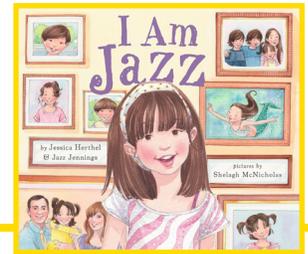


I Am Jazz

Community Discussion Guide



Before the Reading

- + You may want to read the book yourself before your event so you can think about questions you and community members may have.
- + Practice how you want to respond. Being prepared will help you be comfortable with a topic you may be unfamiliar discussing.
- + Review [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#) to prepare to define words for people.
- + If a community member asks you a question and you're unsure of the answer, it's OK to say that you don't know or that there are likely multiple answers to the question depending on who you ask!
- + Our handout [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs About Gender](#) will help guide your answers to common questions that can arise around gender stereotypes.
- + The book simplifies the idea of being transgender to "a girl brain but a boy body"; however, being transgender is far more complex and is about more than just the brain. If someone identifies as a girl, then their body is a girl's body. Our bodies do not determine our gender identity, which is who you know yourself to be in your heart and mind.
- + You may want to reference the [Gender Snowperson](#), a simple tool to break down the concepts of how you feel and know yourself to be (gender identity), who you love (sexual orientation), pronoun assigned at birth (sex assigned at birth) and gender expression. Many people do not realize that gender identity and sexual orientation are two very different concepts and that all of us have both a gender identity and sexual orientation.

Transgender: when your gender identity (how you feel/who you are) is different than what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy/intersex, she/he/they pronouns or sex assigned at birth).

Note: If you don't have a copy of the book, you can [watch Jazz Jennings read I Am Jazz](#) with either English or Spanish subtitles.

Introducing and Reading *I Am Jazz*

I Am Jazz is a first-person account of a transgender girl, written by transgender activist 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. She now has a popular reality TV show on TLC. 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 being transgender can mean, hoping to create a book that other caregivers would use to start important conversations about gender with their kids.

Community Discussion Questions

- + Are there ways you can relate to Jazz's story?
- + What are some ways caregivers and educators can help children understand gender identity and expression?
- + How can we learn to care for and welcome people who are different from them?
- + Have everyone turn to each other and share their name, pronouns and something they like to do.

- + What are some important steps we can take to support transgender and non-binary youth?

Answers might include:

- Be respectful of gender expression—everyone can wear their hair and clothing in the manner that makes them happy without being teased or bullied.
 - Use correct name and pronouns (do not ask someone what name they used to use or what their “real” name is).
 - Protect privacy—do not out someone because that can put them in danger. If someone shares their gender identity with you, it means they trust you—check in with them about what you can or cannot share.
- + Advocate for full community access, such as all-gender restrooms and locker rooms in public spaces.
- + Remember that transgender and non-binary bodies are private—no, it isn’t OK to ask about surgeries, etc. unless you are someone’s trusted partner or medical provider.

Action You Can Take

Are there actions that you would like to take in your community to help transgender and non-binary youth feel welcomed and affirmed? In your schools? In your religious community? In your workplace? What might those steps be?

- + Advocate for full community access, such as all-gender restrooms and locker rooms in public spaces. Many businesses have single stall restrooms that are gendered—they just need to change the sign.
- + Ask your community or school library to carry more books with transgender and non-binary characters.
- + Keep educating yourself and learning. Follow transgender advocacy organizations or social media accounts of transgender and non-binary advocates. Read books written by transgender and non-binary authors.
- + Be an ally. Speak up in support of transgender and non-binary people. Interrupt transphobia.

- + Share your pronouns when you meet people and in your email signature.
- + Advocate for transgender inclusive policies at your place of work and in your schools.
- + Vote for transgender and non-binary affirming candidates.

Discussions with Children

- + What are some things you have in common with Jazz? What are some things that are different?
- + 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 teases or bullies you?
- + If Jazz went to your school, what could you do to help her feel safe and welcomed?

Want a more in-depth learning opportunity? Welcoming Schools also has a lesson plan available for download at WelcomingSchools.org



Photo credit: I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel & Jazz Jennings with Illustrations by Shelagh McNicolas.