

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## ***Why do I need to use the pronouns that my students request?***

Using the pronouns requested by students is one of the most basic ways to affirm their gender identity. Introducing yourself with your own pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers), even if you think they are obvious, can help others feel safe in sharing their own gender identity and pronouns.

## ***How can I use “they/them” to refer to a single person? That’s grammatically incorrect.***

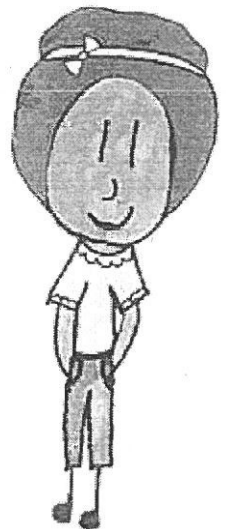
It can be particularly difficult to learn to use gender-neutral pronouns, but an increasing number of people who don’t identify with the gender binary use these. According to the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *Meriam-Webster Dictionary*, **they/them/their** can be used to refer to a single person. In fact, “they” has been used in the singular consistently since the 1300s. If Shakespeare can do it, you can, too!

## ***Do you have to have surgery or other medical intervention to be transgender?***

No. While some trans-identified people may choose some medical intervention, such as hormones or surgery, to reduce gender dysphoria (feelings of unease with one’s body because sex assigned at birth is not consistent with gender identity), many do not. Someone is transgender because that’s how they identify.

## ***How can a young child know that their gender identity doesn’t match their sex assigned at birth?***

Gender identity generally develops between ages three and five, in advance of sexual orientation. Many children this age are able to express that their gender identity is not consistent with their sex assigned at birth. For others, going through their natal puberty heightens feelings of gender dysphoria and leads to “coming out” in their early teens.



### **Language NOT to use**

Tranny, transgendered, a transgender, “real man” or “real woman,” sex change, “real name”

### **Questions NOT to ask**

*Have you had surgery?*

*Any questions about genitals or other body parts.*

*What is your real name?*

*How do you know you are really a girl/boy?*



### **How to be an ally for students, regardless of gender identity.**

- Honor names and pronouns.
- Apologize for mistakes you make with names and pronouns and stay open to feedback.
- Learn the language (and drop the old hurtful language)
- Advocate for students so that their gender identity is affirmed.
- Elevate transgender students to leadership positions.
- Acknowledge intersecting oppressions (transphobia, sexism, racism, etc.)
- Respect confidentiality.
- Be prepared to listen and learn.
- Be open to learning new things about yourself.

Please send requests for individual school trainings to [BrysonInstitute@AtticYouthCenter.org](mailto:BrysonInstitute@AtticYouthCenter.org)

# Building Supports for Trans & Gender Non-conforming Students

Knowing some of the key concepts relating to gender can help you better support your transgender and gender non-conforming students and help you understand the reasoning behind Policy 252. The information in this handout is based on training materials from The Attic's Bryson Center and questions posed to Attic staff at previous trainings.



**These concepts are distinct and operate on a continuum:**

**Sex assigned at birth:** the classification, either male or female, that a doctor assigns to an individual upon birth based on external genitalia. This differs from biological sex, which encompasses sex traits both external and internal, including genitals, hormones, chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, etc.

**Female**      **Male**      **Intersex/Other**

●                      ●                      ●

**Gender identity:** is a person's deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender, regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth. Individuals determine their own gender identity and gender identity may change over time.

● **Female/woman/girl** →

● → **Male/man/boy** →

● → **Other gender(s)** →

**Gender expression:** refers to the way a person expresses gender to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms. Gender expression may not seem consistent with gender identity for several reasons, including whether not a student feels safe expressing their gender identity.

● **Feminine** →

● → **Masculine** →

● → **Other** →

**Sexual orientation:** An inherent or enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Trans-identified people may be heterosexual, gay, bisexual, asexual, and pansexual just like cisgender people. Do not assume that someone who is transgender is gay. **Physically attracted to:**

● **Female/woman/girl** →

● → **Male/man/boy** →

● → **Other gender(s)** →



Someone who was assigned male at birth, identifies as a man, expresses himself as a man, and is attracted to women would be considered a **straight, cisgender man**.

Someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman and is attracted to men, expresses herself as a woman, and is attracted to men is a **straight, transgender women** or just a **straight woman**.

There are an infinite number of combinations of sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. You don't need to keep track of all the different words (like pansexual, polyamorous, or gender queer); you just need to respect that variations in gender and sexuality are the norm, not the exception.