

TRANS IDENTITIES AND PRONOUNS

OVERVIEW:

This lesson seeks to educate students about trans identities and the significance of using correct pronouns. Through group discussions they will explore societal expectations around gender and the diverse experiences within the transgender community. The lesson will conclude with a hands-on activity that will allow students to create personalized name tags that display their names and chosen pronouns, promoting normalization of sharing pronouns.

OBJECTIVES:

- Educate about trans identities and challenges faced by the trans community.
- Recognize the significance of using correct pronouns.
- Practice allyship to the trans community and foster a supportive environment for trans youth at school through creative expression.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Scissors
- Markers and other colouring utensils

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Sex Assigned at Birth – Typically, The designation of "male" or "female" assigned to an infant at birth based on the appearance of their external anatomy. This label is not always binary, as some people are born intersex, and a person's sex can change through medical procedures later in life.

Gender Identity – A person's deeply held sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Expression – The external ways in which a person shows their gender, including their name, pronouns, clothing, hairstyle, voice, and behavior. While society often classifies these expressions as masculine or feminine, they can vary widely across cultures and individuals, and may not necessarily align with a person's gender identity.

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TERMINOLOGY

Transgender – A person whose gender identity is different from the societal expectations associated with their sex assigned at birth. It is used as an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of gender identities and experiences.

Cisgender – A person whose gender identity matches what is socially expected based on the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a person who identifies as a woman and was assigned female at birth.

Non-Binary – Refers to a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or woman. It can also be used as an umbrella term for a wide spectrum of gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of men and women. Some non-binary people identify as transgender, while others do not.

INSTRUCTIONAL OVERVIEW:

Begin the session by explaining the purpose of the lesson: to learn about trans identities and the importance of pronoun use. It is important to create a safe and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable sharing and asking questions. Be mindful of varying levels of understanding and experiences related to gender identity. You can ensure your students have a basis of knowledge on relevant terminology by reviewing the terminology page as a group. Encourage students to think deeply about societal expectations regarding gender, the diverse experiences within the transgender community and the diverse experiences within the transgender community



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Here are some discussion questions that can facilitate deeper understanding and conversation about trans identities:

- Have you ever felt pressure to conform to traditional gender roles? How did that affect you?
- What are some common challenges that transgender individuals might face at school or in wider society?
- In what ways might the experiences of transgender individuals differ across cultures and communities?
- How can friends and allies support transgender people in their lives?

Suggest to students that a significant way they can support the transgender and gender diverse people in their life is to use their correct pronouns. Start by explaining what pronouns are: words we use to refer to people without using their names. The most commonly used pronouns in the English language are “he/him,” “she/her,” and “they/them”. Some people also choose to use neopronouns as an alternative to these traditional pronouns. They are often created or adopted by individuals to better reflect their gender identity or to express a non-binary or genderqueer experience. Some examples of neopronouns include Ze/Zir, Xe/Xem, and Ey/Eir. The use of neopronouns is a way for individuals to communicate their identity in a way that feels authentic to them.

Discuss the impact of misgendering, which is when someone is referred to by the wrong pronouns. Explain that this can be hurtful and invalidating, as it dismisses a person’s identity. Encourage students to consider how they would feel if their own identity were not recognized or respected. Using someone’s correct pronouns contributes to creating a more inclusive environment and helps everyone feel seen and respected. Encourage students to ask for and use pronouns in a thoughtful way, reinforcing the idea that it’s okay to make mistakes and to correct them with kindness and humility.

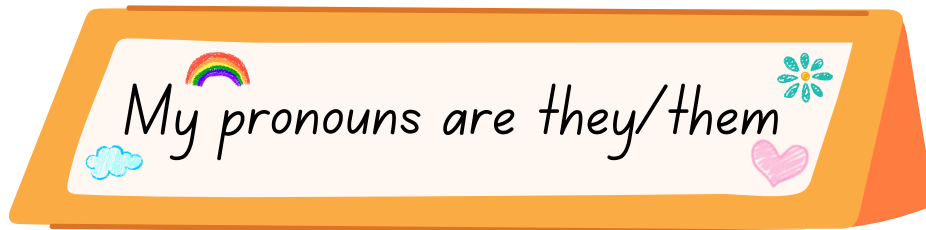
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ACTIVITY:

Create name tags that include each person's name and pronouns. Participants can decorate them and wear them during group activities to normalize sharing pronouns. Have students follow these instructions:



- Cut a piece of paper into a rectangle about 4 inches by 10 inches.
- Fold the rectangle in half lengthwise so the shorter sides touch. This will create a tent shape.
- Write your name on one side in big letters.
- On the other side, write any pronouns that feel right for you.
- Decorate their name tags with drawings or patterns that represent their personality or interests.
- Once everyone has finished creating their name tags, invite participants to introduce themselves to the group by stating their name and pronouns.

Consider having students display their name tags on their desks or creating a designated area where participants can display their name tags in the classroom. You can also choose to have students create a collective pledge to respect and use correct pronouns. They can sign it and display it in the classroom as a commitment to inclusivity.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

<https://egale.ca/awareness/pronoun-usage-guide/>
<https://itgetsbettercanada.org/trans-content/>
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

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