



**WHEREVER YOU
& YOUR GENDER SIT
THERE IS A PLACE WHERE
YOU CAN BE YOU**

Gender, sex and sexuality are not black and white.

**A Guide to Supporting
Trans* Young People
at School**

www.twenty10.org.au

twenty10
A PLACE TO BE YOU

Twenty10 is an organisation that works within NSW to support young people, their families and communities around sex, gender and sexuality. We have created this resource for school and education communities with the underpinning belief that for any young person to reach their full potential, a network of consistent support is pivotal. Many education professionals that we have spoken to have voiced their concerns around working with young people who identify as Trans* simply because they do not have enough knowledge of the area; this resource aims to address that concern.

We have used the term “Trans*” in this resource which refers to individuals who may identify as Trans, Transsexual, Transmen, Transwomen, Genderqueer, Gender Questioning, Gender Diverse or any other identity labels which are meaningful for that person. For an explanation for each of these terms, please refer to the accompanying glossary of terms.

There are many amazing resources on supporting gender diverse students available on the internet. We have combined the best of those; with our own practical and day to day experiences and have created some suggestions on how to best support and include young Trans* people and their families within your school community.

If you require further support, resources or information, you can contact us at:

Twenty10

Street:	45 Bedford Street, Newtown
Email:	info@twenty10.org.au
Metro Support:	02 8594 9555
Rural Support:	1800 65 2010

What name and pronoun should be put on a Trans* student's school documentation?

All school documents should use a student's preferred name (as opposed to their birth assigned name). The best way is to check with each Trans* student for their preferred name and pronoun, then consistently use those terms, regardless of the details on the student's birth certificate.

It is very unlikely that Trans* students will have been able to change the sex details on their birth certificate while still at school. If the details on a student's birth certificate need to be referenced or sighted, this should be kept as confidential as possible.

Who needs to know that a Trans* student is enrolled at the school?

In most instances only the school principal, school counsellor and the Trans* student's teachers need to be aware of the student's gender identity. This can help the relevant staff address any issues privately and sensitively. In some situations it may be appropriate for more staff to know that a student is Trans* but any such decisions should always recognise the student's right to privacy.

It is never appropriate for a school to disclose a Trans* student's gender identity or history to other students or their families, except with the student's express permission.

Should Trans* students tell other students they are Trans*?

The Trans* student should be supported to decide if, and when, they want to share their identity with other students. Many may simply want to blend in. For example, a Trans* boy (born female and identifying as male) will often want to be treated the same as other male students.

What toilets should Trans* students use?

Trans* students should have the choice of using a toilet that matches their gender identity. This can be an important way to support a Trans* student's sense of identity and wellbeing.

A unisex or disability toilet can be a good alternative for any students who may feel uncomfortable about using bathroom facilities, not just those identifying as Trans*. It can help to explain that privacy and safety are important for all students when using bathroom facilities, and that any form of harassment will not be tolerated.

What changing area should Trans* students use?

Like many other students, some Trans* students will feel vulnerable having to change clothes in front of other students. So it is good to support them with a number of options that can help to minimise their discomfort. Trans* students, like other students, should have the option of using the changing area that matches their gender identify. Other options include ensuring their are private areas in the changing rooms through the use of curtains or cubicle doors and creating options where students can change in unisex or disabled toilets.

What uniform or dress code applies to Trans* students?

Trans* students should be allowed to wear the uniform that matches their gender identity. Gender-neutral uniform options, if available may be more appropriate and even preferred by some Trans* students.

What about sex-segregated activities at school?

If boys and girls are separated for classes or activities, Trans* students should be allowed to participate in the group that matches their gender identity. Holding mixed sessions open to any student is a more preferable option, especially for those Trans* students who do not identify and/or pass as either a boy or girl.

What about sports uniforms or swimming costumes?

To help their body match their gender identity, many Trans* students use clothes, binders which are then hard to conceal if they are required to wear a close fitting sports uniform or swimming costume. Loose fitting unisex options are a better alternative.

Like many students, many Trans* students are uncomfortable with their bodies and may be distressed by having to wear tight, revealing swimming costumes. Longer swimming shorts, rash suits or shirts may help. In some cases, the possibility of being excused from swimming should be discussed with the student and the student's parents/guardian.

If Trans* students want to play sport which team should they play for?

Where possible, Trans* students should be able to play in the team that matches their gender identity wearing the appropriate uniform or a unisex option if preferred.

This applies for any sport before a child turns 12; non-competitive events; and those sports where strength, stamina or physique do not give someone a competitive advantage.

How do we deal with bullying of Trans* students?

Schools have the responsibility of creating a safe physical and emotional environment for all students including students who identify as Trans*. Schools need to ensure that Trans* students, like any other student, are able to express their gender identity at school without facing discrimination or harassment. Bullies will pick on anybody who is different or socially isolated including Trans* students, especially if they think they can get away with it. There is no reason to think that the school's usual ways of dealing with bullying will be less effective for Trans* people.

Including materials about gender diversity within the curriculum will help foster a supportive environment for Trans* youth and benefit other students too.

How can schools support the parents of Trans* students?

Often a parent may be fearful about how their child will be treated at school. Reassure them that the school respects diversity and every student's right to a safe school environment. It may help them to know what strategies the school will use support their child to be included and acknowledged in their gender identity, including the student's privacy.

What can teachers, counsellors and school staff do to be more inclusive?

- Display materials and posters relevant to gender diverse people in your spaces. (www.twenty10.org.au is a good starting point)
- If a young person chooses to talk to you about their gender identity, be honest about the things you don't understand.
- Don't ask Trans* people to educate you. Do your own homework & research.
- Don't assume all Trans* people want hormones and/or surgery, or to transition at all. Hormones and surgery are not options for everyone.
- When speaking with students or staff, if someone else uses a pronoun that is not the Trans* student's preferred pronoun.
- Asking anyone personal questions about their body, sexual behaviours, hormones or surgeries is inappropriate. It's ok to ask people of diverse genders "who" they are, but not "what" they are. It is a breach of their privacy when people ask them about their bodies, their genitals, or how they have sex.
- Remember that a person's gender identity is different from their sexual orientation.
- Modelling using a Trans* student's preferred pronoun and name is essential when speaking with staff and students. If someone makes a pronoun mistake, correct them, whether or not the person whose pronoun was misused is actually present. This helps to avoid future mistakes and corrects the assumptions of anyone who heard the mistake. Allowing the mistake to go uncorrected means the Trans* student will have uncomfortable interactions in the future and could also expose their gender identity without their consent.
- Saying someone was "born a girl" or "used to be a girl" is disrespectful to the Trans* student's identity. If you need to refer to their history saying they were "assigned female at birth" recognises how sex and gender are assigned at birth but is not always the way the individual experiences their gender.

Our thanks for the amazing and inspirational work of the following agencies and projects which have helped us develop our thinking:

<http://lgbtcenter.ucdavis.edu/lgbt-education>

http://www.hrc.co.nz/human-rights-environment/action-on-the-Trans*-inquiry/resources/Trans*-people-facts-information/