

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 your or your child better understand gender-related issues?
- Many people don't realize that gender-based discrimination is not allowed under federal regulations outlined in 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.
- Organizations such as the PTA, the NEA, various associations for administrators, counselors and other educational professionals, the California School Board Association and many others 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?

- What are the specific behaviors of another person that are making your child feel unsafe?
- 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?
- Our expectation for all of our students is that they respect the privacy and physical boundaries of other students. If the behaviors of one student are making another student feel unsafe, that is an issue we take very seriously. Is something or someone behaving in a way that makes your child feel unsafe?
- How can we help your child to feel more comfortable? 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?

- Schools have always worked to support the needs of individual students in a variety of ways. For any student who requires support related to gender, the school works very deliberately to provide the necessary services. This does not take place without a great deal of care and planning.
- Schools all over the country are supporting transgender students in these ways and this issue simply does not come up. 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 make this up; why would they? Conversely, any student pretending to be transgender would be easily identified in the planning processes we have established.