

Developing Gender Inclusivity in PK-12 Schools:

A guided conversation around the evolution of gender inclusivity in our PK-12 school communities.

Introductions:

- ❖ Turn to a person near you and introduce yourself, your pronouns, your role in your school and one reason you came to this session today.
- ❖ Who's in the room?
- ❖ Google Doc for resource sharing

What do we mean by gender inclusive schools?

- ❖ Schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students of all gender identities and expressions.
 - ❖ Learning environments that affirm all community members by reducing gender role stereotyping and allowing all to express their interests and find confidence in their strengths.
 - ❖ Work actively and explicitly to dismantle gender binary stereotypes through conscientious development of curriculum and practice
 - ❖ *From Welcoming Schools (HRC):* "Creating schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students are common goals for all educators. As educators, one can create gender-expansive environments that affirm all children by reducing gender role stereotyping and allowing them to express their interests and find confidence in their strengths."
 - ❖ *From Creating Gender Inclusive Schools:* "...an inclusive environment for all children, regardless of where they fall on the spectrum of Gender identity and expression"
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Our school's journey:

- ❖ Blake's evolution as a more gender-inclusive school community; our protocols and practice
- ❖ Turn to a neighbor and discuss the journeys your schools have been on with regard to gender inclusivity

Areas of focus:

❖ **Professional Development:**

- What sorts of training or new learning have you and/or your school participated in that has helped to move toward a more gender-inclusive community for faculty and staff?
- Successes? Failures? Blind spots?

❖ **Curricular connections:**

- How do gender, gender identity and gender expression “live” in your school curriculum?
- What steps have you taken to identify and dismantle the gender binary as it resides in the different aspects of your school community?
- How do members of your community learn about gender inclusivity?
- Share out

❖ **Parent involvement:**

- What steps have been taken in your school community to involve parents and guardians in your school’s work to be a more gender inclusive space?

❖ **Challenges and troubleshooting:**

- What are some significant challenges for your school community with regard to becoming a more gender-inclusive space?

Resource list:

“A Toolkit for Ensuring Safe and Supportive Schools for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students.” Minnesota Department of Education, 19 July 2017. as adopted by the School Safety Technical Assistance Council

Bongiovanni, Archie, et al. *A Quick & Easy Guide to They/Them Pronouns*. Limerence Press, 2018.

Bryan, Jennifer, and DePalma Renée. *From the Dress-up Corner to the Senior Prom: Navigating Gender and Sexuality Diversity in PreK-12 Schools*. Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2012.

“Championing LGBTQ Issues in K-12 Education since 1990.” *GLSEN*, www.glsen.org/.

“GSA Network.” *GSA Network*, gsanetwork.org/.

New Day Films, 16 July 2018, *Creating Gender Inclusive Schools*, www.newday.com/film/creating-gender-inclusive-schools.

Nutt, Amy Ellis. *Becoming Nicole: the Extraordinary Transformation of an Ordinary Family*. Atlantic PBS, 2017.

Roffman, Deborah M. *Talk to Me First: Everything You Need to Know to Become Your Kids Go-to Person about Sex*. Da Capo Lifelong, 2012.

“Welcome to the Family Acceptance Project.” *Family Acceptance Project* ®, familyproject.sfsu.edu/.

An incomplete timeline of LGBTQIA+ support and advocacy at The Blake School¹

- 1998 Boy Scout Troop Discontinued (Cub Scouts at LS)
- 1999 GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) formed at the Upper School (a gay student, a straight daughter of a lesbian couple, and two US faculty) Inspired by attending a march in Washington, D.C., and viewing the AIDS quilt
- 1999 Community conflict around LS family curriculum (Head of School John Gulla declared that Blake will include gay and lesbian parents as part of the Family curriculum taught in 1st grade. This led to a number of families leaving Blake, and forming Providence Academy.)
- 1999 & 2002 Kevin Jennings, executive director of GLSEN (the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) visited Blake and led faculty, staff, and community in a number of presentations around LGBT acceptance. Jennings created the first ever GSA while working at Concord Academy (independent school) in 1988.
- 2000 LGBT Parents Group at Blake (We called it “BLAKE,” which stood for Blake Lesbians And Kids Eat.) This was a group of same-sex headed families at Blake.
- 2001 Students begin coming out in Senior Speeches²
- 2002 PAHR (People Against Homophobia and Racism) formed at the MS, the precursor to the modern MS GSA
- 2007 Confidential LGBTQIA+ Student Support group begins at the Upper School (Separate from the GSA, this is an affinity group for queer students.) Meets weekly
- 2009 LGBTQIA+ students begin to date openly, participate in dances
- 2010 Blake Family Pride (Parent/Guardian Affinity group). Meets Monthly. This is for parents/guardians who either have LGBTQIA+ children, identify as queer themselves, or--sometimes--both.
- 2011 Student comes out as trans in Senior Speech
- 2012 Curriculum begins to shift to be more inclusive of LGBTQIA+ identity (Health class, Gender studies, Moral Issues)
- 2012 MN state voters rejected a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage after a hard-fought campaign
- 2012 The MN Legislature passed a same-sex marriage bill, which was signed and enacted by Governor Mark Dayton on May 14, 2013.
- 2013 Students begin to identify as trans/non-binary. Students and families seek to enroll in Blake as a better option for their families
- 2014 All Genders Restrooms--at the US, the GSA submits a request to school administrators to convert an existing set of Men’s/Women’s restrooms, making a pair of All Genders multi-stall restrooms. (There was one All Genders option at the time, near the Black Box Theater, not convenient for people to use between most of their classes.) Since then, a second All Genders multi-stall restroom has been converted near the cafeteria
- 2014 Confidential LGBTQIA+ Student Support group meets at the Middle School (separate from the GSA, this is an affinity group for queer students.) Meets weekly
- 2015 Senior weekend overnight includes All Genders Cabin option for students
- 2016 Blake hires trans-identified teachers (MS and LS campuses)

¹ Blake came into existence in 1900. There have been LGBTQIA+ faculty/staff/students/parents all along the way, always! This is just the story I know...

² The first “coming out”-themed Senior Speech was in the late 1980’s, according to Greg Dawson, former Blake teacher and director of the Senior Speech program for many years

- 2017 Work begins in the LS to address Gender Inclusivity in curriculum and practice. This work is initiated by 5th-grade teachers who realize the binary way puberty, adolescence, and human reproduction is taught no longer seem inclusive. We have children in the Lower School who identify as trans/non-binary.
- 2018 Blake begins work on a Gender Inclusion Policy, in which all areas of the school experience are considered. It takes into account athletics, arts and academics, and hopes to include all areas of the educational experience, including Global Programs, Clubs and Academic teams, overnight trips... anywhere we are gathered!
- 2019 Blake Girls Hockey hosts Pride Night, the first time athletics recognizes LGBTQIA+ identity at a public event. This was organized by students from the Global/Local class at the Upper School

