

## **Sense of Belonging/ Pronouns FAQ:**

### **1. Why is this so important now?**

Creating a sense of belonging for all students is essential in our work. At the start of the school year, we included a reminder in our back to school message for faculty and staff related to building relationships. That message encouraged being mindful of students' identity by offering students the ability to share their preferred pronouns if they wanted. A small committee comprised of faculty and administration compiled these belief statements:

- Asking students for pronouns is important.
- Giving students options to answer questions is equally important.
- The power of simply asking for pronouns communicates a teacher's care for each student's individuality.
- **Requiring** students to share pronouns aloud or in writing may not actually achieve our objective of making all students feel welcome and seen; please do not make this a requirement.

In preparation for the second semester, this is a good practice to re-establish a rapport with students in all academic and instructional settings. It's even more important for a school our size to develop a consistent approach when supporting students with their gender identity. Please keep this in mind for new students to your classroom or instructional space.

### **2. What is this consistent approach?**

All faculty and staff are aware of the practices outlined in this FAQ to provide a common approach to supporting students in all instructional spaces within the school setting.

### **3. What if I have my own way of asking students what they want to be called in class? I already do this and it's working for my students and me.**

Autonomy is encouraged as long as the experience for students is as consistent as possible from class to class. If students indicate they have a name other than what is listed in Powerschool, or have a preferred pronoun to be used, please be sure to meet one on one the student and it's done privately.

*Example: "In this class" makes students feel more comfortable (i.e. when asking students to introduce themselves, say, "what would you like to be called in this class")*  
*Example: Consider asking students to introduce themselves in the first few days of class. This helps with preferred name, pronunciation, etc.*

### **4. Is it required that I use this exact survey?**

No. It's essential that we foster a culture of belonging and gaining information from students about what they want to be called in class is the goal of soliciting this information.

**5. What is and isn't required if I choose to use this student survey? How should it be used?**

- Not every question on the survey is required.
- Let students know answering the pronoun question is optional - do so in writing and in your oral direction.
- Make sure questions are not marked as required on Google forms
- If a student marks something that is not what you expected, find time to talk to them 1 on 1 to gain a deeper understanding. *For example:* "I did see what you marked on your survey." "I want to support you - can you let me know if this is a name/pronoun you use broadly with everyone?"

**6. What information should I provide when I have a substitute?**

Provide substitutes with a roster that has the name each student wants to be called in your class.

Consider how a substitute teacher may take roll, provide the substitute with a preferred name class roster, and give suggestions to ask the substitute to ask students who they are rather than calling names out loud.

**Other areas of the school where this consistent approach should be used and good practices:**

- **Gender-free bathrooms-** "Students who wish to use the gender-free bathrooms may need a bit more time as there are fewer available." please keep in mind it may take a little longer for them to find the nearest bathroom.
- **Locker rooms-** students should work with their KW teacher, adviser, or trusted adult to inform them of their planned usage and develop a plan.
- **Use of their pronoun in different spaces-** Assure the student that you will use the pronouns and name(s) they requested in class. If students request they be referred to differently with parents or other areas of the school, let them know you will make note of it so they can be referred to them differently in conversations with those individuals
- Practice saying the names and pronouns of students with a different name and/or pronoun when you are outside the classroom