

This is not the Prin I went to. How about you?

What would Mrs. Eddy and Mrs. Morgan say?

PRINCIPIA UPPER SCHOOL

Text of an Internal Staff Email Believed Authentic, Not a Hoax October 2017

Hi Home Dept,

As we look to a wonderful weekend of Homecoming festivities, I want to turn our attention to making sure that Homecoming feels successful and welcoming for all of our students, particularly those who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bi, trans, questioning/queer, etc). Events like Homecoming, which often tap into our most deeply held gender paradigms, can feel particularly constricting for these students, when they are invited to live someone else's expectations for their identity. Supporting the Good Samaritan approach to a school culture that is safe, kind, and inclusive, means paying particular attention to those in the community who may feel the most vulnerable.

Dress

Principia does not stipulate dress expectations by gender, and prioritizes supporting each student as they dress in a manner that reflects their most authentic self. I've had conversations with cisgendermale students, in the past, who asked if there was any reason why they could not "parade" around in a dress? As we discussed the difference between the motivation to be a "spectacle," vs the motivation to be your most authentic self, it was clear to them why we allowed biological males to dress in skirts, unless the motive was to ridicule, make fun of, or be disrespectful to others. If we have students in the boy's dorm who feel they are their most authentic self in a dress, the school does not prohibit this, and the need to be kind and inclusive should be paramount.

Similarly, the students in our girl's dorm should feel the freedom to look "great" in any way that means the most to them (within our guidelines for formal dress), whether it be a dress, or a suit and tie. Please be conscious about language that solely frames the goals of Homecoming dress to be, "pretty, or beautiful," or other adjectives that don't allow for students who would prefer to look, "great," or "awesome," or "handsome," in ways that are not particularly feminine or gender specific.

Same Sex Couples

Our students can date or take any other students to Homecoming, regardless of biological sex, gender expression, or sexual orientation. These students have just as much right to feel welcome and supported as straight couples, and are also welcomed to be in close contact (light PDA) in the same ways we allow straight couples. Let's celebrate the courage that these students

have in a culture that is only now learning how to embrace them as equal members of the community.

Confidentiality

Students have the right to elect how, when, and why they may choose (or not choose) to share details of their gender identity or sexual orientation. The best way we can support these students is to recognize that their identity is part of “their story,” and it is not for us to share on their behalf, unless they’ve given us permission to do so. Correspondingly, we should not attempt to solicit this information from students or student peers, in an effort to “discover” this information. There are very real safety concerns for these students relating to who knows this information, and it is of utmost importance to maintain strict confidentiality if there is any question about how publicly they are sharing details of their identity.

As a school that supports LGBTQ students and adults as members of our community, it’s important to recognize that this is a FULL invitation for these individuals to be themselves, as they choose. We recognize each person in our community as a unique expression of God, which allows for a wide spectrum of individual gifts and qualities to be celebrated and shared.

We look forward to having more ongoing dialogue about this in the future; in the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you for helping to make sure each student in our school feels safe and valued during this exciting weekend.

-Charley

Charley Martin
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Leadership. Character. Curiosity.