



THE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & CAREERS

Pat Wright
Chief Executive Officer

Jo Ann P. Moore, M.Ed.
Principal

STUDENT EXPRESSION POLICY

Purpose

Prep Charter High School recognizes that students have the right to freedom of expression as protected by the United States Constitution, the Pennsylvania Constitution, Pennsylvania School Code, applicable federal and state laws, and the rights afforded to students under Pennsylvania law.

The school is committed to fostering an educational environment where students may express their ideas, opinions, beliefs, identities, and viewpoints in a respectful and responsible manner while maintaining a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment.

Prep Charter High School is committed to providing an educational environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation, and retaliation based on a student's actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

This policy is intended to protect student expression rights and to establish clear expectations regarding student conduct, attire, gender identity and expression, privacy, participation in school activities, and treatment of all students.

This policy applies to conduct occurring at Prep Charter High School, on school property, during school-sponsored functions and activities, and in other circumstances where the school has authority to regulate student conduct.

This policy also applies to electronic technology and electronic communication associated with the school, including school computers, networks, digital platforms, forums, mailing lists, and school-sponsored electronic communication.

Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to limit any rights provided to students by applicable federal, state, or local law.

Student Expression Rights

Students have the right to express themselves through speech, writing, publications, symbols, peaceful assembly, petitions, artistic expression, digital communication, clothing, appearance, and other lawful forms of expression, provided such expression does not:

- Materially and substantially disrupt the educational process or school operations;
- Interfere with the rights, safety, or well-being of others;
- Constitute harassment, bullying, intimidation, threats, or discrimination;
- Promote illegal activity, violence, weapons, or the use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, or other prohibited substances;
- Include obscene, vulgar, lewd, or profane language or imagery; or
- Violate federal, state, or local laws.

Students may engage in protected expression before school, after school, during non-instructional time, and in accordance with school procedures regarding the use of school facilities.



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Viewpoint Neutrality

Prep Charter High School shall not prohibit or restrict student expression solely because school officials, staff members, or other students disagree with the viewpoint being expressed.

Restrictions on student expression shall be based upon legitimate educational, safety, or legal concerns and shall be applied in a viewpoint-neutral manner whenever possible.

Student Publications and Student Media

Students may create, distribute, and publish written materials, including newspapers, flyers, posters, petitions, artistic works, and digital content, provided such materials:

- Are not libelous or defamatory;
- Do not incite disruption or unlawful conduct;
- Do not contain threats, harassment, bullying, or discriminatory content; and
- Comply with copyright and intellectual property laws.

Student journalists and student media organizations are responsible for determining the content of student media, subject to the limitations established by law and this policy.

Student-produced media shall not be considered the official position, opinion, or endorsement of Prep Charter High School unless expressly authorized by the school administration.

Distribution of Literature

Students may distribute non-school-sponsored literature, flyers, petitions, pamphlets, and other written materials before school, after school, and during non-instructional periods, provided that such distribution:

- Does not materially and substantially disrupt school operations;
- Does not interfere with the rights of others;
- Does not create a safety concern; and
- Does not contain content prohibited by this policy.

The school may establish reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions regarding the distribution of materials to ensure the orderly operation of the school.

Demonstrations and Assemblies

Students may participate in peaceful demonstrations, meetings, and assemblies that are conducted in a safe and orderly manner and do not substantially disrupt school operations or infringe upon the rights of others.

Requests for organized demonstrations or assemblies during the school day must be submitted to school administration in advance and will be reviewed in accordance with established school procedures.



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Religious and Political Expression

Students may express religious, political, philosophical, cultural, or social viewpoints to the same extent that they may express other personal viewpoints.

The school will neither promote nor inhibit any particular religious or political belief. Student participation in religious or political expression must remain voluntary and may not disrupt instruction or school activities.

Electronic and Digital Expression

Students retain their rights to free expression in digital spaces. However, online expression that substantially disrupts the school environment, threatens the safety of students or staff, constitutes bullying or harassment, discriminates against another person, or otherwise violates school policies may result in disciplinary action consistent with applicable law.

This provision applies to applicable electronic communication occurring through school technology, school networks, school-sponsored platforms, and other electronic environments over which the school has authority.

Protection Against Prior Restraint

Student expression shall not be subject to prior restraint except when school officials reasonably determine that the expression is likely to:

- Create a material and substantial disruption to school operations;
- Constitute libel, slander, or defamation;
- Be obscene or unlawful;
- Incite violence or unlawful conduct;
- Violate the rights, safety, or well-being of others; or
- Constitute harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination.

Any restriction imposed under this section shall be narrowly tailored to address the specific concern identified by the school.

Names and Pronouns

Prep Charter High School shall respect a student's self-identified gender identity and gender expression.

The school shall use the name and pronouns with which a student identifies in interactions between the student and the school and, consistent with applicable law and school procedures, in written correspondence, school communications, and school records.

Intentional or persistent refusal by school personnel to respect a student's identified name or pronouns, including intentionally referring to a student by a name or pronoun that does not correspond with the student's gender identity or gender expression, is prohibited.

School personnel shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that student names and pronouns are used respectfully and consistently throughout the school environment.



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Privacy and Confidentiality

Prep Charter High School shall respect the privacy of students regarding gender identity and gender expression.

School personnel shall not disclose information that may reveal a student's transgender identity or gender nonconformity to other staff members, students, parents/guardians, or members of the public unless the student has authorized such disclosure or disclosure is otherwise required or permitted by applicable law.

School personnel shall take reasonable steps to prevent and promptly correct unauthorized disclosure of information that may reveal a student's gender identity or gender nonconformity.

Information relating to a student's gender identity or gender expression shall be maintained and handled in a manner consistent with applicable privacy laws and school confidentiality requirements.

Respectful Communication and Hate Speech

School personnel shall not use derogatory, discriminatory, or offensive terminology when communicating with or referring to a transgender or gender-nonconforming student.

Students and staff are expected to communicate respectfully with all members of the school community.

Derogatory slurs, harassment, intimidation, threats, or other offensive conduct directed toward a student because of actual or perceived gender identity or gender expression are prohibited and may result in disciplinary action consistent with school policy and applicable law.

School personnel shall take reasonable steps to prevent and promptly correct discriminatory or offensive terminology used in communication with or concerning transgender or gender-nonconforming students.

Gender-Expansive Activities

To the extent possible, Prep Charter High School shall reduce or eliminate segregation of students by gender.

When school activities, programs, or other opportunities are separated by gender, students shall be assigned and permitted to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity, consistent with applicable law.

The school shall not unnecessarily restrict a student's participation in school activities based solely on gender identity or gender expression.

Gender-Neutral Language

To the extent possible, Prep Charter High School shall use gender-neutral language in school communications and written materials.

Examples include using "parent/legal guardian" rather than "mother" or "father" when appropriate and "student" or "youth" rather than gender-specific terms when gender is not relevant.

The singular "they" may be used when appropriate.



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Restroom Access

Students shall have access to the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity.

Any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided access to a single-stall restroom, but no student shall be required to use such a restroom.

If a single-stall restroom is unavailable, the school shall work with the student to provide a reasonable alternative arrangement that respects the student's privacy and dignity.

Locker and Dressing Room Access

Students shall have access to the locker room or dressing room that corresponds with their gender identity. Any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided with a reasonable alternative arrangement that is agreeable to the student. Any alternative arrangement shall be provided in a manner that protects the confidentiality and privacy of the student's gender identity. No student shall be required to use a separate or alternative facility solely because the student is transgender or gender nonconforming.

Expression Through Dress and Appearance

Prep Charter High School recognizes that personal appearance may be a form of student expression.

Students have the right to determine their personal dress, grooming, hairstyle, hair texture, protective hairstyles, jewelry, religious attire, and personal appearance, provided such choices comply with the Prep Charter High School Uniform Policy and do not materially and substantially disrupt the educational process or create a legitimate health or safety concern.

Students may dress in clothing that corresponds with their gender identity or gender expression, including maintaining a gender-neutral appearance, while complying with applicable uniform requirements.

The school's uniform requirements shall be administered consistently and without discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression.

No student shall be disciplined solely because of the student's hairstyle, hair texture, protective hairstyle, cultural attire, religious attire, gender identity, gender expression, or other culturally significant form of appearance when the student's appearance otherwise complies with applicable school requirements.

Uniform Requirements

Prep Charter High School maintains a uniform policy to promote school pride, safety, equity, and an environment focused on learning.

Students are required to comply with the uniform requirements outlined in the Student and Parent Handbook, including approved school shirts, approved Prep Charter outerwear, khaki pants, shorts, or skirts, and appropriate footwear.

Uniform requirements shall be applied in a manner consistent with this policy and all applicable nondiscrimination laws.



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Symbolic Expression

Students may engage in symbolic forms of expression, including the wearing of buttons, badges, armbands, ribbons, pins, patches, and similar items, provided that such expression:

- Does not materially and substantially disrupt school operations;
- Does not constitute harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination;
- Does not promote violence, illegal activity, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, or weapons;
- Does not contain obscene, vulgar, or profane content; and
- Does not create a legitimate safety concern.

The school may restrict symbolic expression only when it falls within one of the prohibited categories identified in this policy or otherwise materially and substantially disrupts the educational environment.

Prohibited Attire and Expression

The following items are not permitted during the school day:

- Clothing displaying obscene, vulgar, profane, discriminatory, threatening, or sexually explicit language or images;
- Clothing promoting violence, weapons, illegal activity, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or vaping products;
- Clothing or accessories that substantially disrupt the educational environment;
- Excessively revealing clothing
- Pajamas, blankets, or sleepwear;
- Hats, hoods, ski masks, or head coverings that conceal identity, except for approved religious or medical accommodations; and
- Chains or accessories that pose a legitimate safety concern.

These requirements shall be applied consistently and shall not be used to prohibit or restrict clothing or appearance solely because it is associated with a student's gender identity or gender expression.

Non-discrimination, harassment, and bullying

Prep Charter High School prohibits discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation, and retaliation based on a student's actual or perceived gender identity, gender expression, transgender status, or gender nonconformity.

A violation of this policy may constitute a violation of the school's nondiscrimination, harassment, bullying, or student discipline policies and may result in appropriate corrective or disciplinary action consistent with applicable law.

Investigation

Prep Charter High School shall ensure that reports or incidents involving discrimination, harassment, bullying, or violence are promptly and thoroughly investigated.

The school shall communicate the applicable investigation process to the student and, as appropriate and consistent with privacy requirements, communicate the status and outcome of the investigation.



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The school shall take appropriate corrective action to address and remediate substantiated discrimination, harassment, bullying, or other prohibited conduct.

The school shall take reasonable steps to prevent retaliation against any student or individual who reports discrimination, harassment, bullying, or other prohibited conduct or participates in an investigation.

Due Process for Expression

When student expression is restricted or disciplinary action is imposed as a result of student expression, students shall be informed of the reason for the restriction and provided an opportunity to respond through applicable school procedures.

Students and parents/guardians may seek review of such decisions through the school's established administrative procedures and, when applicable, through appeals to the Board of Trustees.

Disciplinary decisions shall be applied consistently and shall not be based solely upon a student's protected gender identity, gender expression, or lawful expression.

Enforcement

The school will enforce this policy in a fair, consistent, and equitable manner.

Any restrictions on student expression shall be narrowly tailored to address legitimate educational, safety, or legal concerns.

Students who believe their rights under this policy have been violated may report the concern to a school administrator, the designated school personnel responsible for nondiscrimination matters, or through other established school reporting procedures.

Reports shall be addressed promptly and in accordance with applicable school policies and law.

Staff Training and Professional Development

Prep Charter High School shall regularly conduct training for all staff members on their responsibilities under the uniform policy of nondiscrimination set forth in applicable laws and Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations Regulation No. 9.

Training and ongoing professional development shall, to the extent possible, address:

- Respectful use of student names and pronouns;
- Gender identity and gender expression;
- Privacy and confidentiality;
- Prevention and identification of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation;
- Appropriate responses to reports of discrimination or harassment;
- Restroom, locker room, and dressing room access;
- Gender-inclusive and gender-neutral practices; and
- Responsibilities regarding electronic communication and school-sponsored activities.

The school shall take reasonable steps to ensure that staff members understand how to prevent, identify, and respond appropriately to discrimination and harassment involving transgender and gender-nonconforming students.