



**QUICK STEPS
YOU CAN TAKE TO MOVE
YOUR SCHOOL
BEYOND THE
BINARY**

Unfortunately, many transgender and other gender non-conforming students face harassment, discrimination, and even violence on a daily basis. Your school does not have to be that way. By taking some basic actions, students, school staff, and community activists can greatly reduce discrimination and harassment against transgender and gender non-conforming students.

Who are transgender and gender non-conforming students?

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. Students who are gender non-conforming are those whose gender expression (or outward appearance) does not follow traditional gender roles, including, boys who are perceived as effeminate, girls who are perceived as masculine or “tom boys,” and students who are androgynous.

What Kinds of Discrimination and Harassment Do Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students Face?

In addition to the typical challenges students face in school, transgender and gender non-conforming students often face slurs, bullying, harassment, and assaults by fellow students and even by teachers. Restrooms are a common place where transgender and gender non-conforming students experience discrimination and harassment. In addition, transgender students who change their name as a part of their transition some times have trouble getting people at school to use the correct name and pronoun. Finally, some transgender students find that they are criticized or punished for the clothes they wear, even when they are complying with the school’s dress code.

How Can I Help Create a Safer School for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students?

You can organize a campaign to improve school safety by working with students, school staff, and/or community activists. You will need to keep some things in mind as you develop your campaign. First, you need to clarify your overall goal. Second, you need to research the issues related to your goal. Third, you need to identify the person or people who can help you achieve your goal (allies, decision makers within the school, etc). Finally, you need to figure out what actions you can take to accomplish your goal. Three examples of gender identity-related campaigns are changing your school anti-discrimination policy to be transgender-inclusive, training teachers and administrators on transgender issues, and setting up an educational event, such as the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Getting your school to adopt anti-harassment and non-discrimination policies that clearly protect transgender and gender non-conforming students is a practical way to help make your school safer. Policies can help prevent discrimination and harassment by helping students and staff understand harassment and discrimination based gender identity is unacceptable behavior.

An educational event is another way to reduce discrimination and harassment. Too few people know basic information about transgender people. An educational event such as a staff training helps teachers and administrators learn basic terminology, become familiar with their legal obligations, and learn practical steps for addressing discrimination and harassment. An educational event on campus allows the whole school community to learn about who transgender people are so that everyone is more aware of the need to respect people. The Transgender Day of Remembrance is an especially powerful event because it educates people on the high rate of violence committed against people simply because they are transgender and/or gender non-conforming.

Safer Schools are Everyone's Responsibility

Regardless of who you are, you have a responsibility to help make our schools safer. By taking the above steps or helping someone else take them, you can help fulfill that responsibility in a meaningful way. In the process, you'll be making your school better for all students and ensuring that every school is one in which everyone can fully and freely participate.

These quick steps were taken from *Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools*. *Beyond the Binary* is a 45 page tool kit that provides practical tips that you can use in improving student safety at your school. It contains much more detail on the above steps as well as one and two page tools like a list of common definitions, myths and facts, model school policies, and a resource list. To request a copy be mailed to you or to download a PDF version, contact::

GSA Network
www.gsanetwork.org
415-552-4229

Transgender Law Center
www.transgenderlawcenter.org
415-865-0176

National Center for Lesbian Rights
www.nclrights.org
415-392-6257

