

Transgender and Gender Variant Information

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Reference

Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) www.glad.org

Gender Spectrum, www.genderspectrum.org

Queerly Elementary, www.queerlyelementary.com

Transgender 101

What does 'transgender' mean?

'Transgender' is an umbrella term often used to refer to people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. However, people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth may not always self-identify as transgender; some may identify as transsexual, trans, genderqueer, etc. When in doubt, always defer to the way a person self-identifies. Transgender people may or may not use a different name or pronoun than the one they were assigned at birth, and they may or may not pursue hormone therapy or surgery.

Additional definitions are provided in the *Vocabulary* list on page 29.

How is sexual orientation different from gender identity?

Sexual orientation describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction to another person (for example: straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual). Gender identity is someone's personal sense of their own gender (for example: male, female). Like people who are not transgender (cisgender), transgender people may identify their sexual orientation as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.

What pronoun (he/she) should I use when referring to a transgender person?

When referring to a transgender person, you should always use the person's preferred third-person pronoun (he/she/his/hers) and their preferred name. If you're uncertain which pronoun is appropriate for a person, you should respectfully ask that person rather than make an assumption.

Gender variant children can grow up to be healthy, happy, and successful adults!

What words are offensive to transgender people?

These words should not be used: 'she-male,' 'he-she,' 'it,' 'trannie,' 'tranny,' and 'shim.' Using these words to refer to any person is similar to using an anti-gay epithet.

Supporting a Transgender Child (page 21) outlines how families and adults can support a transgender child.

Implementing California Law Prohibiting Gender-Based Discrimination

School Success and Opportunity Act: Assembly Bill 1266

Existing law prohibits public schools from discriminating on the basis of specified characteristics, including gender, gender identity, and gender expression, and specifies various statements of legislative intent and the policies of the state in that regard. Existing law requires that participation in a particular physical education activity or sport, if required of pupils of one sex, be available to pupils of each sex. This bill would require that a pupil be permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs, and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records. *California Legislative Information* www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov

Gender: a persons' actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with a person's sex at birth. *California Code of Regulations*

OUSD implements these policies in the following ways:

District Board Policy 5145.3

Names/Pronouns Students shall have the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun corresponding to their gender identity that is exclusively and consistently asserted at school.

Avoid Gender Segregation As a general rule, in any other circumstances where students are separated by gender in school activities, students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity exclusively and consistently asserted at school.

Official Records The District shall change a student's official records to reflect a change in legal name or gender upon receipt of documentation that such legal name and/or gender have been changed pursuant to California legal requirements.

Restroom Accessibility Students shall have access to the restroom that corresponds to their gender identity exclusively and consistently at school.

Locker Room Accessibility Transgender students shall not be forced to use the locker room corresponding to their gender assigned at birth.

Sports and Gym Class Transgender students shall not be denied the opportunity to participate in sports and gym.

Dress Codes Students shall have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity that is exclusively and consistently asserted at school, within the constraints of the dress codes adopted at their school site.

Checklist to Support a Transgender or Gender Variant Student

Issues to consider when developing a plan to support a transgender/gender variant student.

Develop an Individual Plan

Each set of circumstances will drive what support and resources are needed. However, all students have the right to a safe and welcoming school.

Involve the Student

As appropriate based on age and maturity, provide an opportunity for the transgender or gender variant student to voice concerns, ask questions and offer solutions.

Get Support

Reach out for guidance through OUSD district staff or community-based organizations (pages 40 – 48) to help develop a plan to ensure a welcoming school for all students.

Safety

Transgender persons often face significantly higher safety risks both on school campus and off. It is essential to take explicit, precautionary steps to ensure student safety.

State and District Policies

Become familiar with the CA State Assembly Bill 1266 and OUSD's policy 5145.3 (page 18) which clearly outlines school obligations to support transgender students.

Maintain a student's right to privacy

For many transgender students it is essential for their safety to be strictly discrete. However, some students may choose to be more open. In general, the student should take the lead with what information they would like to share publically.

Considerations when Communicating with Families/Parents

Parent involvement will vary depending on factors such as a student's age and family dynamic. While ideally the family is supportive and involved, at times a child's safety is in jeopardy when their family becomes aware of their gender identity or transition.

School-Wide Professional Development

While maintaining individual privacy, educate all staff on how to create a welcoming school for transgender and gender variant students.

Names and Pronouns

Staff and peers should use the pronoun and name that the student consistently identifies with, which may or may not be their legal name.

Student Education

Provide age appropriate, classroom lessons on gender for all students. These lessons are often an essential part of creating a welcoming and safe school environment.

Gender Segregated Areas & Bathroom Considerations

Students have the right to participate in school activities, and use the bathroom and locker room in accordance with their affirmed gender. However, some transgender students do not feel safe to do so or have other concerns such as privacy. Offer options and develop a plan with the student to meet their individual needs.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Gender Diversity

1. Why should students learn about this in school?

School is a place where children are taught to respect one another. In addition, schools are legally responsible for the safety and well being of their students. Learning about gender and the gender spectrum is part of that work.

3. Won't students get confused if we speak about more than two gender options?

When it is explained to them in a simple, age appropriate manner, gender diversity is usually an easy concept for children to grasp.

4. Aren't elementary students too young for this topic?

Typically, children have a strong sense of their own gender identity by three or four years old. This means that gender nonconforming children or children with transgender identities may display signs of this variance as young as preschool age. In addition, some children may have transgender family members. By using more encompassing, inclusive, and age appropriate language, we make room for self-expression and peer acceptance.

5. Won't discussing this encourage students 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 child feels about themselves.

6. Won't allowing children to express a non-traditional gender cause them to be teased or harassed?

Students have a right to express their gender identity in a safe school environment. Teachers and administrators may work to minimize potential teasing and harassment by teaching all students about gender variance, teaching students to respect differences, and by implementing the Social Emotional Learning Standards outlined on page 23.

7. Why are some families private about having a transgender child?

A family with a transgender child will decide together how much they wish to share with others. 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.

8. I don't feel like I know how to answer my student's questions.

You will likely feel more confident to talk with your children and students about these topics once you learn more. Be honest with your students if you don't know an answer. Perhaps you and your class can learn together?

Implementing California Law Prohibiting Gender-Based Discrimination (page 18) clearly outlines school expectations.

The Transgender Resources on page 22 lists books and local organizations that will help answer more questions.

Supporting a Transgender Child

A Guide for Families and Caring Adults

Love and Support your child unconditionally just as you always have. This is the single most important thing any parent can do for their child.

Thank your child for sharing this part of their life with you. Even if you are experiencing a range of feelings, it is important that your child knows that you appreciate who they are.

You are not
alone.

Listen. By listening to your child, you will show you care for them and are respectful of their experiences.

Ask how you can help. Simply ask how you can help if you aren't sure what your child needs.

Learn more. The more you learn about this topic, the less overwhelmed you will be and the more confident you will become in supporting your child. Consider reading one of the following books:

- *Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*, Stephanie Brill and Rachel, 2008 Peper Cleis Press
- *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to Complex Issues*, Nicholas M. Teich, 2012 Columbia University Press

Create a Safe Place for your child at home. Allow your child to freely express his or her gender identity at home.

Gender variant children
can grow up to be
healthy, happy, and
successful adults!

Follow up. Check-in regularly to show your on-going support.

Say Sorry. It is always okay to say sorry and start over if you feel badly about something you said or did.

Reach out for Support for both yourself and your child. Connect with family, friends and organizations that can support you and your child. *Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians* (PFLAG) www.pflag.org and *Gender Spectrum* www.genderspectrum.org both offer local support groups for family members of transgender people.

**Oakland Unified School District is
committed to creating safe, welcoming
schools for all students, including those
who are gender variant and transgender.**

Transgender Resources

Book List and Local Organizations

Local Organizations

Gender Spectrum

Consultation, training and events designed to help families, educators, professionals and organizations understand and address the concepts of gender identity and expression. Free monthly support groups for parents of gender nonconforming and transgender children. www.genderspectrum.org or 510-567-2977

Family Acceptance Project

Provides free support services and guidance for families with lesbian, bisexual, transgender or question children. Services available in English, Spanish and Cantonese. www.familproject.sfus.edu or email fap@sfsu.edu

“The District is committed to maintaining a discrimination-free learning environment which teaches respect for all people, including those who do not conform to traditional sex role stereotypes.” OUSD Board Policy 5171

Books

Elementary Fiction

10,000 Dresses by Marcus Ewert and Rex Ray, 2008 Triangle Square
Baily dreams of wearing dresses, despite his family’s concerns. In the end he finds a friend who creates magical dresses just for him.

My Princess Boy by Cherly Kilodavis, 2010 Simon and Shuster Books
A mother writes about her son who loves princess things.

High School & Middle School Fiction

Luna, Julie Anne Peters, 2006 Little, Brown and Company
Luna is the story of Liam’s transformation into Luna. Told from the perspective of her younger sister, Regan.

Parrotfish, Ellen Wittlinger, 2007 Simon & Schuster Books
Parrotfish is the moving story of Angela’s transformation into Grady.

These books explore various aspects of the transgender experience and related issues.

Adult Non-fiction (may be suitable for older teens)

Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to Complex Issues, Nicholas M. Teich, 2012 Columbia University Press

Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals, Stephanie Brill and Rachel, 2008 Peper Cleis Press

Helping Your Transgender Teen: A Guide for Parents, Irwin Kreiger, 2011 Genderwise Press