

A Day of Learning: Community Discussions about Transgender Youth

Day of Learning: Community Discussions About Transgender Youth

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to host a Day of Learning event! We know that life is busy and we appreciate that you are taking the time to do this.

Day of Learning is a direct response to Wisconsin state legislation that was introduced in 2015 and seems likely to be reintroduced in early 2017. The 2015 bill would have caused transgender student either to use school bathrooms and locker rooms based on the sex they were assigned at birth or to use a single stall alternative separate from the rest of their classmates. Neither option would have validated a student's deeply felt sense of gender, nor would they have decreased the stigmatization, isolation and possible violence often faced by transgender students.

Day of Learning is also a response to the actions of Mount Horeb students and community members who organized book readings and educational events late in 2015 when an out-of-state organization threatened to sue the school district if they allowed the book *I Am Jazz* to be read to elementary student to help them understand and be respectful to a 1st grade classmate who was socially transitioning for male to female. Nearly 200 and 600 people attended both events, respectively. It was an amazing show of community support and learning.

As an education organization, GSAFE understands the importance of providing opportunities to learn about what it means -and doesn't mean- to be transgender. This packet is designed to help you do just that. We hope it contains the tools and information you need to host a successful Day of Learning event and respond to question that might come up. At the same time, there might be questions that surface that feel beyond your ability to answer. That's okay. Please know that we are here as a resource to you prior to and following your event. We are also here for audience members who want to know more.

With your help, we hope that people around Wisconsin will have the chance to examine common stereotypes and misconceptions about gender diversity. We also hope to identify people willing to contact their elected officials to encourage legislation that supports and protects, rather than isolates and endangers all K-12 students in our state.



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Tips for Organizing an Event

The following are tips we recommend for organizing a successful Day of Learning event:

1. **Build your planning team.** While you *can* do this alone, planning partners help share the work and increase the pool of likely attendees. If you have a GSA or similar school-based club in your community, reach out to them for their ideas and involvement. Look to see if there is a local parent group for LGBTQ youth, such as PFLAG, in your area. You might find more volunteers to help with your event. See if there is anyone in your community who is both well-known and a strong ally who would be able to attend and share a few words about why this event is important.
2. **Find a place to host your event.** Libraries and community centers are good neutral locations that are open to the public and have ample space for small to large events. Your local library might also be able to put together displays of books about transgender people and their history.
3. **Set your event date and time.** Plan for your event to take 60 to 90 minutes from start to finish, depending on which option you choose and how much discussion occurs.
4. **Get the word out.** If you know someone with a good amount of contacts, consider asking them to help you get the word out to as many people as possible. If you are working with a public library or community center, they might have their own networks for event promotion. Modify and distribute the printable flyer at the end of this packet with your event information on them. Consider creating an event page on social media, or sending the flyers out as attachments to your email list. GSAFE has a pre-made banner and editable flyer available for use on Facebook and other social media sites. You can find them at: www.gsafewi.org/a-day-of-learning-2016
5. **Contact the local media about the event.** If you choose to, you might want to contact your local paper about running your event details. See if they will do a story on your event to help get the word out. **Please make sure to notify GSAFE if you receive requests for interviews, and also encourage reporters to reach out to Brian J. at GSAFE by calling (608) 661-4141 or emailing him at brianj@gsafewi.org.**
6. **Gather your materials.** Depending on the event option you choose, you may need a copy of the book, *I Am Jazz*, as well as access to a computer with internet connection, speakers, a projector and screen that many people can see.
7. **Who will do what?** GSAFE will *not* be able to attend the event as much as we'd love to be at every one of them! Plan in advance who will be reading the book if you are reading *I Am Jazz*. Have someone who is comfortable with the A/V equipment to run it. Maybe you know someone that would be great at helping out with an art project if you do one.



8. **Make this event as family-friendly as possible.** Early evening on a week day might be an optimal time and allow most families to attend with their children. This will take the worry out for parents that might normally need child care. If you choose to do a book reading, let people know that it is a children's book.
9. **Do not push the politics too much.** While we want people to be aware of the impact of the politics around this topic, our primary goal for Day of Learning events is to build understanding and help identify people who might be willing to contact their elected officials in the future. So it is best to keep your event fairly laid back. Focus on learning first, and then provide people with information on how to take action as they are leaving.
10. **Have a community art project.** On page 9, there is a list of art projects, what you need to do them, and all of the steps for doing them. Pick the one that works the best for what you have available to you.
11. **Bring snacks.** Ask attendees to bring food like cookies or other baked goods. It's a good idea to have at least one snack choice that is allergen friendly. Make sure you have volunteers to help clean up afterwards.
12. **Invite school leaders to attend.** School leaders often don't have access to accurate information about transgender people.

13. **Provide a safe person to provide support if needed.** Some of the subjects, conversations, and opinions that surface during your event may be triggering for many reasons to some members of your audience, including individuals who are transgender or who have transgender family members or friends. While more likely than not, your attendees who this might affect will be aware of the possibility, hearing you or someone you love's existence questioned or challenged can be hard. Please do not let this discourage you from having your event. Going over simple group agreements about how to have a respectful discussion can help. Please see our sample, Check it at the Door Declaration on page 17 as an example you can use. If possible, have a local counselor or similar trained support person at your event. Ask them to introduce themselves and let the audience know that they are there to offer support. This gives people someone safe to talk with if they feel they need to do so.

Option 1: *I Am Jazz* Book Reading and Discussion

What you will need:

- *I Am Jazz*, by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- A volunteer to read the book
- A computer with sound and internet access (Note: If you anticipate a crowd, we highly recommend securing a video projector or small board with a large enough screen for all to see the video easily.)
- Copies of the printable handout on pages 13-14 of this packet
- The sign-up sheets on page 16-17

1. Welcome everyone: Briefly talk about why you organized the event and what you hope everyone will take away from the evening, focusing on an increased understanding of transgender young people and their families. Mention the likelihood of legislation being reintroduced and you hope that we can all leave better informed about the impact of such legislation.
2. Acknowledge that everyone is likely at a different place of understanding about this topic, and that is okay. Ask that audience members be respectful in their conversations and language, and to be open to feedback if it arises. We want to make sure everyone who speaks is being heard but also that people are being mindful of the things they say and the words they use. Some people have very strong feeling on this subject, and while that is okay, we need to be aware of the other people in the room.
3. Draw attention to the terms on the handout before starting.
4. Watch the video, An Introduction to Transgender People - <http://tinyurl.com/h44gsqs>
5. Read *I Am Jazz*
6. Have a discussion about the book. Encourage audience members to ask questions.
 - At the beginning of the book, did you think that Jazz what a boy or a girl?
 - Where you surprised when you learned the Jazz was not born a girl? Why?
 - Does it seem like Jazz is confident about who she is and what makes you think so?
 - How did Jazz feel when people didn't treat her the same as other girls?
 - Why would that be important?
7. Explain that you wanted to give everyone a chance to hear from transgender youth and their families. In order to do that you will be sharing one or two short videos: <http://tinyurl.com/meetmychild> and/or <http://tinyurl.com/trans-NPR>
8. Before the video, ask them to look for the following:



- How is this family similar to your family? How is it different?
 - What values do the families express or demonstrate?
9. After viewing the video/s, facilitate a short discussion using the following questions as suggested prompts:
- What are some things that jumped out at you watching this/these?
 - What did you notice about the kids in these/this video?
 - Did it seem to you that they were not sure about their gender identity? Why or why not?
 - What difference did it make for the child when they were allowed to live as their authentic self? (second video)
 - How were these families similar to your family or the families in our community? How were they different?
 - What values did the families express or demonstrate? How could we follow the lead of these families?
10. Ask audience members if they have any additional questions.
11. Invite audience members to sign up to be contacted with information about how to show support of transgender youth and their families in case future legislation is introduced. Unless they indicate otherwise, they will only receive information about possible future legislation and opportunities to show support. Let them know there is no pressure and your feelings won't be hurt if they don't share their contact information. Remind them that there is a link to find their local government contacts on the handout.
12. Thank everyone for coming and remind them that there is a resource on the handout for further questions should they have them.

Talking Points

Here are some talking points you can use if you need to get a discussion going or need to get a point across:

- What sorts of thing make you feel uncomfortable and make you feel as though you aren't yourself? (Clothing items, things you have to do)
- How might it feel if you had to live with those uncomfortable things every day, all day?
- What sorts of things help you to feel better about yourself?
- What might it feel like to live every day not living as your authentic self?
- What makes you who you are? (likes, hobbies, personality) Tie that in with the idea that we are more than our gender, there is more to us that makes up who we are.

Option 2: Case Studies with Discussion

What you will need:

- Copies of the printable handout on pages 13-14.
 - A computer with sound and internet connection and a projector/screen (if showing video clips to a large audience).
 - Copies of one of the two stories as linked to below
 - Sign-up sheets
1. Welcome everyone: Briefly talk about why you organized the event and what you hope everyone will take away from the evening, focusing on an increased understanding of transgender young people and their families. Mention the likelihood of legislation being reintroduced and your hope that we can all leave better informed about the impact of such legislation.
 2. Acknowledge that everyone is likely at a different place of understanding about this topic, and that's okay. Ask that audience members be respectful in their conversations and language, and to be open to feedback if it arises. We want to make sure everyone who speaks is being heard but also that people are being mindful of the things they say and the words they use. Some people may have very strong feelings on this subject, and while that is okay, we need to be aware of the other people in the room.
 3. Watch the video, An Introduction to Transgender People - <http://tinyurl.com/h44gsqs>
 4. Give some background on one of the two transgender stories that have been in Wisconsin news; the reading of I Am Jazz in Mount Horeb - <http://tinyurl.com/Jazz-reading> or <http://tinyurl.com/I-am-Jazz-ch-3> (has a video as well). Or Kenosha Unified School District denying transgender youth to use the bathroom that matches their gender and requiring they wear wrist bands - <http://tinyurl.com/Kenosha-lawsuit> (story has a video as well).
 5. Let the attendees read the articles so they have all the details. [Note: consider inviting participants do a “spirit reading” of the article. Invite them to circle or underline words, phrases, or short sentences that jump out at them as they are reading the article. After everyone has finished reading the article, invite them to take turns sharing them. Spirit readings get at the heart of the piece they are reading without participants having to explain why they selected what they shared.]
 6. Have a discussion about the article/ video:
 - What are your first impressions of the article/video news story?
 - What was handled right the first time? What do you think wasn't handled very well?
 - How could this situation have been handled differently?



- What do you feel the outcome of this situation should be?
 - How could we respond if this were to happen here?
7. Allow some time for any other questions that people might have.
 8. Invite audience members to “sign up” to be contacted with information about how to show support for transgender youth and their families in case future legislation is introduced. Unless they indicate otherwise, they will only receive information about possible future legislation and opportunities to show support. Let them know there is no pressure and your feelings won’t be hurt if they don’t share their contact information. Remind them that there is a link to find their local government contacts on the handout.
 9. Thank everyone for coming and remind them that there is a resource on the handout for further questions should they have them.

Talking Points

Here are some talking points you can use if you need to get a discussion going or need to get a point across:

- What sorts of things make you feel uncomfortable and make you feel as though you aren’t yourself? (Clothing items, things you have to do)
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- What sorts of things help you to feel better about yourself?
- What might it feel like to live every day not living as your authentic self?
- What makes you who you are? (likes, hobbies, personality) Tie that in with the idea that we are more than our gender, there is more to us that makes up who we are.

Day of Learning Art Projects

Images of Welcoming Schools:

What you will need:

- Paper to draw/color on
- Crayons, color pencils, pens or anything else that can be used to draw pictures

Have attendees draw a picture of what welcoming schools mean to them. Or, they could draw what it means to them to be respectful of differences.

When they are done, these pictures can be displayed or taken home if they would like to. There could be a time for people to talk about what they drew and what it means.

Welcoming Hands:

What you will need:

- Construction paper in different skin tones- make sure you aren't just using white
- Crayons, color pencils, pens or anything else that can be used to draw pictures or write with
- Scissors

Have attendees trace their hand onto the skin toned construction paper. In their hands, ask them to write or draw about what they learned, or they could write or draw positive messages.

When the hands are done, they can either be displayed or taken home. There could be a time for people to talk about what they drew and what it means.

Thought Bubbles:

What you will need:

- Paper to draw/write on
- Crayons, color pencils, pens or anything else that can be used to draw pictures or write with
- Scissors (not 100% necessary though)

Have attendees draw thought bubbles. In the thought bubbles, they can either write something they learned or a positive thought.

When the thought bubbles are done, they can either be displayed or taken home. There could be a time for people to talk about what they drew and what it means.



Frequently Ask Questions

People have a lot of questions about transgender topics, especially as they relate to schools. It is very possible that you may be asked a question that you have no immediate answer for. This is okay, we do not expect you to be an expert and that is just fine. Sometimes even the experts get stumped! If you just do not know how to answer a question or topic that is brought up, let them know that they have asked a very good question and that you are not sure of the answer. You can offer to look into it and get back to them if they would like. You can also refer them to GSAFE and they can contact us using the email address that is on the handout. Also, please see the Myth and Facts page; this may help out as well.

Below are some questions and comments that might come up:

1. **Explain the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation again (or some variation).** Gender identity is how we feel about our gender in our heart and mind. Sexual orientation is about who you are attracted to and fall in love with.
2. **Does that mean this transgender person is now straight? Or gay? (or some variation)** Transgender people have a sexual orientation, just like everyone else. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or some other sexual orientation. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a straight woman. A person who transitions from female to male and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a gay man. In the end, the answer is very specific to each individual person.
3. **Aren't kids too young to know this? Aren't we just encouraging confusing?** Scientific studies have found that youth are aware of their gender identities around the ages of 2 or 3. Some students know very early, while others might come to understand their gender identity over a period of time. Part of childhood is figuring out who you are – we see that in many different ways already. We also know that young people who are not allowed to be the gender they understand themselves to be can experience anxiety, depression and thoughts of suicide by the time they enter elementary school.
4. **Isn't it just a fad/trend?** Instances of gender diversity have existed in a number of cultures and continents for a very long time, including here in this county with some native and indigenous tribes. Also, while it is becoming more common for people to be open about being transgender, they still encounter bullying and violence on a regular basis. Most people are not going to expose themselves to those things unless they feel this is who they truly are.
5. **How will schools keep my non-transgender child safe at school?** Student's safety is a priority of all schools. This includes expectations of respectful behavior in facilities such as bathrooms and locker rooms. If the *behaviors* (rather than identity) of one student



make another student feel unsafe, schools have the tools to address them. Additionally, if any student or their family feels the need for additional support, such as a private changing space or bathroom, schools can work with them to identify appropriate accommodations. There have been no substantiated instances of increased violence toward students when transgender student are allowed to use a school facilities based on their gender identity. In fact, the reality is that transgender student remains most at risk for violence and harassment in these spaces.

6. **Isn't this just an invitation for people who are up to no good to go into bathrooms they're not supposed to be in?** There have been no reported cases of this happening and no signs that it will. Most of the time it's fairly easy to tell the difference between someone who is just there to use the bathroom and someone who is up to no good. Schools already have expectations about the respectful use of these spaces, and have tools to address anyone who accesses them for inappropriate reasons. A person who is claiming to be a different gender for an improper pursuit is significantly different from a transgender person.
7. **Okay, I get being transgender, but I don't understand this non-binary thing.** Someone that identifies as non-binary finds that they don't exclusively identify as male or female. They feel that they are a mix of both male and female or might feel that they are somewhere between the two. This is something they deeply understand about themselves. There are numerous examples of people and cultures across the globe who don't fit into the gender binary. Many native and indigenous populations have recognized more than two genders for centuries.
8. **How can I support my kid/a kid if they are transgender?** First of all, believe them. It takes a lot of courage to share this information with family members and people they trust. Ask them how you can best support them – each person is going to be different. Please also refer to our list of resources on the handout we provided for additional tips.
9. **What are pronouns/how do I use them? Why do people use they/xe/etc.?** On the hand out, there is a definition for pronouns that should mostly explain the first question. Some of the new pronouns that you are hearing about are gender neutral so they are good for someone to use if they feel that they do not identify as one specific gender or fit into the gender binary (ie, man or woman).
10. **Doesn't the research say that most transgender kids will grow out of it (being transender)?** The studies that suggest this are often done by people that already have a problem with the idea of someone being transgender, therefore not giving very accurate information. In fact, most kids do not “grow out of it”. They are sure of their gender identity and this does not change as they get older.

What if I get a hostile audience member?

While we expect audience members to have different opinions, it is possible that you might have an audience member who is hostile or seeks to dominate the discussion. So here are some ideas for you on how to deal with that:

1. Take a deep breath (or a few). Give yourself a moment to calm yourself if necessary.
2. Thank them for their interest in this topic. Remind them that this is supposed to be an informational event but you understand they are concerned. Invite them to talk to you afterwards.
3. If they are insistent, let them know that you would be happy to give them 2 minutes to speak so they feel that they are being heard. Remind them that the expectation is that their comments will be respectful. After 2 minutes, thank them and ask them to refrain from further commentary so that others have time to speak, get questions answered, and so on.
4. If they are too disruptive, it is okay to ask them to leave, especially if they've already been given a "warning". This event is meant to be an educational event, and there are others there who want to learn. Learning is very unlikely to happen if a person is allowed to dominate or otherwise disrupt the event.

Myths and Facts

Myth: Youth are not old enough to know their gender identity.

Fact: Research shows that youth are aware of their gender identity as early as 2 or 3. This includes some families recognizing and supporting their gender diverse child much earlier than in years past.

Myth: Youth are identifying as transgender just to be trendy.

Fact: Identifying as transgender brings with it challenges and often discrimination. It is not something people do to be cool. Like in many other areas of their life, some students may be exploring their gender expression and the labels they use to describe themselves. Such exploration is a normal part of adolescent development.

Myth: Transgender women are not “real” women and transgender men are not “real” men.

Fact: People’s true gender is not defined by the gender they were assigned at birth. Our true gender is based on our gender identity. When a person who is transgender expresses an identity different from the one they were assigned at birth, the gender they are expressing is their real gender. Additionally, it may be helpful to remind audience members that a transgender girl is someone who was assigned male at birth but understands herself to be a girl. Similarly, a transgender boy is someone who was assigned female at birth but knows that he’s actually a boy.

Myth: It’s okay to make fun of girls who are too masculine and boys who are too effeminate because that is just harmless teasing.

Fact: Teasing is never harmless, particularly regarding gender stereotypes. Gender non-conforming youth are often very clear about their gender identity. Their appearance or expression may seem confusing, but that is only because it doesn’t fit into stereotypes we have about gender.

Myth: Transgender-inclusive bathroom policies put non-transgender students at risk of sexual assault.

Fact: School districts all over the country—including Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest in the nation—have permitted transgender students to use restrooms consistent with their gender identity for years. Not one of these schools has seen an increase in incidence of sexual assault or other problems in bathrooms and locker rooms. Similarly, numerous states and municipalities have enacted transgender-inclusive laws and ordinances without any rise in sexual assault or violent crimes.

Sources: [Beyond the Binary](#) and [Teaching Tolerance](#)



Gender Diversity: Words You Should Know

Gender Identity

How we feel about our gender in our hearts and minds.

Gender Expression/Gender Presentation

How we show our gender to the world through external choices (e.g. dress, behavior, hairstyle).

Cisgender

Describes a person whose birth sex and gender identity align.

Sex Assigned at Birth

A specific set of genetic, chemical and anatomical characteristics that we are either born with or that develop as we mature. This is the sex assigned to you by a health care provider upon visual exam at birth.

Gender Binary

The faulty concept that there are only two genders: male and female. Now gender is understood as a spectrum, with a wide range of ways to self-identify.

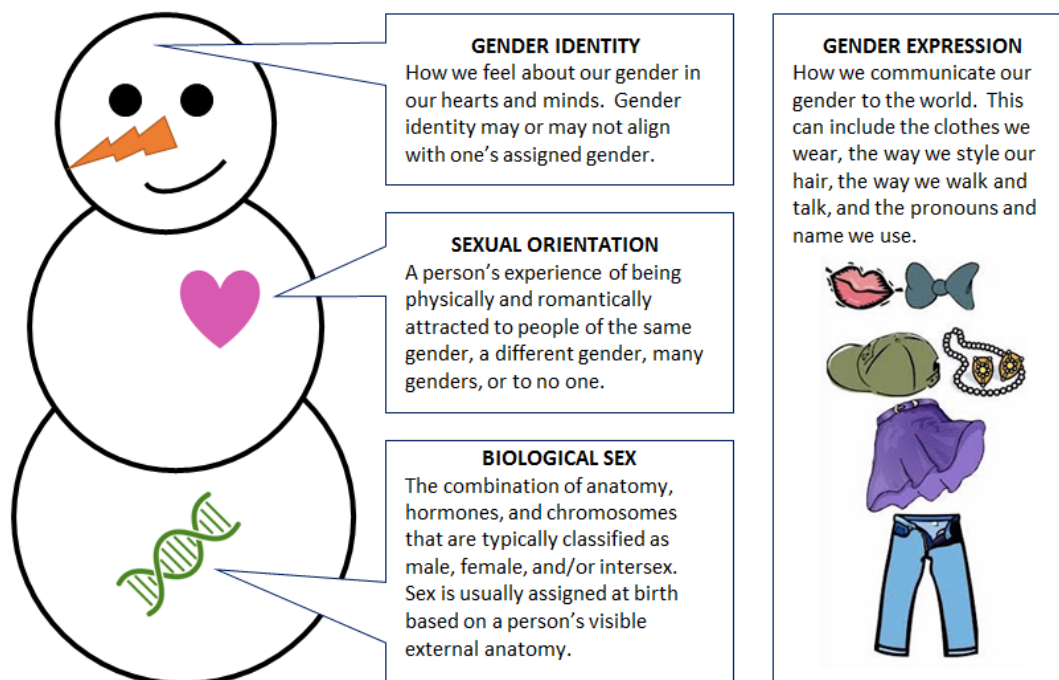
Transgender

Describes anyone whose gender identity and birth sex do not align. The word should be used as, “transgender,” not “transgendered.” For example, “My brother Sam is transgender.”

Personal Pronouns

In addition to the traditional pronouns (he/him, she/her, they), some people prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns, such as ne, ve, ze/zie and xe. If you don’t know a student’s personal pronoun, it’s always best to ask.





More books for kids about gender diversity :

Red, A Crayon's Story – by Michael Hall

All I Want To Be Is Me – Phyllis Rothblatt, MFT

Henry Holton Takes the Ice – Sandra Bradley

10,000 Dresses – Marcus Ewert

Looking to take action?

Contact your local elected officials-

<http://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

GSAFE – <http://www.gsafewi.org>

Fair Wisconsin – <http://fairwisconsin.com/>

Resources for supporting transgender youth:

<http://tinyurl.com/Supporting-youth>

<http://tinyurl.com/Supporting-transgender-youth>

<http://tinyurl.com/Supporting-transgender-teens>

Do you have more questions or would you like to know

more?

Contact GSAFE at brianj@gsafewi.org or

(608) 661-4141



CHECK IT AT THE DOOR DECLARATION

I BELIEVE

that ALL people should be valued and appreciated;
 that every person is a treasure worthy of dignity and respect;
 that diversity in humans is a strength;
 that by pre-judging people and by holding biases,
 I will miss the beauty within each individual person.

I REALIZE

that it is natural for people to be uncomfortable with those who are different from themselves,
 but I will work to overcome those feelings;
 that people have different abilities, appearance, beliefs, ethnicities, experiences and identities,
 and I realize that the world is a better place because of these differences.

I PLEDGE

to be aware of my biases and the ways I pre-judge people;
 to try to get to know the person who may look, dress, think or live differently than I do;
 to check my biases and my temptation to pre-judge people at the door;
 to ask people their gender pronouns rather than assume;
 to be open to feedback and learn from my mistakes.





Date of Event: _____
 Location: _____

Name	Email	Phone	Zip Code	How may we contact you?
				<input type="checkbox"/> Notify me about opportunities to support transgender youth! <input type="checkbox"/> Add me to GSAFE's email list.
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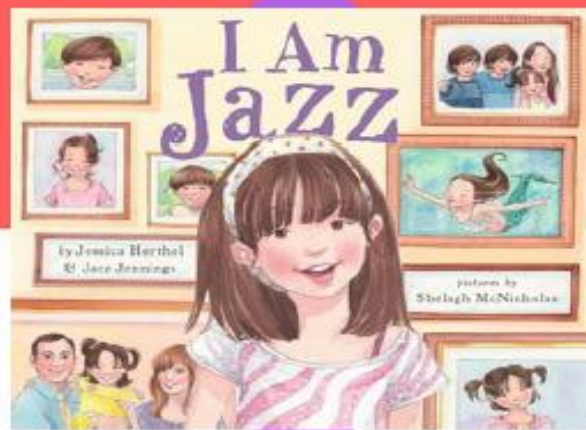


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A Day of Learning:
Community Discussions about
Transgender Youth



Date:

Time:

Location:

Join us at a Day of Learning!

What does it mean to be young and transgender? Please join us for a community conversation to help increase awareness and understanding around this topic. There will be time for discussions, questions, and information you can take home.

This is a family-friendly event; children are encouraged and welcome.

**Please bring a food item for a treat or snack if you are able.
We would love to have at least one option that is allergen friendly.**

We are looking forward to seeing you there for a Day of Learning!

Have questions? Please call _____ at _____

