

— *I Am Jazz* —

AN ORGANIZING KIT FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS & COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

A resource from Welcoming Schools, a project of the
Human Rights Campaign Foundation



Community Readings of *I Am Jazz* to Support Transgender Youth

In late 2015, an elementary school in Mount Horeb, Wis., planned a reading and discussion of a children's book as part of their efforts to support one of the school's students — a six-year-old transgender child who had recently socially transitioned and was attending the school openly as the girl she knew herself to be. The book, *I Am Jazz*, is a picture book based on early experiences of transgender youth and advocate Jazz Jennings.

Prior to the reading, an anti-LGBT hate group learned of the event and threatened to sue the school, calling for the school to cancel the discussion. But the Mount Horeb community rallied behind the school and the transgender student.

A parent in the community organized a reading of *I Am Jazz* at the local library. The audience — full of children, parents, grandparents and community members — put courage before fear and turned out to learn more about how they could support the full humanity of transgender children and youth in their own backyard.

In 2016, communities all across the nation hosted their own events — inspired by the Mount Horeb community. They were held in schools, libraries, churches, temples, and bookstores. *I Am Jazz* was even read aloud on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Human Rights Campaign — through the HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools program — is encouraging parents, teachers, students, school administrators and communities to create their own readings in support of transgender youth. These events help children and youth know they are welcomed and loved in their communities.

The HRC Foundation has created this guide to help organizers to build more affirming and supportive spaces for transgender and non-binary children and youth across the country.

HRCF's Welcoming Schools program also provides additional resources and professional development to schools across the United States. Visit www.welcomingschools.org.



About the Book, *I Am Jazz*

I Am Jazz is a first-person account about being transgender by transgender youth and advocate Jazz Jennings and her co-author Jessica Herthel. Jennings was one of the first transgender children to talk publicly about her identity and the challenges she has faced as a transgender youth. Herthel is not transgender, nor does she have any transgender children. She co-wrote the book based on her experience explaining to her daughters what “transgender” meant, hoping to create a book that other parents and caring adults would be able to use to start conversations with their kids. The book takes less than five minutes to read, and is appropriate for all ages.

Organizing a Reading of *I Am Jazz*

Creating welcoming spaces for transgender and non-binary children and youth can start with something as simple as a conversation — between colleagues or neighbors, among educators in the teacher’s lounge, in classrooms and hallways, or in more formal settings like a community forum or school-wide assembly. What is important is making sure that these conversations happen in safe and productive ways.

Here are some ideas for getting those conversations started with a reading of *I Am Jazz*:

In your school – If you’re a principal or other school administrator, consider having a school-wide assembly and reading *I Am Jazz* to the entire school. Teachers can use this discussion guide to have conversations in small groups or in their classrooms. In the library, you could arrange for classes to have a discussion about the book.



In your community – Organize a reading and discussion that is open to all members of your community at a local library or school auditorium. Invite prominent local leaders to participate and encourage attendees to bring the whole family. Use social media to create an invitation and spread the word. (See below for ideas)

In the classroom – If you’re an elementary school teacher, consider reading *I Am Jazz* to your class, just like you would do with any other children’s book – use the Welcoming Schools lesson plan for *I Am Jazz* that is aligned with national standards; use some of the discussion prompts in this guide; or integrate the reading into your social emotional learning program on developing empathy or preventing bullying.

In your place of worship – If you belong to a church, temple or mosque, plan a reading and discussion within your community. Open it to the wider community as well.

If you’re a parent, consider giving a copy of *I Am Jazz* to your child’s teacher and asking if it can be read in the classroom — and share this guide with them. Read it with your children at home or organize a reading in a community location!

After your reading or lesson, the conversation doesn’t end! Help ensure there are [inclusive anti-bullying policies](#) in your schools. Read other [books that look at gender](#) to continue the discussion. [Examine your own practices](#) to make sure that you’re helping all young people to thrive.

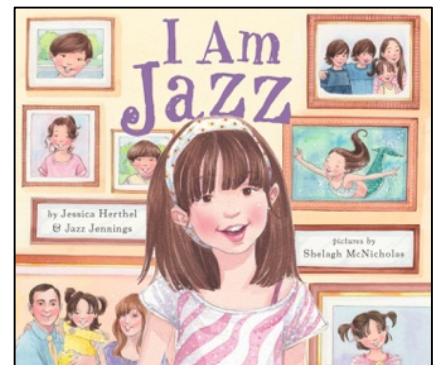
Promoting Your Event:

For some organizers, these will be school events. For others, these events will be taking place in libraries, community centers and other public locations.

If you're planning a public event, help raise awareness and a crowd for your event. Here are a few tips that can help:

- **Publicize on social media.**

- Do you have a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account?
- Share on your personal and/or public account.
- Post on any pages or "groups" that you belong to.
- Be sure to do this several times – just because you post once doesn't mean that people will see it.
- Tag the Human Rights Campaign on Facebook and use the hashtag #CloseTheBookOnHate, so we can help spread the word.



- Use images to help people notice your posting. (Cover image from *I Am Jazz* attached)

- **Make an event page on Facebook** to help encourage people to RSVP. (To create an event, click Events in the left menu of your News Feed.)
- **Invite local leaders** (i.e. elected officials, School Board members, supportive community members, local leaders of LGBTQ organizations, etc). If they accept, encourage them to also share with their audiences.
- **Distribute fliers** at your local library, put on bulletin boards in supportive locations, and bring some to a local community center or LGBTQ center. (Click here for a flier template)
- **Share information about your event on a listserv.** Are you part of a parents listserv, a listserv for your congregation, or community list?
- Send out information a week or two prior to the event, a few days before, the day before, and the day of the event to remind people to attend.
- **Submit to your local community calendar.** Most outlets allow you to do this via a website.

Sample language for social sharing:

Facebook:

Join me and the Human Rights Campaign for a reading of *I Am Jazz*, a book by transgender teen Ambassador Jazz Jennings! (Include details here or make a Facebook event page for RSVPs.)

Show your support for transgender youth. Join me and the Human Rights Campaign for a reading of Jazz Jennings' book "I am Jazz." RSVP at...(share details).

Don't forget to join me for a reading of *I Am Jazz*, a book by transgender teen and Human Rights Campaign Foundation Youth Ambassador Jazz Jennings. (share details)

Jazz Jennings' book *I Am Jazz* plays an important role in helping communities understand transgender youth. Join me for a reading of Jazz's book next week/tomorrow/today (share details)

Twitter:

Hashtags: #CloseTheBookOnHate, #HRC, #IAmJazz, #WelcomingSchools

Join me and @HRC for a reading of I Am Jazz, a picture book by transgender teen @JazzJennings #CloseTheBookOnHate

It's not too late, join me and @HRC for a reading of I Am Jazz, by transgender teen @JazzJennings tonight! #CloseTheBookOnHate

WATCH: These amazing moms are standing up for their trans kids @HRC #CloseTheBookOnHate #trans <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oysepu0LWEk>

WATCH: These amazing dads are standing up for their trans kids @HRC #CloseTheBookOnHate #trans https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI7RLbt_OOE

Some Considerations Before Your Event

Who should do the reading itself?

Is there a teacher, school official, family member or community member who would be willing to do the reading or help facilitate the discussion? Are there advocates or other experts in your community who might be willing to lend their expertise to the discussion and help draw a friendly crowd? Keep in mind that just because a teacher is gay or a parent in your school is transgender, they may not want to be the person to read the book. Having an ally do the reading is equally as powerful.

Consider your audience.

Are you talking to a classroom of elementary students or a large group of students with their families? Consider your audience when deciding what questions to discuss (see ideas below) and how to structure the event. For example, a question and answer session with a few panelists might work best for a large group, while an interactive group discussion might be better suited to a small group or classroom.



Be prepared for questions.

In most cases, there will be people at your event who don't have a lot of background knowledge on what it means to be transgender. They may ask questions that seem rude or inappropriate or that you do not have an answer to. Most people, however, are simply lacking information, and this event can help by providing accurate information. If someone asks you a question and you're unsure of the answer, it's okay to say that you don't know!

In preparation, check out our talking points for answers to some of the questions or concerns that may arise and look at the resources listed in this guide.

Important Talking Points

- A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender children, just like all children, need safe and supportive environments in which to live and learn.
- People express their gender in many different ways. There is no right or wrong way to be a boy, girl, both or neither. There is no such thing as a “boys’ color” or a “toy for girls”; every child should be allowed to express themselves however they want regardless of gender.
- Diversity and difference are important to be recognized by children and adults. Celebrating diversity creates schools and communities where all youth and their families can feel safe and supported.
- Students are already learning and talking about gender and difference. By guiding those discussions, families, educators and other caring adults can prevent bias-based bullying, harassment and gender stereotyping.

Questions for Discussion

For Children:

Everybody has different levels of understanding or experience with hearing about or knowing transgender people. Help your students to feel comfortable asking questions and assuring them it’s OK if they don’t know something.

- How does Jazz feel when other kids at school make fun of her because she’s transgender?
- How does it make you feel when someone makes fun of you?
- What are some of the ways that Jazz talks about being different from her friends?
- Jazz likes to dance, sing, play soccer, and wear her mermaid tail? Can both boys and girls do all those things? Guide the discussion toward an understanding that there isn’t such a thing as “boys’ toys” or “girls’ colors” or “boys’ haircuts” or “girls’ haircuts.”
- What makes you feel safe at school?
- How can you help transgender students feel safe too?
- What can you do if you see someone making fun of another student? (See Welcoming Schools [Ally / Bystander lesson](#))
- What does being an “ally” mean, and how can you be an ally at school?



For Parents and Other Adults:

Everybody has different levels of understanding or experience with hearing about or knowing transgender people. Help create a brave space where people feel comfortable asking questions -- assuring them it is OK if they don't know something.

- What do you appreciate about hearing Jazz's story?
- Are there times that you feel like you are not seen for who you are?
- What does it mean to be transgender?
- Do you know someone who is transgender?
- Have you ever talked to your child about transgender people?
- How does being transgender affect Jazz's experiences at school?
- What are some of the ways that you teach your children gender stereotypes, even without meaning to?
- What words or phrases would you feel comfortable using to help children understand what transgender means?
- What are some ways that parents and educators can help children understand gender and appreciate people who are different?
- What are some ways that parents and educators can help create schools where transgender and non-binary children feel safe and supported?

Other Tools for Your Event

At the event, you may want to offer other resources or even show a video or two to provide more information to your audience. These tools below can help before, during, or after the event. Also, attached to this Organizing Kit are additional resources

HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools is the nation's premier professional development program with training, resources, and lessons dedicated to creating respectful and supportive elementary schools with training and resources geared specifically to help support transgender and non-binary students in school. School resources on gender at www.welcomingschools.org.

Supporting Transgender Children and Youth Find resources that transgender children, families and other youth-serving professionals need to support one another in their journeys. www.hrc.org/trans-youth

Supporting & Caring for Transgender Children is a groundbreaking resource from the HRC Foundation that explains how families and healthcare professionals can help transgender children thrive.

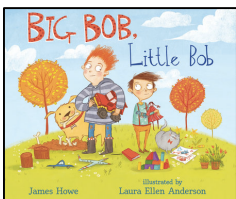
Parents for Transgender Equality National Council a coalition of the nation's leading parent-advocates working for equality and fairness for transgender people. www.hrc.org/resources/parents-for-transgender-equality-national-council

Moms and Dads for Transgender Equality [videos]: Parental support is critical to all children. Fortunately, more and more parents are standing up for their transgender children. Watch these videos of incredible parents with courageous transgender kids, all speaking out in support of transgender young people.

Time to THRIVE Conference: The HRC Foundation, in partnership with the National Education Association and the American Counseling Association, present Time To THRIVE, an annual national conference to promote safety, inclusion and well-being for LGBTQ youth... everywhere! www.timetothrive.org

Children’s Books to Help Understand and Support Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth

Be Who You Are, Todd Parr (Pre-K – K) With Parr’s signature silly and accessible style, Parr encourages readers to embrace all their unique qualities – reminding them that their unique traits are what make them so special.



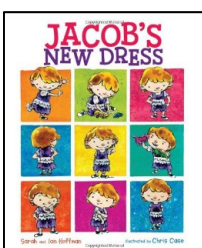
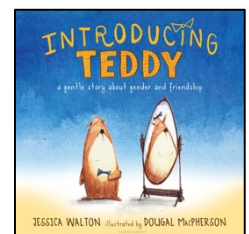
Big Bob, Little Bob, James Howe (Pre-K – 2) Despite the fact that they share a name, they are different. Big Bob likes trucks and throwing balls and being loud. Little Bob likes dolls and jingling bracelets and being quiet. Yet, they become friends. When a neighbor teases Little Bob about dolls, Big Bob steps in with “Boys can do whatever they want.”

George, Alex Gino (3 – 6) When people look at George, they think they see a boy. But she knows she's not a boy. She knows she's a girl. George really wants to play Charlotte in Charlotte’s Web. Will she be able to?



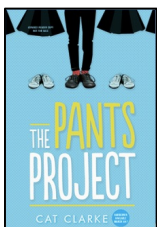
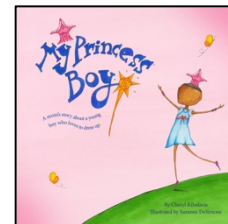
I Am Jazz, Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings (K – 5) From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she was a girl even though everyone thought she was a boy. She loved pink and dressing up as a mermaid and didn't feel like herself in boys' clothing. Based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings.

Introducing Teddy: A gentle story about gender and friendship, Jess Walton (Pre-K – K) Introduces the youngest readers to understanding gender identity and transition in an accessible and heart-warming story about being true to yourself and being a good friend.



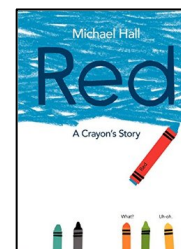
Jacob’s New Dress, Sarah and Ian Hoffman (Pre-K – 2) Jacob loves playing dress-up, when he can be anything he wants to be. Some kids at school say he can’t wear “girl” clothes, but Jacob wants to wear a dress. Can he convince his parents to let him wear what he wants? Speaks to the unique challenges faced by boys who don’t identify with traditional gender roles.

My Princess Boy, Cheryl Kilodavis (Pre-K – 1) Dyson loves pink, sparkly things. Sometimes he wears dresses. Sometimes he wears jeans. He likes to wear his princess tiara, even when climbing trees. He’s a Princess Boy.



The Pants Project, Cat Clarke (3 – 6) Liv knows he was always meant to be a boy but he hasn’t told anyone – even his two moms yet. Now, his new school has a terrible dress code, he can't even wear pants. Only skirts. The only way for Liv to get what he wants is to go after it himself. But to Liv, this isn't just a mission to change the policy—it's a mission to change his life.

Red: A Crayon's Story, Michael Hall (Pre-K – 1) A blue crayon mistakenly labeled as "red" suffers an identity crisis. Almost everyone tries to “help” him be red until a friend offers a new perspective. He’s blue! About finding the courage to be true to your inner self. This can be read on multiple levels.



For additional books, see [Welcoming Schools Booklists](#) with great, diverse book recommendations.

About HRC Foundation’s Welcoming Schools

HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools is the nation's premier professional development program with training, resources, and lessons dedicated to creating respectful and supportive elementary schools by:

- Embracing family diversity
- Creating LGBTQ- and gender-inclusive schools
- Preventing bias-based bullying
- Supporting transgender and non-binary students

For more information, visit www.welcomingschools.org.

Attachments

- A. [I Am Jazz National Day of Action Flyer](#)
- B. [Welcoming Schools I Am Jazz Lesson Plan](#)
- C. [Be Prepared for Gender Put Downs](#)
- D. [Gender and Children: A Place to Begin](#)
- E. [Defining LGBTQ Terms to Children](#)
- F. [Transgender Children: Books to Help Adults Understand](#)
- G. [Welcoming Schools Information](#)



NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

IN SUPPORT OF TRANSGENDER YOUTH



Teachers, librarians, parents and communities all across the country are

SIGNING UP TO READ / AM JAZZ ON MAY 18, 2017,

in support of transgender youth.

It's easy. Sign up today and download the organizing kit to get started.

WWW.HRC.ORG/IAMJAZZ





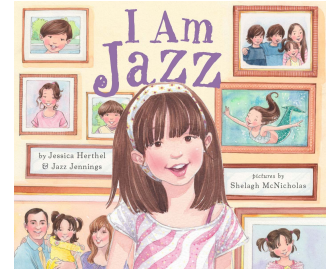
***I Am Jazz*: READING A CHILDREN’S BOOK TO HELP UNDERSTAND TRANSGENDER TOPICS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K – 5

LENGTH OF TIME: 40 minutes

GOAL

- To expand students’ perception and understanding of gender.
- To understand what it means to be transgender using developmentally appropriate language for younger students
- For students to understand ally behavior.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and discuss a story based on the true story of a transgender girl.
- Students will learn new vocabulary words related to gender.
- Students will learn about difference and being an ally.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS RL 1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- CCSS RL 3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- CCSS SL 4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

EDUCATORS’ NOTES

About the Book

I Am Jazz is a first-person account about a transgender girl written by transgender teen, Jazz Jennings, and co-author, Jessica Herthel. Jennings was one of the first transgender children to talk publicly about her identity. At the age of 6, she spoke with Barbara Walters on “20/20.” Herthel is not transgender, nor does she have any transgender children. She co-wrote the book based on her desire to explain to her daughters what “transgender” means, hoping to create a book that other parents and caring adults would be able to use to start conversations with their kids.

Before Reading *I Am Jazz* to Your Students

- Read the book yourself and think about what questions you and your students may have, *and* practice how you want to respond. Being prepared will help you to be comfortable with a topic that you may be unfamiliar discussing.
 - o Review the Gender Definitions section, below, to prepare how to answer questions and lead a class discussion on gender topics.

-
- o It is important to note that the book simplifies the idea of transgender to “a girl brain but a boy body,” however, being transgender is about more than just the brain. One’s gender is about who you know you are deep inside.
 - o For ideas on ways to respond to questions or put-downs about gender, take a look at Welcoming Schools’ handout: [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs on Gender](#).
 - o If a student asks you a question and you’re unsure of the answer, it’s okay to say that you don’t know! You could say you’ll figure it out and get back to them.
 - Ensure that every child in your classroom is allowed to express themselves however they want, regardless of their gender identity or expression---or any aspect of their identity that may be considered by other students to be “different”.
 - Understand that gender is a spectrum, not a binary, and that we all express ourselves in many different ways along that spectrum. Each child is an individual with their own unique expression of who they are in the world.
 - Messages to students can be as simple as: There is no such thing as a ‘boys’ color’ or a ‘girls’ toy;’ Colors are colors; Toys are toys; Clothes are clothes; and Hair is hair!
 - Students are already learning and talking about gender and difference. They receive formal and informal messages about gender from a multitude of sources—their families, peers, communities and the media. Many of the messages empower them, and many of the messages limit them. As such, it is critical to discuss gender in the classroom.
 - By guiding discussions about gender with students, educators, families and other caring adults, you can help to prevent bias-based bullying, harassment and gender stereotyping.
 - Finally, it is often important to review classroom rules about respect and being an ally when having discussions about gender given that gender is a common way that children participate in identity-based bullying.

MATERIALS: A copy of the book *I Am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel.

ACTIVITY

Note: The book purposefully introduces you to Jazz—what she likes to do, her favorite colors and her friends—before mentioning that she is transgender. Therefore, read the book before saying that it is a book about a transgender girl. Instead you could simply say that this is a story based on the real-life experience of a girl named Jazz.

Prompts for discussion:

- Jazz says that her favorite colors are silver and green. What are your favorite colors? What about the colors pink or blue? Can boys like pink? Can girls like blue?

-
- Jazz says she felt sad when she had to wear traditional “boys” clothes? Why do you think she felt sad?
 - What helped Jazz feel happier? What kinds of things help you feel better about yourself?
 - In the book, Jazz says that she is transgender. Who can describe what transgender means? **Note:** Allow students to ask questions. Help to clarify the meaning of transgender, if students are still not sure about it.
 - Being transgender is just one part of who Jazz is. What are other parts of Jazz that make her who she is?
 - How does Jazz feel when other kids at school make fun of her because she’s transgender?
 - How does it make you feel when someone makes fun of you?
 - What can you do, if you see someone making fun of another student?
Note: Students have many options. Mention some of these ideas if they are not mentioned by your students: Speak-up in the moment; tell an adult such as a parent or teacher; talk to either the student who is being made fun of or the student who is being mean later, in private; cause a distraction so the mean teasing stops; or help the student who is getting teased to get away from the situation.

EXTENSIONS

- Continue the discussion about gender roles and gender stereotypes with some of the additional books listed below.
- Watch the music video, *I Am Me* by Willow Smith. ([Available on YouTube](#))
- Write “I Am Me” poems. (See the Welcoming Schools’ lesson: [Be Who You Are: I Am Me Poems.](#))
- Continue the discussion of what students can do if they see someone making fun of by another student with the Welcoming Schools’ lesson: [Making Decisions -- Ally or Bystander.](#)

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Exit cards asking about one new thing the students learned and anything that they still have questions about.
- Ongoing teacher observation of gender-based teasing, and if it is recognized more often or becomes less frequent.
- Ongoing teacher observation on whether or not students feel comfortable making choices outside the gender binary.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Picture Books

Annie's Plaid Shirt. Stacy B. Davids.

Introducing Teddy: A gentle story about gender and friendship. Jess Walton.

It's OK to Be Different by Todd Parr.

Jacob's New Dress by Sarah and Ian Hoffman.

Red: A Crayon's Story by Michael Hall.

Middle Grade Books

George. Alex Gino.

Gracefully Grayson. Ami Polonsky.

Lily and Dunkin. Donna Gephart.

The Pants Project. Cat Clarke.

Riding Freedom. Pam Muñoz Ryan.

DEFINITIONS

GENDER IDENTITY: How you feel—male, female, neither or both. This can be different from the anatomy that you were born with (sex assigned at birth).

TRANSGENDER/TRANS: When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than how your body is (your anatomy). When a person with a boy body feels like a girl inside their heart and brain. Or, when a person with a girl body feels like a boy inside their heart and brain.

GENDER EXPANSIVE: This means that here at our school children get to “like what they like.” Toys are toys, hair is hair, clothes are clothes. Children can express themselves fully – to be who they are without being teased or bullied.

GENDER BINARY: The idea that there are two distinct and opposite genders—male and female / boy and girl. This idea is limiting and doesn't allow for the many ways that children and adults express themselves.

GENDER EXPRESSION: One of the many forms of expression where we share who we are with items such as our clothes and hair.

STEREOTYPE: When you generalize and oversimplify what an entire group of people is like. They are often negative. Stereotypes don't take into account all of the ways each person is unique. Even a positive stereotype can be hurtful. Stereotypes keep people from being seen as who they are as an individual.

GENDER STEREOTYPE: Stereotypes based on social and cultural beliefs or expectations about appropriate behavior for men/boys or women/girls. This can limit children's aspirations, achievements and well-being.



BE PREPARED FOR QUESTIONS AND PUT-DOWNS ON GENDER

Practicing answering questions related to gender or interrupting hurtful teasing based on gender will help you respond more easily when the situation arises. As educators, take the time to practice simple phrases. As teachers, work with your students so that they also have simple responses to gender exclusion or put-downs.

“Why does Martin like pink?”

- There doesn't have to be boy colors or girl colors. Colors are colors. All people like different colors.
- Do you think it's wrong for boys to wear pink? Why's that?
- Why do you like blue, or green, (or whatever color that child likes)? Why don't you like pink?
- Did you know that pink used to be considered a boys color and blue was the girl's color?

“Why is her hair so short? She looks like a boy.”

- Girls and women can have hair in many different styles and so can boys or men.
- Hair is hair. That is how she likes it.
- Why does it matter if a girl's hair is short or a boy's hair is long?

“Juan plays with dolls. That's weird.”

- It's true that some boys don't like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some of you like to draw and some of you don't. Some of you like to play kickball and others don't. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because they are a boy or a girl.
- The dolls are for all children in this classroom.
- Sometimes this is confusing. We get messages about some things being for boys and some things being for girls. They are just for kids!

You overhear a student say to another student who identifies as a girl, “You look like a boy.”

- Why do you say that?
- There is no one way for girls or boys to act or look.
- Girls and women can have short hair. That's just how she likes it.
- Those are the kinds of clothes that she likes to wear. Why do you like to wear what you're wearing?

“But he's a boy, why does he dress like a girl?”

- There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress.
- Some boys like to wear pink or to have long hair. All of these things are OK in our school.
- There are many ways of being a boy (girl), and all are okay ways of being a boy (girl).
- Those are the kinds of clothes that he likes to wear? Why do you like to wear what you're wearing?

“Dominic is always hanging out with girls. Why?”

- I encourage all children to play together.
- Dominic hangs out with friends who he likes to spend time with, just like you do with your friends.
- Some boys like the activities that more of the girls are doing and therefore like to play with girls.

You overhear a student call another student who identifies as a boy, a “girl” in an insulting way.

- That’s not OK at our school to call someone a “girl” to insult them or make them feel bad.
- Student: “But he is always playing with the girls and with girl toys!”
 - At this school all children can play and do things together. He’s a boy who likes to play with girls and that’s OK. All kinds of toys and games are for all children.

“Why does she always play with the boys?”

- Those are the activities that she likes to do just as there are different activities that you like to do.
- There are many different ways of being a girl (boy), and that’s great!

You overhear a student say, “Boys are better at math than girls.”

- Some boys are good at math and some are not, and some girls are good at math and some are not. All kids have different things that they are good at.

Sample language when a biological boy socially transitions to a girl.

- Although Angela was called a boy when she was born, she has always felt like a girl inside. She wants everyone to call her Angela now and she wants to be able to wear the types of clothes that she likes the most and do the activities that she enjoys.
- Sandy has always felt like a girl deep down inside. That is the way Sandy likes to dress now.

Simple phrases students could say to each other.

- “There’s no such thing as boys’(girls’) clothes (haircuts, toys, colors.)”
- “You can’t say, ‘Girls (boys) can’t play.’”
- If someone says, “Boys are better at sports.”
A student could say, “No group is best. Some are good. Some are not.”
- If someone says, “Girls are better at art.”
A student could say, “No group is best. Some are good. Some are not.”

Ideas for talking with a student’s parents or guardians.

- Educator: There was an incident at school today in which your child called a boy, a “girl” to intentionally hurt him. At our school we are working on not using gender in a negative way to limit our students. It is important to us that all of our students are physically and emotionally safe to learn here everyday.
- Parent/Guardian: “But my son told me that Bobby wears girls’ clothing, paints his nails, and mostly plays with the girls.”
- Educator: Some boys prefer typical boy activities, some do not. We affirm all of the interests of our students and work hard to not limit children based upon gender. It’s important for children to learn not to tease someone in a hurtful way because of how they dress or who they play with.

When you overhear a colleague make a gender stereotypical remark about a student

- Remark: “Andre’s parents should really try to get him to do some more sports with boys like baseball.”

Sample responses:

- Why do you say that? And then engage in conversation.
- Andre’s parents are trying to do what is best for him. He has always loved gymnastics.

Ideas based on: The Gender Inclusive School by Gender Spectrum, Graciela Sleseransky-Poe, “Not True! Gender Doesn’t Limit You” by Lindsay Lamb, et al. Teaching Tolerance, and Johanna Eager



Gender & Children: A Place to Begin

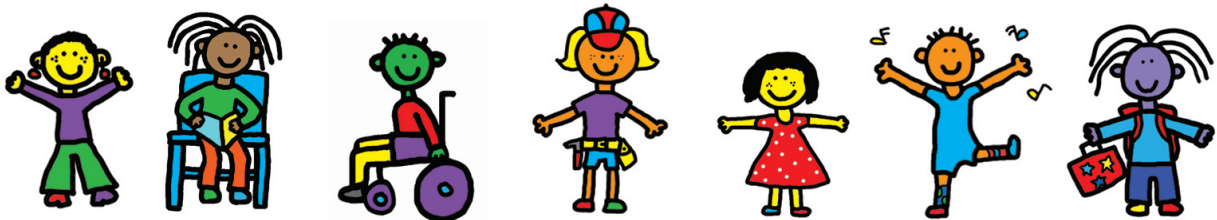
Creating schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students are common goals for all educators. In order for students to feel supported and empowered to express their identities and interests at school, educators must create gender-inclusive environments that affirm all children and that help all children move beyond the limitations of gender stereotyping.

Checklist for a Gender Inclusive Classroom

- Use inclusive phrases** to address your class that are not gendered such as, “Good morning, everyone” or “Good morning, scholars” or choose and use a name for your class like the Dolphins or the Owls.
- Develop classroom messages** that emphasize “All children can... (dance, cook, have short or long hair, do math, make art...)”
- Group students** in ways that do not rely on gender such as table groups, letters in their names or colors of their clothes. Avoid situations that force children to make gendered choices, such as boys line up here and girls line up there.
- Provide role models.** Show a wide range of achievements and emotions for all people that move beyond gender-role stereotypes. [Read diverse biographies.](#)
- Read books to your class** that teach about gender and breakdown stereotypes related to gender expression and gender identity.
- Use lesson plans** designed to expand student’s understanding of gender. Read books that encourage discussion of gender assumptions. Help students see the limitations of gender stereotyping. Ask your class to examine popular culture, advertising, or children’s toys and books for gender stereotypes.
- Create classroom displays** that show a wide range of occupations and achievements for all genders. Ask students to write biographies or make hallway displays featuring people who have moved beyond traditional gender roles and have excelled in their chosen fields.
- Be a role model!** When possible, give examples of how you or people you know like to do things outside of gender stereotypes.
- Build student allies.** With your class, look at ways to be an ally when someone is teased or bullied for any reason. Can they try to stop it directly? Should they talk with an adult? Could they talk with the student who has been harassed? Use the Welcoming Schools [Ally or Bystander](#) lesson to help students think through the options.
- Be an upstander yourself.** Stop hurtful teasing or name-calling based on gender and other bias. Interrupt student comments based on gender stereotypes. Engage in discussion with students by using these situations as teachable moments.
- Encourage students** to connect with other students based upon interests and activities that they enjoy rather than connecting with other students solely based upon gendered activities.
- Ensure safety.** Be aware of whether your students feel safe both inside and outside of the classroom. In the lunchroom? Recess? PE? Special education classes? In the bathroom? On the school bus? Use the Welcoming Schools [Name-calling and Feeling Safe at School](#) lesson to engage students on where they feel safe and what makes them feel safe.

Steps for School-wide Action

- **Professional development is critical.** Provide [training](#) on understanding gender and stopping gender-based bullying. Include all school personnel — from teachers, aides and counselors to administrative staff, bus drivers, recess aides, and cafeteria workers.
- **Practice intervening** when students are limiting each other based on gender. Adults in the school need time to prepare and [practice with simple phrases](#) to stop gendered teasing and bullying. Be ready to educate students on why it is wrong or hurtful.
- **Ensure good supervision** of hallways, playgrounds, and cafeterias to increase safety and reduce name-calling and bullying. Provide some structured or adult coached activities during recess to engage more students. Encourage and teach inclusive and cooperative games.
- **Ensure [anti-bullying policies](#)** specifically name groups more frequently targeted for harassment. Include actual or perceived gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Naming it helps to stop it.
- **Organize a welcoming or caring committee** to help develop a respectful, caring community in your school. This group could assess your school's current climate and practices, organize [family education events](#), or develop affirming hallway displays.
- **Hold an event for parents and caregivers** in your school community to help people understand gender and children. Share ways to talk about gender that are affirming, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate.
- **Ensure educators feel supported** by the administration and others in the school in their efforts to help create welcoming learning environments by addressing gender stereotyping, bullying, and teaching to ensure gender literacy for all students.
- **Honor the name and the pronouns that a student uses.** This improves student well-being by acknowledging that you see them for who they are.
- **Review all forms** used in your school, including registration, attendance, and class lists, to include options outside of the gender binary and for children and families to share gender and pronouns.
- **Reframe dress code policy** to describe what the school considers appropriate clothing without assigning clothing options to particular genders. For example, for a chorus concert, you could ask students to wear a white top and dark or black on the bottom.





DEFINING LGBTQ TERMS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

- When children ask questions about LGBTQ words, it is sometimes best to offer simple and direct answers.
- You might choose to answer a student's question with another question to figure out what they are really asking -- is it about name-calling, a classmate's two dads or something they saw on the internet. Listening first helps you respond.
- Using examples helps students understand definitions.
- Questions about LGBTQ words can provide teachable moments on topics like understanding difference and treating people with respect.
- If a student uses an LGBTQ term in a derogatory way, ask them if they know what it means. If they don't, give a short definition and explain how that term is hurtful and mean. Let them know they should not use it in that way.
- This list can serve as a starting place for educators to respond to questions about LGBTQ words. These suggested definitions can help to ensure that you feel confident in your own knowledge and ability to communicate these ideas to students.

Ally: A student who speaks up in the moment for someone else, comforts someone privately, or who gets help from a caring adult.

Bisexual: People can love other people of both genders. People get to love who they love.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth (anatomy/biology).

Gay: Two people of the same gender who love each other. Two men or two women.

Gender: It's how you feel. She, he, neither or both.

Gender Binary: The idea that there are two distinct and opposite genders—male and female / boy and girl. This idea is limiting and doesn't allow for the many ways that children and adults express themselves.

Gender Expansive: This means that here at our school children get to "like what they like." Toys are toys, hair is hair, clothes are clothes. Children can express themselves fully – to be who they are without being teased or bullied.

Gender Expression: One of the many forms of expression where we share who we are with items such as our clothes and hair.

Gender Identity: How you feel—male, female, neither or both. This can be different from the anatomy that you were born with (sex assigned at birth).

Genderqueer: A person whose gender identity is neither, both or a combination of male and female.

Heterosexual: Two people of different genders who love each other. A man and a woman.

Intersex: Just as our hair, eyes and noses are different. There is variation in all of our anatomy.

Lesbian: Two people of the same gender who love each other—two women.

LGBTQ: Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning.

Non-binary: A person whose gender is both, neither, or a unique mixture of male and female that may change over time based on how the person feels.

Queer: This word can mean different or peculiar. It can also mean someone who is gay. When used in a mean way, it is a word that hurts. Many people now use it in a positive way to identify with and celebrate people of all gender identities and all the ways people choose to love each other.

Sex Assigned at Birth: When a baby is born, a doctor or midwife looks at their body/anatomy and says they are a boy or a girl.

Babies can't talk yet, so they can't tell us how they feel. When they start to talk, they may say they feel like a girl or a boy or neither.

Sexual Orientation: Who you love.

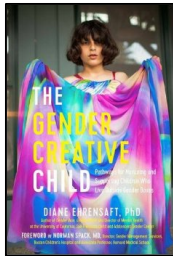
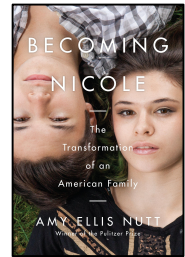
Transgender or Trans: When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than how your body is (your anatomy). When a person with a boy body feels like a girl inside their heart and brain. Or, when a person with a girl body feels like a boy inside their heart and brain.



TRANSGENDER CHILDREN: BOOKS TO HELP ADULTS UNDERSTAND

Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family, Amy Ellis Nutt.

2015. Captures the inspiring true story of identical twins, one of whom is transgender, and a family's journey to acceptance.

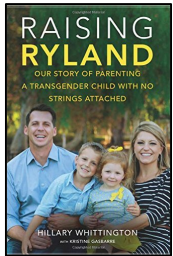
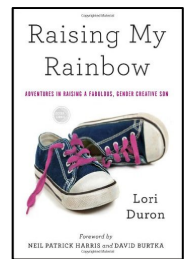


The Gender Creative Child: Pathways for Nurturing and Supporting Children Who Live Outside Gender Boxes. Diane Ehrensaft and Norman Spack. 2016.

A comprehensive resource that explains the interconnected effects of biology, nurture, and culture to explore why gender can be fluid, rather than binary. A guide through the rapidly changing cultural, medical, and legal landscape of gender and identity.

Raising My Rainbow: Adventures in Raising a Fabulous, Gender Creative Son. Lori Duron. 2014.

A frank, heartfelt, and brutally funny account of her and her family's adventures of distress and happiness raising a gender-creative son. Whereas her older son, Chase, is a Lego-loving, sports-playing boy's boy, her younger son, C.J., would much rather twirl around in a pink sparkly tutu. Based on Duron's popular blog.

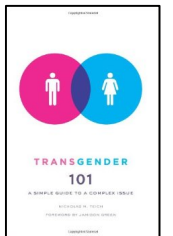
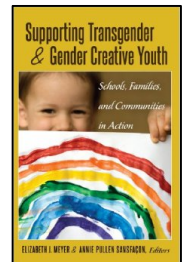


Raising Ryland: Our Story of Parenting a Transgender Child with No Strings Attached. Hillary Whittington. 2016.

Hilary first told Ryland's story in a short video for the teachers in his new school as he began kindergarten. The video soon went viral. In this moving account, you are now taken on the path of his parents as they transform their understanding of gender and learn take the many steps needed to support the life of their child.

Supporting Transgender and Gender Creative Youth: Schools, Families, and Communities in Action. Elizabeth Meyer and Annie Pullen Sansfaçon (Editors) 2014.

Specifically addresses issues and challenges in education, social work, medicine, and counseling as well as recommendations that are relevant for parents, families, practitioners, and educators alike.

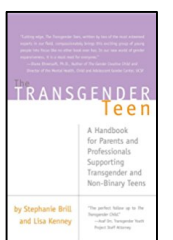
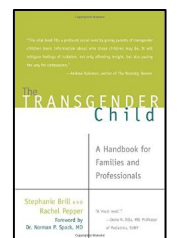


Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue. Nicholas M.

Teich. 2012. (Middle-school – Adult) A very readable and thorough primer on the history, terminology, types, politics, and medical and social realities of the transgender population. Written for students, professionals, friends, and family members.

The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals.

Stephanie A. Brill and Rachel Pepper. 2008. A comprehensive guidebook on gender variance from birth through college. How can parents advocate for their children in elementary schools? What do doctors and therapists recommend?



The Transgender Teen. Stephanie A. Brill and Lisa Kenney. 2016.

A comprehensive guidebook that explores the unique challenges that thousands of families face every day raising a teenager who may be transgender, non-binary or gender-fluid. Covers topics relating to physical and emotional development, social and school pressures, medical considerations, and family communications.

welcoming schools



A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

The nation's premier professional development program dedicated to creating respectful and supportive elementary schools by:

- Embracing family diversity
- Creating LGBTQ- and gender-inclusive schools
- Preventing bias-based bullying
- Supporting transgender and non-binary students



WELCOMING SCHOOLS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Contact Welcoming Schools to bring certified facilitators to your school or district with ready-to-deliver modules focused on:

- Embracing Family Diversity
- Creating LGBTQ-Inclusive Schools
- Developing Gender-Inclusive Schools
- Preventing Bias-Based Bullying
- Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Students
- Overview of Laws and Policies for Safe and Welcoming Schools

Welcoming Schools can be integrated into your current programs – including Second Step, PBIS or the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.

WELCOMING SCHOOLS ONLINE RESOURCES

Lesson plans based on inclusion and respect. Over 25 lessons on family diversity, LGBTQ topics, gender and bias-based bullying aligned with national standards.

Ways to respond to students' challenging questions and put-downs, including *What Do You Say to 'That's So Gay'* and *Other Anti-LGBTQ Comments?* and *Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs on Gender*.

Booklists of diverse and inclusive books that offer great starting points for discussions on families, LGBTQ topics, gender and bullying.

Welcoming Schools films: *What Can We Do? Bias, Bullying, and Bystanders* and *What Do You Know? 6-12 year-olds talking about LGBTQ topics*.



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN
FOUNDATION

THE ONLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL RESOURCE OF ITS
KIND THAT IS LGBTQ- AND GENDER-INCLUSIVE.

www.welcomingschools.org | welcomingschools@hrc.org

**“HELPS SCHOOLS MOVE
TOWARDS EQUITY
AND EXCELLENCE.”**

— Maureen Costello, Director Teaching
Tolerance Southern Poverty Law Center