m1 DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Gender Identity Data Collection and Reporting at MDE

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will be revising data collection systems to allow public school districts and charter schools greater flexibility in reporting students' gender identity, including the option to designate a gender other than male or female.

Background

Gender identity is an individual's innate sense of one's own gender, regardless of the gender assigned at birth. According to the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey, 2.8% of ninth grade students reported being transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or unsure about their gender identity. Across Minnesota and the United States, government entities have been moving toward a more inclusive approach to the way in which gender identity is collected and reported.

- As of July 1, 2020, nineteen states plus the District of Columbia allow residents to mark M, F, or X on their state IDs and driver's licenses. Minnesota adopted this approach in October 2018.
- Many colleges and universities in the United States offer policies that allow students to change their gender on campus records.
- Some schools in Minnesota and many across the country allow students to identify as a gender other than male or female in their enrollment records.

MDE collects student gender in the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS). Currently, only male and female are accepted values. School districts in Minnesota who collect gender data other than male and female cannot report this information in MARSS. Instead, they collect gender as required by the State of Minnesota, in addition to locally defined options for internal purposes.
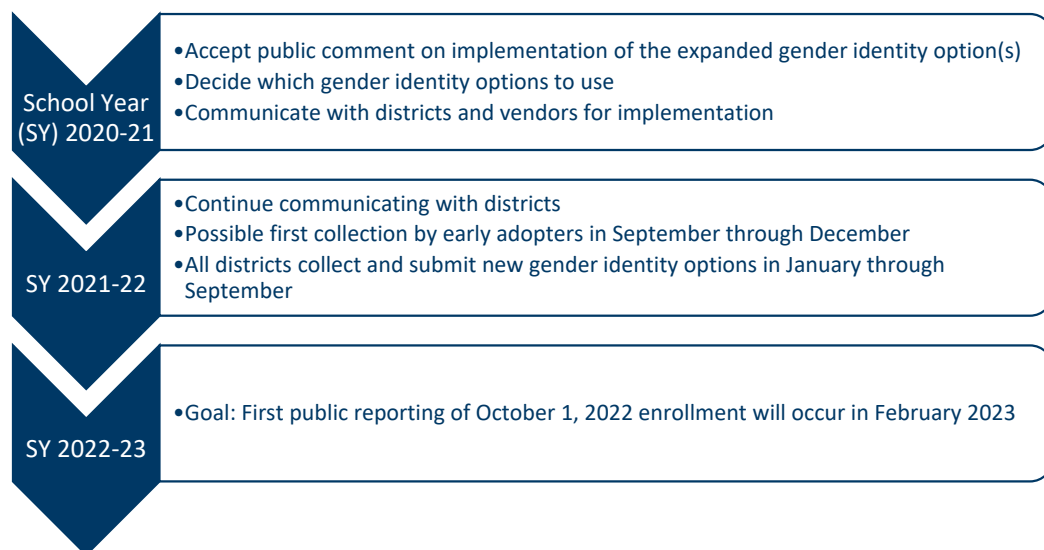
Gender is used in federal and state reports and in assigning demographics to student outcome information. It is used in verifying a student's state reporting number in the Student ID Validation System. It is not used for funding purposes.

Feedback Sessions

Since March 2019, MDE has explored the possibility of expanding the way in which student gender is collected and reported in the state's K-12 student enrollment data system. MDE conducted feedback sessions in March 2020 with individuals who both oppose and support this change. Feedback centered around six main themes:

- **Student privacy:** Participants raised questions about who would be allowed to report a student's gender identity to their school and who would have access to that data.
- **Staff:** Some participants expressed desire for staff to receive training on expectations, while some hoped that staff would not face punitive consequences if they disagreed with the approach.
- **Families:** Participants acknowledged that schools need to be prepared to address pushback from families if they view schools as trying to advance different beliefs than the family.
- **Pressure for medical procedures:** Some participants opposed this change because they thought it could create pressure for gender-affirming medical procedures.
- **Gender options:** Participants tended to support having more than one option in addition to male and female (e.g., nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid, two-spirit, etc.).
- **Gratitude and impatience:** Participants who support the change expressed gratitude for the idea of the state moving this direction to affirm students and impatience that it has taken so long to do so.

Timeline

School Year (SY) 2020-21
- Accept public comment on implementation of the expanded gender identity option(s)
- Decide which gender identity options to use
- Communicate with districts and vendors for implementation

SY 2021-22
- Continue communicating with districts
- Possible first collection by early adopters in September through December
- All districts collect and submit new gender identity options in January through September

SY 2022-23
- Goal: First public reporting of October 1, 2022 enrollment will occur in February 2023

Public Comment

Minnesota public school districts and charter schools will soon be given greater flexibility in reporting students' gender identity, including the option to designate a gender other than male or female in MDE's data collection systems. The general public is invited to comment on the implementation process, including ideas for the expanded range of gender options, concerns or thoughts on implementation, and considerations of other implications (e.g., preferred name).

The window for public comment will open at 8 a.m. on Monday, November 30, 2020 and will close at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, December 13, 2020.

Submit comments online or via email to mde.datafeedback@state.mn.us.