

Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Students in Your School Community

A Whole School Approach to Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Students

Incorporating trans and gender diverse inclusive practices as part of a whole school approach supports students' wellbeing and celebrates diversity, assisting schools to create and maintain safe and inclusive learning environments for all students. Listed below are areas that provide opportunities to ensure that schools are affirming and supportive learning environments for all students, including those who may be trans and gender diverse.

Policy

Ensuring that school policies are inclusive is an essential part of supporting trans and gender diverse students. New policies can be created, or existing policies adjusted (e.g. diversity, anti-bullying, and non-discrimination policies) to include trans and gender diverse students. These policies should reflect both state and federal anti-discrimination legislation. The Queensland Department of Education's *Inclusive Education Policy statement; Diversity in Queensland schools - Information for principals*, and *Internal Guidance Materials to Assist Queensland State Schools in Supporting Gender Diverse Students* are useful for reference. It is important to be specific when including trans and gender diverse content in policy. For example, explain what transphobic behaviour is so that staff know what to address and how to respond.

Support and Educate Staff

Professional development and training can increase staff knowledge and confidence to create safe and inclusive schools for trans and gender diverse students. Training and information is most effective when it is aimed at inclusion of trans and gender diverse students in general, rather than being in response to the needs of an individual student. If a student or family have a specific request for information to be shared, ensure it is shared in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Have processes in place to support the education and best practice of new, temporary and supply staff.

Educate All Students

There are opportunities to teach students about respectful and supportive relationships through the curriculum, through specific lessons on gender diversity and anti-bullying or the use of specific resources. Ensure that students understand how some interactions might be harmful and what constitutes bullying and discrimination. Supporting students to be inclusive of diversity in general is a good thing for all students. School environments that respect and affirm gender diversity will empower all students.



Engaging the Broader School Community

When embedding trans and gender diverse inclusive practices into a school, engaging the broader school community is important. This may be supported by offering parents and carers education opportunities and information about gender diversity and inclusion.

Ensuring the school's commitment to inclusion is publicly known will also support community engagement. If community members have questions about individual students, be mindful to maintain student privacy, referring to school policy and anti-discrimination legislation.

A simple response to a parent asking why a student is wearing a girls' uniform could be that uniforms are available to be worn by students of any gender.

Administrative Processes

Ensuring that all school documents and forms allow for a variety of gender identities is an important part of inclusive practice. Documents should reflect an individual's affirmed gender.

Facilities and Resources

School facilities should be accessible to all students, including those who may be trans and gender diverse. Consider ways to create accessible facilities within the school's current structural environment. In future plans and upgrades, consider the possibility of: all gender toilets, individual change rooms, all gender physical education options, and uniform options for all genders.

There are many ways to promote and celebrate inclusivity. A great way to increase representation of trans and gender diverse perspectives is to ensure that school resources are inclusive. This could include: relevant library resources, classroom materials, posters and visual material, resources from supportive local and national organisations, and guest speakers from the local community.

Designing Support Plans for Trans and Gender Diverse Students

Developing a student led support plan fosters a sense of belonging in the school community, which will assist the student to thrive and work towards their educational goals.

The following areas of consideration will guide your development of a support plan that responds to the student's needs and priorities.

Student Led

Individual student's needs will differ and ensuring a student centred approach will guide successful outcomes.

Support the student to identify which parents/carers and support people they would like involved in this process.

In instances where parents/carers do not support the young person's decision to affirm their identity, the school must consult the student and assess the best interests of the student to ensure their safety and wellbeing.



Privacy

The student should decide who needs to know about their individual experience and support needs within the school context. Consent from the student (and where possible the parent/carer) needs to be given to share information.

Trans students have the right not to disclose. The *Information Privacy Act 2009* prohibits the use and disclosure of personal information about a student without their consent.

Support Team

Together with the student and where possible the parent/carer and support person, identify a core group of staff and support people that will be involved in any planning or support required.

For example, the support team can include: a member from the leadership team, a guidance officer, a school nurse, a year level teacher, and/or parent/carer or support person.

Roles and responsibilities should be clear and written out in the support plan.

Timeframes

Work with the student (and parent/carer/support people) to determine suitable dates for any changes that need to be implemented.

Identity, Names and Pronouns

Ensure the whole school uses the correct (affirmed) name and pronouns for the student. Educate the school community on how misgendering can be damaging to health and wellbeing.

School Facilities

Toilets and changerooms: Students legally have the right to use the toilet that aligns with their gender identity. A safe and accessible bathroom should be made available to all trans and gender diverse students, including gender-neutral toilets. Trans young people often report avoiding drinking and eating to reduce the need to use the school bathroom, thus toilet accessibility is crucial.

Uniforms: The Department of Education's *Student dress code* requires every Queensland state school to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. *Diversity in Queensland schools – Information for principals* ensures that all students are able to wear the uniform that aligns with their affirmed gender identity and/or expression. This is inclusive of all uniform categories, including formal uniforms.

Sport and physical education: Continued access to sport is important. For under 12s there is no required gender differentiation for sport. For students over 12, competitive sport can lawfully discriminate on the basis of sex and/or gender identity only if strength, stamina or physique is relevant. There still may be no need to segregate in competitive events: Consider the diversity of 13 year olds in general based on cultural background, individual differences, and stage of puberty. Participation should be the ultimate goal.

Camps and school events: Consider what accommodation arrangements would make the student most comfortable. Consider venues with changerooms that maintain student privacy.

Administration: Documents and Records

Currently, a student's assigned sex is required to be recorded under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. Principals may enrol a student and affirm their sex and/or gender by recording their sex in OneSchool as specified in one of the following documents:

- A statement from a Registered Medical Practitioner or a Registered Psychologist which specifies their gender
- A valid Australian Government travel document, such as a valid passport, which specifies their gender or
- A state or territory birth certificate, which specifies their gender. A document from a state or territory Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages recognising a change of sex and/or gender will also be seen as sufficient evidence.

Where more than one of these documents are presented at the point of enrolment, the most recent document is to be used.

There is no requirement for formal school documentation (e.g. school reports, attendance records, roll marking records) to reflect the student's legal name and assigned sex. The student should always be provided with the option to have their affirmed name, gender and gender pronouns recorded on school documentation.

If schools have any queries, please refer to Department of Education's *Internal Guidance Materials to Assist Queensland State Schools in Supporting Gender Diverse Students* or contact support.diversity@qed.gov.au.

Referral Pathways

Consider referral pathways for the student (and parent/carer/support people). Trans and gender diverse students and their parent/carer and support people may wish to engage with different types of services such as legal services, medical services, social support and counselling services. Also consider the places which students are generally referred to by schools, such as work experience, and whether they are suited and sensitive to the student's needs.

References

This document draws on information from the following publications:

Smith, E., Jones, T., Ward, R., Dixon, J., Mitchell, A., & Hillier, L. (2014) *From Blues to Rainbows: Mental health and wellbeing of gender diverse and transgender young people in Australia*. Melbourne: The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health, and Society

Stephens, A., Murray, E., & Stewart, S. (2016) *Supporting Trans Youth: Guidance for supporting trans and non-binary young people in formal & non-formal education*, Gender Jam NI, SAIL NI, Youthnet

Strauss, P., Cook, A., Winter, S., Watson, V., Wright Toussaint, D., Lin, A. (2017) *Trans Pathways: the mental health experiences and care pathways of trans young people. Summary of results*. Telethon Kids Institute, Perth, Australia.

Transgender and intersex student support procedure (2016) Department for Education and Child Development: South Australia

Ward, R., Radcliffe, J., Parsons, M., Gaylard, M., Wright Toussaint, D. (2015) *Guide to supporting a student to affirm or transition gender identity at school*. Safe Schools Coalition & Foundation for Young Australians.

Relevant Policies and Legislation

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld)
- Department of Education *Diversity in Queensland schools - Information for principals 2017*
- Department of Education *Inclusive Education Policy 2018*
- Department of Education *Internal Guidance Materials to Assist Queensland State Schools in Supporting Gender Diverse Students 2017*
- Department of Education *Student Dress Code, 5.0 2018*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld)
- *Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013* (Cwlth)

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