

A Message from Superintendent Daniel Cates

December 1, 2017

On November 30, 2017, a lawsuit was filed against Township High School District 211 claiming the District had violated the rights of a student by failing to provide full and equal access to our facilities – specifically, the locker room – because of the student’s transgender identity. As an educational institution centered on supporting all students, we want to both educate and assure all parties of our support.

The allegations in this lawsuit misrepresent the accommodations extended to this student and the District’s overall approach to working with and supporting transgender students. District 211 has provided caring and responsive supports for transgender students for years, including transgender students who daily use bathrooms and locker rooms of their gender identity in multiple schools. Every transgender student in District 211 who has requested use of the locker room of their identified gender has been offered such access, along with other supports within an individual support plan.

The Illinois Department of Human Rights has already dismissed this case, stating there was no evidence of discrimination.

Our staff members and students recognize, respect and celebrate the complete range of unique and marvelous human differences, many of which are best served through supportive accommodations. Throughout our schools, we are committed to a foundation of caring and professional regard to all students, and that includes the support we provide to students experiencing transgender identity – honoring each student’s stated name, supporting participation on teams, accommodating access to all facilities, and working closely with parents to understand and support each student’s progression through the many opportunities and challenges facing today’s youth, while always balancing the needs of all the teenagers in our district.

Many in our community remember two years ago when District 211 was embroiled in a federal complaint surrounding our supports to protect access and privacy for all students, including a transgender student. Still today, these matters divide communities across the nation.

The students and staff members in our schools are not divided on this issue. Every day in our schools, transgender students have full access to the bathrooms of their identified gender. Each day, transgender students use the locker room of their identified gender. Some seek more private accommodations, and those are provided as well.

We will vigorously defend and protect compassionate, fair and equitable support for all students, and, at the same time, we continue to defend our supports for transgender students at the federal level. This is our commitment now and throughout whatever challenges are put before us, regardless of agenda or cause.