality Alliance student clubs
- Gender and sexuality diversity conferences
- Gender-inclusive policies task force
Conclusion

“If they don’t [have policies], [trans*] students face discrimination and are responsible for educating those around them/advocating for themselves instead of focusing on getting an education.” - student

- Assume that you have someone in your community who identifies as trans*
- Best practice: allow trans*-identified students to lead their own processes
- Consider the feedback of trans*-identified students re: how to make school safe
- Factor of state level guidance, city level guidance and a school’s decision
- Know that the Department of Education has confirmed they will no longer consider trans* students’ civil rights claims related to facilities use under Title IX (Feb 12, 2018)
- Anticipate questions and also be honest about your own
- Seek guidance and expertise as needed
- Remember! Continued reflection and revisiting of policy and practices
Resources: Print and Online

- Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender K-12 Schools
- Gender Spectrum: Gender Inclusive School’s Toolkit
- Welcoming Schools
- Human Rights Campaign: Transgender Children and Youth
- National Center for Transgender Equality: School Action Center
- GLSEN: Model Policy

Sample Friends School Policies: Contact Betsy Torg at betsy@friendscouncil.org
Resources: Video and Film

- Gender Revolution from National Geographic
- Welcoming Schools films
- GLSEN Video: How to Support Transgender Students
- GLSEN Video: What does it mean to be Gender Fluid