


Gender, Expectations, and Social-Emotional Development in Early Childhood Programs

with...
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WHO ARE WE ?



Helena Nathanael Mitali Allie Julie Encian Tyler

GENDER JUSTICE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

We are part of a group of Bay Area based preschool teachers, academics, activists, and artists who are committed to empowering children through exploration and validation of their authentic selves



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Land and Labor Acknowledgement



photo: Joaquin Miller Park (Oakland, Unceded Chocheonyo Ohlone Territory)
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Our Goals Today

Expand your Understanding of Gender

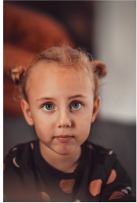
Gender as a Constellation

STAR Tool: Supporting Children's Gender Development



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Image of the Child



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When did you *first* start learning the rules of gender?

Where did these messages come from?

How did it feel to either follow or break the rules?

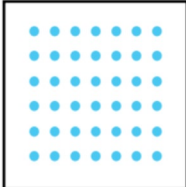
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What is Gender?




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Binary Gender Paradigm



Gender as:
Binary,
Assigned,
Fixed,
Determines
sexual
orientation,
Unrelated to other
Identities



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Social Emotional Impacts of Gender



Feelings of shame and a strong sense of needing to hide


Gender expansive children often already know they do not fit these rules

Can surface as behavior problems


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Toxic effects of binary gender norms

42% of girls first through third grades want to be thinner.



globally



1 in 3 women
worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence—mostly by an intimate partner.

Men and Violence

- Men commit 90% of homicides in the U.S. and represent 70% of victims.
- They are the demographic group most likely to be victimized by violent crime.

Health Care
sexgenlab.org

- Research shows that the more men conform to masculine norms the more likely they are to consider risky health behaviors normal (heavy drinking, tobacco use, avoiding vegetables).
- Men with the strongest beliefs about masculinity were far less likely to get preventive health care.

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Toxic effects of binary gender norms

SUICIDALITY & MENTAL HEALTH

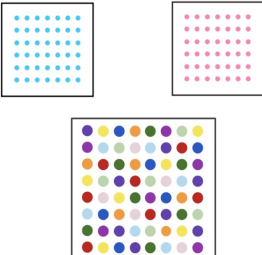
39% of LGBTQ respondents seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months.

More than half of transgender and non-binary youth have seriously considered suicide.

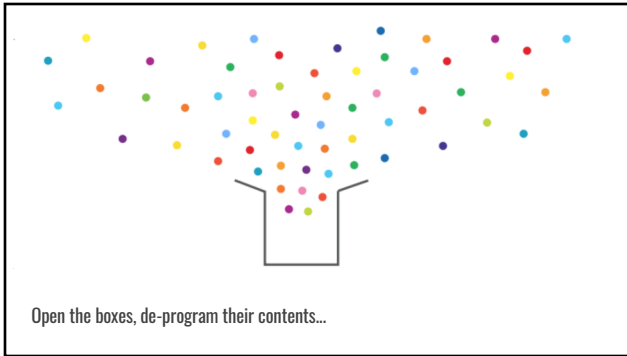
- The Trevor Project's 2019 National Survey Results

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So, if the binary doesn't fit.... what does?



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GENDER EXPANSIVENESS
 Gender as Complex, Dynamic, Individually-Determined, Separate from Sexual Orientation, & Related to Other Identities (Intersectional)^{3,4,5,6}

gender

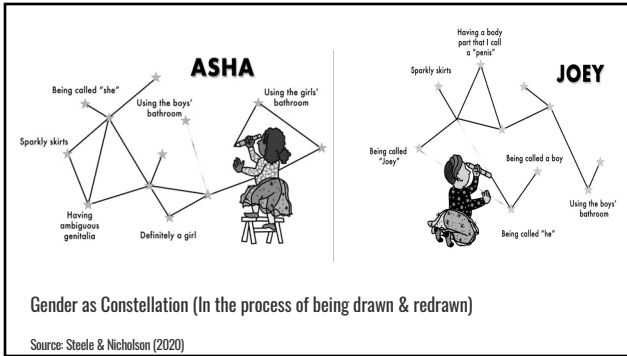
- I identify as _____
- My identity is fluid/fixed _____
- My pronouns are _____
- Words that make me feel good about my body are _____
- I like to wear _____
- My favorite toys and games are _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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Gender As a Constellation

Do you want to know more?
 Pages 40-57 of our webcomic go into detail about the gender constellation

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Classroom Resources: Pretend Play and Drama



- Play - a protected space to explore, if we are remembering to act against bias.
- Drama - a teacher initiated/facilitated play space that extends into their imaginary play.

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Toys, Art, and Materials



- Toys are toys, art supplies are art supplies. They are for everyone!
- **And**, these toys may already have meaning for the children and families
- Think about what these materials open up to the children, and what they may shut down

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Books and Stories

Include children's books about diverse gender expression and identity and create your own stories.



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Gender Inclusive Language

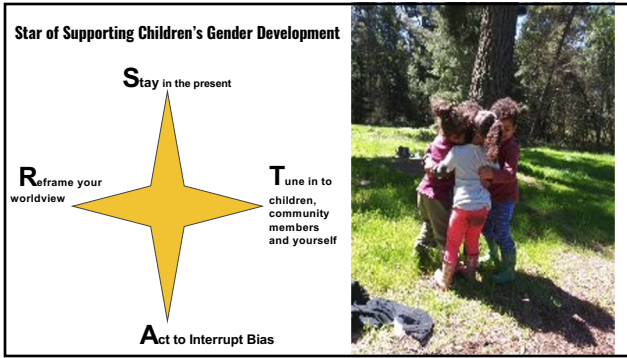


A person's name and pronouns are an important part of that individual's identity.

- He/she
- They/them
- Ze/zir
- All the pronouns

Consistently using a child's chosen name and pronouns communicates that adults are respecting and affirming all students' gender identities.

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Act to interrupt bias



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(notice stereotypes out loud)



(and do something in response)


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Reframe your worldview



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(notice when we're reinforcing binary gender)



(& begin to change our practices)

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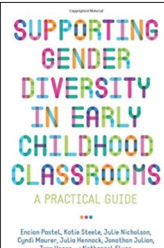
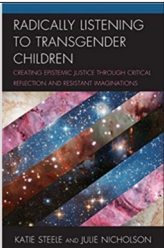



Path to Justice for TGE Children . . .



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Upcoming Article

Constellations in a Starry Sky: Building Epistemic Justice for Children of All Genders in Early Childhood Classrooms
Katie Steele, MBA and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D.

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