



What You Need to Know About...

Gender: Words Matter



“Words and identities that make your heart burst with joy are worth keeping around.”

- Planned Parenthood

The definitions provided below are meant to help build a shared language that respects gender diversity in KPR. They are **not** meant to label an individual. Labels and identities should only be self-selected and not assumed by others.

Biological Sex: the classification of people as female, intersex or male. Typically assigned at birth, a person’s sex is determined based on their reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes and other physical characteristics.

Gender Identity: each person’s internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person’s sense of being a man, woman, both, neither or anywhere along the spectrum. A person’s gender identity may be the same as, or different from, their sex assigned at birth.

Cisgender: refers to someone whose gender identity aligns with their biological sex assigned at birth. For example, a person who identifies as a woman and whose assigned sex at birth is female is cisgender. Using the language of cisgender challenges the implication that trans* identities are abnormal when marked against non-trans identities. Therefore, people exist as “cis” and people exist as “trans*”.

Transgender, Trans-Identified, or Trans*: umbrella terms that describe people whose diverse gender identities and gender expressions differ from cultural or societal expectations based on assigned sex and gender. Individuals may identify with both male and female genders, move between genders, or may reject the gender binary (two-part definitions of male or female) or gender altogether.

Transphobia: fear or hatred of any perceived difference from, or transgression of gender norms. It is often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence. Anyone who is assumed to be transgender can be a target of transphobia.

Intersex: a term used to describe a person born with female and male genetic or physical sex characteristics. Typically babies born intersex are assigned one sex at birth, either male or female.

Lived Gender Identity: the gender a person feels internally (“gender identity” along the gender spectrum) and publicly expresses (“gender expression”) in their daily life. This includes their life at work, while shopping or accessing other services, in their housing environment or in the broader community.

ABC

The words people use to describe themselves, others, and their identities are very important. Using correct language can affirm identities and challenge biased attitudes. Incorrect language can disempower and demean people, reinforce exclusion and perpetuate bias.

ME

Every person has the right to define their own gender identity. Individual self-identification is the sole measure of gender.



Scientific data has suggested that 1 in 1,500 people are born with intersex characteristics. Intersex activists draw a parallel between that figure and how many people are born with red hair (approx. 1 in 2000). Intersex characteristics are like any physical variation in appearance, something extremely common in any given population.

Transitioning: refers to a host of activities that some trans* or gender diverse individuals may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include changes to their name, sex designation, dress, the use of specific pronouns, and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery, or other procedures.

Questioning: a person who is unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBTQ/GLBTQ: commonly used acronyms that are shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit and questioning. Sexual minority is a synonymous term.

Queer: historically, a derogatory term for homosexuality, used to insult LGBTQ people. Although still used as a slur by some, the term has been reclaimed by some members of LGBTQ communities, particularly youth. In its reclaimed form it can be used as a symbol of pride and affirmation of difference and diversity, or as a means of challenging rigid identity categories.

Two-Spirit: some Aboriginal people choose to identify as Two-Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* or queer. Prior to European colonization, Two-Spirit people were respected members of their communities and were often accorded special status. In some Nations, this was based upon the belief of their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives. Two-Spirit persons were often the visionaries, healers and medicine people in their communities. The term Two-Spirit affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity - including gender, sexuality, community, culture and spirituality. It is an English term used to stand in for the many Aboriginal language words for Two-Spirit.

Gender Neutral: anything (such as clothing, styles, activities, or spaces) that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations.

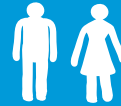
Ally: an individual who is supportive of the LGBTQ community. Allies believe in the dignity and respect of all people, and are willing to stand up in that role. Allies do not identify as members of the groups they are aligning with; e.g. a straight person can be an ally for LGBTQ communities; a lesbian can be an ally for trans* communities.



We would like to acknowledge Advocates for Youth, Egale Canada, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Teachers' Federation for these definitions. A full list of resources is located at: www.kprschoools.ca/en/students/well-being/equitydiversityandinclusion.html.



Passing: a term for those who successfully assume a gender role and gender expression different than the one to which they were born or assigned at birth.



Gender Binary: An increasingly unfounded construct that suggests gender has only 2 identities: men/masculinity and women/femininity.



"THEY"

The word "they" is a great way to refer to a group of students without using gendered language. You can also use "they" as a singular pronoun to refer to one student! It is grammatically correct and acknowledged by Merriam-Webster, MLA, and other publication organizations.



Tip: Avoid referring to classes as `boys and girls; come up with something that works for you and your students (e.g., Grade 3s, folks, students, wolverines or another mascot, etc.)



* There are many terms that individuals use to identify their gender. In this document, trans* is an umbrella term that aims to include all gender identities that are not included in the mainstream gender binary (two-part definition) of male or female. "Trans" includes individuals who are Transgender, Gender Non-conforming, Gender Expansive, Gender Independent, Gender Queer, Gender Diverse, and more.