Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit

Creating a school that acknowledges and affirms the gender diversity of every student does not happen by accident. Through thoughtful and intentional practices, any institution can create gender inclusive conditions for all of its students. The following materials are designed to set a tone that demonstrates your commitment to making sure every student's gender is recognized and accepted. For additional resources, please visit our website at www.genderspectrum.org.

Framework for Gender Inclusive Schools

*When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you're not in it, there is
a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing*

--Adrienne Rich

Gender inclusive schools…

- Recognize that gender impacts all students
- Interrupt binary notions of gender
- Normalize gender diversity

- Question limited portrayals of gender
- Support students' self-reflection
- Teach empathy and respect

Entry Points

When focusing on the intentional development of gender inclusive school settings, it is helpful to think in terms of four discrete entry points: **Personal**, **Structural**, **Interpersonal**, and **Instructional**. Depending on the context, any one of these may prove the best starting point for this work.

Personal entry points focus on educators' own understandings of gender. It involves reflection about how each person's experiences and beliefs about gender impact the work they do with students. Using tools such as *My Gender Journey*, this entry point is really a foundation of learning upon which teachers build their gender inclusive practices, in the process applying a lens of gender awareness to all they do in their classrooms.

Structural entry points are institutional steps that create a foundation for gender inclusive practices to take hold. Structural entry points demonstrate to your community that the institution recognizes and honors gender diversity and actively works to reflect a more complex understanding about gender. Such approaches include:

- Policies/administrative regulations emphasizing gender as an area of diversity protected and supported by the school
- Systematic staff training that builds the capacity of teachers and other staff to honor the gender diversity of all students
- Student information systems allowing families to specify a child's gender marker, preferred name and pronouns

- Identified staff members functioning as leads around gender diversity work or issues
- Gender neutral restroom/facilities that provide options for privacy without stigmatizing any students
- Readily available written materials and information about gender diversity
- Signage/imagery celebrating gender diversity
- Procedures/forms that demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender

Interpersonal entry points are the various ways in which individual interactions and communications are utilized to reinforce the school's commitment to gender inclusion. Supported by many of the structural components, these relational aspects nonetheless require intentional behaviors in the day-to-day interrelationships of a campus. They literally voice a school's commitment to honoring the gender diversity of all students. Frequently language-based, teachers operating from this entry point:

Use language that challenges binary notions of gender
- *There are lots of ways to be a boy or a girl or even something else; isn't that great?*
- *Toys are toys, hair is hair, colors are colors, and clothes are clothes*
- *Is there only one way to be a boy or girl? Can boys and girls like the same things?*
- Rather than "boys and girls," "ladies and gentlemen," etc., refer to pupils as "students," "children," or another non-gendered term for the group.

Help students understand the difference between patterns and rules

o *Who says only girls wear dresses? Do all-girls wear them? Do all boys wear dresses? Do some?*
o *What patterns have you observed about expectations for you about gender from peers? The media?*
o *Sure, boys might do certain activities more than girls or vice versa. But that doesn't mean all boys do those things or are supposed to wear that girls don't or shouldn't do that!*

Question limited portrayals of gender

o *Who decided what things are for boys and what things are for girls?*
o *Sometimes this stuff is confusing. We get messages that some things are for boys and some things are for girls. But these messages are just some people's ideas. They may not be right for you.*

Recognize that gender is more about our identity than anything else

o *No one gets to tell another person how to feel on the inside.*
o *How someone feels about their gender comes from their hearts and their minds (and not their pants!)*
o *Some bodies are thought of as "boy" and some though of as "girl" but that's not true for everyone.*

Support processes of reflection

o *Who we are or who others think we are on the outside is not always who we are on the inside; think of all the wonderful things about yourself that no one else knows about by just looking at you!*
o *Being a boy or a girl or something else is not about what you like or what you wear or your body. It is something that each of us figures out for ourselves based on how we feel inside*

Teach empathy and respect

o *How do you think you would feel if people were always asking you about your own gender?*
o *No one likes to be pointed out by others. Does it feel good if you think others are talking about you?*
o *Have you ever been teased? How does it feel when you are teased or treated as an outsider?*

Normalize gender diversity

o *Ideas about gender are changing all of the time.*
o *History is full of examples of gender diversity! There have been gender diverse people in every culture and religion, from all over the world and throughout time.*

Instructional entry points are specific ways in which teaching and learning are used to instill greater awareness and understanding about gender. Whether standing alone or integrated into other aspects of instruction, these approaches are the most direct way to impact students. In some ways, instructional approaches are the most easily accomplished. Teachers in their classrooms can have a great deal of autonomy for what takes place there. Yet at the same time, in an era of increasingly scripted curricula or environments in which controversial subjects are highly scrutinized and regulated, instructional methods for creating gender inclusion can have the highest stakes for teachers or other educators. Instructional approaches include:

- Designing lesson plans to expand understandings of gender diversity
- Exploring curriculum areas or units for inserting gender diversity issues or topics
- Using literature that has themes raising gender diversity issues
- Utilizing the arts to explore gender
- Using the social-emotional curriculum to surface gender related themes
- Examining the media and popular culture for gender related messages
- Assigning open ended projects that include gender related topics, readings, or news

- Arranging for transgender or other gender expansive people to present in classrooms
- Analyzing data about various trends related to evolving understandings of gender
- Inviting guest speakers who work for greater gender equity in education, law or other fields
- Using video or other media that present specific ideas about gender
- Creating space for students to articulate their own understanding and beliefs about gender
- Integrating gender into curriculum areas through story problems, writing prompts, readings, art assignments, research projects and more

SEX?
SEXUAL ORIENTATION?
GENDER IDENTITY?
GENDER EXPRESSION?

Knowing the difference can make *all* the difference to students who do not conform to binary norms.

By Joel Baum and Kim Westheimer
Illustration by Mark McGinnis

IF YOU'RE AN EDUCATOR, chances are you have struggled to support students who question their sexual identity or don't fit neatly into social expectations of what it means to be a boy or a girl. Perhaps you can relate to situations like these:

One of my students wants to be referred to as a boy. The student's mother is adamant: "My daughter is a girl!"

My 7-year-old is tired of students constantly questioning why he plays with dolls. I am supportive of him, but I don't know what to do.

Two colleagues in the teachers' room discussed a boy who is sensitive and not into sports. One of them said, "He's going to be gay for sure."

At the heart of these scenarios lies confusion about the nature of gender,

sex and sexual orientation. When adults don't understand the complexity of these concepts, young people must navigate these and other challenging situations by themselves.

In a recent blog post titled, "I'm An 18-Year-Old Boy Who Wears Blue Nail Polish—Get Over It," blogger Nasir Fleming wrote: "Enforced gender roles do not only affect those who break them,

Spectrums make room for anyone whose experiences do not narrowly fit into binary choices such as man/woman, feminine/masculine or straight/gay.

but also those who give their blood, sweat and health just to fit in with them."

Fleming's choice of words is not an exaggeration. Imagine being a transgender student who dehydrates himself to avoid using the girls' bathroom all day, or a student who is ready to drop out of school because she is bombarded with verbal or physical abuse about her perceived sexual orientation. Imagine being one of the nameless students represented in studies that document the disproportionate risks for assault, rejection and self-harm in schools that are not accepting of fluid gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation.

A Binary System

A significant barrier to creating fully inclusive schools is the presumption that sex, gender and sexual orientation fit neatly into a binary model.

This binary world is populated by boys and girls who are viewed as polar opposites. This world conflates biology, gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation, relegating people to rigid categories: male or female, gay or straight.

Schools have a history of reinforcing binary perceptions of sex and gender. Even before children enter most schools for the first time, parents or guardians are asked to check *male* or *female* boxes on registration forms. On the first day of school, teachers might shepherd students to class in boy and girl lines. Restrooms are designated for boys and girls. Everywhere there are expectations about what kind of imaginative play and dress-up is appropriate for whom, about who is naturally

rambunctious and who is predestined to quiet studying. As students get older, they are subjected to gendered expectations about extracurricular activities, dating and dress—even what colleges and careers they're encouraged to pursue after graduation.

If we truly want to include all students, we need to look beyond binaries to create practices that include school communities' diverse representation of biological sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

Biological Sex

Sex refers to a person's anatomy, physical attributes such as external sex organs, sex chromosomes and internal reproductive structures.

For most people, the anatomical indicators of sex line up in a way that is typically understood as male or female. However, intersex conditions also occur naturally in all species, including humans. *Intersex* refers to a variety of conditions in which an individual is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the typical understanding of female or male bodies.

In the past three decades, more than 25 genes have been identified that were once believed to be associated solely with male or female biology, but in fact exhibit more complex, nonbinary variations. With the advent of

new scientific knowledge, it is increasingly evident that biological sex does not fit a binary model. Intersex conditions are increasingly being recognized as naturally occurring variations of human physiology.

Following years of organizing by intersex activists, momentum is growing to end what was once a standard practice of "gender-normalizing surgery" performed on intersex infants with ambiguous genitalia. In 2013, the United Nations condemned the use of this unnecessary surgery on infants, putting it in the same category as involuntary sterilization, unethical experimentation or reparative therapy when enforced or administered without the free and informed consent of the person receiving the surgery.

Gender Identity

Gender identity is an individual's deeply held sense of being male, female or another gender. This is separate from biological sex.

Some children become aware at a very young age that their gender identity does not align with their physical sex characteristics, even expressing the disconnect as soon as they can talk. Other transgender and gender-expansive people recognize their gender identity during adolescence or adulthood.

➨ **DID YOU KNOW?** ◄

The rainbow flag is a widely recognized symbol of gay pride, but did you know that the purple, white and green striped flag represents non-binary pride? Visit this blog post to learn more about flags and symbols embraced by individuals from across spectrums of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
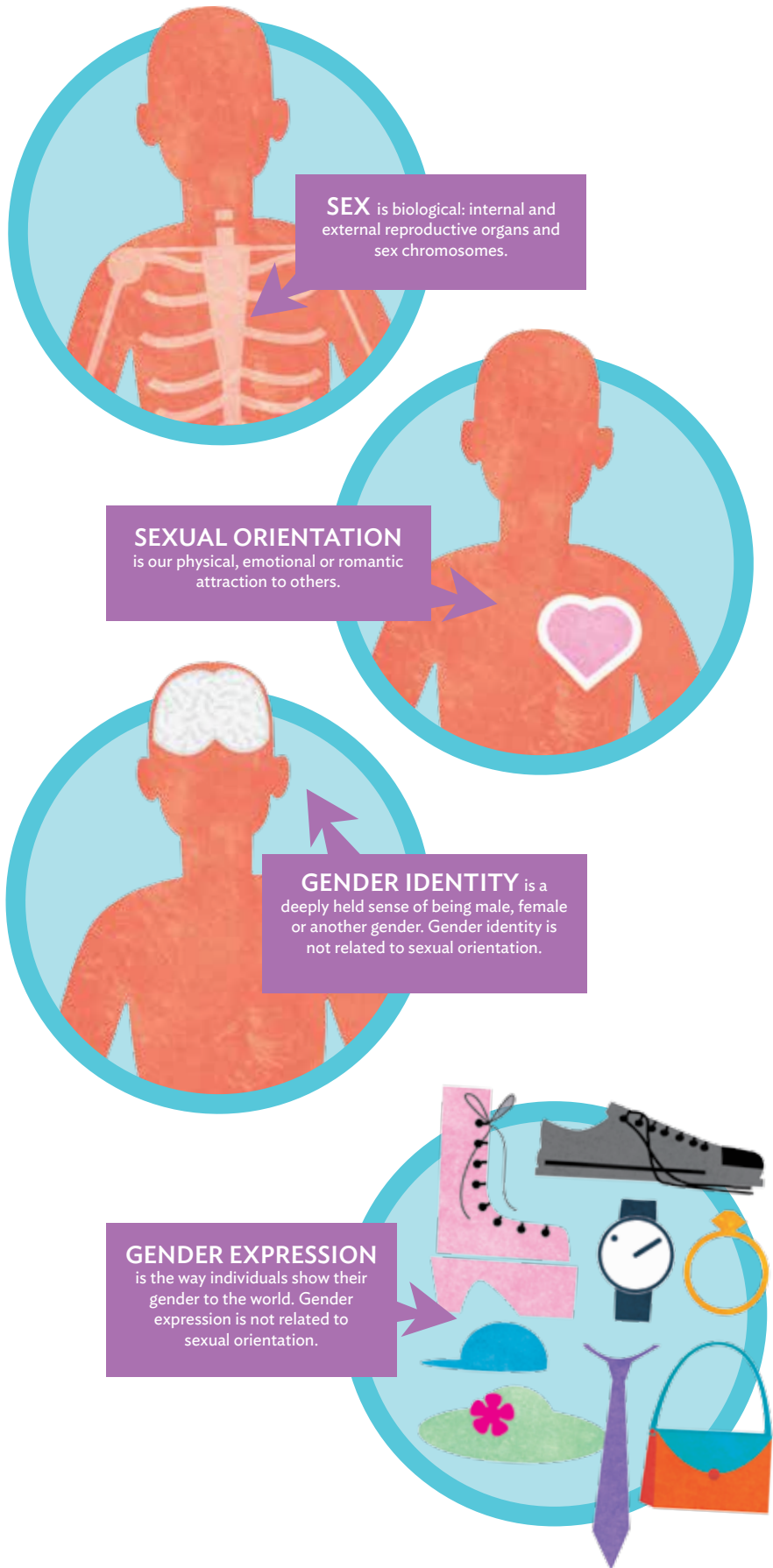
Individuals whose biological sex and gender identity "match" rarely think about the alignment of biology and identity because they have the privilege of being considered normal by society. People whose gender identity and biological sex align are called *cisgender*. Cisgender is an important word because it names the dominant experience rather than simply seeing it as the default.

Individuals living comfortably outside of typical male/female expectations and identities are found in every region of the globe. The *calabai* and *calalai* of Indonesia, the two-spirit Native Americans found in some First Nation cultures, and the *hijra* of India all represent more complex understandings of gender than a binary gender model allows. At least seven countries—including Australia, Bangladesh, Germany, India, Nepal, New Zealand and Pakistan—recognize a third gender for legal documents. As people around the world use a growing variety of terms to communicate their gender identities, Facebook now offers its users 52 options with which to define their gender.

Gender Expression

Gender expression can be defined as the way we show our gender to the world around us. Societal expectations of gender expression are reinforced in almost every area of life. Even very young children are clear about the gendered choices that boys and girls are "supposed to" make in relation to toys, colors, clothes, games and activities.

Girls whose gender expression is seen as somewhat masculine are often considered tomboys. Depending on the context and the degree to which they transgress norms, tomboys might be seen positively, neutrally or negatively. For example, a girl who identifies as a gamer geek, cuts her hair short and wears clothing perceived as masculine may be labeled as a "cute tomboy" or met with words intended to hurt, such as *dyke* or *freak*.

SEX is biological: internal and external reproductive organs and sex chromosomes.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION is our physical, emotional or romantic attraction to others.

GENDER IDENTITY is a deeply held sense of being male, female or another gender. Gender identity is not related to sexual orientation.

GENDER EXPRESSION is the way individuals show their gender to the world. Gender expression is not related to sexual orientation.

Positive or neutral labels are harder to come by for boys whose sex and gender expression are seen as incongruent. Common words used to describe such boys tend to be delivered with negative—sometimes hateful—intentions, words like *sissy* and *faggot*. There also is little room for boys to expand their gender expression. Just wearing a scarf or walking in a stereotypically feminine way can lead to abuse from peers, educators or family members.

Bias related to race, economic status, religion and other identities also influences responses to young people who break out of gender constraints. School-discipline data provide a disturbing example of this, as seen in the report Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected. The report reveals that African-American girls who act in ways considered stereotypically masculine are far more likely to be disciplined by their teachers than white girls who exhibit similar behaviors.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is about our physical, emotional and/or romantic attractions to others. Like gender identity, sexual orientation is internally held knowledge. In multiple studies, LGBT youth reported being aware of their sexual orientation during elementary school, but waited to disclose their orientation to others until middle or high school.

Students might identify as bisexual, pansexual, queer, asexual or use a host of other words that reflect their
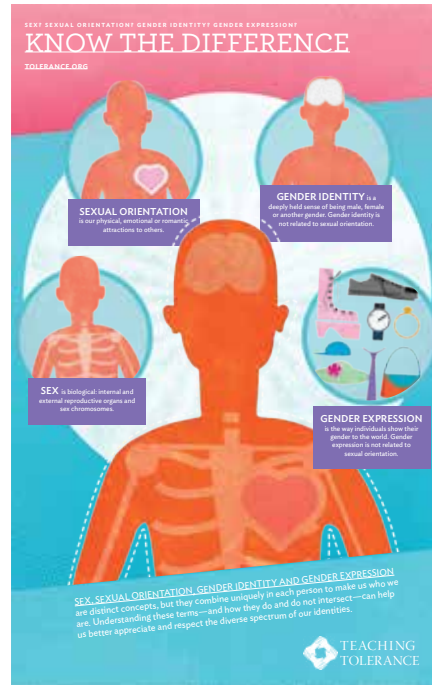
SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE!
Download and print this poster on 11x17 paper and hang it in your classroom or teacher's lounge.

capacity to be attracted to more than one sex or gender or not to feel sexual attraction at all. This emerging language illuminates a complex world in which simple either/or designations such as gay or straight are insufficient.

The overlap and conflation of gender identity and sexual orientation can be confusing for individuals trying to make sense of their own identities as well as for those who are clear about their identities. It can also be

complicated for anyone seeking to support them. In her book *Gender Born, Gender Made,* psychologist Diane Ehrensaft describes a teenage client who, over the course of a few weeks, identified in seemingly contradicting ways, including as androgynous, as a gay boy and—eventually—as a heterosexual transgender female. This young person was involved in a dynamic process that illustrated both the way sexual orientation and gender identity are intertwined and how they are separate.

Embracing a Spectrum Model
As we have seen, binary notions of gender, biology and sexual orientation exclude large swaths of human diversity. This diversity can be better understood by using spectrum-based models. Spectrums make room for anyone whose experiences do not narrowly fit into binary choices such as man/woman, feminine/masculine or straight/gay.

Gender-expansive and *genderqueer* are two of many terms used by people to describe themselves as somewhere on a gender spectrum—outside of the either/or choices relating to sex and gender.

A spectrum model not only makes room for people who are gender-expansive but for those who are perceived to be more typical as well. A spectrum provides an avenue to a deeper understanding of the separate yet interrelated concepts of biological sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. For educators, this understanding is a critical first step toward changing school-based practices and toward being advocates for *all* students—regardless of where they fit on any spectrum. ◆

Baum is the senior director of professional development and family services, and Westheimer is the director of strategic initiatives at Gender Spectrum, an organization that provides education, training and support to help create an inclusive and gender-sensitive environment for children of all ages.

Won't Students Get Confused?

Studies show that children of any age are able to understand that there are more than two gender categories when the concept is explained to them in a simple, age-appropriate manner. The same is true of diversity related to biological sex and sexual orientation.

Wondering how YOU might answer questions that parents and colleagues might have? See Gender Spectrum's responses to Common Questions and Concerns from Parents and Guardians.

TOOLKIT
Put this story into action! VISIT » **tolerance.org/sex-identity-expression**

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Добро пожаловать

欢迎 bienvenidx

all genders
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ברוך הבא καλωσόρισμα ترحيب

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gender spectrum

BE YOURSELF
CHANGE THE WORLD

gender spectrum

boy
girl
both
neither

CELEBRATE
GENDER EXPANSIVE
YOUTH

genderspectrum

GENDER

BIOLOGY
EXPRESSION
IDENTITY

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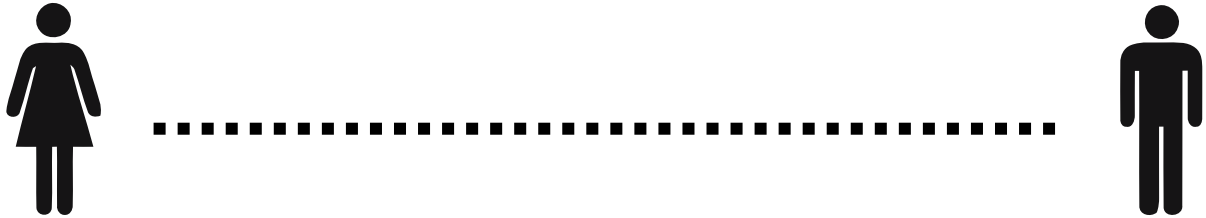
The binary Gender System is <u>two</u> limiting

genderspectrum

THINK **OUTSIDE** THE BOXES

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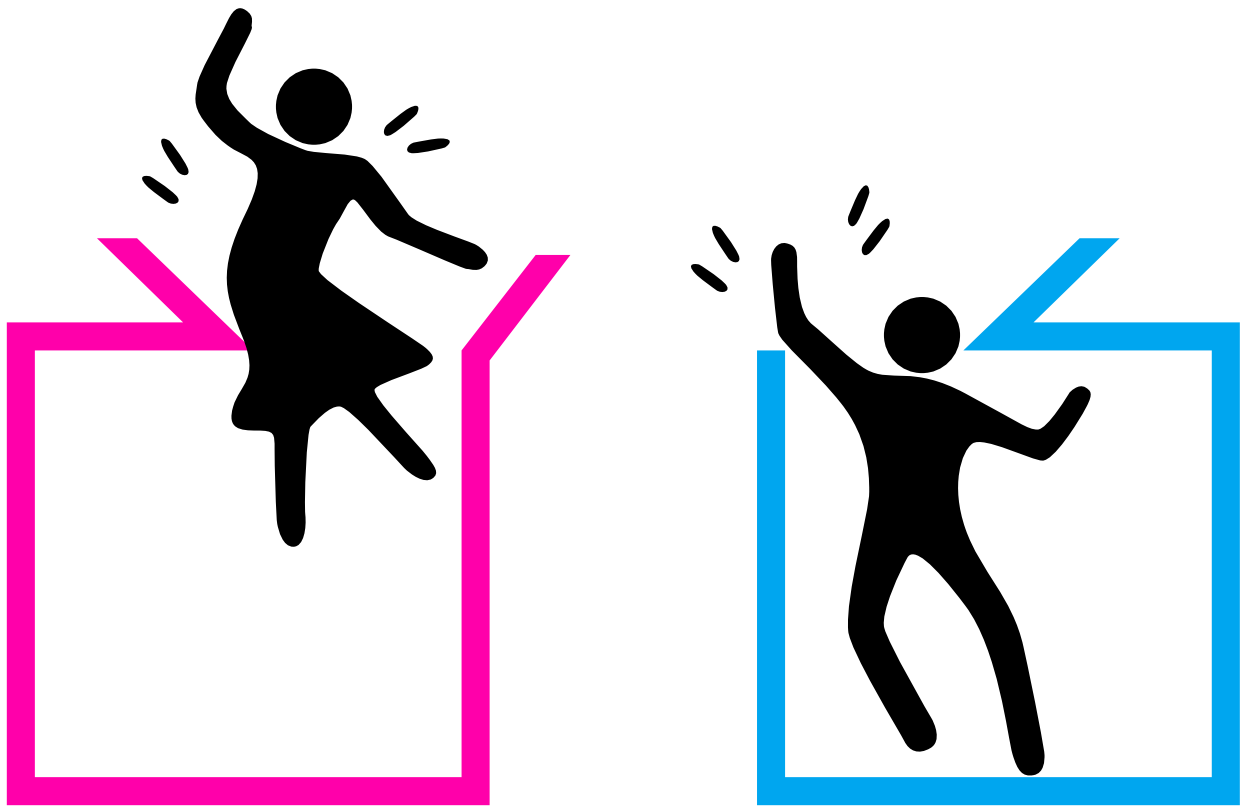
Gender Inclusive Registration Forms (guardian)

_____ School is committed to recognizing the rich diversity of our students. If you have any questions about any of the information we are collecting, please don't hesitate to discuss with us.

Child's Preferred First Name: _____

Child's Legal First Name:_____   _____Decline to state

Child's Gender: _____Decline to state _____Female _____Male _____Something else (please share child's gender, below)

_____

Child's preferred gender pronoun: ____He ____She ____They ____ Something else (If so, please share with us how your child prefers to be addressed)

_____

Child's sex on birth certificate: _____Female _____Male _____Intersex /Other _____Decline to state (see below if you wish to share details)

Is there anything about your child's gender or sex that you would like for us to know? If you prefer to share this information privately, attach a separate note or we can set up a time to discuss with you in person. Please know that _____ school considers this private and confidential information that will only be shared with your expressed permission and guidance.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Gender Inclusive Registration Forms (student)

_____ School is committed to recognizing the rich diversity of our students. If you have any questions about any of the information we are collecting, please don't hesitate to discuss with us.

Preferred First Name: _____

Legal First Name: _____   ____Decline to state

Gender: ____Decline to state _____Female _____Male _____ Something else (please share your gender, below)

_____

Preferred gender pronoun: ___He ___She ___They ___Something else (If so, please share with us how you prefer to be addressed)

_____

Sex listed on birth certificate: _____Female _____Male _____Intersex /Other (see below if you wish to share details)

Is there anything about your gender or sex that you would like for us to know? If you prefer to share this information privately, attach a separate note or we can set up a time to discuss with you in person. Please know that _____ school considers this private and confidential information that will only be shared with your expressed permission and guidance.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Talking with Young Kids about Gender

Many adults feel nervous talking about gender with kids. They worry that they won't say the right thing or maybe they don't know what to say at all. Here are a few key concepts about gender, some language you might use, and some conversation starters/tips you may want to try with the kids in your life. These are just some ideas and are certainly not the only ways to talk about gender with kids. Be proactive in your conversations by bringing up topics about gender; *don't* wait for your child to bring it up or for an experience or incident to talk about. Practice (by yourself or with other adults) talking about gender without bias, embarrassment, or judgment. When ready, invite your child into the discussion. We hope this will inspire you to find words and activities that feel right for you and that will spark conversation!

Concept: Gender is personal and there is not just one way to be.

Possible language:
- Is there only one way to be a boy or girl? Does everyone think of themself as either a boy, or a girl? Can boys and girls like the same things? Do all boys like the same things? Do all girls like the same things?
- Kids can do or be or like or want anything because they are individuals with hopes and likes and dreams. This is not **because** of their gender. It is because they are people.
- If you <u>do</u> know a person's gender, don't assume you know the things they like to do or wear, or play with.

Conversation starters/Tips:
- Provide "counter narratives" to stereotypical stories or examples that reinforce the gender binary. Give examples of kids they know, such as boys who like sparkly things, girls who like to play with trucks. Try to use yourself and other well-loved family members as examples (e.g. *When I was a little girl, people told me I shouldn't wear red and black because they weren't "girl" colors, even though they were my favorite colors*).
- Read a book that addresses gender with your child and discuss it. You can find a book that you think your child might like in our [Annotated Bibliography of Children's Books about Gender Diversity](#).
- If you hear a child say something related to gender, ask them more about it and help them figure out where the messages are coming from; use it as a teachable moment.
- Watch TV shows and advertisements and discuss: 1) How gender roles are portrayed; and 2) what messages are being sent. Is the mom always making cookies or dinner with the daughter and serving the boys? Are only boys playing with trucks or cars? Who is being portrayed as strong? How is the meaning of strength being conveyed?

- When someone says something gender-biased (e.g. *He is all boy! Look at all the energy he has*!), take the opportunity to mention counter examples (e.g. *One of the girls he plays with has even more energy than he does*!).

Concept: Things don't have genders; people have genders.

Possible language:
- There aren't boy things and girl things. Instead, toys are toys, hair is hair, colors are colors, and clothes are clothes.
- There are lots of different types of clothes. Kids get to wear what feels right to them and makes them feel good.
- Who gets to decide that some things are only for boys and some things are only for girls? How do you feel when you like something, or want to play with something, and someone says you can't because it's only for boys/girls?
- These ideas can be confusing. We get messages that some things are for boys and some things are for girls. But people who say these things just don't understand that people have genders, things do not. Each of us gets to decide what we like and don't like. We just can't be unkind to others about the things they like.

Conversation starters/Tips:
- Ask what your child thinks of as "boy" things or "girl" things, and then ask why. See if there are things they like which are assigned to the opposite gender and talk about how it would feel to be told they can't wear those things or do those things.
- Question and explore your own biases. For example, how do you feel about boys with long hair? Girls who want to shop in the boy's department for clothes? Girls playing football or boys wearing makeup or fingernail polish? What messages about gender expression are you giving your child?

Concept: Only you know your gender. You can't tell a person's gender by looking at them.

Possible language:
- No one gets to tell another person who they are. You know yourself better than anyone else does and only you get to decide your gender- and what it means to you.
- Who you are is not about what others tell you, but something you determine for yourself (even when you get messages that say otherwise).
- Some people think they can tell a person's gender by looking at them, but that is not always true. Think of all the wonderful things about yourself that no one else knows about by just looking at you!

- Gender expression is about showing the world who you are. There may be some patterns we notice, but these are not rules. More girls might wear dresses than boys, but does that mean all girls wear dresses? Or that boys can't wear dresses?

Conversation starters/Tips:
- When you or your child refers to someone else as male or female (i.e. *"see that man over there,"* or *"I like that girl's necklace"*), ask whether you can be really sure that you know the person's gender. Introduce the idea that when we notice someone's gender, we are often making assumptions based on patterns of gender expression. Sometimes, these patterns don't hold.
- Mix up gender language when reading stories to your kids. For example, if the story is about a "boy" animal, mix it up and make the lion a girl. Consider adopting this strategy for the people in a story too. Mixing up gender language and behavior expectations is creative and then you don't have to read a story the same way every time!
- When introducing yourself, consider sharing your gender pronouns: *"My name is Jessica and I use the pronouns 'she/her/hers.'"* Try asking the adults around you what, if any, pronoun they would like you to use.

Concept: Your body doesn't determine your gender.

Possible language:
- Gender is a lot more than our bodies. It is also about how we show other people who we are (maybe our clothes, or our hair, etc.) and who we know we are inside.
- Some people think gender is only about your body, but really gender is about who you know yourself to be.
- When a baby is born the grown-ups look at its body and say "It's a girl" or "It's a boy" but they may not be right. We only know what a person's gender is when they are old enough to tell us.

Conversation starters/Tips:
- Talk about what it would feel like if one day you woke up in a different body. Would you be the same person? Would it change what you want to wear and like to do?
- Don't rely on or expect transgender, non-binary or other gender-expansive people to take the lead on discussing gender identity. Be an ally by bringing up issues that celebrate gender diversity.

Concept: There are more than two genders.

Possible language:
- Each one of us has a gender. Kids can be boys, girls, both, neither, or something else- isn't that great? Everyone gets to describe their gender in their own words.
- There have been examples of more than two genders in many cultures, and many religions, all over the world and throughout time.
- History is full of examples of gender diversity!

Conversation starters/Tips:
- Speak (in private, of course) of specific people in your child's environment who express gender differently, or who may have a gender other than male or female. Explore what your child thinks about it and share *your* thoughts and feelings about it.
- Introduce the notion of "boy, girl, both, neither, or something else" as a regular way to talk about people.

Concept: We need to be respectful of everyone, no matter what their gender is.

Possible language:
- No one likes to be pointed out by other kids. Does it feel good when you think someone is talking about you? How do you think it would feel if people were talking about your gender?
- How do you think you would feel if people were always asking you about your own gender?

Conversation starters/Tips:
- Ask your child to think of a time they were teased for being different. How did it feel?
- Share a story about when you were teased about something and how it made you feel.
- Explore the names we use to describe other people (i.e. Tomboy, Girlie, etc.). For some, those names are very hurtful. Respectfully talk with people about other ways they might want to be described.

Things Anyone Can Do Tomorrow…

- Seek out and use a student's preferred name and pronouns
- Invite ALL students to share a preferred name and/or pronoun (especially early in the year)
- Put up signs that recognize and affirm gender diversity
    - All Genders Welcome*
    - Celebrate Gender Expansive Youth*
    - Think Outside the Boxes*
    - Boy, Girl, Both, Neither*
- Post pictures depicting gender-expansive individuals or cultures in which gender is expressed differently than typically represented by traditionally binary notions
    - "Two spirited" individuals found in many First Nation communities
    - The Hijra of India
    - Arabic men holding hands
- Display examples of people doing things not traditionally seen for their gender
    - Male nurses, childcare providers and dancers
    - Female soldiers, auto mechanics, and athletes
- Don't divide kids into boy and girl groups
    - Use birthdates, dogs and cats, winter or summer, chocolate or strawberry
    - Avoid arranging students boy/girl/boy/girl
    - Be mindful of <u>always</u> reinforcing the gender binary. At least sometimes say things like "attention scientists," "listen up Cougars," or "folks" rather than "ladies and gentlemen" or "boys and girls."
- Introduce language that is not all or nothing such as "sometimes, but not always," or "more common and less common," or "more frequent and less frequent"
- Say things like "all genders " or "boys, girls, both or neither" or "gender-expansive"
- Share examples of gender's impact on you or what you've learned about it over the years
- When binary statements about gender are made, interrupt them by asking questions like "is that always true?" or "can anyone think of an example that does not fit the pattern?"
- Respond to gender-based putdowns firmly, but instructionally, always being careful about further marginalizing the target of the statements. Follow up privately to see if how you handled the situation was comfortable for the student involved.

Integrating gender diversity into everyday curriculum…

Language Arts/Writing
Personal narrative writing prompts: A time when someone talked about my gender and the things I could or could not do. When someone confused my gender/When I confused someone's gender.
Persuasive essay writing prompts: Girls should not be allowed to play on the football team
Expository writing prompts: Describe the ways in which portrayals of gender in the media have affected our society's understandings of gender. Describe ways that gender is marketed to kids
Reading comprehension: use a short piece like "*The Dimensions of Gender*" and have students answer questions about content
Responding to literature: Various young adult reading titles* raise topics related to gender diversity, roles and stereotypes

Grammar & Spelling: Correct any of the mistakes in the following sentence. *Alex and shannon, were discussing the auditions for the school play when both girls was starteled by the loud noise?*
"The word is 'Extract.' Denise was trying to extract the doll from her brother's firm grip. Extract"

Social Studies/History
Studying Native Americans, include two-spirit individuals
Historical figures who have challenged traditional notions about gender
What are some of the ways gender is understood in different cultures?
What is the relationship between gender and issues of power in our society?

Science
Fact of the day: did you know there are species of geckos that only have "female" bodies?
The Biology of Gender*
Genetics
Sexual Health Education

Mathematics
Sample problems:
- 12 boys, 10 girls and 2 gender-expansive kids (feel like both or a blend) are in the math club. What is the ratio of boys to girls? Girls to gender-expansive?
- A survey was conducted recently. 373 students identified as male, 396 identified a female, 13 identified as transgender, and 27 identified as other. Graph these results. What percentage of the students identified as male? Female? Transgender? What percentage did not identify as either male or female?

Data and Statistics: Why is it difficult to come up with solid statistics about people who don't identify as male or female?

The Arts
Various projects where students have to portray something using the lens of gender
Allow students to play any part in various theater productions, rather than basing on gender
Discuss how certain dances have "male" and "female" parts. Why might that be challenging for some people?
Songs celebrating gender diversity

Foreign language
If the language is particularly gendered, distinguish between the rules of a language and a non-binary understanding of gender.

Advisory, Social-Emotional Curriculum
My Gender Journey*
Guest speakers
School climate surveys about gender inclusiveness

Gender Spectrum works closely with schools and individual teachers to think about ways in which to bring the lens of gender into classrooms. Please email us at info@genderspectrum.org or call us at 510-788-4412.

* Materials available from Gender Spectrum

12 easy steps on the way to gender inclusiveness…

1. Avoid asking kids to line up as boys or girls or separating them by gender. Instead, use things like *"odd and even birth date,"* or *"Which would you choose: skateboards or bikes/milk or juice/dogs or cats/summer or winter/talking or listening."* Invite students to come up with choices themselves. Consider using tools like the "appointment schedule" to form pairs or groups. Always ask yourself, "Will this configuration create a gendered space?"

2. Don't use phrases such as *"boys & girls," "you guys," "ladies and gentlemen,"* and similarly gendered expressions to get kids' attention. Instead say things like *"calling all readers,"* or *"hey campers"* or *"could all of the athletes come here."* Create classroom names and then ask all of the "purple penguins" to meet at the rug.

3. Provide an opportunity for every student to identify a preferred name or pronoun. At the beginning of the year or at Back-to-School Night, invite students and parents to let you know if they have a preferred name and/or pronoun by which they wish to be referred.

4. Have visual images reinforcing gender inclusion: pictures of people who don't fit gender norms, signs that "strike out" sayings like "All Boys…" or "All Girls…" or "All Genders Welcome" door hangers.

5. When you find it necessary to reference gender, say *"Boy, girl, both or neither."* When asked why, use this as a teachable moment. Emphasize to students that your classroom recognizes and celebrates the gender diversity of all students.

6. Point out and inquire when you hear others referencing gender in a binary manner. Ask things like, *"Hmmm. That is interesting. Can you say more about that?"* or *"What makes you say that? I think of it a little differently."* Provide counter-narratives that challenge students to think more expansively about their notions of gender.

7. Look for examples in the media that reinforce gender stereotypes or binary models of gender (it won't be hard; they're everywhere!). When with others, call it out and interrogate it.

8. Be intolerant of openly hostile attitudes or references towards others EVERY TIME you hear or observe them, but also use these as teachable moments. Take the opportunity to push the individual on their statements about gender. Being punitive may stop the behavior, at least in your presence. Being instructive may stop it entirely.

9. Teach children specific language that empowers them to be proud of who they are, or to defend others who are being mistreated. *"Please respect my privacy." "You may think that, but I don't." "You may not like it, but I do." "Hey, they're called 'private parts' for a reason."*

10. Help students recognize "all or nothing" language by helping them understand the difference between patterns and rules. Teach them phrases like *"That may be true for some people, but not all people,"* or *"frequently, but not always,"* or *"more common and less common."* Avoid using "normal" to define any behaviors.

11. Share personal anecdotes from your own life that reflect gender inclusiveness. Even better, share examples when you were not gender inclusive in your thinking, words or behaviors, what you learned as a result, and what you will do differently next time.

12. Do the work yourself. What are your own experiences with gender? What might be some of your own biases? What assumptions do you make about the gender of others? Share reflections about your own evolving understandings about gender.

Responding to Concerns: Teaching about Gender

Why should my child learn about gender at school?
- School is a place where children are taught to respect one another and to learn to work together regardless of their differences. Learning about gender diversity is part of that work. Creating a more tolerant, inclusive, and accepting school environment teaches all children to recognize and resist stereotypes. We teach children to stand up for others, to resist bullying, and to work together.
- We also know that many children whose gender is seen as different than what is expected of them can face very difficult circumstances. Too often teasing, bullying, and violence are common experiences for a gender-expansive child. A growing number of school districts and states (17 as of 2014) specifically prohibit bullying and harassment of students based on gender expression or identity. Furthermore, various federal, state and municipal laws protect students from discrimination because of their gender. Proactive education and training to help students understand gender diversity more fully helps school districts meet those legal obligations while working to create a safer, more supportive learning environment for all students.

Isn't my child too young to be learning about gender?
- Children are already learning about it. Messages about gender are everywhere, and children receive very clear messages about the "rules" for boys and girls, as well as the consequences for violating them. By learning about the diversity of gender, children have an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests, ideas, and activities. For all children, the pressure of "doing gender correctly," is greatly reduced, creating more space for them to discover new talents and interests.
- Whether in or out of school, children will encounter other children exhibiting wide ranges of gender expression. This is normal and, with a little reflection, we can all recognize it as something we encountered during our own childhoods. Tomboys or shy, sensitive boys are commonly recognized examples of children who buck societal expectations of gender expression. These children, and all children, deserve a safe, supportive learning environment in which they can thrive and empower themselves.

If you are talking about gender, aren't you discussing reproduction and sexuality?
- The simple answer is "no." When we discuss gender, we talk about what people like to wear, the activities they engage in, and how they feel about themselves. This is not sexuality. Sexuality involves physical intimacy and attraction. Gender is about self-identity. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of where they fit on the gender spectrum. This includes all kids, "typically" gendered or not.
- If responding to questions that arise about physical sex, the discussion uses phrases such as "private parts," and even if anatomical terms come up, nothing specific to human reproduction or sexuality is taught. For the most part, children are simply not raising these questions. While as adults, we struggle to separate the ideas of gender and sexuality (primarily because many were taught that they are one and the same), children have an ability to grasp the complexity of gender diversity because sexuality does not factor in to complicate their understanding.

Ideas about gender diversity go against the values we are instilling in my child at home. Are you trying to teach my child to reject these values?
- Absolutely not. Our children encounter people with different beliefs when they join any community. While one aim for learning about diversity is to become more accepting of those around us, not everyone is going to be best friends. That does not mean that they can't get along and learn together. The purpose of learning about gender diversity is to demonstrate that children are unique and that there is no single way to be a boy or a girl. If a child does not agree with or understand another student's gender identity or expression, they do not have to change how they feel inside about it. However, they also do not get to make fun of, harass, or harm other students whose gender identity they don't understand or support. Gender diversity education is about teaching students to live and work with others. It comes down to the simple agreement that all children must be treated with kindness and respect.

Won't my child get confused if we speak about more than two gender options?
- Experience show that, with enough information, children of any age are able to understand that there are more than the two gender categories currently recognized by our society. When it is explained to them in a simple, age appropriate manner, gender diversity is an easy concept for children to grasp.
- When you discuss gender with your child, you may hear them exploring where they fit on the gender spectrum and why. This shows that they understand that everyone may have some variation of gender expression that fits outside of stereotypical norms. Their use of language or their personal placements along this spectrum may surprise you. We encourage all parents to approach these discussions with an air of openness and inquiry.

Don't gender-expansive kids have lots of problems? Is gender nonconformity a product of abuse, emotional problems, neglect, divorce, or detached, or over-involved parents?
- No. While it is true that some transgender and gender-expansive people do experience a tremendous amount of societal abuse and parental rejection, this is not the cause of their gender identity or expression. As a result, when not supported, children whose gender expression or identity is considered atypical often suffer from loneliness, lower self-esteem, and other negative feelings. Statistics reveal the devastating impact these youth face when placed into a non-supportive or hostile setting.
- A gender-expansive child's emotional distress is a response to the mistreatment they have likely faced from those around them. It is not at all uncommon to see a gender-expansive or transgender child's distress greatly reduce or disappear when they're provided with a more positive environment.

Won't allowing children to express non-traditional genders cause them to be teased or harassed?
- While there is a great deal of data suggesting that gender-expansive youth do face teasing, there is a growing body of knowledge that points to the impact gender-expansive education can have on reducing that treatment. If children are being treated badly because of who they are, the answer is not to try and prevent them from being themselves. Rather, we should instead ask what needs to be done to address the teasing. Providing educational programming and training that expands students' understanding about stereotypes and limitations of self-expression can go a long way to preventing teasing.

Won't discussing gender encourage my child to be transgender?
- Being transgender is not something that a person chooses. Studies show that although parents cannot make their child gay or transgender, they can deeply influence how their children feel about themselves. Parental pressure to enforce gender conformity can damage a child's self-esteem and is a high predictor of negative health outcomes and risk-taking behaviors for youth. Transgender youth currently have an extremely high attempted suicide rate: some estimate it being as high as 50 percent. Discussing gender will have the effect of removing much of the pressure students face to fit into narrowly defined expectations that few if any can actually meet.

If transgender people are so "normal", why are some families so private about it?
- A family with a transgender child will decide together how much they wish to share with others. Many transgender children prefer to live their lives as the gender that reflects their internal gender identity without using the word "transgender." For example, the child would identify themselves as a girl or boy as opposed to a transgender girl or boy.
- Some children and families are open and share this with everyone in their lives. Others choose to maintain a sense of complete privacy, while still others find a blend of these two approaches. In most families, this decision will be determined jointly by the child and guardian(s), often in collaboration with a medical, mental health, or other professionals experienced in this area.
- If a family honors their child's wish for privacy, this can have the appearance of secrecy. In reality, it may be an effort to avoid potential stigmatization or to simply keep a very personal topic private.

How can I correct or modify the impression I have already given my child about gender?
- It is powerful to let children know when we don't know the answer to something, and to let them know that adults as well as children are always learning. Having conversations with your children that reflect your growing understanding is wonderful. It does not undermine your parenting. If you were to discover that you had unknowingly taught your child another form of misinformation about other people, you would correct the impression you had mistakenly given them. With gender it is no different. Gender diversity is something that both society and science are constantly exploring and understanding more deeply.

I don't really feel like I know how to answer my child's questions.
- Once again, explain that you are learning about this too. It is important, however, to monitor and understand your own feelings before you initiate this kind of conversation. Children can pick up on your feelings towards a subject. So, if you are still feeling uncomfortable about the concept of gender diversity, then consider taking additional time to increase your understanding. Read, talk to others, and further educate yourself. When you have a greater understanding and increased awareness, then you will likely feel more confident to talk with your children.
- Answer children's questions simply, and let them take the lead in how deep the conversation goes. Most children are satisfied with this approach. They will guide the conversation from there and rarely ask the complex questions that occur to adults. You may be surprised at how simply children navigate this terrain. Some parents have found responses such as, "Hmmm, I am just learning about that myself. Let me tell you what I know, and then if you would like to learn more, maybe we could do that together," to be helpful in opening up pathways for further discussion.

Gender Inclusive Classrooms: Concepts and Lessons

Below, you will find some suggestions for sequencing a program of learning about gender and gender diversity across grade-levels. These assume a proactive approach to the creation of a gender inclusive school setting. As with any curriculum development, the key is to match the needs of the specific context to the materials, activities and resources being used. In some cases, a particular student's or staff member's gender may require additional activities or approaches for supporting the school community to be fully accepting and inclusive of the individual.

Pre-K/Lower Elementary Grades (Pre-K – 2)

Overarching concepts:

There are lots of ways to be boys or girls or something else. Isn't it great?!?!

- Toys are toys, hair is hair, colors are colors, and clothes are clothes
- Sometimes this is confusing. We get messages about some things being for boys and some things being for girls.
- Kids can do or be or like or want anything because they are individuals with hopes and likes and desires. This is not **because** they are boys or girls.

Mid Elementary (2 – 4)

Overarching concepts:

Gender is very complex and not just about bodies. We all have a right to be ourselves.

- Gender includes a relationship between bodies, expression and identity
- Who you are is not about what others tell you, but something you determine for yourself (even when you get messages that say otherwise)
- People deserve to be treated with kindness and respect

Upper Elementary (4 – 6)

Overarching Concepts

Gender Diversity: Binary vs. Multi-dimensional Models of Gender

- Gender in Nature
- Gender in history and across cultures
- Certain types of bodies are thought of as boy and certain types as girl, but that's not true for everyone
- Kids can be boys, girls, both, or neither
- Gender depends on culture and history

Middle School

Overarching Concepts

Social expectations and limitations about gender. What happens to gender non-expansive kids?

Roles and responsibilities within a community; being an ally

- Young Adult Literature
- Portrayals of gender in books
- The biology of gender
- What are some of the pressures to conform to gender expectations, at the school and in general? What happens to kids when they don't?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider, either for your own reasons or because you were treated as such?
- What does being an ally look like?

High School

Overarching Concepts

Gender as a social construct

Gender and civil rights issue

- The complexity of gender is seen across virtually every aspect of society
- How have portrayals of gender in the media affected our understandings of gender?
- What are some of the ways gender is understood in different cultures?
- What is the relationship between gender and issues of power in our society?
- Young Adult Literature
- Portrayals of gender in books
- The biology of gender
- Why is it difficult to come up with solid statistics about transgender people?
- How have issues related to gender diversity shown up over the past 5 – 10 years?
- Gender and Sports
- Debates in Psychology: The DSM-5; Raising Gender-expansive Children