Meeting the Needs of Our Gender Non-conforming and Transgender Students: Creating Equity through Policy Change and Professional Development

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Introductions and Disclaimers

- Who are we?
- What do we know?
- What do we not know?
- Why are we here?
- What is your role in today’s work?
- What is your experience in working with gender non-conforming and/or transgender youth?
- What do we hope to accomplish?
Learning Outcomes for Today

Attendees will:

• Understand the why, who, what, and how of the partnership between KCK and UMKC that resulted in policy change and a professional development platform.

• Be reminded of some of the salient definitions and statistics involved when working with gender non-conforming and transgender youth and their families.

• Receive examples of the experiences of some transgender kids through videos.

• Consider the role of the school counselor in working with gender non-conforming and transgender youth.

• Become informed regarding the recent legal actions impacting transgender and gender non-conforming students nationally and in the State of Kansas.
Learning Outcomes for Today

Attendees will:

• Understand the rationale for the need for a district-wide plan.
• Understand the history of our work in USD 500.
• Know the KCK district implementation steps through policy and professional development: a collaboration between KCK and UMKC Associate Teaching Professor and School Counseling Coordinator.
• Consider the role of the counselor in policy and professional development implementation.
• Gain knowledge of the professional development platform utilized and begin to consider one of your own.
Focus on Safety for All Students

• Regardless of our own personal beliefs and feelings about a person who is transgender or gender non-conforming, we are required as educators to keep ALL students safe.

• OUR FOCUS IS ON THE SAFETY OF ALL STUDENTS ALL OF THE TIME.
Focus on Terminology

- What terms we cover: Refer to Handout
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Gender Identity
  - Gender Expression
  - Gender Non-Conformity
  - Transgender
  - Gender Transition
  - Gender Dysphoria: Refer to Handout
- Why we developed a handout for school counselors
- Some of the challenges we have faced during professional development sessions
Focus on Statistics: Transgender Youth National Statistics – “Injustice at Every Turn Report”

Academic Challenge to Success
- Decrease in academic success
- Increase in absenteeism
- High dropout rate – 20% report having to drop out of school due to harassment

Social/Emotional Challenges to Success
- Bullying/Harassment
  65% feel unsafe in school
Focus on Statistics:
Transgender Youth National Statistics –
“Injustice at Every Turn Report”

Social/Emotional Challenges to Success (Cont.)

• Homelessness
  19% experience homelessness
• Suicide Rate
  41% attempt suicide

Overall Emotional Scars/Trauma
Toxic (continuous) stress can lead to many more mental health and/or physical issues (trauma)
There is a list of statistics in your packet

1. Individually, read the information silently
2. Individually, consider one word you best believe describes what you have read.
3. Then, select a statistic that stood out for you.
4. Share that word with someone beside you and why you selected it.
5. Now, share the statistic
6. Let’s share a few of both.
Focus on our Youth:
Jazz Jennings: One Child’s Story

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt_wLU_EB2w
This is a poem by Alysia Harris & Aysha El Shamayleh, it is about the dual identities of a transgender person.

Melissa sits in the back of the classroom afraid to speak up,
She pulls awkwardly at her extra loose khaki cargo pants,
She doesn't want the boys to notice her.

James finds himself at the back of a classroom,
His baseball cap casts a shadow on his pimple stained forehead,
A wide shirt hangs from his broad shoulders,
But no one ever noticed him.

Melissa
The teacher asks,
And she says nothing because she is not here,
And Melissa has never been here,
Because Melissa is just some abstract jumble of syllables that doesn't fit her position,
She is not what she seems,
She doesn't want to have to explain to her mother for the 232nd time why she doesn't want to wear a dress to prom,
Doesn't paint her face it's cause her whole body is painted on.

Melissa, Melissa
James doesn’t want to have to explain where he came from,
Cause with the exception of Melissa he has been deemed an abstract reality by everyone,
All he wishes for is to get to wear a tuxedo to prom.

And Melissa has been tucking in breasts that will be growing for three years now,
Been using duct tape to press them down and mold them more into pecs,
She just wishes that people would understand that at birth her genitals didn’t know which way to grow,
Mad at God who couldn’t relay a message directly to her hormones that they should produce more testosterone,
The only person who understands her is James,
And they have been playmates since the age of four,
Around the time girls notice boys and boys notice girls,
See James’ family wanted daughters instead of sons,
And Melissa was always like that male beetle that everyone called a ladybug,

Melissa, Melissa where is she?
Sometimes she wishes she could rip the skin of her back,
Every moment of everyday feels trapped in the flesh of a stranger,
Melissa,
As she stands to her feet wanting to say
"I’m here, I’ve been here since I was born, so quit asking me if I’m a him or a her, Cause when you combine the two
pronouns you get H.I.R,
Hir,
And God combined the two genders and put me in this body transgendered,
I’m here so quit talking about me like I’m not here."

James falls back into Melissa’s skin,
And the two comfort each other in a syncopated heartbeats,
Waiting for the day when Melissa can finally scrub off this made up genetic make up,
When the teacher asks for James and he can say "I’m here."
Focus on the School Counselor’s Role

As an advocate for students, including challenges you may face:
- Need for support for the student and family
- Need for support from administration
- Need for support from district
- Need for staff training, referral list: Refer to Handout
- Need for transition and support plans.
- Other?

As a possible advocate for the development of policy:
- How might you approach that issue?
- Who would you include? Why?
- How do you see the process working?
Focus on Recent Legal Actions

• March 2016  Student Physical Privacy Act introduced into Kansas legislature.
• March 2016 – Parent of transgender student requests parent training for middle school staff in KCK school.
• April 2016 – Student Physical Privacy Act receives no action in the Kansas legislature.
• May 2016 – Obama administration issued guidance on transgender students in schools. Depts. of Justice and Education issued a letter outlining guidelines for transgender students and their rights in schools to all school districts in the U.S.
Focus on Recent Legal Actions

- June 2016 – Kansas State Board of Education announced that the state will continue to apply its own gender policies on school bathroom use instead of following the Obama administration’s directive to allow students to use bathrooms associated with their gender identification.
- August 2016 – Texas Supreme Court judge rules the guidelines issued by Department of Justice are unconstitutional.
- September 2016 – KCK Board of Education approved changes to Board policy regarding transgender and gender non-conforming students and employees.
Focus on the Rationale for Policy and Guidelines for the District

As need is evident in a district
Professional Development sessions we have created and presented since April
• District Administrators - 2 PDs
• School Counselors – 1 PD and 2 Follow-up PDs
• School Social Worker and Psychs – 2 PDs
• High Schools – 2 PDs; 2 more waiting to be scheduled
• Middle Schools – 3 PDs
Also scheduled:
• Nurses
• Transportation
• Possibly school secretaries (especially in elementary schools)
Focus on the Rationale for Policy and Guidelines for the District

• Partnership with a nearby university with a faculty member familiar with or in school counseling
  – The policy/procedure like this may be bigger than you are – that doesn’t mean you can’t advocate for it or for the kids; it means that you may have the opportunity to get the process started and help put the right partners together.

• Steps to implementation of the policy and professional development – Refer to Handout
  – How to prepare for policy change
  – How to prepare for professional development
  – Who to train first and why
  – How to collect data and make changes as you go along
Focus on the Professional Development Platform

• What is your need?
  – How to be proactive vs. reactive
  – An example
• How should your plan be developed?
• Who should be included?
• What is your communication plan?

What questions might you have now?
What about collecting quantitative and qualitative data from your PD feedback?
Focus on the PD Planning and Follow-Up

- Guidelines for principals and counselors
  *Refer to Handout*

- Importance of counselors in the study and revision of the transition and support plans
  *Refer to Handouts*

- Importance of collecting and studying feedback: survey should be similar but relate to each individual group’s needs
Focus on the Results of Feedback

- Collection of written quantitative and qualitative feedback during and after the PD sessions
- Comments from attendees following each session.
- How we use the feedback for presentation improvement.
Focus on the PD Planning and Follow-Up

- PD Example – Do we have time for one example?
  - A PD Example_MSCA_11_7_16.pptx

- Interested in more? Contact us
  - Deb Woodard at woodardd@umkc.edu
  - Shelly Beech at shelly.beech@kckps.org

  We have some cards available if you would like one as you leave.

This is a continuous learning and evolving process that is dependent upon:
- The diverse needs of our students, families, schools
- The collection of additional research
- Legislation and court cases
Final Words of Wisdom
(or what we have learned thus far)

As a school counselor, think in terms of:

• Building and maintaining strong relationships with your school and district administration
• Suggesting the development of partnerships with university supports
• Utilizing the resources provided by professional organizations like GKCSCA, MSCA and ASCA
• Supporting policy and guideline development vetted by legal counsel and approved by the superintendent and BoE
• Advocating for professional development for all people working with our students and families (prioritizing is important)
• Creating (or using) transgender transition or support plans for students
• Expecting to be involved in continuous research and training based on the needs of the students/families/community/the feedback you receive

Supporting Student Safety and Success! ☺
Thank you!

We are grateful for the time that you have taken to learn more about this very important topic! Your students' parents/guardians/families, administrators, and community appreciate your efforts too! 😊

Do you have any additional:
Questions?
Comments?

Note: The next several slides include some additional resources for your use. Thanks again for joining us!
Related Resources and Things to Consider

http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/a-few-definitions-for-educators-and-parents-guardians and
http://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms

Human Rights Campaign

References & Resources

2011 Anti-Defamation League, [www.adl.org/education](http://www.adl.org/education)

GLSEN, [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org); StoryCorps.

GLSEN, “Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation’s Schools,” 2009, [https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Harsh%20Realities.pdf](https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Harsh%20Realities.pdf)


More References & Resources


More References & Resources

You Tube Videos

Jazz Jennings
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt_wLU_EB2w,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2JdPNAsaTs

Mom, I'm Not a Girl: Raising a Transgender Child
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Si5kAnLyKeg&feature=youtu.be

“Hir”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRLSgPQG0c4

A Mother Stands Up for Her Child, And All Transgender Children
https://youtu.be/mkHx_2dpEbw

Raising Ryland
https://youtu.be/fcD5NOIaIqo