



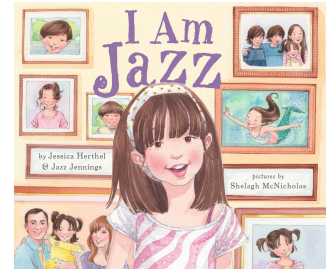
I AM JAZZ: READING CHILDREN’S BOOK TO HELP UNDERSTAND TRANSGENDER TOPICS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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.

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- 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?

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- 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

Jacob's New Dress by Sarah and Ian Hoffman.
Red: A Crayon's Story by Michael Hall.
Henry Holton Takes the Ice by Sandra Bradley.
Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman.
The Sissy Duckling by Harvey Fierstein.
Brothers of the Knight by Debbie Allen.
The Seven Chinese Sisters by Kathy Tucker & Grace Lin.
It's OK to Be Different by Todd Parr.

DEFINITIONS

GENDER IDENTITY: Everyone has a gender identity, which is based on what gender they feel like they are inside – male, female, both or neither.

TRANSGENDER: When babies are born, the doctor usually decides that they are either a boy or a girl. For transgender people, what the doctor decides – based on their bodies – is different from the gender they know they are. Trans for short.

GENDER EXPANSIVE: Describes a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system.

GENDER BINARY: The idea that there are two distinct and opposite genders—male and female. This model is limiting and doesn't account for gender-expansive people, so it's better to describe gender as a spectrum.

GENDER EXPRESSION: How a person expresses their gender through their outward presentation and behavior. For example, this could include a person's name, their clothing, or their hairstyle.

STEREOTYPE: A generalization, usually oversimplified and negative, about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences. Even positives stereotypes can have a negative impact. Keeps people from being seen as individuals.

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.