

Lesson Plan - School Climate Map on Gender Diversity
(based on content from [the Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know](#))



Overview: In this activity, students will create a map of their high school that evaluates how comfortable and welcoming its spaces are for trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students. Students will consider how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations and develop strategies to improve their school climate so that it can be more inclusive and welcoming.

Subject and Grade Level: PHE 8 & 9

Big Ideas:

- Advocating for the health and well-being of others connects us to our community (8/9)

Competencies:

- Propose/analyze strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying (8/9)
- Create strategies for promoting the health and well-being of the school and community (8/9)
- Explore and describe the impact of transition and change on identities (8)
- Explore and describe factors that shape personal identities, including social and cultural factors (9)

Content:

- Consequences of bullying, stereotyping, and discrimination (8/9)
- Influences of physical, emotional, and social changes on identities and relationships (8/9)

Core Competencies:

- Communication – Connect and engage with others (to share and develop ideas)
- Creative Thinking – Generating ideas
- Critical Thinking – Develop and Design
- Personal and Cultural Identity – Relationships and Cultural Contexts
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility – Well-being
- Social Responsibility – Valuing Diversity

First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Learning Activities:

Ground Rules

Prior to engaging in the learning activities, consider setting some “ground rules” to help everyone to feel safe in class, ask questions, and express their opinions without fear for being ridiculed or laughed at. Examples include:

- Listen to and respect others when they are speaking
- Keep an open mind, try not to judge or make assumptions
- Respect other experiences, backgrounds and right to express opinions provided it is not hurtful
- There is no such thing as a stupid question. "Any question is a good question."
- No put downs (including of one's self)
- No negative statements or comments, looks, groaning, or making gestures
- It is OK to pass.

Gender Roles and Identity

Key Concepts:

- Difference between a person’s biological sex and their gender identity
- Stereotypes of gender roles for males and females
- People do not have to change what they like or what they do because something seems “boyish” or “girly”

Learning Activity

Ask students to work in small groups to make a T-chart of list of spaces or situations where they feel the safest/most comfortable being themselves, and those they feel the least safe/comfortable. Remind them to consider all places they may spend time, including home, school, in the community, at clubs/sports, etc. Have them share out and discuss common themes. What makes somewhere feel safe and comfortable? Remind them that school is a place where they have a right to be safe, and that if they have a safety concern, they should talk to an adult about it. Being uncomfortable or nervous in certain situations is natural (giving a speech, taking a test), but becomes a safety concern when it is based on the teasing, bullying, or actions of someone else.

Use the [Gender Unicorn](#) or [Genderbread Person](#) to discuss the differences between biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Note that each of these represent spectrums, versus binary constructs. Teach basic terminology (listed below) or using the Kahoot “Essential SOGI (LGBTQ) Terminology”

How is gender expression influenced by others? Is it difficult when people don't fit societal expectations of gender?

Next, they will consider what it's like for transgender, two-spirit and gender diverse students to be at school. Invite students to work in small groups to create a map of their school (if you have a photocopy of a school map, you could also just provide one to each group). It is not important for the map to be architecturally accurate—ask them to choose which spaces will be important to represent, such as the library, hallways, cafeteria, washrooms, guidance office, gym, locker rooms, and sports fields. Perhaps they could label one classroom to represent all classrooms in the school.

Ask the students to mark the spaces in the school with the following colour code:

- **Green:** This is a place where Trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students feel most safe and welcomed.
- **Yellow:** This is a place where Trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students might feel uncomfortable being themselves.
- **Red:** This is a place where Trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students often feel uncomfortable.

The group should come to a consensus about how to categorize each space. Encourage them to be thoughtful about how they categorize each space by giving reasons and examples for their decisions.

Have students present their maps to the class, explaining their logic for their decisions.

Once all of the groups have presented, ask students to identify patterns across all of the maps. What do they notice? Does anything stand out or surprise them? Are all classrooms the same? What does a truly safe and comfortable classroom look and sound like?

NOTE: During this discussion, students may say that some people don't feel comfortable with a trans person in the washroom. Take this opportunity to ask whether their discomfort is because of inappropriate actions/behaviour by the trans person or simply their presence. What would we say to someone who feels uncomfortable sharing a washroom based on another person's ethnicity?

Action Plans:

Ask the groups to create an action plan for improving the school climate for trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students. What concrete steps can they take to make a difference? What can they as students do to make spaces more comfortable for everyone? Do they have ideas or suggestions for teachers, administrators and even their school board?

Facilitate a class discussion based on the groups' ideas.

Book Titles:

- *Transphobia: Deal with It and Be a Gender Transcender* by Wallace J. Skelton (2015) 32p. Lorimer (978-1459407664) Gr 6 – 10
Offers information, quizzes, comics and true-to-life scenarios to help kids better understand gender identity and determine what they can do to identify and counter transphobia in their schools, homes and communities

- *Straight Talk About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* by Rachel Stuckey (2015) 48p. Crabtree (978-0778722076) Gr 6 – 10
This timely title gives young people a better understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity, and the LGBTQ community. Personal testimonials shed light on the difficulties individuals face coming out and dispel myths of gender stereotypes. Also included is advice on how to support family members, friends, or classmates who identify as a member of the LGBTQ community.

Useful Videos:

An Introduction to Transgender People - National Centre for Transgender Equality - 2016 (4:05) – Prim/Int/Sec
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSuJ70OMo3I>

***Handsome and Majestic* - 2015 (12 min) - Upper Int/Sec *Canadian**
A powerful portrait of BC transgender teen Milan, who bravely faces bullies in his small town high school. With incredible maturity, Milan articulates his gender identity and offers valuable insights that can help all kids find understanding and acceptance.
<https://vimeo.com/186480327>

***Ivan Coyote's Ted Tx: We All Need a Safe Place to Pee* - 2015 (12 min) - Sec *Canadian**
In a poetically rhythmic TEDx talk, award winning Vancouver author Ivan Coyote highlights the need for gender neutral washrooms in all public places.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUKAVcj9NVA&feature=youtu.be>

***There's No Wrong Way to be a Woman* - 2016 (00:30) - Int/Sec**
Ad showing a Trans woman conquering her fear of using the washroom with others.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjq-ZSk31rw>

Definitions: (from TSER – Trans Student Educational Resources and LGBTQhealth.ca)

- Gender Diverse - people who do not identify or express their gender within the gender binary.
- Gender Identity - one's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s).
- Gender Expression - physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc.
- Transgender/Trans: encompassing term of many gender identities of those who do not identify or exclusively identify with their sex assigned at birth. The term transgender does not indicate gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.
- Two-spirit: an umbrella term referring to North American indigenous people who were often honoured and revered for having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some First Nations people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Resources:

- ***Websites, Resources, Support and Advice***

The following websites and tools provide information and resources on various sexual orientation and gender identity topics:

- SOGleducation.org
- Amaze.org
- Scarleteen
- [Out in Schools \(student presentations\)](#)
- [Questions & Answers: Gender Identity in Schools](#)
- [Questions & Answers: Sexual Orientation in Schools](#)

- [Options for Sexual Health](#)
- [Kids Help Phone - LGBTQ](#)
- [Qmunity](#)
- [Pride Education Network](#)