



LYNDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tradition + Pride + Excellence

Proposed Changes and Pro/Con Overview (Version 9.20.2024)

Philosophy of Gender Identity Participation

The WIAA encourages participation for all students, regardless of their gender identity or expression. Further, most local, state, and federal rules and regulations require schools to provide transgender and other gender-diverse student-athletes with equal opportunities to participate in athletics. However, in order to maintain fair and equitable competition, participation in girls' sports and girls' divisions of sports is restricted to students who were assigned female at birth. The purpose of this policy is to offer clarity with respect to the participation of trans and gender-diverse student-athletes. Additionally, this policy encourages a culture in which student-athletes can compete in a safe and supportive environment, free of discrimination.

18.16.0 - Gender Identity Participation

All students are encouraged to participate in WIAA athletics. Participation in girls' sports and girls' divisions is limited to students assigned female at birth.

Examples of girls' sports and girls' divisions within a sport include, but are not limited to:

- Girls' Sports: Fastpitch, Volleyball (when no boys' or co-ed division exists)
- Girls' Divisions within a Sport: Soccer, Wrestling, Basketball, Track & Field

Appeal Process for Eligibility in Girls' Sports and Girls' Divisions

The possibility of an appeal process for a student-athlete assigned male at birth to participate in girls' sports requires further exploration and should be developed with input from key stakeholders, including medical professionals, school leaders, and student-athletes. The goal of any appeal process or exception is to balance inclusivity with the protection of competitive fairness in girls' sports.

Pros and Cons of Proposed Amendment:

Pros:

1. **Clarity in Eligibility:** *The policy provides clear guidelines regarding eligibility, which can reduce confusion and ensure consistency across schools and sports.*
2. **Focus on Fair Competition:** *Restricting girls' sports to those assigned female at birth aims to maintain a level playing field, addressing concerns about potential physical advantages in certain sports.*
3. **Safety Considerations:** *By maintaining separate divisions, the policy addresses safety concerns that could arise from physical differences in some sports.*

4. **Inclusivity and Support for Transgender Students:** *The policy emphasizes inclusivity and encourages transgender and gender-diverse students to participate in athletics.*
5. **Potential for Appeal Process:** *The option to explore an appeal process provides a pathway for transgender females to participate, showing a willingness to adapt the policy based on medical and professional insights.*
6. **Alignment with Federal Regulations:** *The policy aligns with local, state, and federal guidelines that mandate equal opportunities for all students, which could help schools avoid legal challenges.*

Cons:

1. **Exclusion of Transgender Female Athletes:** *By limiting participation in girls' sports to those assigned female at birth, the policy could be seen as exclusionary towards transgender females. Restricting participation may spark legal challenges and ethical debates, particularly regarding the rights of transgender individuals and equal access.*
2. **Perception of Discrimination:** *Although the policy states a commitment to inclusivity, some may perceive it as discriminatory against transgender athletes, especially those who identify as female but are unable to compete in girls' sports.*
3. **Complexity of Appeal Process:** *The appeal process could be complicated and may involve medical evaluations that raise privacy and ethical concerns. Schools and athletic organizations may face challenges implementing and enforcing the policy, especially regarding medical assessments or appeals, leading to administrative burdens and potential inconsistencies in implementation.*
4. **Unresolved Issues for Intersex Athletes:** *The policy does not address how intersex athletes would fit into the existing sports divisions, leading to possible confusion and further exclusion.*