

Best Practices for Creating Inclusive Schools for Transgender Students



Creating inclusive and supportive schools for transgender students decreases the stigmas often associated with being transgender and increases student's safety, social interactions, learning opportunities, and participation in school activities. Below are some best practices to help create safe and supportive schools for all students regardless of gender identity and/or gender expression.

- Work with transgender identified students and find out what will work for them. Do not assume there is a one size fits all solution.
- Reduce gender segregation whenever possible, including bathrooms, locker rooms, dress codes, graduation gowns, sports teams, separating into groups for activities, etc. When gender segregation is unavoidable, transgender students must be allowed to go where they feel comfortable and safe. (Note: This choice may differ for each transgender student– ask, don't assume).
- Allow transgender students to use the locker room that corresponds with their gender identity, if that is their choice. Also offer the option of using a private or alternate changing room whenever possible. (Note: Many non-transgender students have body image issues and/or privacy needs and may also benefit from having single stall facilities.)
- Address privacy concerns. A transgender student may feel that having to go to the nurse's office to change will "out" them and create an unsafe space for them. Uphold transgender students' right to privacy and confidentiality.
- Gym class, especially swimming, can be very difficult for trans youth who may have intense feelings of distress about their bodies and/or may feel very uncomfortable wearing clothing that does not fit their gender expression. Be as relaxed and flexible as possible with your gym and swimming dress codes and requirements.

- Allow students to join sports teams that correspond with their gender identity. When issues around sports team inclusion and locker room use arise and are being discussed with other coaches, the media, etc., uphold transgender students' right to privacy and confidentiality.
- Ungender language and forms as much as possible. Don't box people into specific gender roles and expectations or force people to check boxes that don't fit for them.
- Include conversations about transgender and gender expansive individuals into everyday school curriculum, not just health class.
- Always ask and use the correct name and pronoun for individuals, even if they do not match their legal name. Create policies that ensure privacy and eliminate the possibility of error for guest speakers or substitute teachers.
- Support your school's GSA or pride group or help to start one. They promote leadership skills, offer a safe space, have an overall positive impact on school climate, and help transgender students identify supportive school staff.
- Ensure that your school's non-discrimination policy includes sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
- Create standardized policies around name use, modifications of records, confidentiality, dress codes, facility use, etc. and share them with all parents, faculty and staff.
- Schedule mandatory professional development trainings for all teachers, staff and administrators on transgender identities, creating safe schools and addressing transphobic comments and actions.
- Hold optional annual SafeZone trainings so teachers, staff and administrators can earn their SafeZone sticker and increase visibility around LGBTQ inclusion at your school.

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