



Gender Equity Policy & Best Practices

Apprentice Learning strives to have a board and staff who reflect the students we serve.



To that end, staff are expected to recognize and value racial, religious, cultural, ethnic, economic, and gender diversity. We strive to create and maintain a culture where staff, students, families, schools and work partners are treated with respect and dignity. The experiences, observations, and skillsets that exist within diverse environments are an invaluable asset. When we, as an educational organization and employer, lean into this mindset and practice of valuing one another's authentic selves, we become stronger, more viable, and more productive.

We agree to motivate and encourage one another to continually expand our knowledge and practice regarding all aspects of diversity and inclusion.

A Message about Gender Inclusive Pronouns

Apprentice Learning is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment. As both an educational organization and employer, we not only want people to be comfortable being themselves, but also to be celebrated for their identities and what makes them unique. In addition, we try to build a culture where we don't make assumptions or pass judgment on each other. If a person chooses to tell you their pronouns (in their signature line or otherwise), they are simply letting you know how you can refer to them, without you having to make any assumptions.



What are Pronouns (or “Gender Pronouns” / “Preferred Gender Pronouns”)?

Pronouns are used in language all the time when we refer to ourselves or other people. Examples of pronouns you might use refer to others are:

- he/him/his (for someone who might identify as male)
- she/her/hers (for someone who might identify as female)
- they/them/their (for someone who might not identify strictly as male or female, these pronouns are considered ‘gender neutral’; also used when referring to multiple people)

Why would someone add their pronouns to their signature line?

Typically, society has taught us to make automatic assumptions about what pronouns to use for someone. If a person's gender expression (the way they appear in terms of gender) seems to be male, we'd likely use he/him/his when talking about that person; if a person's appearance seems to be female, we'd be likely to use she/her/hers. However, gender is not always that simple. Sometimes a person's gender identity (the way the person identifies internally in terms of their gender) doesn't align with their gender expression (the way they look). In addition, not everyone identifies strictly as male or female. When a person includes their gender pronouns on their email signature line (or on a nametag, when introducing themselves, etc.), they

are simply taking the guesswork away for you! It's their way of saying “when you refer to me using pronouns (opposed to by my name), these are the pronouns I'd like for you to use.”

If someone feels the need to state their pronouns, does it mean they are transgender and/or gender non-conforming?

Not at all. Everyone has a gender identity, and most of us have specific pronouns we'd like people to use when we are being referred to. Some might ask: Isn't it typically obvious what pronouns to use for a person? (For instance, if someone has a ‘female’ name and looks ‘female,’ then can't one assume that person identifies as female and would want to be referred to with she/her/hers pronouns?) To answer that question, yes, most of us are privileged in that when someone guesses our pronouns, they'll get them right. However, that's not the case for everyone. Oftentimes this might be because a person is gender non-conforming (where they don't clearly conform to ‘traditional’ male or female standards) or are openly transgender (which might also leave some unsure which pronouns to use). With that said, if someone decides to tell you their pronouns, it does not automatically mean they are transgender or gender non-conforming. It's basically a way of saying “rather than operating in a system where we assume each other's gender and automatically attach pronouns to each other, I'll instead let you know what pronouns work best for me.” Isn't life easier when we're not always having to assume things about each other?

Gender Equity Best Practices for **Middle School Students** at Apprentice Learning

Our vision clearly states that we are committed to serving ALL students in full collaboration with schools, families, business partners, and the community to ensure all children become socially responsible and achieve academic and career success.

Apprentice Learning is committed to maintaining an environment where individuals of all backgrounds and experiences are welcomed, encouraged, and included. We are committed to providing our students with equal education opportunities and a safe learning environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination, and hate crimes, where all student community members treat each other with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools and across workplaces in the city of Boston.

As educators, one can create gender-expansive environments that affirm all children by reducing gender role stereotyping and allowing them to express their interests and find confidence in their strengths.

1. Allow Students and Their Families to Self-Identify Their Gender (or not)

On paperwork, avoid asking students to identify as male or female unless it is absolutely necessary. When not necessary, either omit the gender inquiry or allow students to self-identify their gender. If necessary, consider adding write-in options for those who have non-binary gender identities.

Similarly, make sure that forms do not have specific spaces for “mother” and “father.” If a form requires the name(s) of legal caregivers(s), the form can just say “parent,” “guardian,” or “caregiver.”

2. Avoid Using Gender to Divide and Address Students

For generations teachers have separated students according to their gender for activities or to line up for lunch. However, this can leave some students feeling out-of-place, making them distracted or isolated and not able to focus on learning. For example, when lining students up for lunch, rather than saying, “Girls line up first,” try saying, “Anyone wearing a green shirt can line up,” or “If your name has an ‘E’ please line up.” Similarly, instead of addressing your class using “boys” and “girls,” try something new. Words like “friends,” “students” or “scholars” allow all students to feel included, expand student vocabulary and model inclusive language and behavior for other students and teachers.

3. Prepare for Teachable Moments

“He looks gay!” “She dresses like a boy.” Sometimes students catch us off-guard and it’s difficult to formulate the perfect response to difficult questions or statements. Check out our teachable moments to prepare for these situations and find real questions that students may ask and responses that can help students appreciate and better understand gender diversity.

4. Develop a Gender Expansive Environment

We know that conforming to traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity can be limiting to all students. Be mindful of the ways you might be gender stereotyping students. For example, rather than only expecting boys to be interested in coding, invite all students, to select this apprenticeship experience. Show pictures and use examples that challenge gender stereotypes and demonstrate that women can be firefighters and doctors and that men can be nurses and stay-at-home parents. Keeping with this example, we encourage each other to move even beyond this binary concept and to find ways to demonstrate that ALL people or ANYONE can be a firefighter, doctor, nurse or stay-at-home parent. Take the opportunity to use examples of non-binary pronouns in your material, for a representation and normalization of gender experiences within the continuum of all experiences.