Supporting Transgender Youth in the Community and School

Jeff Perrotti
with a student, parent, and administrator panel

American Academy of Pediatrics Webinar Series

Sponsored by AAP Provisional Section on LGBT Health and Wellness
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Objectives

• Identify primary considerations for transgender youth in school and the community

• Discuss ways to help transgender young people and their families to have a positive experience in their schools and communities

• Describe components of model school policies and best practices

• Discuss legal rights of transgender students

• Identify resources for families and schools
Introductions, Context

- Positive Psychology
- Growth Mindset
- School Climate
- Social Justice

Student, Parent, and Administrator Experiences

Lauren – parent
Christy – parent
Zach – student
Justin – principal
Sheila – principal
"I want people to know that I’m a boy. Yes, my voice is kinda high. Yes, I don’t have the angular face or completely flat chest that other boys have. But that doesn’t mean that I’m not one. Why is it so hard to just call me he?"
“I identify as pansexual and gender-fluid. Pansexual means that I am attracted to people regardless of their biological sex or gender identity. They could be male, female, trans-male, trans-female, intersex, or any other sex, and that would not matter to me. Gender-fluid means my gender identity changes. Sometimes I am female, other times male, and occasionally agender (having no gender). “Since genderfluid and pansexual are new terms, I would like other people to fully understand and accept them. Look them up on Google!”"
Genderbread Person

Biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are independent of one another.

TRANSGENDER

when your gender identity (your sense of yourself as a boy/man, or a girl/woman) is inconsistent with your assigned sex at birth
Transgender

- Insistent, persistent, consistent
- Gender identity is usually established by age 4, and often by age 2 or younger
- 90% of people have someone close to them who is lesbian, gay, or bisexual; 8% of people have someone who is close to them who is transgender

Biological Sex does not determine Gender Expression.

Biological Sex does not determine Gender Identity.
Gender Identity is different from Sexual Orientation

Social Transition
Medical Transition
A student’s transition goes more smoothly when...

1. The family and school work together, and there is a designated point person on the staff.

2. There’s a plan…

One that spells out who needs to know what information when, and how it will be communicated.
Sample Letters from School Principals

September 20, 2013

Dear First Grade Parents,

I am writing to share some information with you. As some of you are aware, a child in first grade that has recently been transferred from a boy to a girl. This child has been referred to by a gender different from his assigned sex at birth. Social transition means that he is moving from boy to a girl. Social transition means that he is moving from boy to a girl.

This has been, and will continue to be, a learning experience for our school. Although this situation is new to most of us, we have already done it at [name of school], and we continue to be kind and respectful to everyone, and to support, accept and appreciate this student and his family as valued members of our community. This is in keeping with our boy's view, XXXX, and I would be happy to provide you with further resources, including additional language to use in conversations with your children.

Thank you for being so open and understanding.

Sincerely,

name of Principal

October 18, 2013

Dear Fifth Grade Parents,

I am writing to share some sensitive and important information with you. As you are aware, a child in fifth grade has recently been transferred from a boy to a girl. This child has been referred to by a gender different from his assigned sex at birth. Social transition means that he is moving from boy to a girl.

This has been, and will continue to be, a learning experience for our school. Although this situation is new to most of us, we have already done it at [name of school], and we continue to be kind and respectful to everyone, and to support, accept and appreciate this student and his family as valued members of our community. This is in keeping with our boy's view, XXXX, and I would be happy to provide you with further resources, including additional language to use in conversations with your children.

Thank you for being so open and understanding.

Sincerely,

name of Principal
3. Administrators dedicate time and other resources for them and their staff to talk and learn about this topic.

Administrator, faculty, and staff workshops that include best practices, laws, policies, and resources (people, organizations, books, websites, and other opportunities to learn).
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has interpreted Title IX to require school districts to treat transgender students in accordance with their gender identity, including in the context of sex-separated spaces such as restrooms, locker rooms, and overnight field trips.

For information on individual state laws, go to the Transgender Law Center http://transgenderlawcenter.org/

Chapter 76, Section 5  The MA Student Anti-discrimination Law
No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.
Best Practices

Key Components of effective policies:
- Name, Gender Marker, & Record Changes
- Bathrooms & Locker Rooms
- Confidentiality
- Athletics
- Gendered Practices

http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/GenderIdentity.pdf

www.camparanutiq.org
Camp Aranu’tiq serves transgender and gender-variant youth and their families
Micro-aggressions
gestures, language, behaviors, or even tone of voice that cumulatively impair a person's performance or self-esteem

Micro-affirmations
subtle or apparently small acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments
District of Columbia Public Schools Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Policy Guidance


Additional Best Practices

• Antidiscrimination policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression

• Staff training on supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students

• GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances, Gender and Sexuality Alliances)

• Responding to anti-LGBT language: Stop it/Name It/Claim It

• LGBTQ visibility in the curriculum and in the school environment (i.e., safe zone stickers) – Students are “scanning for safety.”

• Educating and supporting parents: Family Acceptance Project

http://familyproject.sfsu.edu PFLAG https://community.pflag.org
Family Acceptance Project

Range of parent reactions to LGBT child:

Rejecting – 30%, Ambivalent – 50%
Accepting – 17%, Celebratory – 3%

Children of rejecting parents are: more likely to report high levels of depression, to attempt suicide, to use illegal drugs, to engage in unprotected sex, and to be bullied at school.

LGBT children of accepting parents - decreased risk.
Even a little parent support makes a big difference.

http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/

Protective Factors

• Being able to talk to “an adult in your family about things that are important to you”

• Being able to talk to “a teacher or other adult in this school if you have a problem”

• Opportunities for leadership and meaningful participation; extracurricular activities

• Presence of a gay/straight alliance (GSA)

• Exercise, humor, spirituality, optimism
Sample Books & Web-based Resources

- [www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)
- [http://www.imatyfa.org](http://www.imatyfa.org)
- [www.welcomingschools.org](http://www.welcomingschools.org)
- [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

www.genderspectrum.org

- Under “Resources”, click on “Education”
- Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools
- Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students
- Gender Transitions: Key Considerations; Gender Support Plan; Gender Transition Plan; Initial Principal Meeting
www.welcomingschools.org

- Excellent resources on how to talk about gender and sexual orientation, in an age-appropriate way, at the elementary and middle school levels.

- Gender Stereotyping and Identity; Affirming Gender in Elementary School: Social Transitioning

- Films: What Do You Know? 6-12 Year Olds Talk about Gays and Lesbians; What Can We Do? Bias, Bullying, and Bystanders

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Questions and Challenging Situations

- questions from students and parents; community concerns

- bathrooms, locker rooms, athletics, and overnight room assignments

- unsupportive parents
4. Student and parent voices are included.
Head – Heart - Feet

• write down one thing you are thinking or one thing you learned.
• write down one thing you are feeling or one thing you felt.
• write one step or action you’re going to take.

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