

# Understanding and Supporting Gender Diverse Students from a Trauma-Informed Perspective

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Pronouns: He/Him/His

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# Session Objectives

To enhance participants' awareness of gender identity, and gender diversity matters in schools;

To augment participants' knowledge base related to gender diversity and the impact of trauma and other factors in this population, especially in light of the numerous stressors 2020 has posed;

To highlight strategies participants can employ to support gender diverse students as they navigate the educational process this year.





# NEA's Position

Teaching Strategies (<http://www.nea.org/tools/30420.htm>)

“NEA believes that a great public school is a fundamental right of every child - free from intimidation and harassment, and safe for all students, including those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered.”

“There is only one real issue for educators: We are responsible for our students' safety and education. We must ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to achieve and thrive.”



# Principal Professional Associations

- National Association of Elementary School Principals
  - <https://www.naesp.org/communicator-may-2016/new-resource-supporting-transgender-students>
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
  - <https://www.nassp.org/who-we-are/board-of-directors/position-statements/transgender-students?SSO=true>

# NASP's Position

- Position statements
  - [Safe Schools for Transgender and Gender Diverse Students \(2014\)](#)
    - “The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) supports efforts to ensure that schools are safe and inclusive learning environments for all students, family members, and school staff, including those who are transgender or gender diverse. NASP respects a person’s right to express gender identity, and the right to modify gender expression when necessary for individual well-being. In addition, NASP supports all students’ right to explore and question their gender identity....NASP acknowledges that having a transgender identity or being perceived as gender diverse are not disorders, and that efforts to change a person’s gender identity are ineffective, harmful, and discriminatory. NASP works to ensure that settings in which school psychologists work are safe and welcoming and provide equal opportunity to all persons regardless of actual or perceived characteristics, including gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and any other personal identity or distinguishing characteristics.”
  - [Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Youth \(2017\)](#)
    - “The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) believes school psychologists are ethically obligated to ensure all youth with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and/or gender expressions, are able to develop and express their personal identities in a school climate that is safe, accepting, and respectful of all persons and free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse.”

# Prompts for Thought

- What is your understanding of what it means to identify as ‘transgender’ or ‘gender diverse’? As gay or sexually diverse?
- How is ‘gender identity’ distinct from ‘sexual orientation?’
- When do individuals become aware of their gender identity?  
Of their sexual orientation?

# Definitions

## Sex

Think biology - Female/Male

## Gender

Social construction that is culturally-mediated -  
Girl/Woman, Boy/Man

## Gender Identity

Lived/defined by the individual

## Gender Expression

How people communicate their gender identity to others

## Gender Role

Culturally-mediated ways people live out gender -  
Feminine/Masculine

## Sexual Orientation

One's primary psychological, social, emotional, and erotic attractions to other people



# Definitions (continued)

## Cisgender

Gender identity matches the sex and gender one was assigned at birth

## Transgender

Gender identity does not match the sex and gender one was assigned at birth

Consistent, persistent, insistent

## Gender Diverse

Broader category that captures the range of gender identities



# Facts

- Estimates vary as to the number of people in the U.S. who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual (~10%), or transgender/gender diverse (~0.5%)
- Estimates are probably under-representative
- Cuts across ethnic, racial, and class lines
- Present throughout human history and throughout the world

# Transgender Youth

- 80% of TG-identified adults knew they were 'different' before leaving elementary school
- Less than 4% of TG-identified persons realized they were TG after the age of 18
- Average age of trans-spectrum self-realization: 7.9
- Average age of learning the 'words' to communicate feelings: 15.5  
Consistent, Persistent, Insistent
- Transitions pre-puberty are social in-nature; some persons make seek medical transitions around puberty or later

# Gender Diversity and ASD

- Numerous anecdotal observations and emerging research are demonstrating an association between gender diversity and autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Children and adolescents on the autism spectrum are seven (7) times more likely to be gender diverse
- Children and adolescents at appearing at gender clinics are 6-15 times more likely than their same-aged peers to have ASD

*Strang et al. (2017)*

# Mental Health Issues

- Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)
  - Gender dysphoria
- Homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, cisgenderism
- Higher rates of depression and anxiety; lower levels of self-esteem; high rates of substance use/abuse and risk-taking behaviors
- Suicide attempt rate
  - 41% of TG/GD adults report attempting suicide in their lifetime
  - 10-20% of LGB-identified persons
  - 3-5% of the general population

# School Issues

Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 44.6% report feeling unsafe at school because of the climate
- 40% report avoiding gender-specific spaces because of climate
- 70.5% report avoiding extra-curricular activities and 75.4% report avoiding school functions

# School Issues

## Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 25% of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because of negative school climates and 10% missed four or more days in the past month
- 94% heard negative gender expression remarks
  - 62.2% heard these remarks frequently
- 87.4% heard negative trans-specific remarks
  - 45.6% heard these remarks frequently

# School Issues

Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 71% heard negative gender expression remarks from adults
- 59.1% verbally harassed at school
- 24.4% physically harassed at school
- 57.3% LGBTQ sexually harassed at school

# School Issues

Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 49% LGBTQ electronically bullied because of SO or GI/GE
- 55.3% LGBTQ did not report incidents
- 60.4% who did report indicated school staff did nothing in response

# School Issues

## Discriminatory School Policies and Practices

- 62.2% experience anti-LGBT policies and practices
- 18.2% of students were prohibited from discussing or writing about LGBT topics in school assignments, and 17.6% were prohibited from doing so in extracurricular activities
- 31.3% report being disciplined for PDA

# School Issues

## Discriminatory School Policies and Practices

- 11.1% prevented from attending a dance or function
- 14.8% restricted from promoting GSA
- 42.1% prevented from using declared name and/or pronouns
- 46.5% required to use restrooms and 43.6 required to use locker rooms based on gender assigned (GA) at birth

# School Issues

## Discriminatory School Policies and Practices

- 13% prevented from wearing clothes considered inappropriate based on GA
- 11.3% were prevented or discouraged from participating in school sports because they were LGBTQ
- 71.2% of LGBTQ students reported their schools engaged in some form of gendered practice in school activities (e.g., attire, royalty courts, photographs)

# Effects of a Hostile Climate

- Three times more likely to have missed school in the past month
- Have lower GPAs than non-harassed peers
- Twice as likely to report not to pursue PSE



# Effects of a Hostile Climate

- Twice as likely to have been disciplined at school
- Report higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem
- Report higher rates of substance use/abuse and risk-taking behaviors

[GLSEN 2017 National Climate Survey](#)



# Legal & Policy Matters

## Title IX (Patsy Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act, 2002)

- U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights considers gender identity and gender expression as protected classes under Title IX
- The DOE-OCR and the U.S. DOJ have filed and won lawsuits in this regard

## FERPA

- According to Lambda Legal, students (ages 18+) and/or parents or legal guardians have the right to request a school change the name and gender marker on a student's records if they are incorrect, misleading, or violate one's privacy [34 C.F.R. section 99.7(a)(2)(ii)]

## Anti-Bullying Legislation/Guidance

- <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/safe-schools/bullying-prevention>



# Childhood Trauma

- Single incident trauma (Type 1)
- Complex trauma (Type 2)
- PTSD
- ACES (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovIJ3dsNk>)
- Emotional, social, behavioral, developmental, and physical tolls
- Complex, systemic, challenging, taxing

# Childhood Trauma

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovIJ3dsNk>



# Trauma-Informed Schools

School environments wherein school personnel understand the etiology and symptomatology of simple and complex trauma in children and adolescents and stand ready to be the adults in their lives who are safe (not abusive), who help (and don't hurt), who persist through difficulty (and don't give up and abandon them), and who teach (more than just academics!).

TI schools embrace such values as *Safety, Trustworthiness, Choice, Collaboration, and Empowerment*. (Thanks, WI DPI!)

# Framing 2020 from a Trauma Perspective

- COVID-19
- Social distancing/isolation/quarantine
- Killing of unarmed black persons, racism
- Potential abuse - experienced and/or witnessed
- Loss of employment on the part of adults at home
- Food insecurity
- Political and cultural upheaval
- Etc., etc., etc.

# Impact on Gender Diverse Students

- Social isolation
- Forced back in the closet or deeper in the closet
- Lack of access to supportive adults, peers, and clubs (e.g., GSA's)
- Limited or no access to community, medical, cyber, and other supports
- Compounding stressors
- Fear, anxiety, uncertainty with no clear end point

# Raising Ryland

- <http://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2015/03/17/digital-shorts-parenting-transgender-child-orig.cnn?sr=fbdwtransp>



# Schulyer Bailar

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niBM3li662U>



# Strategies

- Educate yourself
- Identify your pronouns when speaking/interacting with students
- Be trauma informed and sensitive
- Relationships, relationships, relationships
- Gatekeeper training
- Collaborate with educators; participate in classroom meetings
- Consider ride-alongs into neighborhoods to be present and to provide services
- Virtual GSA's
- Interface with community-based agencies
- Know to whom to refer students at school and in the community; communicate the process for accessing services

# Resources

[National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\)](#)

[Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network \(GLSEN\)](#)

[Transparenthood \(Blog\)](#)

[TransActive Gender Center](#)

[Welcoming Schools](#)

[Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center](#)

[TransYouth Family Allies](#)

[Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference](#)

[TNET - PFLAG's Transgender Network](#)

[WI Department of Public Instruction](#)

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# Questions?

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