

**District 211 Proposes Transgender Access Policy,
Pending Board of Education Approval**
A Message from Superintendent Daniel Cates

At the upcoming District 211 Board of Education meeting on Thursday, September 19 at Palatine High School, the Board will conduct its first review of a potential policy that would grant transgender students unrestricted access to the locker room of the student's gender identity, in partnership with the student's parent and support team.

Four years ago, District 211 faced a complaint that our supports to transgender students were discriminatory. The complaint sought unrestricted access to locker rooms by transgender students. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) determined that the District had violated its guidelines and sought to compel the District's compliance or, otherwise, face a potential violation and risk the loss of federal funds.

There was no definitive legal guidance in place at the time to help schools on matters like this. District 211 felt the local school board should make this important decision. For months, participation at our Board meetings included passionate voices from all perspectives, including two meetings attended by hundreds of people that included hours of public comments.

Our Board of Education adopted a compromise practice of granting access to the locker room of a student's gender identity upon the student's agreement to change clothes in a private area. The private changing areas would also be available to all students as desired. The OCR approved this practice, and the District has successfully implemented it for numerous students over the past four years.

Throughout this time, we have been in the unique position of facing complaints and lawsuits from both sides of the issue – those who want full, unrestricted access to the locker rooms and those who feel that adolescents with different anatomy should not share the same locker room. Our school district's approach has prevailed in federal and state court in the face of challenges from both sides.

And in those four years, understanding and acceptance of transgender identity have advanced – societally and in our immediate communities – for the better. In our district and countless others, students, families and staff honor, respect and celebrate all manifestations of unique differences characteristic of the human condition.

Our proposed District policy reflects these advancements. The policy, which still requires approval from the Board of Education, will be posted Tuesday in advance of our Board meeting next week, and would provide transgender students unrestricted access to the locker room of the student's gender identity. (In District 211, policies must be reviewed at two Board meetings; a new or revised policy may be adopted at the second meeting).

District 211 has a longstanding legacy of providing compassionate, fair and equitable support for all students. As always, we are committed to ensuring that our schools provide a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that celebrates our unique differences and respects all people.