



news

gender identity

respect

school tools

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Gendergrads.org



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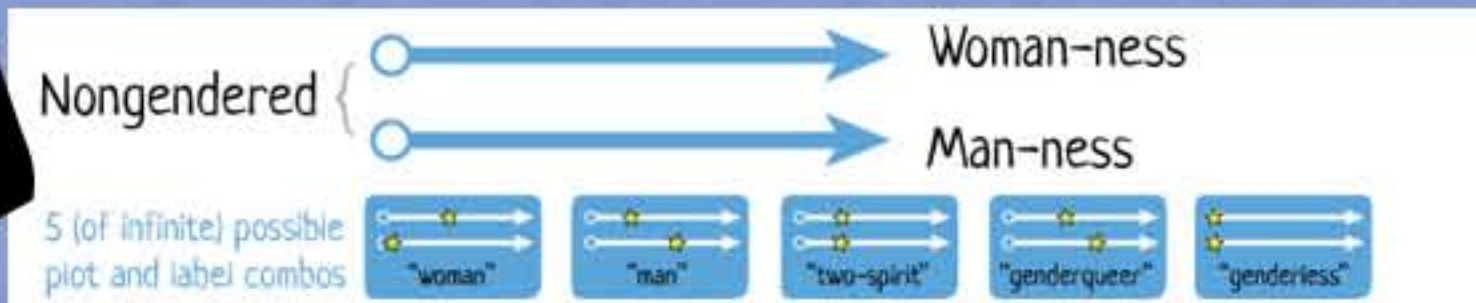
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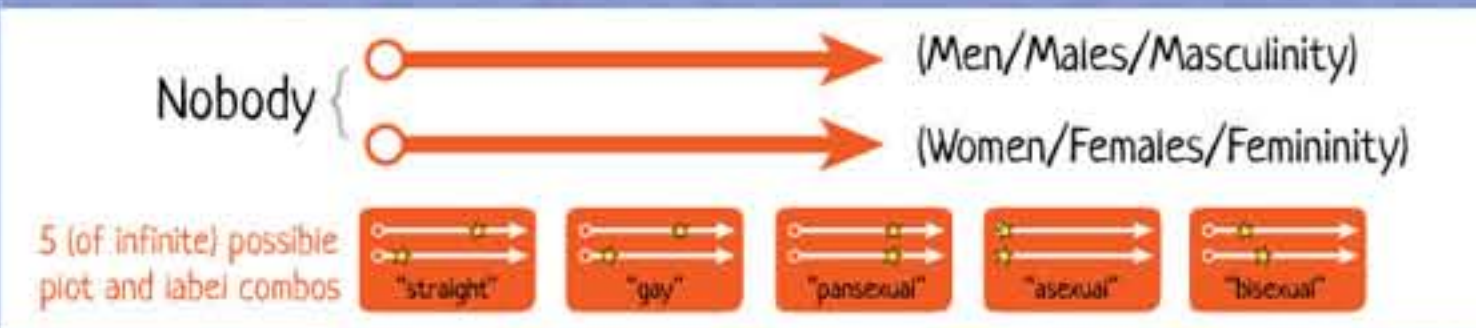
What is Gender?

Is gender just a matter of being male or female? Is gender only about the way you look and dress? Or is it also about how you see yourself and how that affects you? Gender is a combination of all these components.

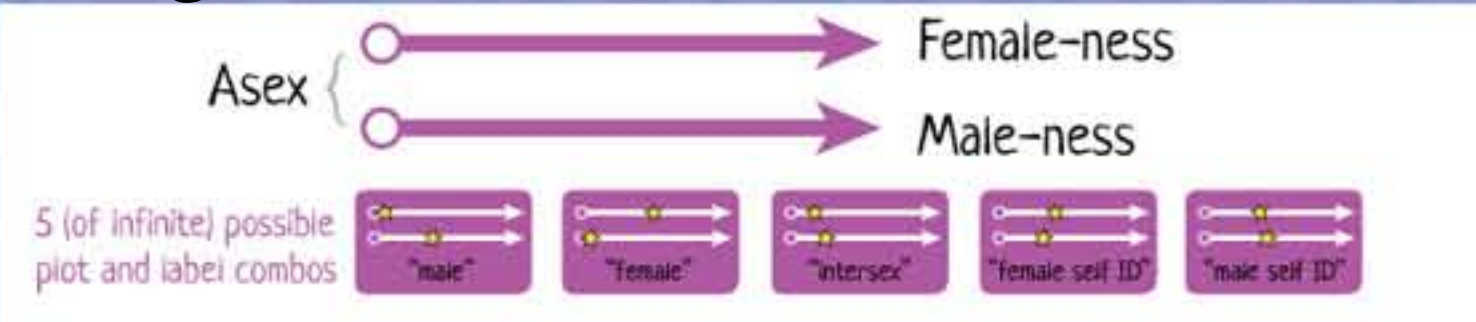
Gender Identity



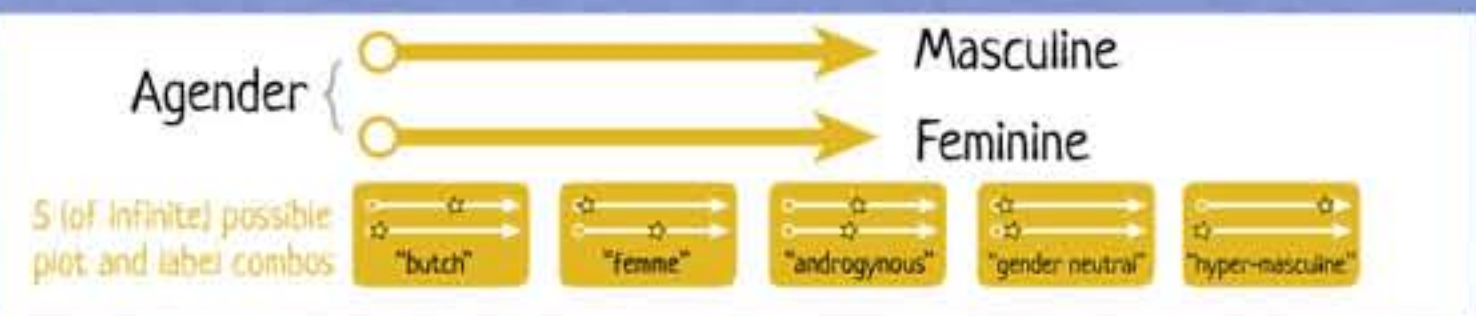
Attraction / Orientation



Biological Sex



Gender Expression



Gender is defined and evaluated all around us. There are words that are associated with being a boy and others that are associated with being a girl. There are clothes that boys are expected to wear to prom, and clothes that girls are expected to wear to prom. There are sports that are considered “boys” sports and sports that are considered “girls” sports. Students who are gender non-conforming are those whose gender expression (or outward appearance) does not follow traditional gender roles: “feminine boys,” “masculine girls,” and students who are androgynous, for example. It can also include students who look the way boys and girls are expected to look but participate in activities that are gender nonconforming, like a boy who does ballet. The term “transgender youth” can be used as an umbrella term for all students whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-stereotypical. Some transgender students transition or change from one gender to another. Transition often means changing the way you dress, selecting a new name, and sometimes getting help from a doctor to change your body.

- ❖ **Gender identity** refers to a person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being either male, female, something other, or in between. Everyone has a gender identity.
- ❖ **Gender expression** refers to an individual's characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine.
- ❖ **Transgender** is an umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender expression is nonconforming and/or whose gender identity is different from their birth assigned gender.
- ❖ **Transsexual** is a term most commonly used to refer to someone who transitions from one gender to another. It includes students who were identified as male at birth but whose gender identity is female, students who were identified as female at birth but whose gender identity is male, and students whose gender identity is neither male nor female. Transition often consists of a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, and a request that people use the correct pronoun when describing them. Transition may, but does not always, include necessary medical care like hormone therapy, counseling, and/or surgery.
- ❖ **Gender non-conforming** refers to a person who is or is perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. Gender non-conforming people may or may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer.
- ❖ **Genderqueer** refers to people who do not identify as, or who do not express themselves as completely male or female. Genderqueer people may or may not identify as transgender.
- ❖ **Sexual orientation** refers to a person's emotional and sexual attraction to other people based on the gender of the other person. A person may identify their sexual orientation as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. It is important to understand that sexual orientation and gender identity are two different things. Not all transgender youth identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. And not all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer youth display gender non-conforming characteristics.
- ❖ **LGBTQ** is an umbrella term that stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning.” The category “questioning” is included to incorporate those that are not yet certain of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



Gendergrads.org focuses on making your school safe for transgender and gender non-conforming youth. Get the tools to help your GSA raise awareness regarding gender identity and expression. Learn how to educate students and staff about gender non-conformity and transgender issues. Fight for policies at your school that provide strong protections for transgender and gender non-conforming youth.

Challenge the gender binary system in schools!

Get educated about your rights

First, learn about the rights of transgender and gender non-conforming youth in Minnesota schools. Harassment and discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender-related appearance or behavior is prohibited under Minnesota law.

Learn how to file a complaint about harassment or discrimination based on gender identity or expression.

Are transgender or gender non-conforming youth safe at your school?
If your answer is no, then launch GSA Network's Beyond the Binary Campaign.

[Download our Beyond the Binary Campaign Guide \(4 p.\)](#)

[Download our Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools \(52 p.\)](#)

Feeling Unsafe at School

53% of California students reported that their school is unsafe for “guys who aren’t as masculine as other guys” and 34% reported that their school is unsafe for “girls who aren’t as feminine as other girls.”

90% of transgender youth surveyed for a nationwide survey reported feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression.

Hearing Negative Comments

63% of California students reported that they sometimes or often hear students make negative comments based on gender presentation.

13% of California students report that they sometimes or often hear teachers make negative comments based on gender presentation.

Only 40% of California students report that sometimes or often they hear teachers or staff stop others when others make negative comments based on gender presentation.

Experiencing Harassment

27% of California students report being harassed because they aren’t “masculine enough” or aren’t “feminine enough.”

55% of transgender youth on a nationwide survey report being physically harassed at school because of their gender expression.

81% of transgender youth on a nationwide survey reported being sexually harassed at school in the past year because of their gender expression.

Improving Protections and Reducing Harassment and Violence

California students were less likely to be harassed for gender non-conformity if their school harassment policy included sexual orientation and gender, teachers intervened when negative comments were made, their school had a Gay-Straight Alliance club, and students learned about LGBT issues in school.

In a recent poll, 95% of youth supported expanding current hate crimes laws to cover gender and sexual orientation.

In the U.S., 4 states, 52 cities and 9 counties include transgender people in their anti-discrimination laws. This means that 24% of the U.S. population is protected from discrimination on the basis of gender identity by statute, and 76% are not.



Get your campaign started

Change your school policy regarding gender identity. Make sure gender identity and expression are listed in your school’s non-discrimination policy. Go a step further and work to get your school to adopt the model policy for protecting transgender and gender non-conforming students that covers everything from bathrooms and locker rooms to dress codes and school records.

Challenge the administration during prom, dances, and graduation. Make sure your administration allows students of any gender to run for the “King” or “Queen” of your prom or other school dances. Other school ceremonies, such as the color of your graduation gowns, are often gender-segregated. Learn how to fight back.

Organize the Transgender Day of Remembrance. Participate in this annual event in November to memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. Use the event to educate students, teachers, and administrators about transgender issues, so we can try to prevent anti-transgender hatred and violence from continuing.

Conduct student trainings regarding gender issues. Educate your peers to understand more about gender issues, including learning important terminology and understanding the challenges faced by transgender and gender non-conforming youth at school.

Provide teacher and staff trainings on gender awareness issues. Preventing discrimination from occurring in the first place is one of the most effective ways to protect transgender and gender non-conforming students. Teachers and administrators at your school are required by law to prevent discrimination, but may not have the necessary information to do that effectively. So, train them!

Fight for gender-neutral bathrooms. Campaign to get your school to designate a gender-neutral bathroom on campus. For example, your school can make a single-stall restroom accessible to students of any gender.

Use visual activism or poster campaigns. Art activism is a powerful way of bringing attention to your cause. Your GSA can use buttons, T-shirts, ribbons, or stickers with messages and slogans that will encourage others to respect transgender students or challenge the gender binary. Consider if your GSA might also be able to display posters in teachers’ classrooms. You can start by getting some buttons or free posters from GSA Network.

How do I show Respect?

Transphobic words

Calling someone a Tranny or "Too butch to be a girl" etc. demeans and trivializes the wide variety of experiences held by those who identify as transgender. If you see this type of transphobic language being used, challenge it.

Real Name?

Asking someone what their 'real' name is implies that their chosen name is in some way invalid or not 'real.' In the same way, asking someone what their 'real' gender is disrespects their own gender identity.

Coming Out

A gender identity is personal. If someone chooses to come out to you as trans* this means they trust you. Make sure to honor that trust by checking with them before telling anyone else as they may not want others to know.

Just Ask!

It is important to respect the names and pronouns that people prefer. If you are unsure, simply ask, "What are your preferred pronouns?"



❖ How are Transgender and Other Gender Non-Conforming Youth Treated at School?

In addition to the typical challenges faced by all students, those who are transgender and/or gender non-conforming must also be ready to survive slurs, bullying, harassment, and assaults by fellow students and even teachers. Instead of creating safe spaces for gender non-conforming and transgender students, school administrations often enforce policies and practices that can punish gender non-conforming and transgender youth simply for being who they are. Examples of discrimination based on gender identity, appearance, and behavior include: refusing to allow students to wear clothing that fits their gender identity, denying students access to educational or extra-curricular opportunities due to their actual or perceived gender identity and/or expression, and a school's failure to protect students from harassment based on their actual or perceived gender identity and/or expression.

❖ Harassment:

Students who are transgender or gender non-conforming often face persistent and severe harassment that can involve name-calling, threats of violence, sexual innuendos or sexual harassment, and even physical assault. A recent study of California students found that 53% of students said their schools were not safe for guys who aren't as masculine as other guys, and 34% of students said their schools were not safe for girls who aren't as feminine as other girls. Students who are gender non-conforming and/or transgender are often thought to be gay, bisexual, or lesbian (even if they do not identify as any of these), which increases the harassment and/or discrimination that they experience. This is because gender discrimination and harassment is often rooted in homophobia, as gender and sexual orientation are seen as interconnected.

❖ Names and Pronouns:

Recognizing and validating the names and pronouns that correspond to transgender students' gender identity is important for their emotional health and well-being. A student's name appears in a large variety of places -- student records, IDs, class roll-call, school publications, tests, and homework assignments to name just a few. Many transgender students adopt new names that are essential to their identity. They also may request that they be referred to by the pronoun that corresponds, or most closely corresponds, with their gender identity. It is important that these requests be respected.

Some gender non-conforming students do not change their name or ask to be referred to by a different pronoun. Even for these students, however, names and pronouns can still be used to discriminate against them. For example, some gender non-conforming students are teased through the use of the wrong pronoun or variations of their names. For example, a boy called Juan who is perceived to be effeminate is called "Juanita" to express other students' beliefs that he is not acting the way a boy "is supposed to act." This type of name calling or the misuse of an appropriate name or pronoun can be very damaging to a student's ability to fully engage in, and feel safe at, school.

❖ Sex Segregation:

Many school environments and some school activities are sex segregated. Examples include restrooms, some physical education activities, some class projects, and some student activities. Such segregation can cause difficulties for transgender students if they are not allowed access to those facilities or activities that match their gender identity. Not only can such a denial affect students' emotional well-being, but in some cases it can also affect their physical well-being. For instance, if transgender students are denied access to the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity, they might avoid using the restroom at school altogether. This can lead to many physical and emotional health problems and can also create an incentive for the student to disengage from school.

Sex segregation can be especially difficult for transgender students who do not identify as either male or female. If such a student is only presented with the choice of a male or female restroom, the student is forced to make a choice that does not match their gender identity. And often times such a "choice" is meaningless because the student is harassed by other students regardless of whether the student opts to use the male or the female restroom. Harassment in restrooms is a common form of discrimination against gender non-conforming students. Because of transphobia and sex stereotyping, these students are regularly subjected to verbal and physical harassment in restrooms. Therefore, it is important that schools take steps to make sure that restrooms and other sex-segregated spaces be made accessible and safe for students who are transgender and/or gender non-conforming.

❖ Dress Codes:

Enforcement of dress codes is often a source of discrimination. For example, it would be discriminatory for a school to have a dress code that is different for boys and girls and refuse to allow a transgender student to wear clothing consistent with their gender identity. Sometimes transgender students are even disciplined simply for wearing clothing consistent with their gender identity. Such disciplinary action can negatively affect the student's standing in the school. In addition, transgender and gender non-conforming students are sometimes held to a different standard than other students. For example, the clothes of young transgender women are often scrutinized more closely than the clothes of other young women. A skirt that is considered "appropriate" when worn by a biological girl is called "inappropriate" when it is worn by a transgender student. Similarly, gender non-conforming students sometimes face harassment or are scrutinized because their clothes are considered "too feminine" or "too masculine."



Resources for Students



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Trans Youth Support Network
Additional text regarding this resource and how it might be helpful to a student or faculty member.



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Resources for Faculty Advisors



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Need a Hand?

