Hannah Senesh Community Day School

Transgender and Non-Binary Student Support Guidelines for Senesh Students and Families 2020

As an open and inclusive Jewish day school, Hannah Senesh Community Day School is committed to building and celebrating diverse Jewish life with our students, faculty, administration, and families through their diversity across ethnicity, race, nationality, Jewish identity and practice, interfaith family composition, sexual orientation, gender identity, life experiences, socio-economic status, perspectives and worldviews.

We value the dignity and self-worth of each member of our community. Our core Jewish value of Openness/Elu v’Elu guides our work in building empathy, promoting tolerance, and valuing difference. Senesh is committed to creating a culture that respects and values all students and fosters understanding of gender identity and expression within the school community.

These guidelines are intended to help Senesh ensure the educational and social inclusion of transgender and non-binary students and to keep the learning environment safe and free from discrimination and harassment. We aim to promote cooperative and respectful interactions among all members of the School community: students, teachers, parents/guardians, staff, caregivers, and administration without stigma or discrimination. Hannah Senesh provides training (most recently through Keshet) to support staff with resources and strategies.

As young children begin to understand gender identity, gender stereotypes, and gender-based biases questions about gender are common. As a school, our goal is to provide developmentally appropriate and attuned responses to children’s inquiries about their bodies, their identities, and the changing world around them.

At Senesh, regardless of how a student identifies or expresses their gender identity, all students have the right to be recognized and respected by their school community. Many young people experiment with gender roles and gender expression; this is a normal part of childhood development and should be addressed with curiosity from adults, not shame or punishment. But for some students who may identify as transgender, a discrepancy between assigned sex at birth and gender identity necessitates accommodations to allow the child more authentic engagement in their communities.

“Transitioning” is the language most often used to describe the process of living more authentically as the gender one identifies as internally. For most elementary and middle school age youth, the experience of gender transition is focused primarily on social transition, when they begin to live as the gender consistent with their gender identity. Transgender youth who
are in the process of social gender transition may choose a new first name and a gender pronoun that better reflects their gender identity. They may or may not begin to dress and style their hair in ways that reflect their gender identity, and, as all young people do, seek social affirmation of their gender identity from peers and other important figures in their lives. Transition can also include changing identity documents such as the person’s social security record or passport, or seeking gender affirming medical interventions beginning around the time of puberty. Not all transitions are binary, meaning male-to-female or female-to-male. An individual’s decision about whether and how to undergo gender transition is personal and it will depend on their unique circumstances.

The parent/guardians of transgender and non-binary students can play a critical role in establishing a safe and affirming school environment. At Senesh we look to work with supportive parents/guardians whenever possible to establish healthy communication and ensure the needs of these often vulnerable students are fully met.

**Names and Pronouns**

Every student is entitled to be addressed by the name and pronoun that corresponds to the student’s gender identity that is consistently asserted at school. Teachers and other school staff should be made aware of and honor a student’s request to be referred to by the name and gender that corresponds to their gender identity. It is important to note that for students who are gender non-binary or who do not prescribe to the gender binary, they may prefer gender neutral pronouns such as they, ze, or other pronouns.

**Sports and Physical Education**

Senesh currently has mixed gender physical education. Additionally, there are single gender and mixed gender athletic teams. Students will be permitted to participate in athletic teams in accordance with their gender identity that is consistently asserted at school.

**Restroom Access**

Transgender and gender non-binary students must be provided access to facilities consistent with their gender identity consistently asserted at school. Senesh has all gender single occupancy restrooms on the second floor.

**Gender Segregation in Other Areas**

Students at Senesh are permitted to participate in all school activities (for example, overnight field trips) in accordance with their gender identity consistently asserted at school. Requests for accommodations to address privacy concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
Dress Codes

Senesh does not have a dress code that stereotypes or requires students to wear different articles of clothing based on gender, gender expression or gender identity (for example, requiring girls to wear skirts).

Appendix A: Definitions and Terminology

A student is the best person to determine their own identity. Faculty and staff strive to be sensitive to, and use, the terminology that supports and respects the wishes of the individual child.

Assigned Sex at Birth: Refers to the sex designation recorded on an infant’s birth certificate, when there is one.

Cisgender: An adjective describing a person whose gender identity corresponds to their assigned sex at birth. For example, an individual who was assigned the sex designation of female at birth and who identifies as a girl or woman.

Gender Expression: The way a person expresses gender to others in ways that are socially defined as masculine or feminine, such as through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, name, pronouns, activities, voice or mannerisms.

Gender Identity: A person’s deeply held knowledge of their own gender, which can include being female, male, another gender, or no gender. Gender identity is an innate and largely inflexible part of a person’s identity. One’s gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth. The responsibility for determining an individual’s gender identity rests with the individual. Children typically begin to understand their own gender identity by age four, although the age at which individuals come to understand and express their gender identity may vary based on each person’s social and familial development.

Gender Non-binary: A term sometimes used to describe people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as “feminine” boys, “masculine” girls, and people who are perceived as androgynous in some way. Most gender non-binary people are not transgender. For example, a non-transgender girl who has short hair and likes sports might be considered gender non-binary. The term “gender non-binary,” like non-binary, is also sometimes used to refer to people whose gender identity is not male or female. Gender Noncomforming is an older term that should largely be used as a self-identifier from the student or parent/guardian. “Gender expansive” is a newer term used for many school age youth.

Gender Transition: Refers to the process in which transgender individuals begin asserting the sex that corresponds to their gender identity instead of the sex they were assigned at birth. During gender transition, individuals may begin to live and identify as the sex consistent with their gender identity and may dress differently, adopt a new name, and use pronouns consistent with their gender identity. Transgender individuals may undergo gender transition at any stage
of their lives, and gender transition can happen swiftly or over a long period of time. Gender transitions can be non-binary and fluid. It is important to remember that each person’s transition is unique to their own personal experience. There is not one right or wrong way to transition.

Intersex: A term used for individuals born with variations in sex characteristics – reproductive or sexual anatomy or chromosome pattern- that do not fit the typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

Nonbinary: This are term is often used to describe people whose gender is not exclusively male or female, including those who identify with a gender other than male or female, as more than one gender, or as no gender. “Genderqueer” is an older term meaning roughly the same thing.

Sexual Orientation: A person’s sexual orientation is the individual’s continuing pattern of physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic or other attraction to another person. Sexual orientation can be towards persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes and more than one gender. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity.

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender identity or gender expression is different from their assigned sex at birth. Transgender and non-binary youth use a number of words to describe their lives and experiences. Some examples these students may use to refer to themselves include but are not limited to trans, transgender, male-to-female (MTF), female-to-male (FTM), genderqueer, non-binary, gender fluid, two-spirit, trans boy, and trans girl. The language used to describe transgender individuals may differ based on factors such as geographic location, race, ethnicity, age, country of origin, etc. They may also change over time.