

PENNSYLVANIA MODEL SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY

Book	Policy Manual
Section	100 Programs
Title	Sex-Based Distinctions in Athletics
Code	123.3
Status	VERSION 6/3/25

Purpose

The district is committed to serving all students without regard to sex. The district recognizes that a student's sex is irrelevant for the majority of educational decisions and will therefore almost never be the basis of differential treatment.

However, this Policy outlines one of those few situations where sex is relevant and justifies differential treatment. Separate athletic teams on the basis of sex preserve fairness, provide increased opportunities for females, and are safer. Protecting all-female athletic opportunities provides the equal opportunity guaranteed by Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972. As such, the district provides separate interscholastic athletic teams on the basis of sex.

Authority

Title IX was designed to stop discrimination and create equal athletic opportunities for girls in educational settings. In spite of the fact that sex is a protected class under Title IX such that sex-based distinctions in education should generally be erased, Title IX preserved sex-based distinctions for interscholastic athletics, since it was widely recognized that such distinctions were essential for providing competitive opportunities for girls. It is precisely because schools have a significant interest in providing increased competitive opportunities to girls that state law and federal laws provide that schools may operate and sponsor separate teams for members of each sex.^{1 2 3} This policy also complies with Executive Order 14201⁴ and PIAA Bylaws.

Definitions

"Sex" is defined as the biological distinction between male and female based on reproductive biology and genetic makeup. "Sex" and "biological sex" may be used interchangeably.

If the superintendent believes it is necessary for purposes of implementing district policy, the district administration may request that the parent/guardian provide⁵ the student's original birth certificate issued at or near the time of birth that accurately states the student's sex (as defined herein) to the Superintendent, or if unavailable, the student's parent/guardian shall provide a physician's note based on the definition herein.

Provisions

A. It is the policy of this district that athletic teams and sports shall not be segregated on the basis of irrelevant classifications such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

B. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that similar athletic programs are offered to both sexes in proportion to the district's enrollment and shall ensure performance of the legal requirement to "annually submit information to the state regarding interscholastic athletic opportunity and treatment for male and female secondary school students for the preceding school year." 24 P.S. § 16-1603-C. ⁶

C. Interscholastic or intramural athletic teams or sports that are sponsored by the district shall be expressly designated as one of the following based on sex:

1. "males," "men," or "boys,"
2. "females," "women," or "girls," or
3. "coed" or "mixed."

D. Athletic teams or sports designated for "females," "women," or "girls" shall not be open to students of the male sex, and athletic teams or sports designated for "males," "men," or "boys" shall not be open to students of the female sex.

E. Reasonable Accommodations.

1. The school will provide reasonable accommodations for females to try out for teams designated for males, including but not limited to when:
 - a. there is no girls' team for that sport during the school year, or
 - b. the Principal or Athletic Director believes that the female's skill level is such that participation on the girls' team would not provide meaningful competition for the girl.
2. The Principal or Athletic Director may allow a reasonable accommodation for a male student to try out for a female team if all of the following are met:
 - a. the school does not sponsor a boys' team in that sport and the Principal or Athletic Director determines that the overall boys' athletic program at the student's school provides fewer opportunities for boys to participate than for girls;

- b. the boy would not displace any girl from the team's roster;
- c. the boy would likely not, due to his physical size, athletic ability, and/or other characteristics, pose an increased risk of harm to opponents beyond that which would be posed by an average-sized and skilled participating girl; and
- d. the boy would not provide his Team with a significant competitive advantage. (As applicable herein, "a significant competitive advantage" means that the boy's participation would likely cause the Team to be noticeably more competitive than it would be without the boy's participation on the Team.)

In considering whether to permit participation, with regard to factors c and d, above, the Principal or Athletic Director shall be guided by the following:

- i. Where there is a question as to the risk posed to opponents or to a possible significant competitive advantage to the Principal or Athletic Director's Team, such questions should be resolved in favor of the health and safety of opponents and in favor of preventing significant competitive advantage.
- ii. Due to the increased risk of injury to opponents in direct contact sports (such as field hockey, lacrosse, soccer and volleyball), particular scrutiny should be applied by the Principal or Athletic Director to requests in these sports.
- iii. Due to competitive realities, the scrutiny should be heightened even further when the team in question is a varsity team.

F. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to:

- 1. restrict the eligibility of any student to participate in any athletic teams or sports of their sex or designated as "coed" or "mixed,"
- 2. restrict the district from designating non-contact intramural teams or sports as co-ed when the district offers intramural sports,
- 3. restrict the district from maintaining coed gym classes⁷, or
- 4. restrict the district's existing practice permitting student managers, regardless of their sex, to assist any teams based on criteria to be set by the

Principal or Athletic Director in administrative regulations. Such regulations shall include opportunities for a student team manager, under supervision of the coach, to participate in a limited manner in practices to help the team prepare for competition.

Environment of Respect

Students and adults are expected to be respectful and welcoming to all students regardless of gender identity or any other class, and violations are subject to discipline under existing policies including, but not limited to, the harassment, hazing and bullying policies.^{8 9 10 11 12}

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¹ 34 C.F.R. § 106.41

² 22 PA Code 4.27

³ 24 P.S. § 16-1603-C

⁴ Executive Order No. 14201 (2025)

⁵ 35 P.S. 450.603

⁶ Pol. 123

⁷ 34 CFR 106.34

⁸ Pol. 103

⁹ Pol. 103.1

¹⁰ Pol. 218

¹¹ Pol. 247

¹² Pol. 249

¹³ 22 PA Code 12.2