

Guidance for Issues Concerning the Human Person and Sexual Identity

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Terminology

Gender ideology redefines the human person. It is incompatible with Christian anthropology and can lead to profound confusion. In this section, we explain the intended meaning and use of key terms, *as employed by proponents of gender ideology*. Because these terms often contain built-in assumptions incompatible with Christian anthropology, these terms should not be used uncritically in our schools.

- **Gender** “refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity” (Guidelines, in *Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students*, American Psychological Association [APA], 2015).
- **Gender Identity**: “A person’s deeply-felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female; or an alternative gender (e.g., genderqueer, gender non-conforming, boygirl, ladyboy) which may or may not correspond to a person’s sex assigned at birth or to a person’s primary or secondary sex characteristics. Since gender identity is internal, a person’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. ‘Affirmed gender identity’ refers to a person’s gender identity after coming out as transgender or gender non-conforming or undergoing a social and/or medical transition process” (Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students, APA, 2015).
- **Sex** “refers to a person’s biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex (i.e., atypical combinations of features that usually distinguish male from female). There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia” (Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students, APA, 2015).
- **Gender Dysphoria** “refers to discomfort or distress that is associated with a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and that person’s sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics) ...Only some gender-nonconforming people experience gender dysphoria at some point in their lives” (Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students, APA, 2015, internal citations omitted).

- **Transgender** “is an umbrella term that incorporates differences in gender identity wherein one’s assigned biological sex doesn’t match their [sic] felt identity. This umbrella term includes persons who do not feel they fit into a dichotomous sex structure through which they are identified as male or female. Individuals in this category may feel as if they are in the wrong gender, but this perception may not correlate with a desire for surgical or hormonal reassignment” (*Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students*, APA, 2015, internal citations omitted).

By contrast, the following terminology should be used by school leaders and faculty in our Catholic Schools:

- **Sexual identity:** Respect for the dignity of the person means recognizing each person as a child of God, called by God and formed in his image and likeness, and respecting persons in their integrity as embodied male or female from the moment of conception. For this reason, Catholic schools cannot recognize or facilitate a “gender transition,” or grant any accommodation that recognizes or suggests a change in sexual identity. Schools may make some accommodations for children who need additional privacy, as long as these accommodations do not involve recognizing or endorsing a change in sexual identity. For example, a child may be granted access to the nurse’s bathroom for various reasons but should never be granted access to the restroom or changing facilities of the opposite sex. Other accommodations, such as wearing the uniform designated for the opposite sex or the use of preferred pronouns are impermissible, as they convey falsely to that child and his or her peers that there has been or could be a change in sexual identity.
- **Sexual difference:** Catholic schools must affirm the importance of sexual difference as the basis of marriage, and as essential to understanding sexual identity and the truth and meaning of human sexuality. For this reason, Catholic schools cannot facilitate or allow alliances or advocacy that rejects the truth that sexual difference is intrinsic to human sexuality and is the foundation of marriage and family.
- **Marriage:** Catholic schools at all times must uphold the nature and meaning of marriage as a covenantal relationship between one man and one woman that is marked by exclusivity, permanence, fidelity and openness to life. Catholic schools should take care not to convey any equivalence between same sex or transgender legal unions or relationships and marriage. Same sex or transgender romantic partners and children of these unions should always be treated with dignity and kindness. Catholic schools cannot recognize cohabitation as equivalent to marriage. However, children born to cohabiting couples must always be treated with compassion and respect. The truth about marriage is accessible to everyone because it is grounded in the nature of the human person. Promoting and protecting marriage witnesses to the dignity of every person and serves the common good.

1. What is the goal of our Catholic Schools' policies?

The goal of policies established in a Catholic school should be to create and foster an environment in which children can grow in virtue and be formed according to the teachings of Christ, in accord with the school's Catholic mission. Therefore, school policies should reinforce Christian anthropology, including the reality of sexual difference and its relevance in certain spheres. Christian anthropology is unalterably opposed to many aspects of the gender ideology currently affecting the culture nationally and internationally. School (and diocesan) policies should explicitly state that they are written to conform to the teachings of the Catholic Church in all respects. Policies that are unequivocally rooted in Catholic teaching provide the best foundation for religious freedom claims or defenses against lawsuits or demands by parents, employees, activists, or government entities that seek to compel actions or responses incompatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church and the Catholic mission of the institutions. All staff (particularly new hires from public schools or secular schools of education) should understand that the policies of a Catholic school *necessarily* differ, in substantial ways, from the policies of public or private secular schools.

What general principles might be helpful to Catholic schools as they address concerns related to gender ideology?

Integrate concrete circumstances with the moral law. Questions regarding gender ideology and Catholic schools may involve concrete situations related to a particular person or family, as well as conceptual and pastoral questions that apply to the school community as a whole. Situations involving individuals should be addressed with pastoral care that is rooted in love and concern for the person; pastoral care recognizes God's call to every baptized person to share in his eternal life and to follow the moral law as the way to happiness. "A person's discomfort with his or her sex, or the desire to be identified as the other sex, is a complicated reality that needs to be addressed with sensitivity and truth. Each person deserves to be heard and treated with respect; it is our responsibility to respond to their concerns with compassion, mercy and honesty" (USCCB, 2017).

Pastoral care, then, works towards the integration of one's concrete circumstances with objective truth. "Acting is morally good when the choices of freedom are *in conformity with man's true good* and thus express the voluntary ordering of the person towards his ultimate end: God himself, the supreme good in whom man finds his full and perfect happiness" (*Veritatis Splendor*, no. 72). "Conscience thus formulates *moral obligation* in the light of the natural law: it is the obligation to do what the individual, through the workings of his conscience, *knows* to be a good he is called to do *here and now*" (*Veritatis Splendor*, no. 59). Care for an individual also must take into account the potential impact on others, particularly the impact on conscience formation, fidelity to Catholic teachings, institutional identity and mission, the potential for scandal, and legal and other practical considerations.

Distinguish Christian anthropology from gender ideology; Christian anthropology and gender ideology are incompatible. Christian anthropology refers to the understanding of the

person that is grounded in the Creation accounts in Genesis and supported by reason, and that has been developed in the writings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, among others. See *Catechesis and Gender Ideology* for a description of what gender ideology asserts and how it differs from Christian anthropology. (In this document we describe specific assertions of gender ideology as they bear on concrete questions faced by schools.) As gender ideology gains traction culturally, it is ever more important to understand how gender ideology differs from Christian anthropology, and how schools can help Catholics withstand the cultural current that threatens to unmoor us from our foundations.

While the spread of gender ideology presents a danger to the faith of Christians, it offers an even greater opportunity for the Church to present anew the Church's vision of the human person and the Gospel message.

We must:

- Begin by setting out a clear vision of the person, rooted in Christian anthropology.
- Be confident in the truth: Christian anthropology offers a vision of the person that not only is illuminated by faith but also resonates with experience and is rooted in science. It lays a foundation for human flourishing.
- Be prepared to explain clearly to parents (and older students) what gender ideology is, how it differs from Christian anthropology, and why the Church regards gender ideology as harmful not only to the individual but also to the culture at large.

Catholic schools in particular need to implement policies that are consonant with Christian anthropology's view of the person. Schools should avoid validating or affirming the premises of gender ideology, even indirectly, by silence or inaction.

In age-appropriate ways and in partnership with parents, schools should proactively counter gender ideology through periodic lessons, presentations, etc., as well as through unscripted conversations and teachable moments.

When should gender ideology be addressed in Catholic schools and religious education programs?

Catholic schools and religious education programs should present basic Christian anthropology to all children, in age-appropriate ways throughout the course of a child's education, in the context of teaching about the Catholic faith. Questions specifically related to gender ideology (gender identity, transgender-identified persons, topics related to gender nonconformity) should be handled in various age-appropriate ways at appropriate stages of a child's education, always recognizing that parents are the primary educators of their children, with attendant rights and responsibilities.

All teachers should be trained and prepared, from a Catholic perspective, to field questions or comments about the concept of gender identity, peers who have "transitioned" or "come out" on social media, transgender-identified public figures, TV/Netflix shows (e.g., Caitlin Jenner, Jazz Jennings, *Transparent*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Roseanne*, etc.), and gender-

related public policy issues (e.g. bathroom bills) that may arise in the context of other classroom discussions. Teachers should be equipped to take advantage of those “teachable moments” to affirm the reality of sexual difference, present Church teaching on the human person, and point out ways to show compassion and respect for the dignity of every person without approving of harmful personal decisions or public policies. In all situations, schools must be prudent in addressing these issues, taking care to address these issues in an age-appropriate way.

Practically speaking...Catholic schools and religious education programs [should] offer educational presentations on gender ideology for parents—and that schools strongly urge (or even require) all parents to attend. Presentations to parents should occur on a recurrent basis or be available by video link to ensure new parents can access this information. In grades K-6, parents should be informed about the pervasiveness of gender ideology in media and advertising directed toward children, including, for example, shows produced by Netflix (featuring cartoons such as *Super Drags* and *Drag-tots*) and Disney (which features “out” characters, same sex couples, and same sex kisses in children’s programming ranging from *Doc McStuffins*, *Star vs. the Forces of Evil*, to *Andi Mack*) and in *YouTube* videos. Parents should be equipped to handle questions regarding gender ideology in an age-appropriate way.

In addition, schools and religious education should address the topic with students directly, at appropriate ages, with notice to or permission from parents. In middle school (7th and 8th grades), gender ideology topics could be addressed proactively in the classroom, in the context of the religion and science curricula, or discussions of current events. If the curriculum provides for specialized classes in chastity or theology of the body for teens, gender ideology also can be addressed in those contexts. In high school (9th -12th grades), teachers should address specific gender ideology topics within planned lessons on Christian anthropology (identifying the conflicts between gender ideology and Christian anthropology), in the context of biology and related sciences, in classes related to chastity, theology or the body, sexuality or marriage, and in discussions of current events.

May a Catholic school enroll a student who identifies as transgender?

To answer this question, it is important to understand more precisely the student’s actual situation. We draw the following distinctions, based on likely situations school officials might encounter:

- a) ***The student who rejects his or her sexual identity and asserts a gender identity at odds with his or her biological sex.*** This student *identifies* as transgender, queer, nonbinary, gender-fluid, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, or some other identity different from the student’s given sexual identity as male or female. A student who rejects his or her given sexual identity might insist that he or she “is” a person of the opposite sex, or that he or she identifies as something other than male or female. Typically, a student who rejects his or her *given* sexual identity (male or female) will seek to have others affirm the student’s *desired* identity (transgender, non-binary, queer, etc.). Affirmation might include calling the student by a new name or referring to the student by new pronouns, such as those associated with the opposite sex, invented pronouns such as “ze, zir,” or the use of plural pronouns (“they, “them”). This student also might seek to adopt clothing,

mannerisms, and interests that are perceived as “gender-neutral” or are stereotypically associated with the opposite sex. For example, a male student who identifies as transgender, might claim in all sincerity that he “is” a girl and demand that others *affirm* that he *is* female, perhaps by referring to him using female pronouns or a new feminine name, granting him access to female bathrooms or locker rooms, or allowing him to wear the girls’ school uniform or play on a girls’ sports’ team. Schools should be aware of the possibility that such a student or his or her parents might produce a letter requesting an accommodation plan, pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, that stipulates gender affirmation (e.g. desired names or pronouns, access to sex-segregated facilities, etc.) as necessary for the student’s success in school. Questions regarding IEP (disability) or 504 plans are treated in a separate question below.

Recommendation:

A Catholic school cannot affirm a student’s identity as transgender, gender nonconforming, non-binary, gender-fluid, gender-queer, or any other term that *rejects the reality of the student’s given male or female sexual identity*; any asserted identity that rejects the reality of biological sex is incompatible with Christian anthropology. Practically speaking, when parents are relying on secular medical or psychological advice that stresses *parental affirmation* of the child’s desired identity as the only way to support the child, then the situation will prove unworkable. Even if the parents and child express willingness to comply with relevant school rules in the short term, the situation is not workable because the family and the school are working from irreconcilable premises and moving towards incompatible goals. Accordingly, enrollment or re-enrollment of such a student at a Catholic school would not be appropriate. School administrators should communicate this decision to the student and his or her parents in the context of concern for the student’s well-being; school officials might invite further discussions and express willingness to provide additional guidance and support, short of enrollment. (When *both* the parents and the student are working towards integration of the student’s identity and biological reality, and are willing to have the student comply with all relevant rules, the situation would be covered under paragraph “b” below).

- Situations where the parents are divorced or divided over the question of whether or not to “affirm” the child’s chosen gender identity are particularly problematic, and increasingly common. These situations require additional information, including questions about the influence of the “affirming” parent, the involvement of social services, medical or psychological professionals, possible custody arrangements or disputes, relevant court orders or legal agreements. It also requires sensitivity to the personal dynamics involved, especially the child’s vulnerability in the face of parental discord over the child’s identity.
- By enrolling a student who openly rejects his or her given sexual identity and seeks to be affirmed in his or her desired identity by peers and the school community, the school compromises its mission and identity in multiple ways: the school’s decision is likely to be construed as endorsing the view that a person can be “born in the wrong body” or can “change gender” or sex--a view that

contradicts Catholic teaching and is simply not true; by validating the student's erroneous belief about him or herself, the school effectively lies to the student and hinders the student's search for the truth; by accepting the student's presentation of him or herself as "transgender" or any other identity at odds with the student's biological sex, the school is likely to confuse other students, staff, and families about the truth of the human person and the dangers of gender ideology, and to give scandal to the community at large. In actual practice, schools that accept a transitioned student or allow a student to transition typically end up downplaying or muting the relevant presentations of Catholic anthropology, theology, and moral teachings for the entire school, thus compromising the school's mission and hindering the education of other students as well.

- b) ***The student who is struggling to accept his or her sexual identity:*** The struggling student is one who expresses confusion over identity, struggles to understand and accept his or her sexual identity (male or female), or has a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, **but nevertheless** *does not reject his or her sexual identity as male or female, does not assert an identity (transgender, non-binary, queer, etc.) at odds with his or her biological sex, and has not transitioned in any way.* (See the meaning of "transition" above.) In some but not all cases, the student who is struggling to accept his or her sexual identity also might show a preference for the stereotypical clothing, mannerisms, and interests of the opposite sex.

Recommendation:

In general, a student who is confused about or struggling with his or her sexual identity or has a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, **but** who has **not** taken steps to transition, nor overtly rejected his or her given sexual identity or asserted an alternative "identity," does not present a situation incompatible with Christian anthropology. As such, enrollment or re-enrollment at a Catholic school may be appropriate for this student at the school's discretion, considering the fit between the school's mission and expectations and the family's situation. (A poor fit is likely to create turmoil and confusion for the child, and would not be to the child's benefit.) Discussions between school administrators and the parents should occur prior to enrollment or re-enrollment, with mutual commitments to transparency. The school should be explicit about the school's mission; the Church's teachings on the person and concerns about gender ideology; relevant school policies (dress codes, facility use, etc.); the expectation that the parents and child will work towards an integrated sexual identity (aligned with bodily reality); the expectation that the parents and the child will commit to abide by school policies (including social media use*) for the duration of the student's enrollment; and the specific support or accommodations the school might be able to provide for the child. Parents should be transparent about their understanding of and openness to the Church's teachings on the person and the Church's concerns about gender ideology; the goals and methods of relevant individual or family therapy; the nature of any medical guidance they have received and their intentions regarding future medical treatment; the relationship between the parents and child; the duration and seriousness of the child's struggle with sexual identity; the parents' commitment to support the child's growth towards an integrated

sexual identity; the child's level of understanding and willingness to work towards an integrated sexual identity; the child's overall degree of cooperation and compliance with relevant parental decisions and expected compliance with relevant school policies. The situation will likely require ongoing guidance and re-evaluation. (*The school should make clear that in addition to complying with the school's on-campus rules, the child also should not "come out" on social media, e.g., express a social media *identity* at odds with biological sex.)

- c) ***The student with atypical expressions of masculinity or femininity:*** The student who is atypical in expressions of masculinity or femininity (e.g., the "tomboy") but *does not* express confusion about being male or female or assert an *identity* at odds with his or her biological sex (e.g. transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, etc.) does not present issues related to Christian anthropology or gender ideology and thus presents no obstacles to enrollment. Gender ideology has spurred an unhealthy focus on stereotypes, promoting the false idea that atypical interests, behaviors, and dress automatically should be interpreted as signs that a person's "authentic" identity might differ from his or her biological sex. A growing number of adolescents seem to be questioning their identities simply because their preferences differ from those stereotypically associated with same-sex peers (e.g., a boy who thinks he is a girl trapped in a boy's body because he likes pink and dislikes sports).

Recommendation:

Educators should be familiar with variances in child development, the uneven arrival and progression of pubertal development, and the broad range of personal interests, styles, and preferences among both boys and girls. Schools should allow for individual differences, within the limits of the school's chosen dress code or other relevant policies, while upholding standards that recognize sexual difference. Schools should *not* communicate acceptance of explicit "gender non-conforming" or "gender-bending" behaviors that *aim to communicate an identity message*. For example, a boy who wears feminizing makeup to class or wears a dress on a non-uniform day is perceived to be making an identity statement. A girl who plays kickball with the boys on the playground or prefers jeans and t-shirts to dresses is not.

Students naturally exhibit a wide range of developmental and personal growth, which may be reflected in the student's choice of attire, interests, and activities. These situations present no obstacle for enrollment and should be distinguished from other situations that might suggest a student is struggling with sexual identity or has adopted an identity at odds with his or her biological sex. For example, an adolescent girl who displays a behavioral shift towards shape-concealing clothing or "gender-neutral" styles and haircuts, shows signs of depression or social withdrawal, chooses peers who identify as transgender, gender nonconforming, etc, or who spends significant time online may be at risk for developing "rapid onset gender dysphoria" or asserting an identity at odds with her biological sex. (Teen girls are particularly vulnerable to the phenomena of rapid onset gender dysphoria. See Resources for more information.) School staff should be aware that a student who adopts an atypical appearance at school because of an escalating

internal struggle with sexual identity might “come out” as transgender, nonbinary, etc., to peers on social media before he or she begins to assert such an identity at school. Educators who become concerned about whether a child is struggling with identity issues should discreetly communicate those concerns to school administrators, who should coordinate discreet and sensitive communication with the child’s parents.

How should a Catholic school respond if an enrolled student asserts an identity at odds with the student’s biological sex, e.g. identifies as transgender, gender nonconforming, or non-binary, etc.?

School personnel should be aware that a student may begin to assert an identity at odds with their biological sex on social media even before doing so openly at school. The school’s response should consider factors such as how consistently and openly the student is asserting the new identity, whether the student’s asserted identity is common knowledge among the student’s peers or others in the school community, the degree to which the parents are aware of the situation, whether the parents endorse the student’s asserted identity, and whether the parents and student are willing to continue to comply with the school’s relevant policies (e.g., uniform or dress code guidelines, as well as behavioral expectations according to his or her biological sex). The school should contact the parents as soon as the school learns of the situation--to ensure that the parents are aware of the situation, and to arrange a meeting. When the student’s asserted identity is *not* public knowledge--for example, if the student or parents approach the school administration privately about the student’s situation--and the student’s parents do *not* endorse the student’s asserted identity and *are* willing to abide by the school’s sex-differentiated policies (e.g., uniforms, etc.), then the school should try to assist the family while allowing the child to remain an enrolled student.

These situations warrant careful consideration of the circumstances surrounding the child’s exploration of this new identity. Research suggests that in some children underlying or unresolved issues may contribute to identity issues. Factors to consider include whether the child has experienced trauma or sexual abuse or is under psychological stress, struggles with poor peer relationships, has a history or symptoms of other body issues (such as anorexia nervosa), has previously been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (persons with autism experience sexual identity issues at higher rates than average), spends extensive time on social media, or has friends who are also struggling with identity issues.

The school should ensure that both parents and student are aware of the kinds of situations in which the student’s continued enrollment would become untenable. For example: if the student or parents do not comply with the school’s relevant policies (e.g. the student refuses to abide by the dress code or the parents insist that the student be allowed to use opposite sex bathrooms or be addressed by pronouns that match the new identity but are at odds with the student’s biological sex); the student “comes out” or otherwise openly asserts a desired identity at odds with his or her biological sex, either on social media or within the school environment; or the parents endorse or publicize the student’s asserted identity, either informally, on social media, or through media channels.

Catholic schools should be aware of a phenomenon referred to as “rapid onset gender

dysphoria,” in which students and their friends, who have not expressed a transgender identity previously, declare themselves to be transgender and seek to transition together or sequentially. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon, which seems to be a form of social contagion. Rapid onset gender dysphoria often occurs after a teen becomes immersed in trans-affirming social media (Reddit, Tumbler, and similar platforms) and the online community gradually replaces other friendships and family relationships. Catholic school policies typically set expectations regarding social media postings that may affect the school’s reputation or the school community; while Catholic schools cannot be expected to police students’ social media (parents bear primary responsibility for this), the schools should be aware that an individual student’s assertion of a transgender identity on social media inevitably affects the school community.

When a student experiences distress or conflict over his/her sexual identity or receives a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, but continues to follow the school’s policies while remaining within the school’s parameters, the situation will require discretion, sensitivity, prudence, and prayer to discern the best response. *In no situation should the school recognize, encourage, endorse, or facilitate a student’s “gender transition.”* The school has discretion to make accommodations (e.g., providing access to a private bathroom) in order to address concerns about any student’s safety or privacy, while taking steps to ensure that those accommodations are not perceived by other students as an endorsement of the student’s asserted identity or of gender ideology’s core idea -- that a person’s “authentic” identity might differ from biological sex (e.g. that a biological boy, for example, could be a girl trapped in a boy’s body).

How should a school respond if a student or the student’s parents ask members of the school community to address the student using personal pronouns at odds with the student’s biological sex?

The school must refuse this request. Personal pronouns refer to the *person* and correspond to the truth about the person’s identity as male or female. A student who seeks to be called by personal pronouns that correspond to the opposite sex, or by invented pronouns (such as ze, zir), or plural pronouns (they, them, their) seeks to communicate an identity that rejects the student’s biological sex. By asking others to use those pronouns, the student is asking others to affirm something (the asserted identity) that is not true. The school must insist that staff and students comply with the school’s policy both officially and informally, for the sake of consistency. (In other words, a teacher must use the student’s actual pronouns both inside the classroom and in less formal contexts (e.g., informal conversation or social events).

What if a student asks to be called by a new name or desires to change his or her name in school records?

Catholic schools enroll students under their legal names. It is not uncommon for students to ask to be called, informally, by a nickname, middle name, or family name that differs from the student’s legal name. (For example, a student might ask teachers or coaches informally to refer to him or her by a different name in class or on the field.) Informal use of a different name is not a problem in itself but might signal an emerging identity issue.

- In one high school, for example, a girl asked her teachers to begin calling her by a new, androgynous name (“Dale”) that had no obvious connection to her real name. In the preceding months, the girl had cut her hair extremely short and had begun wearing androgynous-style clothing at school social events. (She wore the girls’ school uniform at school.) Shortly after she began calling herself “Dale,” the girl “came out” to friends on social media, but not at school, as lesbian. (Her parents and teachers were unaware.) Several months later, “Dale” came out again on social media, but this time as “trans.” Her mother soon discovered “Dale” had been wearing a chest binder for months to flatten her breasts and now wanted male hormones to facilitate her transition. At this juncture, the school administration learned of the issue; by this time, many students already knew of the girl’s transition through social media, so the administration needed to address the issue not only with the girl and her family, but with her peers as well. In hindsight, the school realized that the requested name change, in the context of other behavioral changes, had been a red flag signaling deeper issues.

If a student or student’s parents ask for a formal name change in the school records, because the student already has changed his or her name legally, then the school must update the records to comply as long as the student remains enrolled. It is important for a school to understand why the student seeks a name change. ***If the name change is sought as part of the student’s exploration of “gender” or as an assertion of a desired identity at odds with the student’s biological sex, then the school needs further discussion with the student and his or her parents to see whether the school is still a good fit (see question 4, above) or whether the school is unable to re-enroll the student.*** The school should meet with the student and parents to clarify that the school cannot affirm an identity at odds with the student’s biological sex, and will continue to treat the student as male or female, according to biological sex, regardless of the legal name change. In general, where a legal name change has occurred for the purposes of affirming a current student’s desired identity (at odds with biological sex), the student’s continued enrollment should be reassessed. The situation would seem unlikely to be a good fit, as parents who are willing to support a child’s desire to legally change his or her name to facilitate a new identity at odds with his or her biological sex, are unlikely to agree to the parameters recommended in 4(c) above.

In situations where the student is asking to be called by a name that is not an obvious nickname or derivative of his or her legal name, the school always should consult with the parents, who are the primary educators of the child.

If a student asserts an identity at odds with biological sex (e.g, identifies as transgender, gender non-conforming, gender creative, or gender fluid, etc.) and requests to wear the uniform of the opposite sex because it matches his or her new identity, how should the school respond?

Schools should not permit a student to wear the uniform appropriate for the opposite sex. Students’ choice of attire communicates something about themselves to others. A female student wearing the male uniform (and vice versa) is intended to convey that the person “is” or identifies with the opposite sex. A student who asserts an identity at odds with his or her biological sex may desire to wear the uniform of the opposite sex as a way to validate the student’s feelings or desired identity. If the school consents to a uniform change, the school would be implicitly

affirming the student's erroneous identity, and effectively encouraging the student to continue down a path that is harmful and unhealthy. It also will make it harder for the student to re-integrate his or her sexual identity with biological reality.

May a student use the bathroom or changing facility of the opposite sex, on the basis that it matches his or her desired or asserted identity?

No. Students must use changing or bathroom facilities in accord with their biological sex. Allowing male students to use female changing or bathroom facilities, or vice versa, violates other students' modesty and privacy. Allowing a student who asserts an identity at odds with biological sex to use facilities reserved for the opposite sex may create the impression that the school is validating the student's belief that he or she has fundamentally changed "who" he or she is. In reality, a person's biological sex cannot change.

A note on Title IX (federal legislation, applicable to schools receiving federal funds, prohibiting sex discrimination): The Obama administration reinterpreted Title IX to say that the word "sex" includes "gender identity," even if the person's desired gender identity is the *opposite* of his or her biological sex. Under the Obama-era interpretation, a school engages in prohibited sex discrimination if it refuses to allow a student to use the same facilities used by other students of the same "gender identity." According to this argument, a male student who identifies as a transgender "girl" claims the same gender identity ("girl") as the biological females in the class, and thus has a Title IX right to use the same facilities the girls use, based on their shared gender identity. Although the Trump administration rescinded the Obama administration's Guidance Letter that instructed schools to re-interpret "sex" to include "gender identity," Title IX's protections are being litigated; several district courts have sided with the interpretation advanced under the Obama administration. Further complicating the situation, some states and municipalities have added "gender identity" protections to their anti-discrimination laws and regulations, and some state courts have interpreted state law or local human rights ordinances to prohibit discrimination on the basis of "gender identity." These gender identity protections typically permit access to opposite-sex restrooms and changing facilities in schools. In late 2018, the *New York Times* published a leaked memo from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services showing the Trump Administration's plan to make the definition of "sex" uniform across federal agencies: "sex" would be defined not as "gender identity" but as either male or female, biologically determined and unalterable.

Even where Title IX has been interpreted to protect gender identity, religious liberty laws and court rulings protect Catholic schools that are subject to Title IX from being forced to comply with gender identity regulations. However, Catholic schools should be aware that other private schools generally are following the practices of the public schools and complying with "gender identity" protections that grant transgender-identified students access to opposite-sex facilities and, often, opposite sex-athletic teams.

We would be remiss if we did not note that the religious liberty claim is strongest when the Catholic school ensures that all of its policies and practices are consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church and openly conveys its intention to remain faithful to the teachings of the Magisterium.

What about clubs for LGBTQ-identified students or “gay-straight alliances”? May Catholic schools recognize these clubs? Is there a Catholic alternative?

Not all groups or clubs that claim to support students who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, or queer (“LGBTQ”) are faithful to the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. Catholic schools should not fund, support, permit, or grant official recognition to groups that: emphasize or encourage students to embrace an LGBTQ *identity* (rather than embracing their primary identity as a child of God); promote or support an unchaste lifestyle; view same-sex sexual relationships as analogous to or a form of marriage; encourage LGBTQ activism in opposition to the teachings of the Church on marriage, human sexuality, and gender identity; affirm transgender, gender nonconforming, gender creative, or non-binary identities (or any other “identities” that reject an alignment with biological sex); or encourage students to “come out” as LGBTQ. Ministry to students who experience same-sex attraction or gender confusion or are diagnosed with gender dysphoria, or to their families, should be carried out with charity and prudence, affirm God’s unconditional love for the person, be faithful to Church teachings, show compassion, and help students integrate their self-understanding with the truth.

Almost all public high schools, many public middle schools, and many private schools sponsor “gay-straight alliances.” These student-led, school-sponsored clubs meet on a regular basis to explore the challenges experienced by LGBTQ-identified students, to promote school-wide acceptance of LGBTQ identities, to provide a “safe space” in which LGBTQ-identified students can discuss concerns related to their sexuality or gender identity, and to build friendships and “ally” relationships between LGBTQ-identified students and “straight” students. *Gay-straight alliances should not be permitted in Catholic schools because they erroneously promote students’ acceptance and approval of LGBTQ identities and behaviors as healthy and moral.*

Catholic school administrators who are approached by students requesting to establish a “gay-straight alliance” or similar club for LGBTQ-identified individuals should recognize the opportunity to support and educate these students about the person, human sexuality, and faith. The appropriate response might be to designate a chaplain or well-formed faculty member to meet with interested students on an individual or possibly a group basis, with an aim to foster the students’ self-understanding, integrate the virtue of chastity, and help them embrace their primary identities as sons or daughters of God. A high school student group specifically for LGBTQ-identified students, even one that openly accepts Catholic teaching on sexual identity and chastity, may do more harm than good. Student and staff who are poorly catechized may perceive the group at the Catholic school as no different from the gay-straight alliances at public schools, which conveys the erroneous idea that these students should define themselves primarily by their sexual desires.

Courage is an apostolate intended to help Catholics who experience same-sex attraction find support and live a life of chastity in conformity with the teachings of the Catholic Church. A *Courage* chapter on a college campus can be a vital source of support for students who identify as LGBT. *Courage* chapters, however, do not allow minors to attend and do not establish high school chapters. The school can list the local Encourage chapter (a *Courage*-affiliated outreach that provides support for families of individuals with same-sex attraction or identity issues)

among its resources for families.

May a Catholic school allow a same-sex couple to attend school dances as a couple?

No. *A Catholic school cannot validate a same-sex student “couple” without undermining its mission and identity.* Catholic schools limit school dance attendance in many ways, for many reasons. Prohibiting students from attending as a same-sex couple is not “unjust discrimination” or exclusion but a commonsense rule that supports the school’s mission and identity. Allowing same-sex couples to attend school dances as romantic partners sends the erroneous message that same-sex romantic relationships are “the same as” opposite-sex romantic relationships--it also normalizes those relationships, conveys approval or affirmation of those relationships, and undermines the school’s ability to help students understand complementarity, which is at the foundation of marriage. School personnel should be aware of the “Love is Love” media campaigns and popular memes that saturate youth-oriented media, effectively teaching them that same-sex relationships are no different from male-female relationships. Some critics of Catholic school policies against same-sex couples argue that because chastity is expected of *every* student, it makes no sense to exclude same-sex couples, or to unfairly single them out as if they were presumed to be engaging in a sexual relationship. It is true that chastity is expected of every student, and that opposite-sex couples attending school dances might engage in immoral sexual activity. The issue with same-sex couples, however, cannot be reduced to a question of whether or not the pair agrees to be chaste. The *romantic relationship itself* is not *ordered* towards authentic sexuality, which is designed to be male-female in the context of marriage, and can never fulfill the God’s design for romantic and sexual relationships. If students of the same sex who are “just friends” ask to attend the dance as a non-romantic couple (e.g. to take advantage of discounted ticket prices for couples), they should be instructed to purchase individual tickets. The school should be consistent in limiting “couples only” activities to opposite-sex couples.

A related question that may arise is whether chaperones should allow persons of the same-sex to dance together at a dance. The answer depends on the context and intent. Women have danced with women, and men with men, throughout history in a variety of cultural contexts and traditions that are not morally problematic; these situations are not expressions of romantic or sexual interest or flirtations or a sign of same-sex coupling. Chaperones should be prepared to intervene in dance situations that involve persons of the same-sex behaving in flirtatious, romantic, or sexualized ways towards each other, just as they should be prepared to intervene if an opposite-sex couple engages in sexually provocative or intimate actions while dancing.

May a Catholic school enroll a child whose parent(s) or legal guardian(s) identify as gay or lesbian or who present themselves as part of a same-sex couple?

At times, a same-sex couple will approach a Catholic school seeking to enroll a child. In evaluating this request, the school must remain true to its mission of forming and educating all of its students in light of the teaching of the Catholic faith. In the wake of the Supreme Court decisions on marriage, same-sex couples approaching the school seeking to enroll a child may expect the Catholic school, like the general culture, to affirm their relationship (especially if they had a civil ‘marriage’ ceremony). The child or children in their household likely see the same-

sex couple as a family like any other and two mommies or two daddies as a normal parental relationship. Enrolling a child under these circumstances is likely to lead to intractable conflicts. *A Catholic school cannot treat a same-sex couple as a family equivalent to the natural family without compromising its mission and Catholic identity and causing confusion about the nature of marriage for all students enrolled.* If teachers and administrators were to treat a same-sex couple as if their relationship—and the situation of two mommies or two daddies—were no different from the mom and dad couples of other families, then it would not be surprising for other students to assume that same-sex couples *are* “just the same” as other couples and having two mommies or two daddies is *no* different from having a mother and a father.

Accordingly, the school should be attentive to situations that might cause confusion about the nature of marriage. In these situations, the school should seek guidance from the diocese, which can assist them in assessing the possibility of enrollment. For example, enrollment may be possible in a situation where one of the child’s biological parents is living in a same-sex relationship, while the other biological parent is not and seeks a Catholic education for the child; enrollment also may be possible in the case of a single parent who has identified as lesbian or gay and seeks a Catholic education for his or her child. Under these circumstances, it is important for the school to have open and forthright conversations with the parent/guardian or couple to discern if enrollment is possible. The school needs to communicate clearly what the Church teaches about marriage and same-sex relationships, emphasize that the child would be receiving formation in light of those teachings, discuss expectations for the parent/guardian/couple, and outline what accommodations the school may or may not be able to make.

If a child being raised by a same-sex couple is enrolled, the school must make every effort to ensure that the child is not bullied or teased because of his or her family situation. The Catholic school has an important opportunity to convey the truth about human dignity and God’s love by ensuring an atmosphere of respect and charity.

If a child of a same-sex couple is enrolled, the school should make clear that it can recognize a couple that is a mother and a father for the child, but cannot recognize “two mothers” or “two fathers” as a family structure. For purposes of registration, school directories, or other forms, a same-sex couple should be instructed to list one mother (or one father). The other adult may be noted elsewhere as an additional emergency contact, but not listed as another parent. The school should seek a commitment from the couple that they will respect the identity and mission of school by avoiding public displays of affection at school functions and exercising discretion about their living situation. The school also should be clear that parents whose objective living situation contradicts the teachings of the faith might face some limitations on their involvement in the school.

The enrollment of a child being raised by a same-sex couple creates additional difficult issues. For example, schools are bound by federal privacy laws not to release a student’s private information, such as family structure, to other families without permission. Situations such as a birthday party for the child of a same-sex couple or a class project on families may cause confusion for children who learn their classmate has two “moms” or two “dads,” and it may cause friction with other parents. Especially when their children are in younger grades, parents are likely to expect that other Catholic school parents share their moral views on marriage, or

that they will be able to shield their children from certain situations. Parents may become upset with the school for not giving them prior notice of another student's living situation (thus preventing parents from addressing the situation ahead of time with their own child). Schools need to respond to all parents' concerns with understanding and without judgment.

What if a teacher or staff member at a Catholic school decides to transition?

As a condition of employment, schools should require teachers to sign statements agreeing that they will uphold Catholic moral teachings in word and deed. Schools must set expectations as well about social media, as postings that contradict Catholic teachings have the potential to undermine the school's mission and the employee's witness. An adult who decides to transition is acting contrary to the truth of Christian anthropology and thus is not suited to teach in a Catholic school or to carry out the school's mission in any capacity. His or her continued employment would cause significant confusion and give grave scandal to the school's students, and the rest of the Catholic community. Even so, the pastor, chaplain, or another member of the pastoral team should reach out to the person with kindness and compassion, while speaking the truth in love. If the person is willing, the pastoral team should strive to open a dialogue in hopes of assisting the person towards greater personal integration.

What if a teacher or staff member decides to go through a same-sex 'marriage' ceremony, or is openly living in a same-sex relationship?

In this situation, the teacher or staff member is openly engaging in behavior opposed to the teachings of the Catholic Church on marriage and human sexuality, and thus is unsuited for teaching or serving in the Catholic school. This situation should be covered by pre-employment agreements. Employees should be required to sign those agreements annually, thus acknowledging the expectation that they will uphold Catholic moral teachings in word and deed.

What if a teacher or staff member decides to become an LGBTQ ally or advocate?

The language of "ally" or "advocate" in this context has been co-opted to mean affirmation of an *identity* that is "LGBTQ," as well as support for gender ideology and the culture surrounding the LGBTQ movement. As a result, those terms should not be used in a Catholic school. If a staff member expresses a desire to become an ally or advocate, this presents an opportunity for a careful conversation about what those terms mean and the staff member's motivation. If the motivation is a desire to serve and emotionally support students who may be same-sex attracted or have gender dysphoria by helping them understand their feelings and experiences *in light of Catholic teaching*, then the school may be able to support this effort, depending on its proposed form. The ministry of Courage/Encourage is aligned with Church teaching and staff may be encouraged to draw on those resources as they discern a prudential outreach. Staff should be aware that secular LGBTQ organizations and even some ostensibly Catholic organizations (such as Dignity, New Ways Ministry, and Equally Blessed) actively oppose Church teaching regarding sexuality and marriage; secular or faith-based LGBTQ organizations that encourage people to be an "LGBTQ ally or advocate" actively encourage young people to embrace an identity based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Catholic school staff who intend to be allies or advocates along those lines are not aligned with the school's mission and identity, and a

poor fit for teaching or serving in a Catholic school. The Catholic approach, in contrast, embraces one's identity as a son or daughter of God, with a given biological sex and sexual desires ordered to conjugal love. An authentic ally or advocate supports the Catholic approach.

Why does the Church still require its Catholic school employees to sign morality clauses, which govern aspects of an employee's private life?

Almost all employers ask their employees to abide by conditions of employment. The Catholic Church and Catholic schools often ask employees to sign pre-employment statements (or contracts that integrate these clauses) in which they acknowledge and agree to the Catholic institution's expectations that they will uphold Catholic moral teachings in word and deed. These are commonly known as "morality clauses." The Church and school are places of mission; employees' words and deeds that contradict or oppose Catholic teaching have the potential to undermine this mission. Pre-employment agreements are helpful in setting clear expectations, but they also provide an opportunity for evangelization. Agreements should include all situations that can be reasonably anticipated where Catholic school employees' words or deeds have the potential to undermine the school's mission or objectively and gravely contradict the teachings of the Church. This includes social media postings, personal living situations, and the potential for serious private failings to become public.

Should schools be concerned about gender ideology making its way into textbooks or curriculum materials?

Yes. For example, Illinois, California and New Jersey state standards mandate that public schools teach LGBTQ history. The Illinois law, passed in 2019, requires schools to incorporate "the role and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the history of this country and this State" into textbooks and curriculum. Textbook companies have already begun incorporating this information into textbooks in order to be able to sell those texts in these large state markets. While state laws cannot require Catholic schools to teach LGBTQ history, textbooks provided by the state or sold independently to Catholic schools will include this content. In addition, the LGBTQ advocacy group GLSEN promotes "LGBTQ-inclusive" curricula (online, video, and other platforms) to schools in every state, with resources, books, and lesson plans for children as young as kindergarten. Teachers need to be cautioned against indiscriminate use of materials from secular educational websites, as these materials may undermine Christian anthropology and Catholic teachings. For example, materials from the Human Rights Campaign "Welcoming Schools" program, or materials from Southern Poverty Law Center's "Teaching Tolerance" website are not suitable for use in a Catholic school. In addition, recently published young readers' biographies of famous people may include additional materials about the person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The LGBTQ community represents a number of historical figures as LGBTQ heroes, even though during the person's life little or nothing was public about the person's sexual orientation or identity. Catholic schools that use secular books, lesson plans, or supplementary materials should carefully screen those materials for content that promotes gender ideology—at every grade level, in every subject.

