gender spectrum

Initial School Meeting

Meeting Participants: Before anything else, specify expectations about privacy for the meeting itself; who will be there? You do not want to show up and meet a panel of adults before you have had a chance to specify your expectations about your child and family's privacy.

1. Purpose of our meeting
    a. Want you to know who my child is and their experiences as a gender-expansive or transgender child
    b. To make sure that you are aware of the challenges facing my child
    c. To make agreements and commitments through a Gender Support Plan (located at www.genderspectrum.org) or similar tool about how we will work together to ensure my child has a positive and successful experience at school
    d. To clarify what I can expect from school, including how you will get the necessary information for staff, parents, and students about gender diversity

2. Who is my child (including history of their gender journey)?
    a. I want you to see all of my child – what they're good at, and proud of, and what makes them, THEM!
    b. (if applicable) Persistent/consistent/insistent; from the age of _____
    c. (if applicable) Not wants or wishes s/he were a girl/boy; s/he **IS** a girl/boy
    d. You may think that this is a choice or something that has been caused…it is not! This is simply who my child is.
    e. I have not chosen this path for my child; I am working to make that path easier for them
    f. Sometimes I wish we weren't in this situation, not because I'm ashamed but because I'm scared.

3. Why am I scared? Gender-expansive kids in general and transgender kids in particular
    a. Higher rates of suicide, victimization from violence, drop out, HIV, homelessness, drug use.
    b. Lower achievement levels and lower expectations about college attendance or for finding happiness as an adult
    c. Why? Because there is something wrong with them? Absolutely not! Kids whose very essence is rejected. These negative outcomes are frequently a response to their negative treatment
    d. Research shows that when supported, gender-expansive kids have very bright prospects
    e. Schools can and are successfully handling this "issue;" in many cases there is nothing at all to "handle." Like any other student, simply help my child remain safe and happy!

4. To date, my child's experience at school has been…
    a. Treatment by teachers and other staff
    b. Other students in grade
    c. Other students in general
    d. Other families
    e. Respect for privacy, including using name and pronoun
    f. Access to facilities

5. PRIVACY: it is very important that we are all on the same page on this topic.
    a. (If child is going to be private in this matter) We want the number of people who know about their gender to be limited. This is confidential information; we must weigh the safety considerations of having adults aware against the potential of being inadvertently outed. Once people know, we can't take it back, so we ask that we are very cautious in this regard.
    b. (If child's gender status is more public in nature) How will we insure that they are treated respectfully by others who knew them as a different gender? Even though my child's status is public, we still expect that they will not be subjected to unfair stigmatization by others.

6. What I am asking you:
    a. To respect my child's gender and treat them as you would any other student at this school
    b. To create a Gender Support Team that will work with me to support my child's gender
    c. To use a Gender Support Plan or similar tool to account for my child's specific gender needs
    d. To commit to learning more about this topic, including to get your staff the necessary professional development and resources to support the gender diversity of every child attending this school.

A few final notes…

- Come to this meeting assuming that you will be working together **as a team** in support of your child's success. Remember: hopefully you will soon be thinking much more about reading and writing and much less about gender! You want to establish a positive relationship with your school.
- Strongly consider attending this initial meeting without an advocate; you can always bring one later. School leaders can feel defensive if they feel blindsided by a "third party."
- Don't have your child attend initial meeting, and think carefully if and when it would be appropriate for your child to attend, especially if they are in primary grades.