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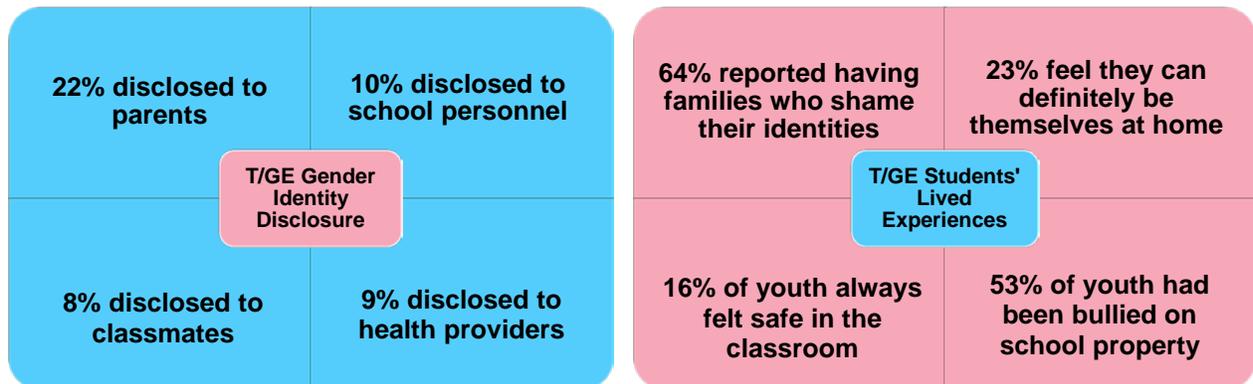
To: District Superintendents of BOCES
Superintendents of Public School Districts
Principals of Public Schools
Charter School Leaders

From: Kathleen R. DeCataldo

Subject: **Transgender Day of Visibility**

Observed internationally on March 31, Transgender Day of Visibility acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of transgender and gender-expansive (T/GE) persons. Moreover, it is a recognition of the discrimination and inequities confronted by T/GE people daily, including feeling unsafe in school and at home, high rates of unemployment, barriers to accessing quality physical and mental healthcare, family and peer rejection, and unstable housing, to name a few.

While there has been a recent increase in T/GE representation in popular culture, the positive effects associated with such representation (i.e., validation, inclusivity, positive self-esteem) are not always felt by T/GE students. The data points below, adapted from the [2018 Gender-Expansive Youth Report](#), highlight some of the lived experiences of T/GE students.



Language Matters

Gender is complex and constructed differently by everyone. Gender identity and expression can be fluid or fixed based on several factors. In all cases, however, gender must be determined and shared with the world by the individual. The term “gender-expansive” helps to give people the flexibility and freedom to expand the notions of gender expression and identity. School and district staff can avoid unintentionally inflicting the harm caused by misgendering people by remaining current with [gender-related terminology](#), ensuring consistent use of inclusionary language, creating a [safe school environment](#), and simply engaging in dialogue when uncertain.

How can schools support T/GE students, families, and staff?

Educators are on the frontlines, working every day to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. Below are suggested practices that all schools can take to create safer learning environments for T/GE students.

- Adopt explicit policies against the use of discriminatory language, harassment, or assault. Promote positive behavior expectations throughout the school using posters, electronic displays, and other means easily viewed by students, staff, families, and other school visitors.
- Schools should encourage the use of preferred pronouns by staff and students wherever and whenever possible. Pronouns can be added to an e-mail signature, a school staff person's door sign, or explicitly stated during the beginning of all introductions in meetings. Even if a T/GE student does not explicitly share their gender identity, it sends an affirming message.
- School personnel can use symbols (i.e., [LGBTQIA+ flags](#)) and signs (i.e., [Safe Space](#)) in their classrooms and offices to signify alliance and support for T/GE students. These symbols should be visible to all visitors who access the space.
- Make information about gender expression and identity available to students, families, and school personnel. Ensure that this information is always age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate. Additionally, schools should identify [organizations](#) that can provide further support to different stakeholder groups.
- Embed information about supporting T/GE students within your annual professional development trainings. Grant staff the appropriate continuing education credits toward recertification and licensure when possible.

Transgender and Gender-Expansive Guidance Document

The State Education Department released [Guidance to School Districts for Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#) to assist school districts in fostering an educational environment that is safe and free from discrimination regardless of sex, gender identity or expression, and to facilitate compliance with local, state and federal laws concerning bullying, harassment, discrimination, and student privacy.

The Dignity for All Students Act

New York State's [Dignity for All Students Act \(DASA or The Dignity Act\)](#) provides all students in the State's public elementary and secondary schools with a safe and supportive learning environment by prohibiting all forms of bullying, harassment, intimidation, taunting, and discrimination on school property, a school bus, at a school function, and/or off school grounds, if it causes a significant disruption to a student's education. The Dignity Act requires schools to address all instances of bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Schools may access [sample](#) DASA incident reporting templates provided by the New York State Center for School Safety.

Thank You

Thank you for your continued support of all students, families, and communities across New York State. As always, please reach out to us if you need to discuss these important topics or share any concerns by contacting the Office of Student Support Services at 518-486-6090 or StudentSupportServices@nysed.gov.

Additional Resources

[Creating a safe space for LGBTQ+ students in CTE](#), (Assoc. Career & Technical Education, 2021)

[How to Create a Safe Space for Transgender Coworkers](#), (Maldonado, 2018)

[Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12](#) (HRC Foundation)

[Supporting Trans and GNC Students](#), (GLSEN)

[Trans-related Infographic Graphics Series](#), Trans Student Educational Resources