



# The Linden School Policy on Gender Inclusion

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## Mission:

The Linden School is a socially progressive community where innovative best practices in girls' education promote and strengthen student voice, well-being, academic excellence, and global engagement.

## Our Values

### Inclusivity:

We support a genuinely student-driven culture; students are empowered to actively seize leadership opportunities and confidently contribute to the making of our academic and social community.

### Diversity:

We work within an anti-oppression framework by approaching the curriculum from multiple perspectives; our academic inquiry includes equity and social justice issues from feminist and anti-racist viewpoints.

### Intellectual Risk:

We support respectful dissent and encourage an enthusiasm for inquiry and interdisciplinary exploration; we challenge ourselves and others through independent thinking, well-informed opinions, and critical debate.

## The Policy:

Our approach to gender inclusion is informed by our mission, values and identity as a girls' school. This policy addresses our approach to admissions, retention, code of conduct for all and for our staff training. Included in this document is a rationale for the development of the policy and pertinent definitions.

Its purpose is to clarify and communicate the school's intentions and practices regarding issues related to gender identity and expression. The included definitions are not meant to label but to assist in understanding the rapidly evolving and expanding cultural perspectives on the topic. As such, this policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

There are two main issues addressed by The Linden School's girl-centred philosophy.

**1. Gender Oppression:** The feminist pedagogy is designed to give the girls agency and voice in a world in which men retain privilege. One could argue that similar gender oppression is experienced by trans men, trans women, non-binary and genderqueer people. One way to think about this is to imagine who might feel unsafe or oppressed in a mixed-gender school as a result of gender issues.



**2. Girl-Centred Education:** Research indicates that there are best practices for educating girls that look different than best practices for mixed groups or boys only.

One could ask the question, what if a boy wanted to attend the school. A transitioning boy would have to be able to accept being in a girls' school in name and practice. In all cases, the school would be in a position to determine if the student and their family fit the school's mission and values as part of the admission or retention process.

### **Admissions:**

Any student who self-identifies as a girl is welcome. Any student who identifies as trans, non-binary or genderqueer may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Criteria for acceptance include their comfort being in a girls' school where they can expect to be included as a member of a group of girls. Students are welcome to request and can expect to be addressed by the pronouns of their choice in the classroom. This would not extend to legal documents, such as student transcripts, where the legal name is required. There may also be school-wide communications and documents, such as consent forms or protocols, that include female-specific language. The school's mission, vision and values will continue to include the word 'girl'.

### **Retention:**

Any student is welcome to be at The Linden School and remain there provided they can accept being in a girls' school through which they are referred to as a girl within a larger group of girls. Students are welcome to request and can expect to be addressed by the pronouns of their choice in the classroom. This would not extend to legal documents, such as student transcripts, where the legal name is required. There may also be school-wide communications and documents, such as consent forms or protocols, that include female-specific language. The school's mission, vision and values will continue to include the word 'girl'.

### **Gender Identity:**

The school respects students' rights to discuss and express their gender identity openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much to share their personal information. The person best situated to determine a student's gender identity is the individual student. While we strive to help students feel safe coming to us about sensitive issues, we understand that some students find this very difficult. Parents or guardians may advocate on the student's behalf to the principal or guidance counsellor who can help the student through the process of communicating their needs to the school. Should the student's self-advocacy be in opposition to the parents' or guardians' wishes, we will seek to facilitate a discussion with the family, while taking into account the student's wishes.



## **Names and Pronouns:**

Once the principal or guidance counsellor have been made aware of a student's wishes regarding name and pronouns reflecting their gender identity, and have had a chance to ensure the school community is also aware, students and their families can expect school staff to engage in reasonable and good faith efforts to address students by their chosen name and pronouns regardless of whether there has been a legal name change. The chosen name, pronoun, and gender markers will be used in unofficial student records (e.g., yearbooks, newsletters, team rosters, etc.). Regarding official student records (e.g., report cards, transcripts), the school will seek to use the name, pronoun, and gender markers requested by the parent/guardian and/or student as well. It should be noted, though, that there are places where legal name/gender are required, leaving the school no choice.

## **Activities and Facilities:**

With regard to gender-based and gender-segregated activities and areas on school grounds, students shall have access to that which corresponds to their gender identity. All students have access to the use of unisex, single-occupant bathrooms. This policy shall be considered when new construction or renovations are planned for the school. Matters of personal privacy, including bathroom and sleeping arrangements for overnight field trips, will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the well-being of the students. The school will seek solutions that are inclusive, respectful, and safe for all students.

## **Athletic Teams:**

At The Linden School, everyone is eligible to participate in every sport or athletic pursuit. In competition, the school must abide by the rules of the organizing body or choose not to participate should the policy create a situation where a Linden community member is excluded for gender-based reasons.

Linden is a member of the SSAF (Small Schools Athletic Federation). To get an idea of the kinds of rules we might encounter among sports organizations, we can look at the policies of the Ontario-wide governing body for student sport — OFSAA (Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations). They have a Gender Equity and Transgender Participation Policy that, among other things spells out eligibility for teams based on gender. The policy allows for girls and transgender boys to compete on boys' teams but does not allow boys and transgender girls to compete on girls' teams. On P. B43 in their bylaws, it states:

"If a sport activity is not available for a female on a girls' team, she is eligible to participate on a boys' team following a successful try out. Where a sport activity is available for a female on a girls' team, she is eligible to participate on a boys' team if she demonstrates comparable skill and ability during a successful tryout. If a sport activity does not exist for a boy, he is not eligible to participate on a girls' team."



## Faculty Education:

The school shall provide regular training for faculty, administration, and staff members regarding topics of gender identity.

## Definitions:

*( Adapted from The Roeper School's Policy on Gender Inclusion. These definitions will be revised and updated as necessary. )*

**Agender:** Also called gender blank, gender-queer, gender-neutral, gender-free, genderless, gender void, non-gendered, or null gender. Agender is an identity under the non- binary and transgender umbrella terms. Agender individuals find that they have no gender identity, although some define this more as having a gender identity that is neutral.

**Sex:** Refers to a person's biological status as male, female or intersex. Intersex is the atypical combination of features that usually distinguish male from female.

**Gender:** For many people the terms "gender" and "sex" are used interchangeably. However, biological sex and gender are not the same, and gender is not inherently connected to one's physical anatomy. "Gender" refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex.

**Gender Expansive:** A term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders. Similar in meaning to gender diverse.

**Gender Expression:** The manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.

**Gender Fluidity:** Gender fluidity refers to a flexible range of gender expression that can change from day to day. A person may not feel confined to the restrictive boundaries of stereotypical expectations of boys or girls, or males and females; and can change in their expression from one day to the next; or one period to the next.

**Gender Identity:** A person's deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth.

**Gender Nonconforming:** A term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders. Other terms that can have similar meanings include gender diverse or gender expansive.



**Gender Normative:** Gender normative also known as cisgender refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity and expression.

**Gender Role:** Gender role is the set of roles, activities, expectations, and behaviors assigned to females and males by a given society. The American culture recognizes two basic gender roles: masculine (having the qualities attributed to males) and feminine (having the qualities attributed to females). It should be noted that not all cultures have only these two basic gender roles.

**Non-Binary Gender :** An umbrella term covering any gender identity that doesn't fit within the gender binary. The label may also be used by individuals wishing to identify as falling outside of the gender binary without being any more specific about the nature of their gender.

**Transgender/Trans:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Note that transgender does not have an "ed" at the end.

**Transgender:** An adjective describing a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned sex at birth.

**Transition:** The process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

**Transsexual:** Transsexual refers to a person who has changed, or is in the process of changing his or her physical and/or legal sex to conform to his or her internal sense of gender identity. Transsexual can also be used to describe people who, without undergoing medical treatment, identify and live their lives full-time as a member of the gender opposite their birth sex. Transsexuals transitioning from male to female are often referred to as 'MTFs.' Similarly, female-to-male transsexuals are frequently called 'FTMs.'

[Link to more definitions](#)

Some Definitions here were taken from TSER (Trans Student Educational Resources). The website <http://www.transstudent.org/definitions> includes many more terms with their definitions.

Parts of this policy were created with reference to the 2018 Policy on Gender Inclusion from Emerson School in Ann Arbor Michigan, [www.emerson-school.org](http://www.emerson-school.org)