

Be an Ally to Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students

The identities, experiences and needs of transgender and gender nonconforming people are often overlooked in schools. As an ally to trans and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) people, you can do your part to make sure that all students, including TGNC students, are safe and respected in school. These ideas are still good to practice even if you don't know any transgender or gender-nonconforming students at your school.

Ask, Don't Assume

Names aren't the only way we refer to people. Personal gender pronouns, or PGPs, are pronouns that an individual personally identifies with. Asking PGP's is a way to respect each person's unique identity and ensure you don't misgender anybody. Some of the most commonly used pronouns include:

- She/her/hers
- He/him/his
- Zie/hir/hirs (pronounced "zee/here/heres")
- They/them/theirs
- All or no pronouns

Start off each GSA meeting by asking each person to introduce themselves using their name and PGPs. Don't ask only your TGNC members about PGPs; ask PGPs of everyone equally.

Respect All Gender Identities & Expressions

Allies to transgender and gender-nonconforming students recognize that there are infinite ways that gender can be expressed. Allies accept this diversity of gender expression and gender identity. Be careful not to tell people to act more masculine or feminine, or to suggest their appearance doesn't match their gender identity. Allow all people to express themselves freely.

Challenge Gender Assumptions

Gendered images are everywhere, from sports teams to bathrooms to pictures on school posters. As an ally, challenge the gender images in your school. Talk with people in your GSA about how gender assumptions can affect students, and make conscious efforts to stop using unnecessarily gendered language.

Buddy Up

Transgender and gender-nonconforming students can be uncomfortable in gender-exclusive spaces, like locker rooms and bathrooms. Accompany your friends in spaces that may feel unsafe.

Be Supportive

To be an ally, you need to be informed. Learn more about transgender issues. Recognize that every person is different and has a unique experience, identity and needs. Check in with your friends about how they would like to be supported rather than making assumptions. Pay attention to intersections of transgender identity with factors such as race and class. Remember that there is no universal trans experience or perspective, and be open to listening to a diverse array of stories.

NOTE: Transgender people are people whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender doesn't conform with traditional or societal gender norms. Gender nonconforming people express gender characteristics that do not conform to traditional or societal norms.