

To: Board of Education

From: Rick Doll, superintendent

Re: USD 497 LGBTQ Components

Date: June 9, 2016

Background:

A board goal was established for the 2015-16 school year to “investigate topics related to LGBTQ students and implement supports as needed.”

Throughout the school year, the superintendent met informally with a student group and a group of interested adults including teachers, staff, parents, administrators and community members. Based on discussions at these meetings, challenges have been identified as follow:

**FACILITIES**

Restrooms

Transgender students report anxiety around which restrooms are appropriate for use. Schools have done a pretty good job of assisting these students, but gender neutral restroom facilities should be a priority.

Locker Rooms

Perhaps the biggest challenge for many students and, in particular, our transgender students is the school locker rooms. Communal dressing rooms and showers pose problems for many students, particularly at the middle school level. Students report skipping P.E. class or not showering to avoid this challenge.

The Office of Civil Rights has maintained the right of transgender students to use the locker room of the gender in which they identify. This challenge can be resolved for all students with more private changing areas and private showers.

Cafeteria

The district should consider more private areas for eating lunch. Some students feel uncomfortable in the large cafeteria. Some ask teachers if they can eat in their classrooms.

**CURRICULUM**

LGBTQ students report that they very seldom “see” themselves in their books and resources. Much like the district has done with an equity rubric, resources need to be evaluated based on inclusion of LGBTQ resources. These LGBTQ resources need to be embedded in the material, not added on.

Many gains have been made with the new sex education/health standards. Emphasis needs to continue in the area of educating students about LGBTQ issues in the curriculum.

Music groups can sometimes be challenging for transgender students. Determining what parts they will sing and how they should dress can be challenging. Students should be able to sing the part that their voice allows.

## **RESOURCES**

Mental health teams should be educated about LGBTQ issues. This process has started and is particularly important around suicide prevention. These resources can be provided through the newly initiated mental health first aid class.

Library/media centers need to increase resources around LGBTQ issues.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF**

Professional development should be provided for all staff around LGBTQ issues. Planning for this professional development should include students as they can identify “blind spots” of staff. Professional development should include terminology, legal issues, and basic communication protocol.

School activities should be evaluated around gender binary issues (homecoming, king and queen, etc.).

Issues around Skyward and other school paperwork should be investigated and clearly addressed.

## **STUDENT AWARENESS**

Much of the professional development outlined above is appropriate for students as well. Emphasis should continue on bullying issues.

Student developed brochures could be helpful in this process.

Student organizations in the secondary schools should continue to be supported.