



# The Laboratory Charter School of Communication and Languages

## Student Expression Policy and Dress Code Policy SY 2025-26

### 1. Scope

The Student Expression Policy at Laboratory Charter School is established in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, including the **Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations Regulation No. 9, Section 9-1133 of the Home Rule Charter**, and **Section 9-1111 of the Fair Practices Ordinance**. This policy applies to all conduct within the school, including on school property, during school-sponsored activities, and in the use of school-related electronic communications and technology, such as computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists. The policy is designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their gender identity, gender expression, or any other protected characteristic under **Section 9-1102(1)(e)** of the Fair Practices Ordinance, are treated with respect and dignity.

### 2. Definitions

**Youth:** Refers to any student enrolled at Laboratory Charter School, as defined in § 9-1133(1) of the Home Rule Charter.

**Institution:** Refers to Laboratory Charter School and any affiliated programs, activities, or events, in line with the definition of "Institutions Serving Youth" in § 9-1133(1).

**Gender Identity:** Refers to an individual's internal sense of their gender, which may differ from the sex assigned at birth, as defined in § 9-1102(1) of the Fair Practices Ordinance.

**Transgender:** Refers to individuals whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned at birth, including those undergoing social and/or medical transitions.

**Gender Expression:** Refers to the external manifestation of gender through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, or mannerisms.

**Gender Nonconforming:** Refers to individuals whose gender expression does not adhere to traditional societal expectations, as defined in § 9-1133(1).

**Gender-Neutral Pronouns:** Pronouns such as they/them/their (singular) used by some transgender and gender nonconforming individuals, as well as gender-neutral terms like "parent/legal guardian" instead of "mother" or "father."

### **3. Guidelines for Student Expression**

#### **a. Names/Pronouns:**

Laboratory Charter School will use the name and pronouns that align with a student's gender identity in all verbal interactions, written correspondence, and official records. Intentional or repeated refusal to use a student's chosen name or pronouns is considered a violation of the Fair Practices Ordinance and will be addressed through the school's disciplinary procedures.

#### **b. Hate Speech:**

School personnel are prohibited from using derogatory or offensive language towards transgender or gender nonconforming students. The school will take immediate action to correct any instance of hate speech. Offensive slurs, regardless of context, may be classified as hate speech under **Section 9-1102(1)(e)** of the Fair Practices Ordinance, which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity and expression.

#### **c. Privacy/Confidentiality:**

Laboratory Charter School respects the privacy of all students and will not disclose information that may reveal a student's transgender identity or gender nonconformity without explicit consent, except as required by law. Unauthorized disclosure is a violation of **Regulation No. 9** and will be subject to investigation and disciplinary action.

#### **d. Gender-Expansive Activities:**

The school will reduce or eliminate gender segregation in activities whenever possible. When gender segregation is necessary, students will be allowed to participate in activities consistent with their gender identity, in accordance with **Regulation No. 9**.

#### **e. Gender-Neutral Language:**

Laboratory Charter School will use gender-neutral language in all communications, consistent with **Regulation No. 9**. This includes using "they" as a singular pronoun and terms like "parent/legal guardian" instead of "mother" or "father."

#### **f. Restroom Access:**

Students are entitled to use restrooms that correspond with their gender identity. If a student desires additional privacy, they will be provided access to a single-stall restroom, though no student will be required to use one if they do not wish to. This policy is in line with **Regulation No. 9**.

#### **g. Locker/Dressing Room Access:**

Students will have access to locker rooms and dressing rooms consistent with their gender identity. The school will provide reasonable alternatives for any student requiring heightened privacy, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained, as required by **Regulation No. 9**.

#### **4. Discrimination and Harassment**

##### **a. Discrimination:**

Discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, or any other protected characteristic is strictly prohibited under **Section 9-1102(1)(e)** of the Fair Practices Ordinance. Any violation of this policy may lead to an investigation by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations.

##### **b. Investigation:**

Laboratory Charter School will ensure that any reports of discrimination, harassment, or violence are promptly and thoroughly investigated. The school will communicate the investigation process to the student and ensure appropriate corrective actions are taken, in compliance with **Regulation No. 9**.

#### **5. Training and Awareness**

Laboratory Charter School will regularly train all staff members on their responsibilities under this Student Expression Policy. Professional development will be provided to build staff skills in preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying, harassment, and discrimination against transgender and gender nonconforming students. The policy will be made accessible to students and staff, posted on the school's website, and communicated through other appropriate channels, as required by **Regulation No. 9**.

#### **6. Exemptions**

Any claims for exemptions from this policy based on bona fide religious or legal grounds must be raised in writing to the school administration. Exemptions will be granted only as required by applicable legal precedents, including those outlined in **Regulation No. 9** and the Fair Practices Ordinance.

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# Laboratory Charter School Dress Code Policy

## 1. Scope and Purpose

The Dress Code Policy at Laboratory Charter School is established to maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment for all students. The policy is designed to ensure that students can express their gender identity through their choice of attire while adhering to the school's standards for appropriate dress. This policy complies with federal, state, and local laws, including the **Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations Regulation No. 9** and **Section 9-1102(1)(e)** of the Fair Practices Ordinance, which prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression.

## 2. General Dress Code Guidelines

All students at Laboratory Charter School are expected to dress in a manner that is neat, clean, and appropriate for a school setting. The dress code is intended to support a learning environment where all students feel comfortable and respected.

## 3. Gender Identity and Dress

### a. Freedom of Expression:

Students are permitted to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. This includes wearing clothing traditionally associated with either gender or choosing a gender-neutral appearance. The school's dress code will be enforced in a manner that does not discriminate based on gender identity or expression, in compliance with **Section 9-1102(1)(e)** of the Fair Practices Ordinance.

### b. Non-Discrimination:

No student shall be disciplined or otherwise penalized for choosing attire that aligns with their gender identity or expression. The intentional enforcement of the dress code in a discriminatory manner, such as targeting students who do not conform to traditional gender norms, is prohibited under **Regulation No. 9**.

### c. Dress Code Flexibility:

The dress code at Laboratory Charter School is designed to be flexible to accommodate the diverse needs of its student body. Students may request accommodations to the dress code based on their gender identity, cultural or religious beliefs, or other personal reasons. Such requests will be reviewed and granted where reasonable and in accordance with **Regulation No. 9**.

## 4. Specific Dress Code Requirements

### a. Safety and Appropriateness:

All clothing must be appropriate for a school setting and should not include any offensive or disruptive images, language, or symbols. Clothing must also adhere to safety standards, particularly in certain classes such as physical education or science labs, where specific attire may be required.

**b. Uniforms:**

If Laboratory Charter School requires uniforms, students will be permitted to wear uniforms that align with their gender identity or expression. The school will provide uniform options that accommodate all students, ensuring that no student is forced to wear attire that does not align with their gender identity.

**c. Enforcement:**

The enforcement of the dress code will be carried out in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner. Any concerns regarding the dress code and its application should be addressed through the school's established channels for grievances and complaints, ensuring compliance with **Section 9-1102(1)(e)** of the Fair Practices Ordinance.

**5. Training and Awareness**

Laboratory Charter School will provide training to all staff on the implementation and enforcement of the Dress Code Policy. This training will include information on respecting students' gender identity and expression in relation to dress. The school will also educate students and parents about the Dress Code Policy and the rights of students under **Regulation No. 9** and the Fair Practices Ordinance.

**6. Review and Updates**

The Dress Code Policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains inclusive and non-discriminatory. Any changes to the policy will be communicated to students, parents, and staff in a timely manner, with opportunities for input from the school community.

**7. Exemptions**

Students may request exemptions from specific dress code requirements based on bona fide religious, cultural, or personal reasons. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the school administration and will be considered in accordance with **Regulation No. 9** and the Fair Practices Ordinance.

This Dress Code Policy ensures that all students at Laboratory Charter School have the freedom to express their gender identity through their choice of attire while maintaining a respectful and inclusive school environment.