CREATING TRANSGENDER INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Navigating the Federal Transgender Education Guidance
Tools and Resources for Parents, Students, Teachers and Advocates

August 2016

For updates and additional resources visit:
www.familyequality.org/inclusive-schools
In May of 2016, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education released federal guidance to schools across the country to help educators and school administrators create safe and supportive environments for transgender students. Recognizing that this can be a challenging topic for parents to navigate with their children, other parents, and school staff, we have assembled this resource to assist parents, teachers, administrators, advocates and students in creating a safe and welcoming school environment for transgender students and their families. This is a dynamic topic and updates to this resource will be posted on our website as the landscape changes in response to new and unfolding lawsuits and/or specific issues or challenges that arise as individuals navigate this new inclusive environment.

In this guide, we break down the federal guidance and provide background on why it was issued, including challenging some common misconceptions about the guidance. We then look at topics surrounding inclusion of transgender students in schools including:

• how to talk to your children about what it means to be transgender including a list of common terminology,
• tips on how to frame conversations with your children about gender and gender identity broken down by age category,
• how to approach a conversation on a classmate’s transition, and
• topics and tips on talking to other parents and your child’s school about gender and gender identity.

Finally, we look at how to advocate for change within a school that may be resistant to adopting the federal guidance.

It is our hope that this can be a vital resource as parents, advocates, teachers and students begin to navigate the new federal guidance, and that it will help you better understand the issues and challenges that may be present as schools move to adopt transgender inclusive policies and practices.

– Family Equality Council
The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice have issued significant guidance about the interpretation of Title IX, the federal law that prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational programs and activities. The guidance followed the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in April that Title IX protects transgender students’ right to use facilities consistent with their gender identity.

The guidance, released in May 2016, outlines that Title IX’s prohibition of sex discrimination in education requires that transgender students must be:

- addressed by their proper name and pronouns,
- permitted to dress in accordance with their gender identity, and
- allowed to use the bathroom and locker room consistent with their gender identity.

The guidance also provides examples of appropriate policies and procedures from school districts around the country. In response to these legal developments, many schools across the country will be adopting and implementing new policies to accommodate transgender and gender nonconforming students. Transgender inclusive policies in schools, now a federal requirement, are a necessary step to insure that our children’s schools are safe, affirming, and nondiscriminatory spaces for all students.

Multiple studies have found that schools have not been living up to the promise of providing a safe environment for their transgender and gender nonconforming students. The 2013 National School Climate Survey found that 55.2% of LGBT students are verbally harassed because of their gender expression. Moreover, a 2011 study of transgender and gender nonconfirming students found that:

- 78% report receiving verbal harassment from their peers.

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5 Jaime M. Grant, et al., Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (2011).
• 31% report receiving verbal harassment from teachers and school officials.
• 35% experience physical assault in the K-12 environment, and
• 12% have been sexually assaulted in the K-12 environment.  

Despite the clear need for these affirming policies, there has been significant resistance to the May guidance from the Department of Education and Department of Justice. Eleven states including Texas, Alabama, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Utah, the Arizona Department of Education, and the Governor of Maine have brought a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education challenging the validity of this federal guidance with claims that the Department has rewritten the law exceeding the congressional authorization for Title IX’s enforcement, that the guidance violates state sovereignty, and that the guidelines were imposed without proper procedure. Resistance to the guidance, organized around this lawsuit, is likely to result in enforcement being delayed in some states and school districts.

In such a controversial climate, both children and parents may have a lot of questions and it can sometimes be difficult to have conversations with those around us about why these transgender-inclusive policies are needed. Sometimes we need a little help in understanding all of the issues so that we can best explain them to our children.

This guide is meant to assist parents in understanding how the federal guidance works and why such guidance is necessary, and also to help parents better understand gender and gender diversity and how to ensure our children are contributing to a safe and affirming environment for all students.

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6 Jaime M. Grant, et al., Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (2011).
WHAT DO THE FEDERAL GUIDANCE AND FOURTH CIRCUIT CASE MEAN FOR YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL?

BACKGROUND: TITLE IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a “comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity.” Its main objective is to prevent “the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and to provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices.” Since 1972, the Department of Education has issued regulations and guidance on Title IX requirements, including guidance released in May 2016.

THE FOURTH CIRCUIT CASE

In April 2016, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals handed down a decision in the case of G.G. v. Gloucester County School Board. The lawsuit was filed to challenge the Gloucester County School Board’s bathroom policy, which prohibited transgender students from using the communal segregated-sex bathrooms consistent with their gender identity and required them to use “alternative private” restrooms.

WHERE WE STAND NOW

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has stayed the order, which means that it has halted any further developments until it decides whether or not it will take up the case. This means that the transgender student is denied access to gender appropriate restrooms until the Court makes a decision.

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9 Id.
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDANCE

Following G.G. v. Gloucester County School Board, the U.S. Department of Education, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Justice released a “Dear Colleague” Letter on May 13, 2016 providing guidance on schools’ obligations regarding transgender students.

The guidance applies to schools at every level of education from preschool to college and university that receive federal funding. Every public school, including charter schools and public colleges and universities, must comply with this guidance. The guidance will also apply to private universities because the definition of federal funding includes schools whose students are receiving federal financial aid.

Some religious schools may qualify for an exemption from this requirement if they claim compliance would conflict with the school’s religious beliefs. Similarly, single-sex schools may choose who to admit, and while they are allowed to admit students based on gender identity, they are not required to do so. Therefore, an all-boys school may be allowed to refuse admission to a transgender boy. However, if they do choose to admit transgender boys, the school cannot require those students to use separate bathrooms, or treat them inconsistently with their male gender identity.

The federal guidance clarifies that schools are required under Title IX to treat transgender students consistent with their gender identity.

This means that schools must:

- allow transgender students to have access to restrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity,
- use the correct name and pronouns for transgender students, and
- allow the student to dress consistent with their gender identity.

Title IX overrides any state law that conflicts with it. For example, North Carolina’s HB 2 is not enforceable, as it requires transgender students to use restrooms that don’t match their gender.

WHAT THE FEDERAL GUIDANCE SAYS ABOUT RESTROOMS

The guidance prohibits schools from requiring their transgender students to use a facility that doesn’t match their gender identity or to use a facility segregated from their classmates, like a single-user restroom. However, this does not prevent any student, transgender or non-transgender, from requesting that their school provide a more private

13 Id.
14 Id.
15 Id.
alternative for their own use. For example, the guidance provides the Washington State Guidelines as a sample policy, where students are allowed “to use the restroom that is consistent with their gender identity” but where “any student who wants increased privacy should be provided access to an alternative restroom or changing area.”

WHAT THE FEDERAL GUIDANCE SAYS ABOUT STUDENTS’ PRIVACY

Schools must also act to protect their students’ privacy in regards to their transgender status. Model policies of how to protect students from having their transgender status disclosed include Massachusetts guidance advising schools “to collect or maintain information about students’ gender only when necessary” and the Chicago guidelines advising that the school should limit an administrative support team for the student to “the school principal, the student, individuals the student identifies as trusted adults, and individuals the principal determines may have a legitimate interest in the safety and healthy development of the student.”

WHAT THE FEDERAL GUIDANCE SAYS ABOUT PREFERRED NAMES AND PRONOUNS

Teachers and school officials are also required to use the right name and pronouns for students, regardless of whether the student has legally changed their name or gender. Using the student’s birth name or pronouns inconsistent with their gender identity places the student at risk of being “outed” to their fellow students. This often includes updating the school’s database to include a “preferred name” in addition to the legal name or creating a new file for the student while maintaining the old file as confidential. Schools may not require a legal name or gender change as a prerequisite for modifying school records to reflect the student’s correct name and gender pronouns. Schools may also be required to amend a past student’s records to reflect that student’s current gender identity.

WHAT THE FEDERAL GUIDANCE SAYS ABOUT DRESS CODES

Transgender students have the right to dress consistent with their gender identity. This means that when a transgender girl wears a dress “and the school code permits other girls to wear dresses just like hers, the school can’t claim that she’s not following the dress code.” Furthermore, dress codes cannot be more strictly enforced for transgender or gender non-conforming students. If students are

20 [Link](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oshs/emergingpractices.pdf) – pp 5-6.
consistently allowed to violate the dress code by wearing bracelets, “a school can’t single out a transgender girl who comes to school wearing a bracelet and discipline her but not other girls.”

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REGULATIONS ON SEX DESEGREGATION

The Department of Education, following its guidance, published a final regulation in July 2016 interpreting Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the law that authorizes the Justice Department to bring education lawsuits, and defining the mission of regional Equity Assistance Centers that provide technical assistance on desegregation and nondiscrimination more broadly to schools.

For the purposes of assisting schools in desegregation and nondiscrimination efforts the regulation defines “sex desegregation” as “the assignment of students to public schools and within those schools without regard to their sex (including transgender status; gender identity; sex stereotypes, such as treating a person differently because he or she does not conform to sex-role expectations because he or she is attracted to or is in a relationship with a person of the same-sex; and pregnancy and related conditions), including providing students with a full opportunity for participation in all educational programs regardless of their sex.”

This regulation, while not directly interpreting language in Title IX, will likely be of value in supporting the Department’s guidance that schools must treat students in accordance with their gender identity, and may not engage in discrimination against their students for their transgender status or gender identity.

FURTHER READING:

If you would like to read the Department of Education’s “Dear Colleague” Letter, click here.

If you would like to read the Department of Education’s “Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students,” click here.

The National Center for Transgender Equality has drafted a model policy with explanations and recommendations for its implementation.


24 Department of Education, Equity Assistance Centers (Formerly Desegregation Assistance Centers (DAC)), Final Rule, 81 Fed. Reg. 4680734 (Jul. 18, 2016), to be codified at 34 C.F.R. §270.7
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

1 THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDANCE COMPROMISES STUDENT’S SAFETY.

FALSE. Schools are responsible for providing a safe and affirming learning environment free from either physical or verbal harassment. Schools likely already have policies and practices to prevent students from engaging in unsafe behaviors like “verbal harassment, physical intimidation, inappropriate touching, or invasion of privacy of another student.”\(^{25}\) 

*A transgender student’s use of bathrooms consistent with their own gender identity does not violate these policies or make other students unsafe.*

2 THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDANCE COMPROMISES OTHER STUDENTS’ COMFORT.

FALSE. The Department of Education has recommended that schools put policies in place to allow *all* students, regardless of gender identity, to request an alternative for increased privacy. This means that any student should be able to request and receive access to a more private option, “such as a staff bathroom, other single stall bathrooms, or a bathroom in the nurse’s office.”\(^{26}\) This means that no student will be required to continue to use the communal bathrooms if they are uncomfortable with doing so.

3 THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDANCE ALLOWS STUDENTS TO PRETEND TO BE TRANSGENDER IN ORDER TO ACCESS BATHROOMS OF THE OPPOSITE GENDER.

FALSE. The experiences of the many states and school districts that have had policies inclusive of transgender and gender nonconforming students indicate that this is not an issue. “In a recent study of seventeen school districts with such [transgender] inclusive policies, which together serve over 600,000 students, *not a single one* reported such scenarios.”\(^{27}\) Furthermore, the Department’s practical examples in the guidance look favorably on the establishment of an administrative support team and the creation of school plans for how the transgender student will be treated at school. These practices not only allow for the effective support of transgender students, but “will serve as an effective checkpoint for distinguishing between an authentic versus disingenuous request by a student to use a different restroom.”\(^{28}\)

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26 Id.
27 Id.
28 Id.
HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT WHAT BEING TRANSGENDER MEANS

It can be difficult to talk to our children about gender and gender identity. However, “children have an ability to grasp the complexity of gender diversity because sexuality does not factor in to complicate their understanding.”29 It’s natural to be nervous or unsure when beginning these conversations but it’s important to have these conversations to create safe and affirming environments for our children. Breaking down gender stereotypes benefits both transgender and non-transgender children alike. By discussing gender with your child, you can reduce the pressure to “perform” gender correctly and teach them to be more accepting of the differences in themselves and their peers.

HELPFUL TERMINOLOGY FOR YOU

While you may or may not use all of the words below in your conversations with your child, it may be helpful for you as a parent to familiarize yourself with the concepts and terminology. The following section will hopefully serve as a primer for you in your conversations with your children.

ASSIGNED SEX
The sex one is labeled at birth, generally by a medical or birthing professional based on a cursory examination of external and/or physical sex characteristics.30

BI-GENDERED
One who has a significant gender identity that encompasses both genders, male and female. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are there.31

CISGENDER
Describes “people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity”, expression, or behavior.32

GENDER
A set of social, psychological, and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations that classify an individual as “feminine” or “masculine.”33

GENDER EXPRESSION
How a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.34

GENDER IDENTITY
“An individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. ... gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.”35 A person’s gender identity may not always correspond to their assigned sex.

GENDER NONCONFORMING
A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.36

31 Gender Spectrum, Understanding Gender, https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/
32 Id.
35 Id.
36 Id.
GENDER PRONOUNS

Gender pronouns are the way we refer to those around us. Gender-specific pronouns are those associated with a gender, i.e. he/him/his or she/her/hers, and gender-neutral pronouns, i.e. they/their/theirs. There are a variety of gender-neutral pronouns.

GENDERQUEER

A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female.37

QUEER

An umbrella term representative of the vast matrix of identities outside of the gender normative and heterosexual or monogamous majority, or denoting a lack of normalcy in terms of one’s sexuality, gender, or political ideologies in direct relation to sex, sexuality, and gender. The term has been reclaimed since the 1980s after a history of pejorative use.38

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A term describing a person’s attraction to members of the same sex and/or a different sex, usually defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, or asexual.39 Sexual orientation (who you like) is independent of gender identity or expression (who you are).

TRANSGENDER

Used as an adjective; describes a person “whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth.”40

TRANSITION

The time when a person begins to live as the gender with which they identify rather than the gender they were assigned at birth, which often includes changing one’s first name and dressing and grooming differently. Transitioning may or may not also include medical and legal aspects, including taking hormones, having surgery, or changing identity documents to reflect one’s gender identity.41

37 Gender Spectrum, Understanding Gender, https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/
40 Id.
41 Id.
A person’s sex, gender identity, and gender expression do not have to correspond with one another. There are many potential combinations of these three aspects. For many people, their gender identity or gender expression is fluid, “with interests and behaviors that may even change from day to day.”

- April was assigned male at birth, but has always identified as a female. Her gender expression, however, leans more towards the masculine side, as she prefers work boots to dresses.
- Jackson’s assigned sex and gender identity match as he has always identified as a man. However, he places his gender expression as more feminine as he wears make-up and nail polish.
- Jo’s assigned sex was female at birth, but they’ve never identified as “completely” female. Instead, they identify as gender-fluid. Their gender expression reflects this, changing from day to day on the spectrum of feminine to masculine.
- Alex’s assigned sex was female at birth, but he has identified as male since he was very young. His gender expression is very masculine and most people identify him as a man.

This variety of combinations should give you an idea of how these three aspects of self can interact. The most important thing to remember is that one element doesn’t tell you how the others will turn out.

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42 This section has been adapted from PFLAG National, Guide to Being a Trans Ally* 17-18 (2014) [https://www.pflag.org/sites/default/files/guide%20to%20being%20a%20trans%20ally.pdf](https://www.pflag.org/sites/default/files/guide%20to%20being%20a%20trans%20ally.pdf)
43 Gender Spectrum, Understanding Gender, [https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/](https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/)
TALKING ABOUT GENDER

The topic of gender is a large one and it might be helpful to break gender down into discrete ideas to communicate with your child. We’ve listed some below, but these are by no means the only ideas relating to gender you can talk about with your child.

- Gender is something personal. No one else can tell you your gender and we shouldn’t try to tell someone else what their gender is.
- Objects don’t have genders. There aren’t boy toys or girl toys. Boys can play with dolls and girls can play with toy trucks.
- You can’t tell gender from looking at someone. There isn’t one way to be or look.
- Someone’s gender isn’t determined by their body.
- Gender isn’t just male or female (boy or girl). Some people are both, others are neither male or female. It may be helpful to your child to introduce the idea of “boy, girl, neither, or something else” as a regular way to talk about people.
- We should respect everyone, no matter what their gender is. We shouldn’t tease others about their gender.
There are many ways to talk to your children about gender, gender identity, and what it might mean when another child transitions. Your approach might vary based upon your child's age or awareness of the topic already. We've listed potential topics and approaches for starting a conversation about gender with your child below. It’s important to remember that this likely won't just be one conversation, but several over time.

**YOUNG CHILDREN**

As a parent, you might feel more comfortable with creating situations for structured conversations about gender with your child.44 Watching a movie or reading a book with your child that addresses gender might help you to spark a discussion about what gender is or means. You can find a list of children's books addressing not fitting into gender stereotypes here. This might also help create a softer entrance into the conversation with your child, rather than trying to start the conversation out of the blue.

You can also present your child with “counter narratives” to traditional gender norms from your own life. For example, if you were a girl that liked to play sports with the boys, you could tell your child a story about that. Another activity that could act as a segue to talk about gender is reading a story and switching the characters’ genders. You can also lead by example for your child by introducing yourself to others with your pronouns, “Hi, my name is John and I prefer the pronouns He and Him.”

Other conversations might be sparked by something your child says about gender. For example, your child might ask you about why a boy in their class dresses like a girl. One potential response might be, “He likes those clothes, just like you’re wearing clothes that you like. Why do you like the clothes you wear?” Your child might ask you why a girl in their class always plays with the boys. You could respond that boys and girls can play together or that their classmate plays with the friends she likes to hang out with, just like your child. Your child might tell you that girls are better at writing than boys, to which you could respond that everyone has different skills, and that writing ability has nothing to do with being a boy or girl.

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44 This section has been adapted from Gender Spectrum’s “Talking with Young Kids about Gender” at https://www.dropbox.com/s/95x9vvsruikjnmd/Talking%20with%20Kids%20about%20Gender%205.15.16.pdf?dl=0 and HRC’s Welcoming Schools Project Be Prepared for Questions and Put Downs About Gender at http://www.welcomingschools.org.
You may want to also help your child come up with “catchphrases” to say at school when other students make put-downs or statements about gender.45

- “There's no such thing as boys'/girls’ clothes/haircuts/toys/colors.”
- If another student says, “You can't play because you're a girl/boy!”, your child could say, “All students get to play everything” or “We don’t separate by gender here!” or “Girls/Boys can play just as well as boys/girls!”
- If another student says, “Boys are better at sports” your child could say, “Some boys are better at sports, but some girls are better, too.”

**JUNIOR HIGH OR HIGH SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN**

While conversations with younger children may involve more planning to break gender down into smaller ideas, having a conversation with your older children about gender and the new policies they will likely see implemented at their school is equally important.

Older children are generally more aware of gender and sexuality, and may associate the two with each other. In these conversations, it may be helpful to your child to discuss how sexual orientation and gender identity are different from one another. The simplest explanation is that sexual orientation is who you like or who you are attracted to and gender identity is who you are.

Older children may also be more concerned with how gender identity and gender expression relate. It is important to reiterate that gender identity is different from gender expression. A girl who keeps her hair short and always wears basketball shorts (i.e. has a more “masculine” gender expression) can still identify as a girl. This conversation can be guided by the topics listed above. A helpful resource for explaining the difference between these three concepts is [Gender Spectrum’s Gender Mapping Worksheet](http://www.welcomingschools.org). This sheet has an activity for any person to actively consider their own sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression on a spectrum and may help children to better understand their transgender and gender nonconforming peers.

If your child expresses concerns about using the bathroom with a transgender student, try to ask questions in order to understand what exactly is making them uncomfortable about that situation. You can also remind them that they are entitled to use a more private bathroom if they ask for one. Empathy can also be a powerful tool in helping your child understand a transgender child’s situation. Ask questions so your child can visualize themselves in their classmate’s shoes by imagining what it would be like if they were excluded from an activity simply because other students were made uncomfortable by your child’s presence.

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45 The following are adapted from HRC’s Welcoming Schools Project, Be Prepared for Questions and Put Downs About Gender at [http://www.welcomingschools.org](http://www.welcomingschools.org).
HOW TO APPROACH A CLASSMATE’S TRANSITION WITH YOUR CHILD

In the event that one of your child’s classmates or friends chooses to transition publicly, your child may have questions about what is happening. This is a great time to reinforce your previous conversations with your child about gender.

Sample Statements:

• “Andy was born a girl, but he knows himself to be a boy on the inside. He wants everyone to call him Andy.”
• “Remember how we talked about how only you can know your gender? The same goes for Andy, and Andy is telling us that he’s a boy. He wants to be called Andy, so we should respect that and call him Andy.”

Your child might be worried about other students’ reactions to their friend going by a new name. Remind your child of the “catchphrases” that you’ve practiced. Reassure them that the teacher and school officials will help to make sure that no one is bullied because of their gender.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER OR SCHOOL OFFICIALS

While your child may understand the concepts of gender identity and gender expression, their school environment may not be accepting or inclusive of all gender expressions or identities. Your child may become frustrated if gender stereotypes are reinforced at school. If you find this to be the case, you may want to approach your child’s teacher and school officials about implementing more gender-inclusive language in the classroom.

If your child’s teacher or school officials are unsure of how to create a more gender-inclusive classroom, below is a list of some resources that you can point them to.

• Gender Spectrum’s “12 Easy Steps on the Way to Gender Inclusiveness”
• Welcoming Schools’ “Resources to Support Transgender and Gender-Expansive Students”
• Gender Spectrum’s “Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit”
• The U.S. Department of Education’s “Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students”
TALKING TO OTHER PARENTS

Not all parents may be familiar with the concepts of gender identity and expression. In some cases, you as a parent may hear other students’ parents making gender-stereotypical remarks about a child. For example, another parent might comment, “Michael’s parents should sign him up for some sports teams instead of doing ballet.” If you feel comfortable, you may want to respond by engaging the fellow parent in conversation by asking why they think that. Or you might simply comment, “Michael’s parents are letting him pursue what he likes. They’re trying to do what is best for him.”

In other cases, you might hear parents complaining about the new policies and practices implemented because of the federal guidance. Some potential responses to fellow parent might be:

- “I think it’s great that they are encouraging our kids to be themselves and embrace their differences.”
- “Does it make your child uncomfortable? They can always ask to use a more private restroom”
- “These new policies are teaching our kids to be more accepting of others, even when they might not understand the other person or their choices. Isn’t that great?”
- “I think it’s great that the school is focusing on making our school a safe environment for all our children.”

BEING AN ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

Despite the federal guidance in regards to Title IX’s coverage of transgender students, there may be schools that decide not to comply with these requirements, either because their state is challenging the guidance, or simply because the school is reluctant to make these changes. If you want to be active in advocating for your school to adopt the new required policies and practice gender inclusivity in the classroom, there are many things that you can do as a parent. While being an active and vocal advocate isn’t for everyone, the following list may give you some ideas for what to do in your community if you choose to take that path. At any point, you can reach out to the staff at Family Equality Council for help or with questions. We are here to help you as you navigate your school system or social situations.

- Start conversations with your fellow parents and the teachers at your school about transgender issues.
- Hold a community discussion or make a presentation to teachers, staff, the school board or the PTA.
- Schedule a reading of I Am Jazz at your local library.
- Join or create a coalition with transgender advocacy groups in your community.
- Draft a petition to show support for making trans-friendly changes in your child’s school, and submit the petition to the principal or superintendent.
- Become a member of your school board and create policy yourself.
- Advocate for transgender issues with elected officials and school administrators. Call or write a letter to your city council representatives or state legislator and ask for a meeting to discuss transgender rights.
- Start a campaign to have your local school board adopt policies and directives for transgender support in schools.
- Write a letter to the editor, an opinion article and press releases about your activities.
- Distribute information about transgender issues to community members.

47 The following is adapted from Lambda Legal, Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Students 6 (2008) at http://www.lambdalegal.org/issues/teens.
CONCLUSION

Despite the difficulty of having these conversations, educating ourselves, our children, and others around us about transgender-inclusive school policies and why they are needed is essential to creating a safe and affirming environment for all students.

Gender stereotypes harm all children, regardless of their gender identity, by limiting the choices that our children have. Discussing gender with your child will reduce the pressure to “perform” gender correctly and will teach them to be more accepting of the differences in themselves and their peers.

QUESTIONS?

We would love to hear from you. If you have questions about the topics covered in this toolkit please contact:

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For updates and additional resources visit: www.familyequality.org/inclusive-schools