



## DEVELOPING A GENDER INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

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Creating schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students are common goals for all educators. As educators, one can create gender-expansive environments that affirm all children by reducing gender role stereotyping and allowing them to express their interests and find confidence in their strengths.

### STRUCTURAL APPROACHES

School-based or district-wide steps that help create a foundation for gender inclusive practices.

#### Professional Development for Staff

- Educate staff to understand the complexities of gender as well as specific methods to stop gender based harassment, bullying and hurtful teasing.
- Provide training for all school personnel—from teachers, aides and counselors to administrative staff, bus drivers, recess aides, and cafeteria workers.

#### Policies / Administrative Regulations

- Ensure anti-bullying policies are enumerated and specifically name groups that are more frequently targeted for harassment. Make sure these policies include actual or perceived gender identity and sexual orientation. Naming it, helps stop it.
- Provide access to gender neutral restroom/facilities with options for privacy that do not stigmatize any students.
- Allow children to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity.
- Have policies in place regarding gender inclusion.
- Have policies and procedures in place regarding challenges to books or curricula.
- Reframe dress codes to describe what the school considers appropriate clothing without assigning clothing options to particular genders.

#### Student Records and Student Information Systems

- Review parent/guardian forms allowing them to specify their relationship to the child regardless of gender.
- Allow families to specify a child's gender marker, preferred name and pronoun.
- Review forms used in your school that include children's names or pronouns such as attendance records or class lists to ensure accurate names and gender are used.
- Ensure privacy for transgender students. Clarify who has access to records.

### RELATIONAL APPROACHES

Individual interactions and communications can reinforce the school's commitment to gender inclusion.

#### Inclusive Messages

- Develop classroom messages that emphasize “All children can...”
- Use inclusive phrases to address your class – students, children or scholars.
- Group students in ways that do not rely on gender – table groups, letters in their names, colors of their clothes...

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- Be a role model! Give examples of how you or people you know like to do things outside of gender stereotypes. Model gender diversity in your own manner of expression.

### **Individualized Attention**

- Let students know that you see their strengths and that you can appreciate their unique qualities.
- Encourage students to find activities that they enjoy and that respect their interests. This helps children develop social connections.
- Honor the name and the pronouns that a student uses.

### **Stopping Gender-Based Bullying and Teasing**

- Interrupt student comments based on gender stereotypes.
- Stop hurtful teasing and bullying based on gender put-downs.
- Ensure there is good supervision of hallways, playgrounds, and cafeterias to increase a sense of safety.

### **Ensuring Good Communication with Parents and Caregivers**

- Be ready to support families with gender expansive children. Help parents/guardians see their child's strengths – academic, artistic, athletic, dramatic or interpersonal.
- Hold an evening event for parents and caregivers in your school community to help people understand the importance and complexity of gender for children.
- With families, share ways to talk about gender that are affirming, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES**

Some ideas to integrate gender inclusion in your planned curriculum.

### **Lesson Plans**

- Use lesson plans that help students see, appreciate and understand one another as individuals.
- Use lesson plans that help children identify gender stereotyping and limits such as examining popular culture, advertising, picture books or toys for children.
- Discuss and practice ways students can stop gender stereotyping and put-downs in school.
- Teach ways for students to be an ally and stick up for one another.
- Integrate gender topics into the curriculum through story problems, writing prompts, readings, art assignments or music.

### **Classroom Activities**

- Read books that encourage discussion of gender assumptions and that challenge gender stereotypes and limits.
- Provide role models through books – biographies or fictional – that show a wide range of occupations and achievements for all genders.
- Invite guest speakers who expand the vision of ways to achieve and thrive that are gender-expansive.

Based on Gender Spectrum's [Framework for Gender Inclusive Schools](#) and Welcoming Schools [Gender: A Place to Begin](#).