



Steph Chambers/Po

Shaler Area School District redesigns graduation gown with new colors for all students



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In an effort to be inclusive, the Shaler Area School District has opted for a redesigned singular gown for the 2023 graduating class.



The district — which covers Shaler, Etna, Millvale and Reserve — has unveiled a new singular graduation gown to replace the two



traditional gowns, which were typically designated between male and female members of the graduating class.



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The new graduation gown features a navy robe with red and white fabric on the cuffs of the sleeves in order to include all of the school's colors within the gown.

Previously, girls wore white gowns and boys wore blue gowns, although students were able to choose either color in recent years.

“The goal of the new graduation gown was to create a single, unified gown that was inclusive of the entire school district,” Superintendent Sean Aiken said.



(via Shaler Area School District)

Shaler Area spokeswoman Bethany Baker said the redesign idea came from the district's Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Initiative, which was created in 2020. Input from the group — composed of alumni, current students, staff, administrators and parents — and feedback from an October school board meeting led to the change in the caps and gowns.

During the October meeting, LGBTQ students expressed concerns about any possible changes, reporting that they already experienced bullying and saying they feared a change could cause further bullying.

Ms. Baker said she was not aware of any specific incidents of bullying of LGBTQ students within the district.

Mr. Aiken said he believes the gown will create a new tradition that will last for decades.

“We are excited that the new gown design features all three school colors, representing all four municipalities and the schools that merged to create Shaler Area School District more than 50 years ago,” Mr. Aiken said. “Shaler Area has a rich history, and we see this new graduation gown design as the beginning of a new tradition that will carry the district through the next 50 years.”

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