

Responding to Concerns: Supporting Transgender Students

Why is the school making such a big deal about this? How many of these kids are there anyway?

- Of course I can't talk about any individual students, just as I would never talk about your child. Personal information about our students, including their gender identity is private. But is there something we can do to help you or your child better understand gender-related issues?
- Many people don't realize that gender-based discrimination is illegal under Title IX, and that gender is a protected class in many states and cities (just like race, religion or disability). Unfortunately, these protections are necessary because transgender and other gender-expansive students frequently face a great deal of discrimination from other students, staff and community members. We are committed to protecting any student who is being singled out for mistreatment.
- Organizations such as the PTA, the National Education Association, the American School Counselor Association and a great many other associations for administrators, school psychologists, and other educational professionals have written clear guidelines about the need to make sure that transgender and other gender-expansive students are safe at school.
- I know this is new territory for many of us. Sometimes change is really challenging. Perhaps I can share some information with you about this issue?

Who is protecting my child?

- I can assure you that the safety of all of the students at this school remains my highest priority. If your child is feeling unsafe, we need to know about it. Can you tell me about specific situations or occurrences that have taken place in which your child's safety was at risk? Are there specific comments or behaviors of another person that are making your child feel unsafe?
- We expect all of our students to respect the privacy and physical boundaries of other students. If the specific behaviors of one student are making another student feel unsafe, that is an issue we take very seriously. Is someone behaving in a way that makes your child feel unsafe?
- Is it possible that you or your child are feeling uncomfortable rather than unsafe? I know for many people this topic is new and unfamiliar, which can lead to discomfort. We want your child to feel comfortable at school; if for any reason your student needs additional support, such as a private space to change or use the restroom, we will work with you and your child to provide these.

So who decides if a student is transgender? What is to prevent a boy from coming to school one day and simply declaring that he is a girl and changing in the girl's locker room?

- We have very specific processes for any students who require support related to their gender. Schools have always worked to support the needs of individual students in a variety of ways; gender is just one of them. This does not take place without a great deal of care and planning.
- Schools all over the country have been supporting transgender students in these ways for many years. This issue simply does not come up. Our established processes would easily catch any student pretending to be a different gender for whatever purpose they may have.
- A transgender student is very different from a young person who is claiming to be a different gender for some improper purpose. Transgender students are not trying to get away with something or making this up; why would they? Conversely, any student pretending to be transgender would be easily identified in the planning processes we have established.
- Our policy of treating transgender students consistent with their gender identity does not permit a student of the opposite sex to enter into the wrong facilities.