

SCHOOLS

# District 99 to install gender-neutral, private bathrooms

## Private dressing stalls will also be considered

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A Downers Grove school district will open single-occupancy, gender-neutral bathrooms at each of its two high schools, as well as hear a proposal to add private dressing stalls in the girls and boys locker rooms.

Officials at Downers Grove School District 99 said single-occupancy restrooms at Downers Grove North and South high

schools will be open to students by April 4.

"As is the ongoing practice at District 99, we are always seeking ways to better accommodate the needs of all of our students," Director of Communications Jill Browningsaid. "As a result, facility changes are being recommended that we believe will benefit all students."

Around the country, school districts have begun installing gender-neutral restrooms and locker rooms in an effort to preempt issues related to transgender students' access to these facilities. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights found Township

High School District 211 in nearby Palatine in violation of Title IX.

However, Browning said this did not factor into District 99's decision, adding that school officials did not receive any requests to establish the spaces. She noted that the private restrooms will merely supplement single-occupancy restrooms currently available in the nurse's office at each school.

"These changes are a result of our work with students, teachers, counselors and student support personnel to better support and anticipate the needs of all students," Browning said. "Given the number of students who use

the single-occupancy restroom in the nurses' offices, it is practical for us to have another such facility available for students and staff members."

At North High, the restroom will be located on the first floor, across from the College and Career Center and adjacent to building administration offices. At South High, the restroom will be located on the third floor, adjacent to a staff lounge. Browning said the restrooms will be open to male or female students, as well as staff members.

Although not finalized, the plan to add private dressing areas inside the girls and boys locker rooms calls for stalls that would

be available to all students who wish to dress privately.

"There are also many students who would prefer to change clothes in a more private setting rather than in an open locker room," Browning said, adding that their only option, currently, is to change in a restroom stall.

Administrators are expected to present finalized plans to the board of education during an April 11 workshop meeting.

"We believe that these facility modifications will help us to ensure that we maintain a welcoming learning environment and atmosphere of respect for all students and staff members," Browning added.