

Dear Parents,

As a school we are committed to fostering a community that is educated, supportive and inclusive of children of all gender identities. Last year, we sent out the following information to support you if/when your child comes to you with questions about their gender identity or that of a classmate. We thought to resend this information, with added/updated websites and resources, as a way to encourage and support you all, in our community, to ask questions and get educated on these matters. Research shows that using supportive language when talking with children about gender identity questions is hugely impactful. For transgender children, using supportive and inclusive language can be the key to fostering self-confidence and a healthy sense of personal identity. As a school we want to foster this feeling for all of our students.

The State of Oregon recently updated Oregon Health Education Standards and Performance Indicators. The standards include (as goals to be taught in kindergarten) that all Oregon citizens should "Recognize that there are many ways to express gender" and "Recognize the importance of treating others with respect including gender expression."

Below are some "Gender Basics" and some accompanying links. If you have questions about these topics — as they relate to your child or a classmate to your child, we encourage you to contact our school counsellor, Amanda Lacy, at amanda.lacy@siskiyouschool.org. Amanda is available to have some conversations and help answer some questions/concerns that may be arising for you.

Gender Basics

Children are not born knowing what it means to be a boy or a girl; they learn it from their parents, older children and others around them. This learning process begins early. As soon as the doctor announces – based on observing the newborn's external sex organs – "it's a boy" or "it's a girl," the world around a child begins to teach these lessons. Whether it's the sorting of blue clothes and pink clothes, "boys' toys" and "girls' toys" or telling young girls they're "pretty" and boys they're "strong." It continues into puberty and adulthood as social expectations of masculine and feminine expression and behavior often become more rigid. But gender does not simply exist in those binary terms; gender is more of a spectrum, with all individuals expressing and identifying with varying degrees of both masculinity and femininity. Transgender people identify along this spectrum, but also identify as a gender that is different than the one they were assigned at birth.

(<https://www.hrc.org/resources/transgender-children-and-youth-understanding-the-basics>)

Transgender (adj.)

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including *transgender*. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the person. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures.

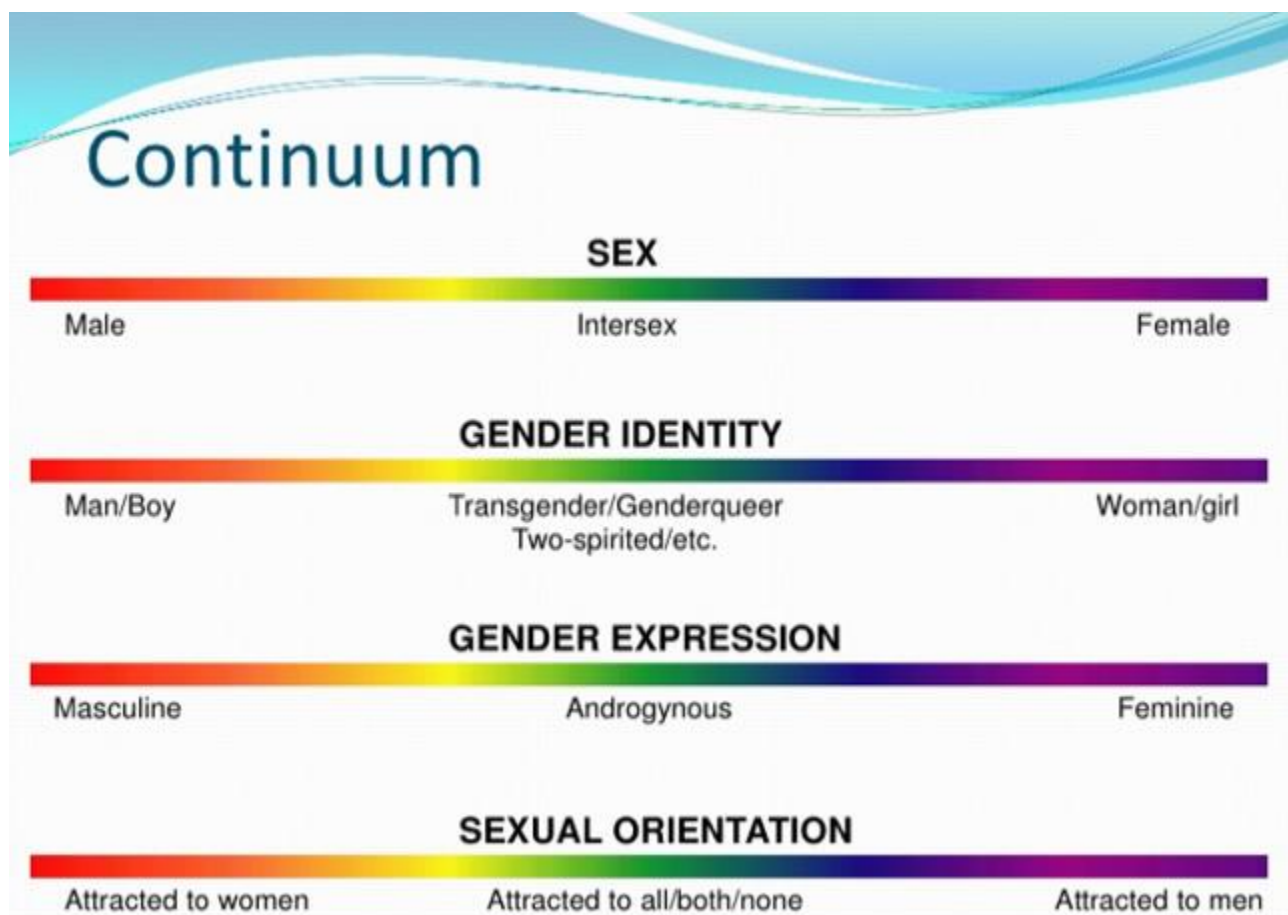
(<https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>)

Sex Assigned at Birth: When a baby is born, a doctor or midwife looks at their body/anatomy and says they are a boy or a girl. Babies can't talk yet, so they can't tell us how they feel. When they start to talk, they may say they feel like a girl or a boy or neither.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth (anatomy/biology).

Transgender or Trans: When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (boy/girl or sex assigned at birth).

The image below, which Gilda Montenegro-Fix referenced in her talk on Wednesday evening, illustrates that gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are not binary (male or female, one or the other), rather, they exist on a continuum. This slide also illustrates that each of these identities — gender, gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation do not necessarily relate to one another. For example, a person’s gender identity does not necessarily impact their sexual orientation or gender expression.



RESOURCES

<https://www.genderbread.org/resource/genderbread-person-minimal-3-3>

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beyond-pink-and-blue/201605/how-talk-kids-about-what-it-means-be-transgender%3famp>

<http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/definitions/youth-definitions/>

<http://www.genderodyssey.org/>

<http://www.theyearwethoughtaboutlove.com/resources/#Parents>

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/family-videos>

<https://www.glaad.org/resources/ally/14>

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/>