



# Framingham Public Schools

Edward J. Gotgart, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

73 Mount Wayte Avenue, Suite #5  
Framingham, Massachusetts 01702  
Telephone: 508-626-9117 Fax: 508-877-4240

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February 27, 2017

To our Framingham Community,

I hope that each of you enjoyed a restful and rejuvenating February break! As we return to our schools and in looking to the weeks and months ahead, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you all that we, the Framingham Public Schools, are committed to providing safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments for all of our students.

As you may have heard, the federal government recently rescinded earlier guidance from former President Barack Obama that focused on protecting the rights of transgender students. In spite of these recent federal actions, I am writing to affirm that we will continue to be guided by doing what is best for our students and that no one will be discriminated against based on their gender identity. Under existing School Committee policy as well as state statute and regulations, protections for students and families will remain in place in our schools and throughout the Commonwealth.

For the last four years, we have dedicated professional development time to educating all staff in our elementary, middle and high schools about the rights of transgender students and our responsibility to create classrooms, schools, playgrounds, and programs in which all young people feel respected, connected and safe. We have worked to create and will continue to improve the educational and extra-curricular experiences of our children who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, transgender or gender non-conforming.

We respect all differences in the Framingham Public Schools. Discrimination, bullying or harassment based on gender identity or any other difference including immigrant status, skin color, religious belief, or disability will not be tolerated in our school community.

If you have any questions or concerns about this, I encourage you to contact your student's school administrators or student support staff. They can provide you with a variety of resources available for supporting all of our students.

Thank you for your support in making Framingham schools welcoming and safe for all!

Sincerely,

Dr. Edward J. Gotgart, Interim Superintendent

**NOTE:** I have included a letter from the Commissioner of Education, Mitchell Chester, to all Superintendents and Principals in the Commonwealth that outlines the laws here in Massachusetts that exceed the recent federal rescindment.

*News from Commissioner Mitchell Chester & the  
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

## **On the Desktop - February 23, 2017**

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and Principals:

I would like to affirm for you that Massachusetts remains dedicated to protecting the rights of transgender students even in light of recent federal actions. No one should be discriminated against based on their gender identity, and under existing state statute and regulations, protections for students and families will remain in place in the Commonwealth.

States can issue their own guidance, which can exceed federal guidelines. The Massachusetts state statute, which predates the federal guidance, ensures protections for all students and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity. An Act Relative to Gender Identity ([Chapter 199 of the Acts of 2011](#)), amended several Massachusetts statutes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of specified categories, including gender identity, and subsequently, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued guidance (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/GenderIdentity.pdf>) to school districts to implement the gender identity provision.

That guidance includes the following:

- “All students are entitled to have access to restrooms, locker rooms and changing facilities that are sanitary, safe and adequate, so they can comfortably and fully engage in their school program and activities.”
- “...it is essential that the principal and student address access to the restrooms, locker rooms and changing facility. Each situation needs to be reviewed and addressed based on the particular circumstances of the student and the school facilities.
- “In all cases, the principal should be clear with the student (and parent) that the student may access the restroom, locker room, and changing facility that corresponds to the student’s gender identity.”
- Some transgender students may be uncomfortable using sex-segregated restrooms and should be provided an alternative, such as the nurses’ restroom or a unisex bathroom.

Additional resources are available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/default.html>.

We are proud that Massachusetts was a leader in this area and that schools have worked constructively and without great controversy to support their students. Please do not hesitate to contact our Safe Schools Program team at [safeschoolsprogram@doe.mass.edu](mailto:safeschoolsprogram@doe.mass.edu) or [781-338-6319](tel:781-338-6319) if they can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Mitchell Chester