HELPING TRANSGENDER YOUTH

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Self-Reflection

Three Questions:

- Which components of identity define a person?
- Which identity defining component should someone be expected to change in order to conform?
- Which core identity component would (or could) you change in order to conform?

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Facts

- 80% of trans adults knew they were ‘different’ before leaving elementary school
- Less than 4% of trans people realized they were trans after age 18
- Average age of trans-spectrum self-realization: 7.9 years
- Average age of learning the “words” to communicate feelings: 15.5 years
- 83% of those who identify as transgender ideate suicide
- 32% attempt suicide

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What is Transgender? (LGBT)

**Transgender or trans:** an umbrella term used to describe those who challenge social gender norms, including genderqueer people, gender-nonconforming people, transsexuals, crossdressers and so on. People must self-identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

**Transsexual:** a medical definition for people who feel such a strong disconnect between their assigned birth sex and their gender identity that they require some degree of anatomical modification to bring their bodies into congruence with their gender identity. This is done through hormones and/or surgery.

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Glossary

- **Gender**: a set of social, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other.

- **Gender identity**: the inner sense of being a man, a woman, both or neither. Gender identity usually aligns with a person’s sex, but sometimes does not.

- **Cisgender**: a person’s sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity and/or gender expression. Cisgender people have lots of privilege in our society!

- **Transphobia**: the irrational fear of those who challenge gender stereotypes, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.

- **Gender binary**: the concept that everyone must be one of two genders: man or woman.

- **Gender expression**: the outward manifestation of internal gender identity, through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms and other characteristics.

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Glossary

- **Gender dysphoria**: an intense, persistent discomfort resulting from the awareness that the sex assigned at birth and the resulting gender role expectations are inappropriate. Some consider gender dysphoria to be a symptom of gender identity disorder, a health condition recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. Many transgender people do not experience gender dysphoria.

- **Genderqueer**: a term used by some people who may or may not identify as transgender, but who identify their gender as somewhere on the continuum beyond the binary male/female gender system.

- **Gender-nonconforming**: behaving in a way that does not match social stereotypes about female or male gender, usually through dress or physical appearance. The majority of gender non-conforming people are cisgender and heterosexual.

- **Gender transition**: the social, psychological and medical process of transitioning from one gender to another. Gender transition is an individualized process and does not involve the same steps for everyone. After gender transition, some people identify simply as men or women.

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ASCA Legal and Ethical Standards

- Each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations including: sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, Respect students’ values, beliefs and cultural background and do not impose the school counselor’s personal values on students or their families. (Preamble)

- Respect students’ values, beliefs and cultural background and do not impose the school counselor’s personal values on students or their families. (A.1.c)

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Professional school counselors respect the rights and responsibilities of parents/guardians for their children and endeavor to establish, as appropriate, a collaborative relationship with parents/guardians to facilitate students’ maximum development. (B.1.a.)

Professional school counselors assist in developing: (1) curricular and environmental conditions appropriate for the school and community; (2) educational procedures and programs to meet students’ developmental needs; (3) a systematic evaluation process for comprehensive, developmental, standards-based school counseling programs, services and personnel; and (4) a data-driven evaluation process guiding the comprehensive, developmental school counseling program and service delivery. (D.1.g)

Professional school counselors monitor and expand personal multicultural and social justice advocacy awareness, knowledge and skills. School counselors strive for exemplary cultural competence by ensuring personal beliefs or values are not imposed on students or other stakeholders. (E.2.a)
The U.S. Supreme Court has never considered this question.

It is important to remember that constitutional protections – unlike the WLAD – cover only discrimination or mistreatment by the government, not by private entities.

(ACLU, 2011)
Washington State Law

Washington state laws clearly prohibit discrimination against transgender people

- Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD) protects people from discrimination based on gender expression or actual or perceived gender identity

(ACLU, 2011)

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What does “gender expression or identity” mean?

The law defines “gender expression or identity” as: “having or being perceived to have a gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression, whether or not that gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the sex assigned to that person at birth.”

(ACLU, 2011)

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The WIAA allows participation for all students regardless of their gender identity or expression. Fundamental fairness, as well as most local, state and federal rules and regulations, requires schools to provide intersex and transgender student-athletes with equal opportunities to participate in athletics. (2011-2012 Washington Interscholastic Activities Association Handbook retrieved from 2011-2012 Washington Interscholastic Activities Association Handbook)
Statistics

- It is estimated that 1:100 public school students may identify as transgender.
  - By comparison, the prevalence of Type 1 diabetes in children is 1:60.
  - That means there may be as many as 2,500 transgender students in the Portland Metro area alone.
  - This does not include private school, homeless, incarcerated or drop-out youth.
  - Statistical analysis indicates that 1:250 children born will be transgender and 1:500 will be transsexual.

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Challenges

- Bullying
- Harassment (Sexual, physical verbal)
- Discrimination
- Teasing

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Verbal Harassment

Figure 1. Hearing Biased Remarks from Students in Washington Schools
(percentage hearing remarks "sometimes," "often," or "frequently")

- "Gay" Used in a Negative Way (e.g., "fag" or "dyke"): 97%
- Homophobic Remarks (e.g., "that's so gay"): 88%
- Negative Remarks Re: Gender Expression: 87%
- Racist Remarks: 52%
- Sexist Remarks: 93%

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Physical Harassment

Figure 2. Harassment and Assault in Washington Schools
(percentage harassed or assaulted in the past year)

- Sexual Orientation: 80% verbal, 35% physical, 16% physical assault
- Gender Expression: 62% verbal, 29% physical, 11% physical assault
- Gender: 51% verbal, 17% physical, 10% physical assault
- Religion: 36% verbal, 10% physical, 6% physical assault
- Race or Ethnicity: 30% verbal, 9% physical, 5% physical assault
- Disability: 18% verbal, 11% physical, 3% physical assault

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Availability of Resources and Support

Figure 3. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports in School in Washington Schools

- Comprehensive Policy: 27%
- Supportive Educators: 98%
- Gay-Straight Alliance: 63%
- Inclusive Curriculum: 15%
- Library Resources: 55%
- Internet Access: 49%

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Real Voices

- Coming soon…

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What the PSC Can Do?

- School Based Advocacy
- Individual (how to respond to situations)
- Group
- Classroom Guidance
- Staff Training
- Safe Zone Sign (+ Student advocate group)

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School Based Advocacy

- Include LGBT issues in the curriculum to increase the visibility and accomplishments of the population
- Provide staff development related to LGBT issues
- Support the organization of a gays straight alliance (GSA), or an after school student club, to provide a safe space for LGBT students and their heterosexual allies
- Sexual orientation should be included in existing antidiscrimination policies
- Visibility of LGBT populations should be increased by displaying supportive posters and resource fliers around school, in addition to including LGBT-related media in school libraries

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Individual

- Offer support, counseling and guidance in coping with the immediate adjustment to family’s discovery of the youth’s transgender or gender non-conforming identity;

- Provide information and guidance related to positive adolescent development, human sexuality and gender identity, and the effects on the youth of family acceptance or rejection;

- Provide referral information on individual and family counseling to support each family member and improve family communication and functioning; and

- Offer assistance in identifying local services and resources to provide ongoing support to the family and the youth.

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Group/ Gay Straight Alliance

Forming and alliance between GLBT students and families and straight students and families has been shown to be successful in stopping and preventing harassment and in establishing a welcoming environment in the school.

When parents see flyers and bulletin boards on gay–straight alliances they see that the school is trying to be aware, open, proactive, and supportive.

At the high school level, alliances are often run by the students with the supervision of a designated staff member trained in GLBT issues. The groups meet in a space provided by the school.

These meetings often provide opportunities for discussing sexual identity and gender issues with information provided to the students in an age-appropriate manner.

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Classroom Guidance Talking Points at Elementary Level

- It is important to treat everyone with caring and respect, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their family members. Kids families are made up of all kinds of people.
- There are lots of ways to be a boy of a girl. There are no "girl things" or "boy things".
- You can't make someone gay or make them straight.
- You can't tell if someone is gay, lesbian or bisexual by looking at them.
- There is lots of diversify in people's bodies.

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Classroom Guidance Talking Points at
Middle and High School Level

☐ A person figures out if they are gay, lesbian or bisexual because of how they feel, not what they do

☐ There are lots of ways to be a guy or a girl

☐ There are important ways to show respect to people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender

☐ Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender teens, like other young people, need to learn about birth control and STD prevention

☐ We don't know why some people are gay, lesbian, or bisexual and others are heterosexual. Or why some people are transgender and some aren't.

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Staff Training
Development of Gender Identity

- “A child’s awareness of being a boy or a girl starts in the first year of life (8 to 10 months of age) when youngsters typically discover their genitals. Between 1 and 2 years old, children become conscious of physical differences between boys and girls.”
- “Before their third birthday they are easily able to label themselves as either a boy or a girl as they acquire a strong concept of self.”
- “By age 4, children’s gender identity is stable, and they know they will always be a boy or a girl.”

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Staff Training
Expression of Gender Identity

- First noticed at 2-4 years
- Behavior is typical for that of the other sex
- Behavior lessens when child has more contact with peers
- Gender-typical or gender-variant traits cannot be changed through the influence of parents, teachers, coaches or therapists

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Staff Training

Working with Transgender Students

- Acknowledge name and pronoun preference
- Respond to requests for help
- Intervene when you observe harassment
- Maintain equivalent disciplinary practices for physical violence
- Take action

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Staff Training
Responding to Harassment

- Focus on the harassing behavior, not the targeted student
- Utilize existing rules and guidelines
- Offer support to the targeted students
- Proactively address gender stereotypes

(Seattle Public Health)

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Supporting Transgender Students

- **Validate their identity.** Simply acknowledging and believing a transperson's gender can be an extreme relief. Be sure to use their preferred pronoun and name.

- **Respect their privacy.** Many transpeople want only a few trusted people to know their history or physical status. Make sure it is okay with the person to discuss with other people that they are transgender or other related specifics of their lives. WPI Safe Zone Manual

- **Consider transgender people when announcing community events.** At present when a "men's event" or "women's event" is announced, transpeople cannot always assume they are welcome. Specify women or men-identified. Remember also that some people identify as both, neither, or other, "all genders welcome" is a good all-inclusive phrase.

- **Just ask!** If you are not sure what pronoun a person prefers or how they identify, just ask. If for some reason asking doesn't feel comfortable, try to speak without using gender specific pronouns.

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Supporting Transgender Students Cont.

- If you make a mistake, apologize and move on. Occasionally you might accidentally use a wrong pronoun or say a wrong name when addressing someone transgender. Apologize and correct yourself, but not too profusely.
- Recognize and acknowledge the child’s gender identity/expression early
- Accept that gender identify is authentic and is not “a phase”
- Be open to childhood social gender transition.
- Look for opportunities to create congruent gender identity/expression experiences

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School Climate Considerations

- Gender neutral bathrooms
- Gender neutral dances
- Gender neutral sports teams
- Gender neutral lockers
- Acknowledge name and pronoun preference on school records and identification

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Safe Zone

- Purpose of a Safe Zone is to visibly mark people and places that are “safe” for LGBT students
- Help students identify a straight ally who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people

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Resources

Navos
Navos provides a variety of mental health services, including specific child and family services. From their website “In schools, in homes, and in children’s care centers, we help young people and their families overcome the effects of poverty, violence, mental illness, and substance abuse. Our counselors provide a range of culturally appropriate therapies, including family therapy, play therapy for younger children, and both individual and group therapy for older children teens.”
Email: info@navos.org
Website: http://www.navos.org/

PFLAG
From their website “While PFLAG provides support, education, and advocacy for the whole LGBT community, PFLAG’s Transgender Network – or TNET – specifically focuses on support for transgender people and their parents, families, and friends. It provides education on some issues unique to the transgender community, and focuses on issue advocacy to ensure equal rights for the transgender community at local and national levels.”
Local Chapter Information and Resources: http://community.pflag.org/page.aspx?pid=803
Website: http://community.pflag.org/

Public Health Centers
Public Health Centers often offer reproductive and sexual health care services to individuals of all ages and sexual orientations. Payment for those services is based on a sliding scale, and no one is turned away because of inability to pay. Teens receive confidential services, and do not need consent from a parent or guardian.
Website: http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov

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Resources

**Camp Ten Trees**

From website “Camp Ten Trees is a nonprofit organization offering summer camp sessions in the Pacific Northwest, featuring a week for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and allied (LGBTQA) youth, and a week for children and youth of LGBTQ and/or non-traditional families. Our summer sessions and year-round complementary activities are for youth connected to LGBTQ communities and provide opportunities for campers to strengthen inner courage, make new friends, and develop leadership skills through traditional camp programming.”

Website: [http://www.camptentrees.org/](http://www.camptentrees.org/)

**Children’s National Medical Center**

Use “Search” menu, then key in “Gender Variant” and click on Outreach Program. This will direct you to a Guide for Parents which includes information on gender variant behaviors as well as related resources including books for children, books for parent and films and videos

Website: [http://www.childrensnational.org/](http://www.childrensnational.org/)

**Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network**

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community.

Website: [http://www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

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Seattle Young People’s Project

Seattle Young People’s Project is a youth-run and youth-led organization that empowers youth to express themselves and to take action on the issues affecting their lives. SYPP sponsors an annual Young Women’s conference each summer and an Annual MLK Day Hip Hop show in January. Any youth is welcome to SYPP for support of their youth led social change project. Current groups include:

- Youth undoing Institutionalized Racism (YUIR)
- Queer Youth Rights (QYR)
- Student Activists for a Multi-Cultural Education (SAME)

These groups generally meet weekly

Email: sypp@drizzle.com  Phone: 206-860-9606
Website: http://sypp.org/

AFSC – American Friends Service Committee’s GLBTQ Youth Programs

AFSC is an international Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Programs range from efforts to bring peace to various African, Middle-Eastern and South Asian countries to criminal justice and sweatshop reform to immigrants’ rights. AFSC’s Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Questions Youth Program offers:

- Internships: Paid, part-time work for LGBTQ youth ages 14-22 for personal and professional development
- Trans Youth Service Project: Provides, in collaboration with Lambert House, services transgender you in the Seattle Metropolitan area including a weekly trans youth support group, a monthly social activity group, and a resource person available in-site at Lambert House.

Seattle Website: http://afsc.org/office/seattle-wa

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Resources

Seattle Counseling Services
A community mental health service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth and adults (and children of sexual minorities); at-risk youth who have run away or been banished from their homes, or who have made suicide threats or attempts; youth living on the streets; or youth suffering from mental illness. SCSSM provides comprehensive mental health services including domestic violence, adult, youth and HIV/AIDS counseling services.

Email: info@seattlecounseling.org  Phone: 206-323-1768
Website: http://www.seattlecounseling.org/

Safe School Coalition
The Safe Schools Coalition works to help schools become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/safe.html

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