



Portland Public Schools

Restroom Equity Plan

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Portland Public Schools - Restroom Equity Plan

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June 30, 2021

Need

Context

Human dignity is about meeting our needs. Everybody has basic needs, including using a restroom. Sadly, transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse students and staff often face barriers when trying to access restroom facilities. The data suggests that **at least 29% of PPS middle and high school students identify as LGBTQ+.**¹ It is time to address student fundamental needs.

Portland Public School LGBTQ+ Student Experiences

- ❑ 63% of non-binary and transgender students responding to a questionnaire indicated that they have **experienced difficulty using a gendered (girls/boys) restroom at their school.** This includes harassment, weird looks, and feeling uncomfortable.
- ❑ Two-thirds of these students said that **not enough information is provided for students and staff** to understand who and what the Gender Neutral/All Gender restrooms at school are set up for.
- ❑ 75% of respondents explicitly asked PPS to **add more All Gender restrooms.**

National Data

- ❑ **Safety:** Transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people experience harassment, humiliation, denial of access and physical violence in school restrooms. In one study, **70% of transgender students said they'd avoided bathrooms because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.**²
- ❑ **Race:** In a study by the Williams Institute **transgender people of color reported harassment and other problems at much higher rates** than white respondents when using restrooms.
- ❑ **Health:** The same study found that **54% of respondents reported health problems** from having to avoid using public restrooms, including dehydration, dysphoria, urinary tract infections, kidney infections and other kidney-related problems.³

¹ Source: Panorama Successful Schools Survey, Portland Public Schools, 2020-21.

² <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Separation%20and%20Stigma%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

³ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/geniuss-report-sep-2014.pdf>

- ❑ **Student Success and Graduation:** When students are harassed or bullied based on their gender, or others' perceptions of it, their learning often takes a backseat to worrying about which restroom they can use safely. As a result, students who face harassment or discrimination are **less likely to succeed academically**. Bias-based harassment increases the risk for problems like school absences, substance use and emotional distress.
- ❑ **Benefits to Everyone:** Creating more All-Gender restrooms makes life **easier for people with disabilities** who require the help of an attendant and helps parents with children of a different gender.

Safety and Security

As with most harmful behavior among children, in general, bullying occurs wherever there is the least structure and adult supervision. Most incidents tend to occur on the playground, in bathrooms, locker rooms, cafeterias, hallways, at bus stops and on the school bus.⁴

Given the importance of having options for all students, some schools consider moving towards a campus in which all bathrooms are “Gender Neutral”, or “All-Gender”. If these are single user bathrooms, there seems little reason to keep these designated by gender. Like those in our homes, such bathrooms are available to anyone. “All-Gender” can also refer to multi-stall bathrooms that can be used by anyone regardless of gender. These are bathrooms where it is likely that one would encounter people of any gender at the sink or coming in and out of stalls.

“Having some or all multi-stall bathrooms declared “All-Gender” dispenses with labeling them as “male” or “female,” instead opting for signs that indicate anyone is able to use that facility.”⁵ (American School Counselor Association, Gender Spectrum, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals.)

Legislation and Policy

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and its implementing regulations prohibit sex discrimination in educational programs and activities operated by recipients of Federal financial assistance. This prohibition encompasses discrimination based on a student's gender identity, including discrimination based on a student's transgender status.

⁴ <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/grants/226235.pdf>

⁵

https://gender-spectrum.cdn.prismic.io/gender-spectrum%2Fb631ac8b-fa0f-425f-9af1-2e3c3c745581_transgender+students+and+school+bathrooms+-+frequently+asked+questions+%281%29-min-min.pdf

Oregon Law

- 2017 – Oregon adopts U.S. Department of Education Guidance as the basis for Oregon school policy. School districts are to set policy and update restrooms based on these recommendations: Many students seek additional privacy in school restrooms and locker rooms.
- June 2020 – The Oregon Department of Education LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan issued to further define the equity initiatives within the 2019 Student Success Act. The Plan includes specific strategies and actions, including: 1) School administrators and students have knowledge of requirements regarding laws related to equal access to restroom and changing room facilities. 2) Provide students with access to all-gender restrooms and changing facilities without barriers to use such as time limited access, required keys, or long-distances to travel.
- June 2021 - Senate Bill 52 - Directs Department of Education to develop and implement statewide education plan for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, intersex, asexual, nonbinary or another minority gender identity or gender orientation.

PPS Administrative Directive

The updated the PPS [Administrative Directive 4.30.061-AD Transgender, Nonbinary and Gender Diverse Students](#) lays the groundwork for restroom equity. It identifies procedures and provides guidance to district and school staff so that transgender, nonbinary and gender diverse students are fully included in the school community and have the necessary supports to actively participate free of discrimination. Section V of the updated Administrative Directive clearly outlines restroom and locker room usage.

Portland Public Schools reimagined - Preparing Our Students to Lead Change and Improve the World

“We believe in the fundamental right to human dignity and that generating an equitable world requires an educational system that intentionally disrupts—and builds leaders to disrupt—systems of oppression.” Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) framework.

Adding All-Gender restrooms is an opportunity to increase RESJ strategies through organizational transformation and system-wide collaboration.

Actions

Actions informing recommendations

While the Administrative Directive provides guidance related to restrooms, it does not address key aspects of implementation. In order to meet urgent student needs, the following actions were undertaken:

- ❑ Completed All-Gender restroom inventory report.
- ❑ Provided All-Gender information to the team working on Facilities Vision.
- ❑ Provided All-Gender information to the team working on Education Specifications (Ed Specs).
- ❑ Created draft Roll Out guidelines and communication plan for schools implementing All-Gender restrooms.
- ❑ Convened a 27 member All-Gender Restroom Stakeholder Advisory Task Force for a total of 7 meetings.

PPS All-Gender Restroom Stakeholder Advisory Task Force

The goal of the Task Force was to make recommendations through a consensus lens to the PPS Executive Leadership Team on All-Gender Restroom standards for both schools undergoing modernization and those not slated for modernization. Composed of: Students, Families, Building-based representatives, Office of School Performance, Office of Student Success, Office of Teaching and Learning, Facilities and Asset Management Department, and Community members the Task Force shaped priorities by balancing the needs of the community with a fiscally responsible work plan. The Task Force met monthly from December 2020 through June 2021.

The Task Force covered:

- Task Force roles (process, decision-making etc)
- Group Agreements
- Applying the PPS Racial Equity and Social Justice lens
- National & state data
- PPS student experiences
- State guidance
- PPS Administrative Directive and policies
- Imagined "ideal" restrooms
- Restroom design and distribution models
- Restroom supplies and sanitary products
- Current state and desired state of restroom modification requests
- Drafted recommendations for new builds

- Developed a prioritization framework for retrofits

Implementation

Recommendations

- 1. All-Gender Restroom Recommendation for New Builds.** Moving forward, it is the recommendation of the All-Gender Restroom Committee, which has been informed by the All-Gender Restroom Stakeholder Advisory Task-Force, that the following criteria be met when designing restrooms for new or modernized high schools and middle schools:
 - a. All restrooms will be All-Gender restrooms.
 - b. This includes single occupancy restrooms as well as multi-stall or banks of single person toilet rooms with shared handwashing lobby.
 - c. All required ADA restrooms will also be All-Gender restrooms.

All-gender restrooms (restrooms) should have the following:

- Clear lines of sight from the corridor.
- This can be provided by having a short wall at the sinks, or having multiple entrances / exits to the restroom. The goal is to provide an open atmosphere to discourage bullying and other unwanted restroom behaviors.
- These sight lines will also be monitored by camera.
- The cameras will not see into any stall or restroom, but will be able to see who enters and exits them.
- Full, or near full height partitions / walls and doors.

The goal is to balance the need for private spaces with practical applications and building code requirements. All doors will have occupancy indicators. All doors and partitions panels will have no-peek construction so that you can not see through the joints/gaps in the panel system.

There will still be single occupancy All-Gender restrooms available. These are self-contained restrooms that include a toilet and sink in a lockable private space.

The task force spent time considering various challenges to increasing All-Gender restrooms. One anticipated challenge is resistance from people who initially feel uncomfortable with the idea of men and women (or boys and girls) using the same restroom, simply because it is unfamiliar and they lack information.

Recommendation number 4 below addresses the need for a communication and training plan to respond to this.

2. Prioritization Framework for buildings not slated for modernization. Since 2016 Portland Public Schools has constructed or modernized four schools totaling more than 1 million square feet. By 2024, more than 20% of the District's total square footage will be modernized. Yet much work remains. Across the District, 38 schools were constructed prior to 1930⁶. In order to address the need for restroom equity in buildings not slated for modernization the following framework has been developed:

- a. Address locations with zero All Gender restrooms that meet baseline criteria. (23 currently identified).
- b. Address locations that do not have a bank of single person toilet rooms with a shared handwashing lobby with open views to the corridors (starting with High Schools not yet modernized).
- c. Set and commit to a timeline. Goal that every school has at least 1 bank of single person toilet rooms with a shared handwashing lobby with open views to the corridors by specific date.

The baseline criteria are:

- Available off of a corridor
- Do not require permission or special knowledge
- Do not require a key
- Do not have time limited availability

There are 3 main restroom types that are options for Retrofit

1. Single Occupancy Restroom - this is a self contained restroom, complete with a single toilet and sink behind a lockable door.
2. Multi-Stalled All-Gender Restroom - this is like a traditional multi-stalled gendered restroom, but is available for all genders.
3. Bank of Single Person Toilet Rooms with a Shared Hand-washing Lobby and Open Views to the Corridors - these are private toilet rooms (toilet behind lockable door or no-peek partition door) with a shared handwashing space, that is open to the corridor to provide maximum visibility.)

A more fully developed prioritization framework is available at: [Framework for Retrofit Prioritization](#)

3. Empower and hold accountable designated Executive Level champions and decision making authority for All-Gender restrooms (and locker rooms).

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<https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/58/2020%20FCA%20REPORT%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

All-Gender restrooms (and locker rooms) are at the nexus of Facilities and Asset Management (FAM), Racial Equity and Social Justice, the Office of School Performance, and Student Success and Health. While all departments have a vested interest in restroom equity, a clear decision making matrix has been developed, vetted, and memorialized. Position titles and responsibilities should be shared throughout PPS and should be clearly detailed on the PPS website. The matrix can be found at: [PPS All-Gender Restrooms Decision Making Matrix - February 2020](#).

PPS Executive Level champions must push for an equitable school district that is student focused, responsive to student needs, and proactive about continuous improvement with respect to All-Gender restrooms. Without steadfast commitment to seeing this vision to completion, students will continue to face considerable barriers.

As noted in PPS Relimagined: “Systems are difficult to change. They are complex, with many interconnecting parts, and beliefs tend to become entrenched as structures and processes evolve. Those who benefit from a given system usually have power within it and actively thwart changes. Therefore, creating shifts requires persistence, widespread buy-in, continuous improvement processes, and a demonstrated commitment to serve every individual student in the school system.”

4. Finalize Roll Out guidelines and communication plans for the District.

Even the most well conceived and beautifully designed All-Gender restroom will fail to meet the intended purpose without a strong educational roll out and communication plan. These plans should be grounded in current data and student lived experiences and should honor multiple perspectives. Moreover, plans ought to detail appropriate and expected behavior in these spaces as well as clearly identify available gendered restroom options. To meet this need, a preliminary draft has been created and is available at: [Draft PPS All-Gender Restroom Rollout Checklist](#)

Important aspects of the Roll Out guidelines include a strong statement from the Superintendent connecting All-Gender restrooms to the overall Racial Equity and Social Justice work of PPS and the alignment with the emerging Strategic Plan. Consideration should also be taken as to the importance of working with the PPS Board to develop a policy related to All-Gender restrooms. Once developed, PPS should consider a prominent web presence like St. Paul Public School’s [Planning, Design and Construction / Inclusive Restrooms](#) and potentially linking to Gender Spectrum’s [Transgender Students and School Bathrooms: Frequently Asked](#)

Questions.

Importantly, the Roll Out guidelines align with the PPS Framework for Professional Development in many ways. Specifically, 1.4) Knowledge and comprehension of intersectionality and the multidimensionality of Oppressions; 2.3) Knowledge and comprehension of developmentally, racially and culturally responsive practices and strategies with students and families related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender expression; and 3.3) Ability to integrate culturally responsive and gender-inclusive practices into strategies to increase student success.

5. Fully fund the Restroom Equity Plan.

Portland Public Schools has been a national leader in restroom equity and now has the opportunity to further walk its talk on equity in the built environment by approving and funding the Restroom Equity plan. Several stakeholders noted the cost of bringing restrooms into compliance with the plan. While cost may make some of these changes take longer to accomplish, the All-Gender Restroom Committee recommends a timeline and goals be established by the District Superintendent now to complete this work in the near future. Moreover, the cost for some of the changes will be minimal, and recommend that these changes be made as soon as possible. We see this as an issue of safety; people who are gender nonconforming will be safer in restrooms where gender is not policed.