

Judge rules in favor of balanced access to locker room

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Township High School District 211

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For the past two years, District 211 has been one of a few school districts at the center of a national debate around matters of student privacy and access to the locker room of a student's identified gender rather than the gender of the student's birth.

Our privilege as a public school is to serve everyone with caring support. Teenagers throughout our school communities can experience challenges associated with adolescent identity development into early adulthood. We also are aware that changing clothes or showering in the locker room can be associated with unspoken discomfort for many teenagers.

In District 211, our Board of Education and staff members have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to respecting all students and safeguarding student privacy. We are dedicated to providing supportive access that respects and balances the identity and privacy interests of all the nearly 12,000 teenagers in our high schools and we have implemented practices to achieve this.

This commitment was the cornerstone of the approved compromise solution we reached with the federal Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in 2015, following a complaint filed by a student seeking unrestricted access to the locker room of the student's identified gender. Our practices provide transgender students use of the locker room consistent with their gender identity with an agreement to use a private changing stall inside the locker room to change clothes or shower. These enclosed changing stalls are available for any student who wishes to use them in locker rooms throughout our district.

A federal court ruling recently affirmed the appropriateness of this approach, refusing to grant a temporary injunction sought by a group who wanted to prevent any transgender students from using the locker room or bathroom of their identified gender. The federal court ruling stated that there was no evidence that the District's current, balanced practices compromised student privacy in any way.

In the fall of 2017, a second lawsuit was filed by a District 211 student, this time in state court, seeking full and unconditional access to the locker room of a student's identified gender without the use of the changing stall. Today in state court, Judge Allen ruled in favor of the District to continue offering transgender students access to the locker room along with the balanced, reasonable agreement of changing clothes or showering in a privacy stall located inside the locker room.

This particular matter has yet to be fully defined in the law and the District will continue to participate in both the federal court and state court proceedings to uphold and protect compassionate, responsive, and equitable support for all students. As always, we are committed to ensuring that our schools provide a welcoming and inclusive learning environment celebrating each of our unique differences.