

Supporting Transgender Educators in Schools

PANC VIRTUAL SESSION
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Agenda

Review context

- Terms/vocabulary
- Legal cases

Our studies

Our findings

Recommendations

Questions

Teachers in the 1950's



The Times They Are A-Changin'



Some
Definitions

Gender Expression

- External clues
- Behavior, clothing, hair

Gender Identity

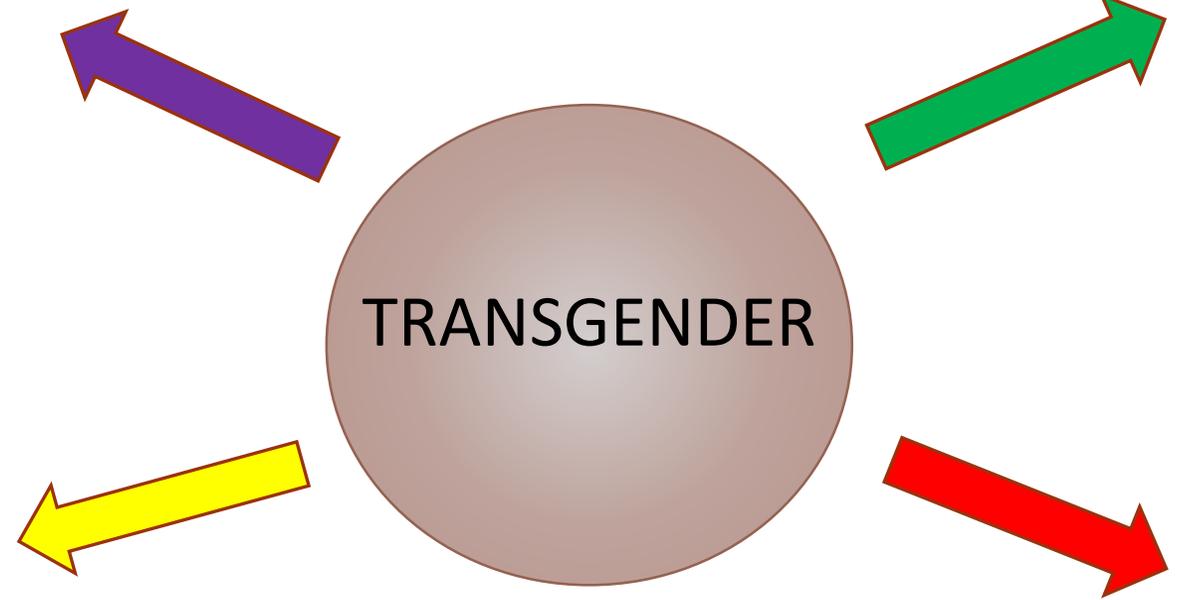
- Internal sense of gender (sense of themselves as male or female)
- May be different from one's birth sex

However, not everyone whose appearance or behavior is gender-atypical will identify as a transgender person.

Describes people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex

Many transgender people live part-time or full-time as members of another gender.

TRANSGENDER

A central brown circle with the word "TRANSGENDER" in black capital letters. Four arrows of different colors (purple, green, yellow, and red) point outwards from the circle to four light blue text boxes. A thin black line also extends from the circle to the top-right text box.

Broadly speaking, anyone whose identity, appearance, or behavior falls outside of conventional gender norms can be described as transgender.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 - Title VII

Outlawed workplace discrimination based on “race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.”

“What did **SEX** mean in 1964 and what does **SEX** mean in 2020?”



A Little History: Title IX – (1972)

“No person in the United States shall on the basis of **sex**, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subjected to **discrimination** under any **educational program or activity** receiving federal financial assistance.”



Recent History – U.S. Dept. of Education issues 2014 guidelines...

Transgender students protected from sex-based
discrimination; public schools
instruct transgender students consistent
with their gender identity.

REVOKED IN 2017

NOT EXPLICITLY ...

Historically, overt discriminatory actions may have been more common toward sexual minorities than other protected minority groups because federal law did not explicitly make discrimination against LGBTQ workers illegal. (Munoz & Thomas, 2006).

Legal Protections

Price Waterhouse v Hopkins (1989)

- US Supreme Court found sex stereotyping to be illegal for a female accountant who was viewed as not acting female. Case established that **gender stereotyping is actionable as sex discrimination.**

Macy v. Holder (2012)

- EEOC ruled **in favor** of Mia Macy, a transgender woman whose promotion within a federal agency was revoked once she revealed her transgender status to her employers.

Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)

- Made **same-sex marriage legal** throughout the United States.

Legal Protections

Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia (2020)

- The USSC ruled that Title VII protections against sex discrimination in the workplace **apply to LGBTQ individuals**. Did not address bathroom issue.

Grimm v. Gloucester County, Virginia (2020)

- The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a policy denying Gavin Grimm the use of a bathroom corresponding to his gender identity **violated Title VII and the Equal Protection Clause**.

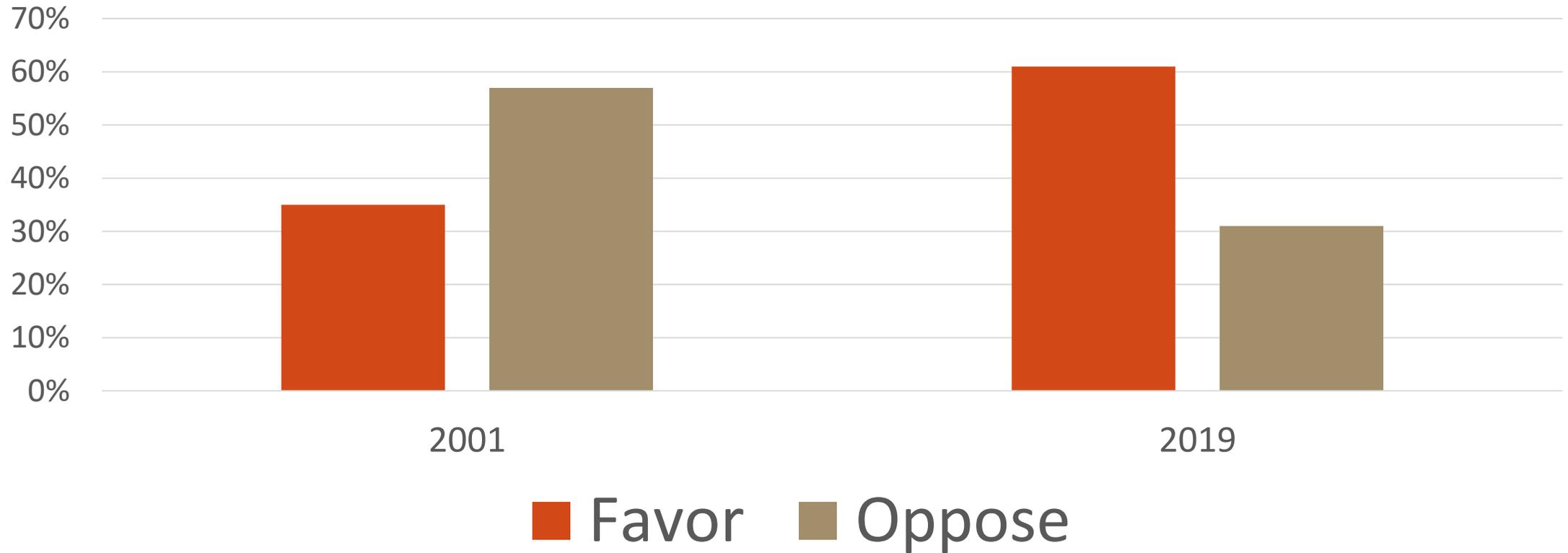
Parents for Privacy v. Barr (2020)

- The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the rights of cisgender students were not violated by **allowing a transgender student to use a bathroom** corresponding with the student's gender identity.

Evolving Views

(Pew Research, 2020)

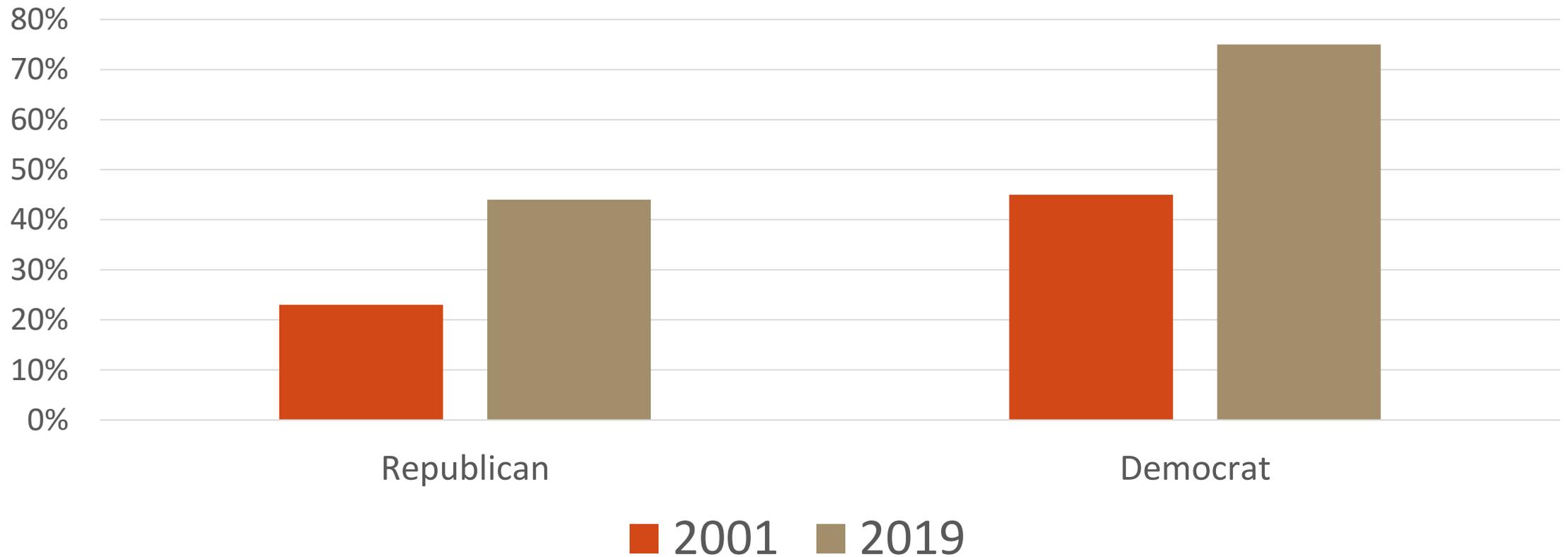
Support for Gay Marriage – American Public



Evolving Views

(Pew Research, 2020)

Support for Gay Marriage - Political Affiliation



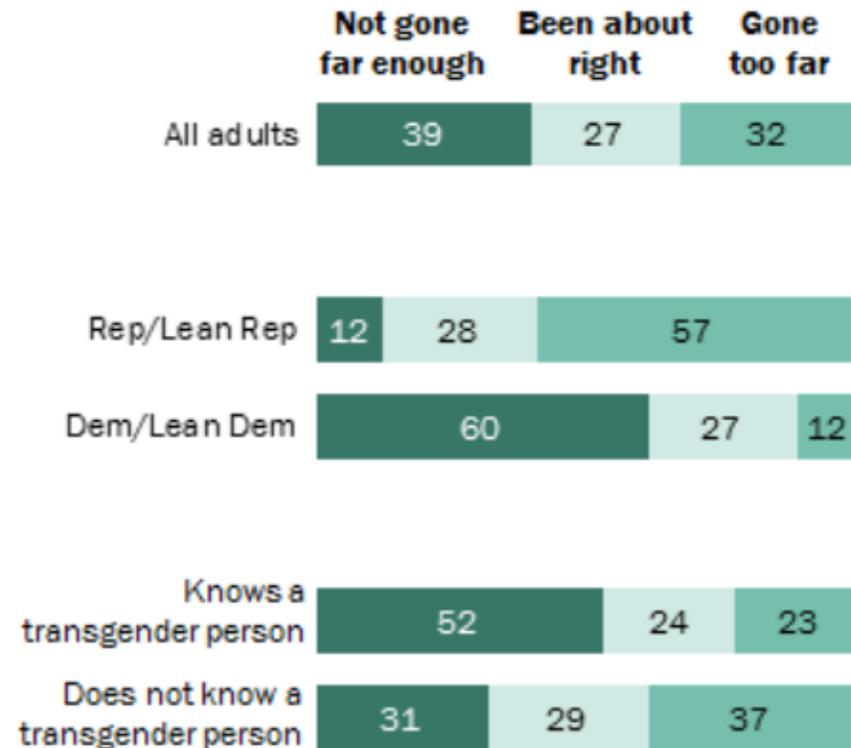
Transgender Individuals Find Less Acceptance

“There is no consensus on whether society has been too accepting of transgender people or not accepting enough. About four-in-ten adults (39%) say society has not gone far enough in accepting people who are transgender, while 32% say society has gone too far and 27% say it has been about right.”

--Pew Research Fact Tank

About a third of Americans say society has gone too far in accepting transgender people

% saying that our society has ___ when it comes to accepting people who are transgender



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 8-21 and Sept. 14-28, 2017.

So, What About Our Schools?

In a 2015 interview, Kevin Jennings, the founder of the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), noted that **teachers are ill-prepared to address LGBTQ issues and opined that many school administrators avoid controversy by ignoring LGBTQ concerns** (*Education Week*, 2015).

See no...



Hear no...



Speak no...



Hiring and ST Placement ... Things to Think About

P-12 Schools

- Hiring transgender individuals – protecting privacy
- Supporting transgender individuals as employees
- Navigating social norms with other employees, parents, students

Educator Preparation Programs

- Placements for STs already challenging
- FERPA, privacy -- student teachers (STs) do not have to disclose
- Transition from university environment (which may have additional supports)

What does this mean for transgender employees and student teachers?

Discrimination based on transgender status in employment is now illegal

Possibly less workplace support, fewer social interactions, and less tolerant attitudes toward LGBTQ colleagues

May affect school and community acceptance of transgender candidates and subsequent employment as teachers

OUR STUDIES

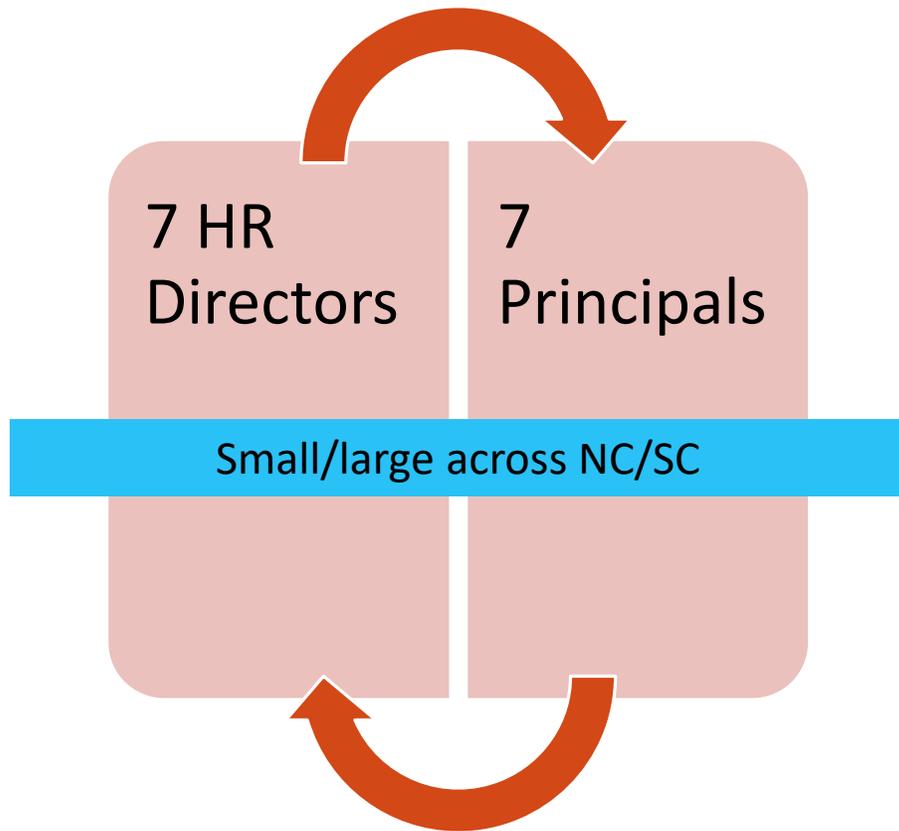
Study #1:

Investigate factors considered by P-12 schools in hiring a transgender teacher OR making a field placement for a transgender teacher candidate.

Specifically, we wanted to know:

- Impact of increased educator diversity?
- Candidate's transgender status would impact the ST placement process?
- District's perception about community response, and would that impact hiring practices or ST placement?

Study 1: Qualitative – School Leaders



Emerging Themes:

1. Diversity is a stated value
2. Transgender status may impact hiring/placement
3. Concern about community acceptance and professionalism

Emerging Theme 1: Diversity in Teacher Staff is a Stated Value



"That is one of our goals. We are trying to increase our diversity to match the demographics of our students so they can relate to the folks who are like them and have more of an impact on them."

Diversity in Teacher Staff is Stated Value

Role Model Benefit

“In a community such as this I think it is important for students to see a very diverse faculty/staff. It opens their eyes to a lot of different perspectives that they may or may not hear otherwise.”

Social Justice Benefit

- "I think there is benefit to trying to bring in diversity, to really build that understanding about being human ... and everything we are doing is trying to be better people."

Emerging Theme 2 – Transgender Status May Impact Placement/Hiring of Teachers

10 of the 14 (71%)

described some aspect of the ST placement process that **they would change to accommodate candidates because of their transgender status.**

Important to note:

participants expressed that they would use such knowledge to attempt to ensure a **positive experience** for the individual.

Emerging Theme 2 – Transgender Status May Impact Placement/Hiring of Teachers

“I think you look at the part of the state that we are in— whether it is right or wrong to be open- or closed-minded— we have some very closed-minded people, and it would be an unsuccessful experience.”



Emerging Theme 2 – Transgender Status May Impact Placement/Hiring of Teachers



“I am concerned with making sure that the mentors that are available to be assigned to these people are ones that we feel would be good mentors ... I am wanting to make the match that is the best match for that person whether transgender or not.”

Emerging Theme 3 – Concern about Community Response to Transgender Teachers; Concern about Professionalism

Participants believed that acceptance of transgender teachers/student teachers in their districts would vary within regions of the district.

RURAL

SUBURBAN



More accepting

Community Response - Not In My Back Yard

“In a rose-colored world I would love to say it doesn't matter. But truthfully I think it does matter in this community. I think it does. When you bring transgender into this community there are people who do not want their child to be exposed to that.”

Community Response - Not In My Back Yard (School Boards)

“Our board is overall moderate and conservative. This is something that might go against what most of them believe. They might support the idea in the abstract. The closer to them, the less likely they would be to support it.”

Candidate Professionalism—“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

“I just would not want that to be the platform at the school. Same with heterosexuality or homosexuality – that place is not a platform for your own personal beliefs. You are there to teach a curriculum rather than making it a personal platform. I would say that to any group, not just a transgender coming in.”

EMERGING THEME 4: Uncertainty by Administrators on How to Handle Transgender Issues



What To Do???



EMERGING THEME 4: Uncertainty by Administrators on How to Handle Transgender Issues

"One thing I am hearing from a lot of principals regardless of their personal view, they are saying, 'I just want to make sure I know what I am supposed to do or not do.'"

"Unfortunately, I don't know if we know enough to educate colleagues, parents, other than what is out there in the media. **For us, [there will be] no action until we need to take action.**"



OUR STUDIES

Study #2:

Investigate workplace experiences of transgender teachers.

Specifically, we wanted to know:

- Factors influencing decisions to be open or closeted in workplace?
- Extent that allies or bullies exist in workplace and impact?
- Ways transgender teachers provide support for LGBTQ students?
- Impact of institutional practices affect workplace experiences of transgender educators?

Study 2: Qualitative – Transgender Teachers

6
transgender
teachers in
NC

5 of 6 → female at birth; of these, 4 identify as non-binary, 1 identifies as trans male

1 of 6 → male at birth; identifies as trans female

All were white

Population:

- 4 of 6 full time high school teachers
- 1 long-term sub in three middle/high schools for 1 year (extended assignments)
- 1 teaches as contract employee doing Health lessons for district

Emerging Theme 1: Factors Affecting Choice to Disclose Gender Identity

Participants feared negative employment consequences OR just wanted to focus on teaching

83% (5 of 6) described negative responses from school colleagues/students

- *Strained relationships*
- *Feeling excluded (“coldly polite”)*
- *Bullying from students*
- *Deliberately using incorrect names*

Emerging Theme 1: Factors Affecting Choice to Disclose Gender Identity

History of Rejection Fuels This...

“I typically assume that people I don’t know may be more likely to reject or feel hostile toward my identity than I would assume that they will feel friendly toward it because that has happened so much in the past.”

Emerging Theme 2: Co-worker support in the workplace

Both Allies and Bullies were experienced in the workplace

Allies



- Caring relationships
- Using appropriate names/pronouns
- Empathetic students

Bullies



- Demeaning comments
- Avoidance, looks of disgust
- Gossiping

Emotionally Exhausting



Emerging Theme 2: Co-worker support in the workplace

Bullying prevention tends to focus on prevention for students, not teachers.

“We talk a lot about kids bullying each other. Generally, kids are able to bully queer teachers because there is no actual system [to address it] and it always comes back on you as, ‘well, maybe you shouldn’t have told that kid to _____’ or ‘maybe you shouldn’t have said’ whatever.”

Emerging Theme 3: Supporting LGBTQ students

All following NCSCOS

Engaged in subtle and spontaneous acts supportive of LGBTQ students when occasion presented itself

Example:

Admonishing students for use of “gay” as derogatory; discussions of inappropriate use of that word

Mentoring / supporting Gay-Straight Student Alliances (GSAs)

Providing easy access to pamphlets and support group information for those who want it

Emerging Theme 3: Supporting LGBTQ students

Could Be a Role Model for Students ...

“A lot of things I don’t talk about with my students. And that’s a shame because that would provide them with an opportunity to have an experience with diversity that they’re deprived of. I could be their own personal unicorn.”



Emerging Theme 4: Impact of the Principal

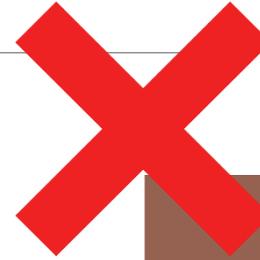
The Principal played most pivotal role in determining the nature of the workplace experience for participants (either positive or negatively).

Emerging Theme 4: Impact of the Principal



Affirming

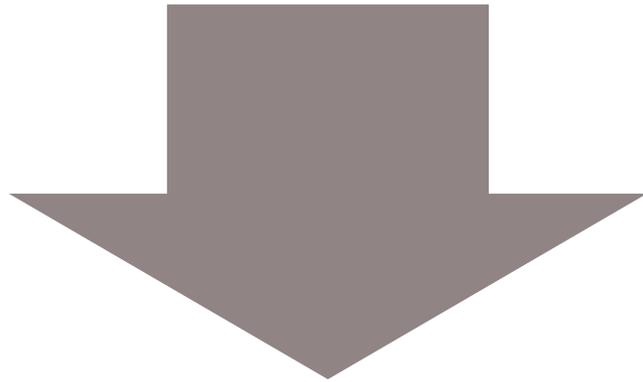
- Supported publicly
- Respected names & pronouns
- Asked “how can I support you?”



Negating

- Cautioned about personal life
- Inexplicable negative ratings after complaints
- Focused on need for trans teacher to change
- Did not stop bullying behavior (or added to it)

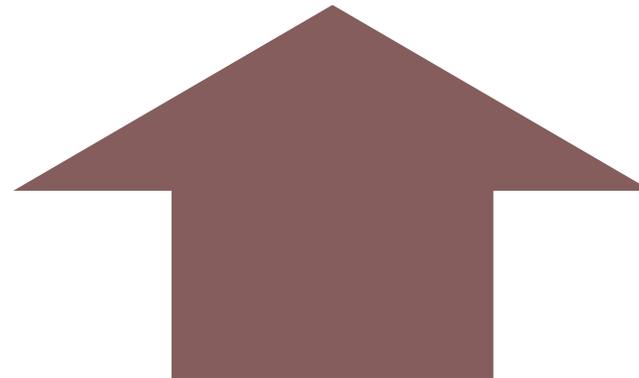
CONCLUSIONS FOR SCHOOLS:



**The desire to create
diversity within
faculties and support
transgender educators**



**The desire to avoid
potential controversy,
which undermines
efforts to diversify**



Conclusions:

**Transgender educators are valuable
but professionally vulnerable.**

Conclusions:

There is an overall **lack of preparedness in school districts & communities** for dealing with issues that are likely to arise related to the employment or placement of transgender educators.



Conclusions:

Leaders should anticipate possible resistance as they promote tolerance for LGBTQ workers' presence in the workplace.

Recommendations (district):

Affirmation of gender diversity with policy at district level

- Legal protections exist as basis for policy
- Supporting principals as they support transgender educators

Professional development for principals

- “How to be an ally”
- Navigating community response – example documents, language

Recommendations (schools):

Adding action to empathy

- Visibly affirming gender diversity as an ally
- Respecting the individual's privacy wishes while communicating support
- Learning terms, names, pronouns

Don't assume that transgender people want to proselytize

- Treat individuals as professionals

No "one size fits all"

- Address each situation in its own context

Wrap-Up:

The best remedy is for leaders to **respond proactively, establishing policies and regulations that outline acceptable procedures while specifically noting that discriminatory and illegal practices will not be tolerated.**

Questions?
THANK YOU!

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