BEFORE WE BEGIN, HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Your dedication to the IDSPE process makes a difference! Research is clear that supporting transgender and gender non-conforming students at school saves lives and makes a positive difference for both trans and non-trans students alike.[i]

What is an IDSPE?

An Identity Support Plan for Elementary (IDSPE) provides the opportunity for school staff to work together with gender diverse students, and potentially their caregivers, to understand and identify ways in which the student's identity is respected and supported at school. The IDSPE process fosters an educational environment that is safe and supportive for ALL students and serves as an effective tool to help guide school staff through conversations with families, other caregivers, and children.

Who is filling this out?

Typically, a staff member who has built a level of trust or comfort with the student or family may facilitate the collaborative IDSPE process. Staff should take initiative and offer the IDSPE to students and their families when concerns or needs around safety and identity have been disclosed. In addition, a district LGBTQ+ Liaison, school counselor, school psychologist, or school administrator are also critical to effective facilitation and implementation of the plan.

How should school personnel approach this process?

The most important part of the IDSPE process is the ongoing relationship between the IDSPE facilitator, the student, and the student's family. Each unique situation should be approached with a focus on understanding the student's experience in order to support their needs.

For whom is the IDSPE meant?

- The IDSPE is for elementary students who demonstrate a consistent gender identity or expression that is different than their sex assigned at birth (e.g., transgender and/or nonbinary).

- Transgender and gender diverse students may have parents/caregivers who approach the school looking for support and/or to advocate for their child as early as Pre-K and Kindergarten.

- Older students who are gender diverse may approach staff with identity requests with or independent of their parents/caregivers—typically around 5th or 6th grade.

- Students who express their gender in ways that may not be traditionally associated with their assigned gender do not necessarily need an IDSPE unless it is necessary to support the student and their unique expression.

Things to Keep in Mind:

o   Gender nonconforming behavior or expression does not necessarily predict transgender identity. Not every student who asks to be called by a different name needs an identity support plan. Each situation should be approached on a case-by-case basis.

o   It is not for school personnel to determine if a student is "really" transgender. The school approach should focus on support planning for the student's emotional safety.

o   Research is clear that affirming children has a positive effect on their mental health.[ii]

o   Children on the autism spectrum have a higher prevalence of gender diverse identity (WPATH SOC, 7th ed, 2012).

o   Students, especially older elementary students, are experts in their own risk and safety. Under state law, education code, and best practices, the facilitator should defer to the student regarding the completion of the form. It is only necessary to complete portions of the form relevant to the student's current situation and needs.

What about parents?

Family collaboration is highly encouraged. Family involvement and support nurtures the student's sense of safety and likelihood of sharing emotional struggles and/or concerns for safety. However, if student does not feel safe involving caregivers, then their wishes for privacy are protected by the law (Calif. Ed. Code §221.5). Though the parents may not be involved, there are still many ways the school can support the student throughout their daily experiences. The facilitator should work with the student and the school staff to ensure strategies conducive to safety, learning and gender expression.

Reassuring, Trauma-Informed Language Will Increase Student's Sense of Safety:

o   Thank you for trusting me/us with this.

o   We want to make sure you feel safe and supported at school.

o   This plan helps us understand ways we can support you.

o   You are in charge of this plan, and you can change it at any time.

o   Everything in this form belongs to you and can only be shared with the people whom you give permission for us to share.

DEFINITIONS:

The state of California recognizes three legal genders: male, female, and non-binary. Thus, these three gender options are also recognized by the databases that schools use to keep student records (e.g., Student Information Systems (SIS), such as AERIES, Synergy, and others, and the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, aka CalPads).

- o **Transgender** - Individuals whose current gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. (CDC's "Health Considerations for LGBTQ Youth, Terminology", 2019)

- o **Non-binary** - Refers to people who do not identify as either male or female. They might exist between or beyond the man-woman binary. (PFLAG's "National Glossary of Terms," 2021). Some non-binary people self- identify as transgender, while others do not.

- o **Gender Nonconforming/Gender Diverse** - The state of one's physical appearance or behaviors not aligning with societal expectations of their gender (a feminine boy, a masculine girl, etc.). (CDC's "Health Considerations for LGBTQ Youth, Terminology", 2019)

- o **Affirmed Gender –** An individual's true gender, as opposed to their gender assigned at birth. This term should replace terms like new gender or chosen gender (PFLAG's "National Glossary of Terms," 2021). Also a respectful way to refer to a student's name and pronouns.

What Does the Law Say?

- Students have the right to use affirmed names and pronouns at school, including online. Staff are expected to put forth best efforts to respect affirmed identity and honor privacy; failure to do so may be considered harassment.

- All unofficial records may reflect student's affirmed name and gender identity (male, female, or non-binary), based on assertion.

- All students have the right to access school facilities and sex-segregated activities based on their gender identity. iii

Best Practices for Inclusive Schools:

- o School and district staff are committed to building a safe and supportive school environment. Harassment, bullying, and intimidation are not acceptable, and we commit to immediately seeking appropriate guidance and support for all involved.

- o School and district staff are committed to advocating for a school campus that teaches staff and students how to create a safe and supportive environment for all students, including transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming students.

- o School and district staff, understand that referring to children as "boys and girls" does not include all children and may create an environment that feels unsafe for transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming children, and therefore commit to implementing PBIS-based strategies that ensure all children are included. Recommendations for such strategies are included in the IDSPE.

STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS) CHANGES — RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:

o SIS systems, such as AERIES and Synergy, offer ways for student's legal identity to be "hidden" so that a student can update their name and gender to support their daily functioning. (*This is not the same as adding a student's affirmed name as an "alias," which does not protect the student's privacy.*)

o Students may update their name and gender marker in district SIS system by request. No legal or medical documentation is required, and parental consent and/or notification is not required.

o Any updates to the SIS system can be seen by the student's family through the parent portal (currently SIS systems do not offer a work around for this).

o Do not change student's SIS without the student's informed consent

o Facilitator may need to speak to the school administrator, office manager, or enrollment tech to complete a name and gender change using the "show/hide" system. If site staff are unsure how to do this, contact your District's SIS Liaison/IT department. If your District is not sure whether you have this capability, an IT liaison may need to contact the SIS company your district uses for guidance.

CONFIDENTIALITY – COMPLETED FORMS:

o To protect student privacy, it is recommended that completed forms not be kept digitally or emailed.

o Copies of the completed IDSP form should be given to student (if safe) and/or caregivers and an on-site student advocate, such as the school counselor or school social worker. An LGBTQ Liaison or other District-level advocate may keep a completed copy as well.

o When student transition or transfer to a new school site, it is recommended that a support person request student consent to initiate a "warm hand off" transition with a support person at the new school site.

o Facilitator should consider aligning student IEP, 504, and IDSPE per district policy and student's unique situation. (For example, if parent is supportive of student's identity.)

i. West Ed "Evidence Based Support for Middle and High School Students," October 2020: https://www. wested.org/resources/supporting-lgbtq-middle-and-high-school-students/).

ii. Tordoff DM, Wanta JW, Collin A, Stepney C, Inwards Netw Open. 2022;5(2):e220978. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978.-Breland DJ, Ahrens K. Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care. JAMA

iii. For information on relevant laws, including privacy expectations, please see the CA Dept. of Ed.'s website page "Frequently Asked Questions: School Success and Opportunity Act (Assembly Bill 1266)" http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/eo/faqs.asp and the Ca Dept of Ed. "How to Support LGBTQ Students" at https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/supportlgbtq.asp