

Trans & Nonbinary Inclusion: Knowledge Exchange Brief

Parents and Affirming Adults

On May 26, 2022, Egale Canada invited parents and affirming adults to come together virtually to share their successes and challenges as they work towards supporting inclusive schools for trans and nonbinary students. The following quick tips were gathered from the learning moments that took place in the breakout room discussions of the virtual event. The content discussed related to navigating the unique issues faced by parents and affirming adults when building 2SLGBTQI-inclusive school environments. This brief will help you jumpstart your inclusion efforts and empower you to take tangible paths of action as you better understand your role and responsibilities in the creation of 2SLGBTQI-inclusive schools.

Quick tips for parents and affirming adults building inclusive schools:

- First and foremost, listen to the identity terms that youth use for themselves and what their experiences have been like in school. Are they supported by friends and educators in their school environment? You can ask questions like, “What does your school do to make you feel safe or included?”, “What challenges do you face at school?”, “Is there anything I can do to ensure you have a positive experience at school?”
- Consider joining parent councils or committees within your school to use your voice to advocate for 2SLGBTQI inclusion across the whole school – you can have a voice in resources, policies, and school curriculum.
- You may need to do your own research and advocate on behalf of your child to ensure accurate resources are being distributed in class. We recommend starting here: [Egale Canada | Inclusive Schools Resources](#).
- Strategize on how best to work with educators and administrators. If you find they often go on the defensive when discussing 2SLGBTQI issues in the school, you can frame your concerns as a human rights issue, “you may not be aware, but this is an issue happening throughout multiple spaces that affects a lot of youth...” If there is still nothing being done, inquire if there is a way, perhaps an online portal, to report the incident(s) with the school board or superintendent so they become aware and can provide more support to your school.

- Become familiar with books and resources that can open the conversation on gender identity and expression. The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) members have [curated a bank of resources and websites](#) that can be referenced to address 2SLGBTQI education. Along with their resources, you can find days of significance, policy, and other support for you as a parent or affirming adult of a 2SLGBTQI youth.
- A new online mobilization hub, [gegi.ca](#), launched in early 2022 serving to support all students and teachers with tools to advocate for expressing their gender without facing discrimination, harassment, or violence. This hub is a great resource for engaging youth about the differences between gender, gender expression, and assigned sex at birth. It also provides a four-step process on equipping youth, educators, and administrators to advocate for gender and gender expression human rights at school.
- If a young person begins using a new name or pronoun, it can be challenging at first for educators, administrators, and other students to begin using their correct name and pronouns. A great book that introduces the topic of changing your name is, "I am Jazz", a story of Jazz Jennings, a young 2SLGBTQI-rights advocate. You can watch the Jennings family read out the book together on [YouTube](#).
- When your child enters a new school year or a new school environment, it may be beneficial to request a meeting with the educators and staff that will be interacting with the 2SLGBTQI-youth in mind. This will give you a chance to map out all their supports that can be put into place. This will also be an opportunity to proactively address any challenges that may arise, for example, instances like lining up according to gender in gym class or difficulties accessing a washroom or changeroom that they feel safe to use. Check out Egale's resource [Supporting Your Gender Diverse Child](#) for a thorough guide on how to navigate the Ontario school system.
- Locate and reach out to the closest PFLAG (originally Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) group in your city or region. You can find a scan of all PFLAG chapters across Canada on [PFLAG Canada's website](#). PFLAG is a national organization, founded by parents who wished to help themselves and their families to understand and accept their 2SLGBTQI children.