

How to Support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Students



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2018

With the support of Engine, Inc. Biddeford, ME

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Campbell (Walking Life's Path)

Introductions

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Objectives

- Understanding the realities that students in York County are facing.
- Basics for supporting LGBTQIA+ Students.
- Laws for protecting LGBTQIA+ students.
- Best practices for schools and teachers in supporting students.

Realities LGBTQIA+ Youth are
facing in their homes, communities
and schools.

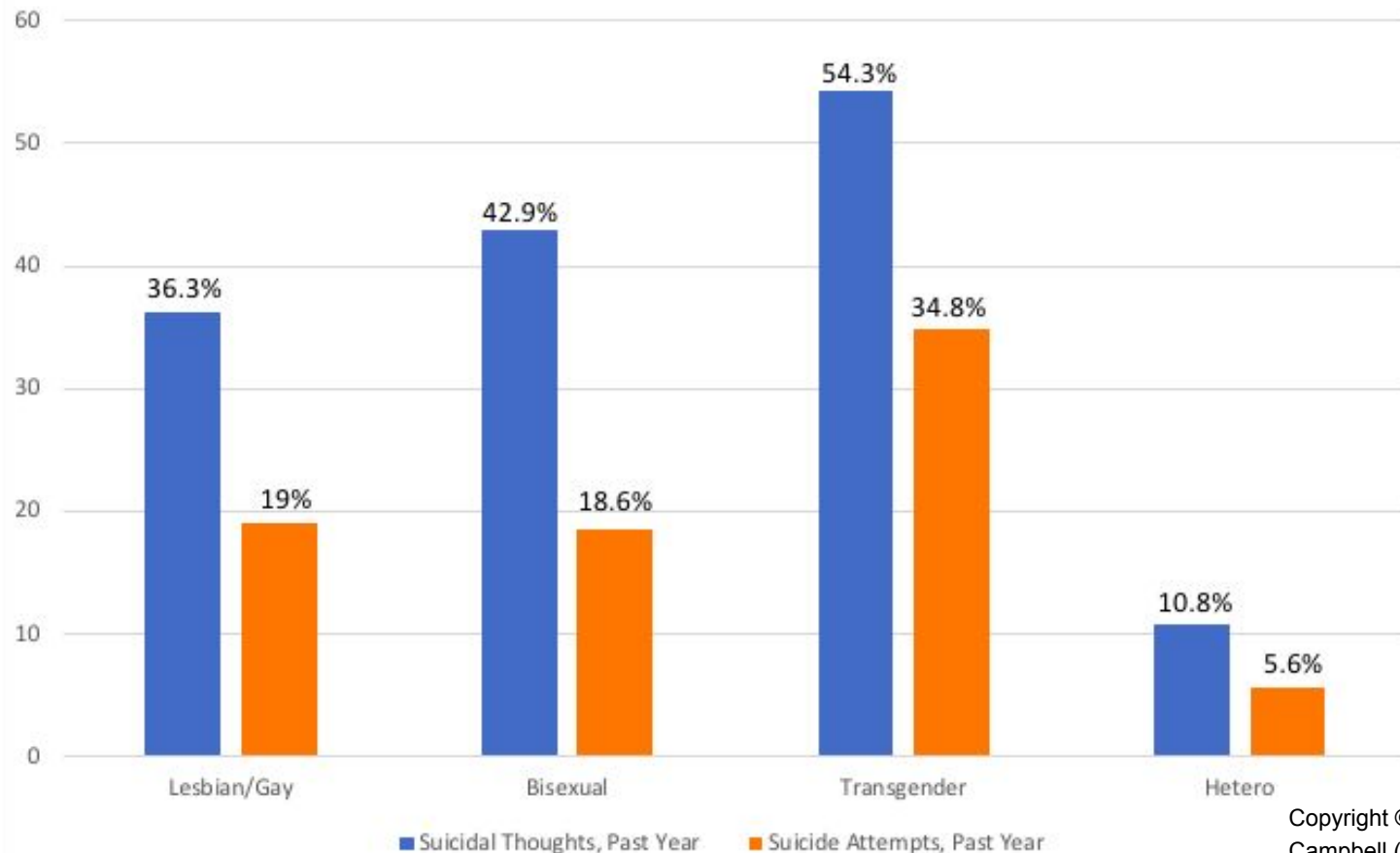
Students in York County are at risk

According to the MIYHS (2017), in York County:

- 21.3% (1,659 high school students) say that they are bullied regularly in school.
- 14% (1,091 high school students) have said that they have seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months
- 6.8% (533 students) said that they have actually attempted suicide in the past 12 months.
- 14.3% (1,127 high school students) at least once did something to purposely hurt themselves such as cutting or burning in the past 12 months without the intention of dying.

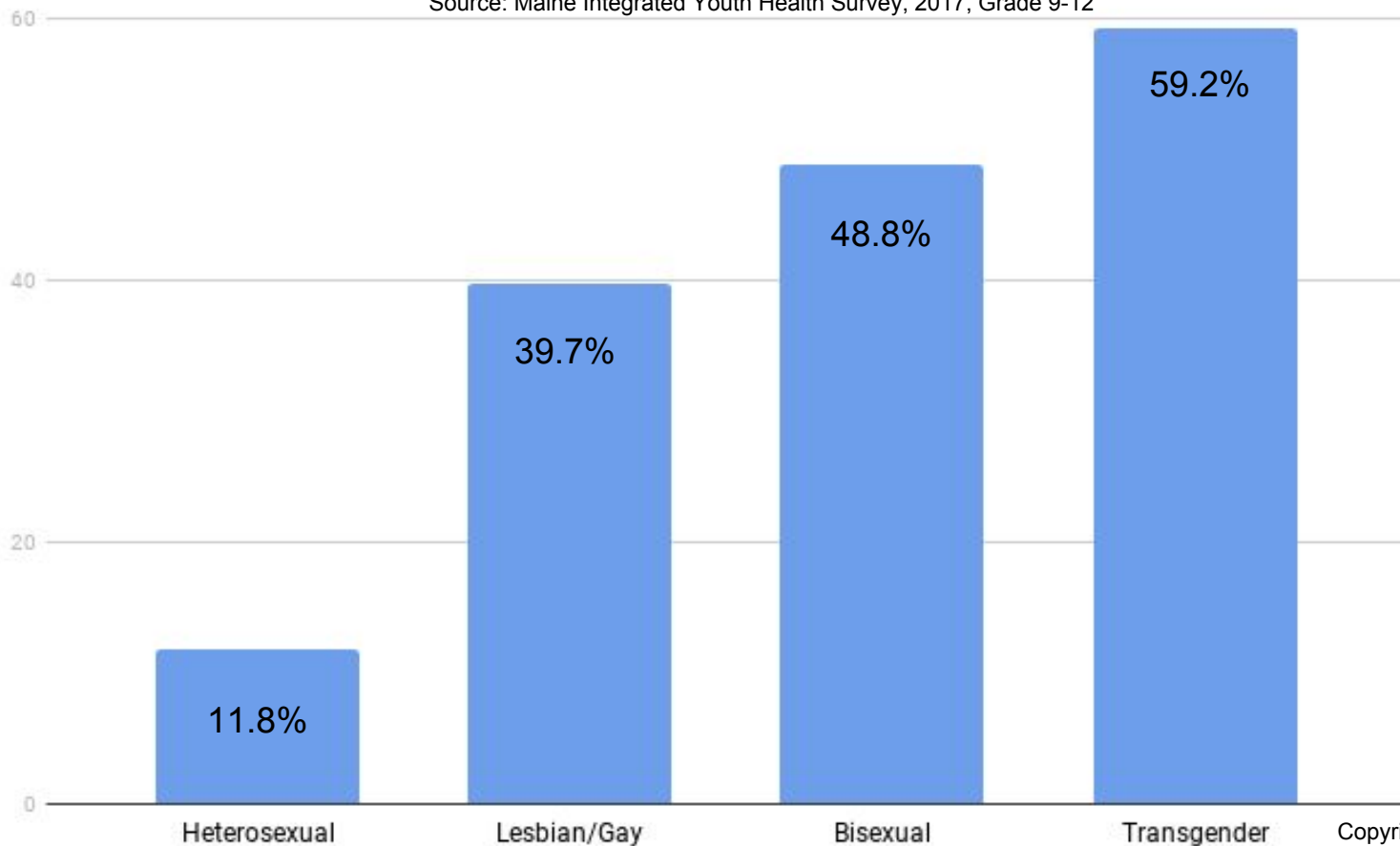
Suicide Ideation & attempts among Maine high school students by sexual orientation, 2017

Source: Maine Intergrated Youth Health Survey, 2017, Grades 9-12



Self-Injurious behavior by sexual orientation among Maine high school students, 2017

Source: Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2017, Grade 9-12



Basics for supporting your students.

Terminology Activity

What is the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation?

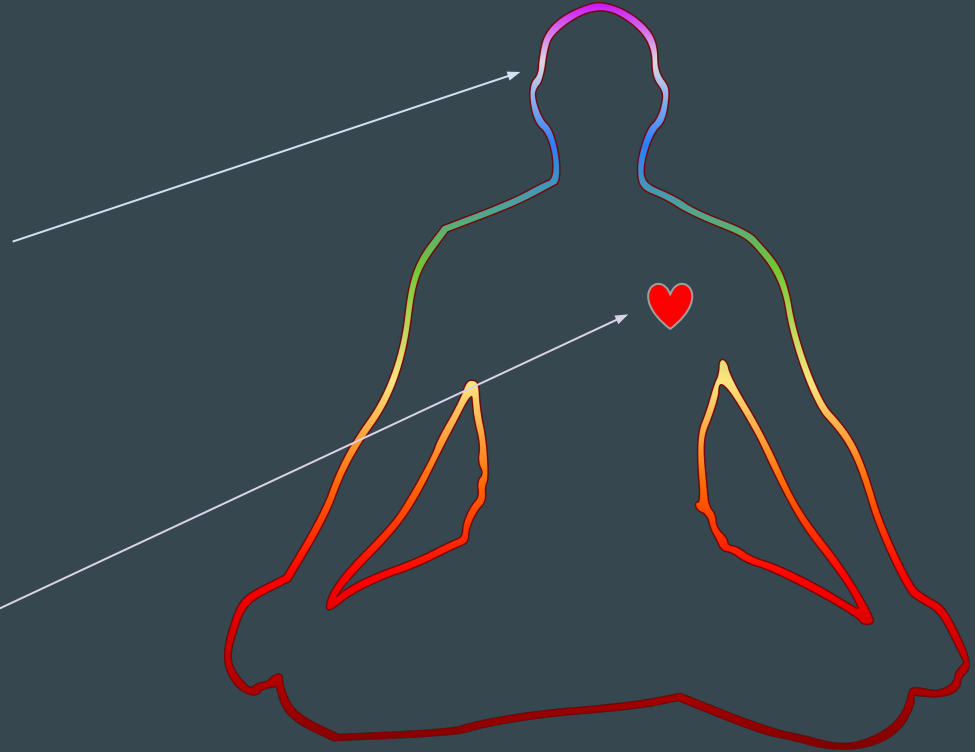
Gender Identity:

this is a spectrum; it is how someone identifies and expresses themselves. Many terms fall within this category: Transgender, transexual, gender nonconforming, and cisgender.

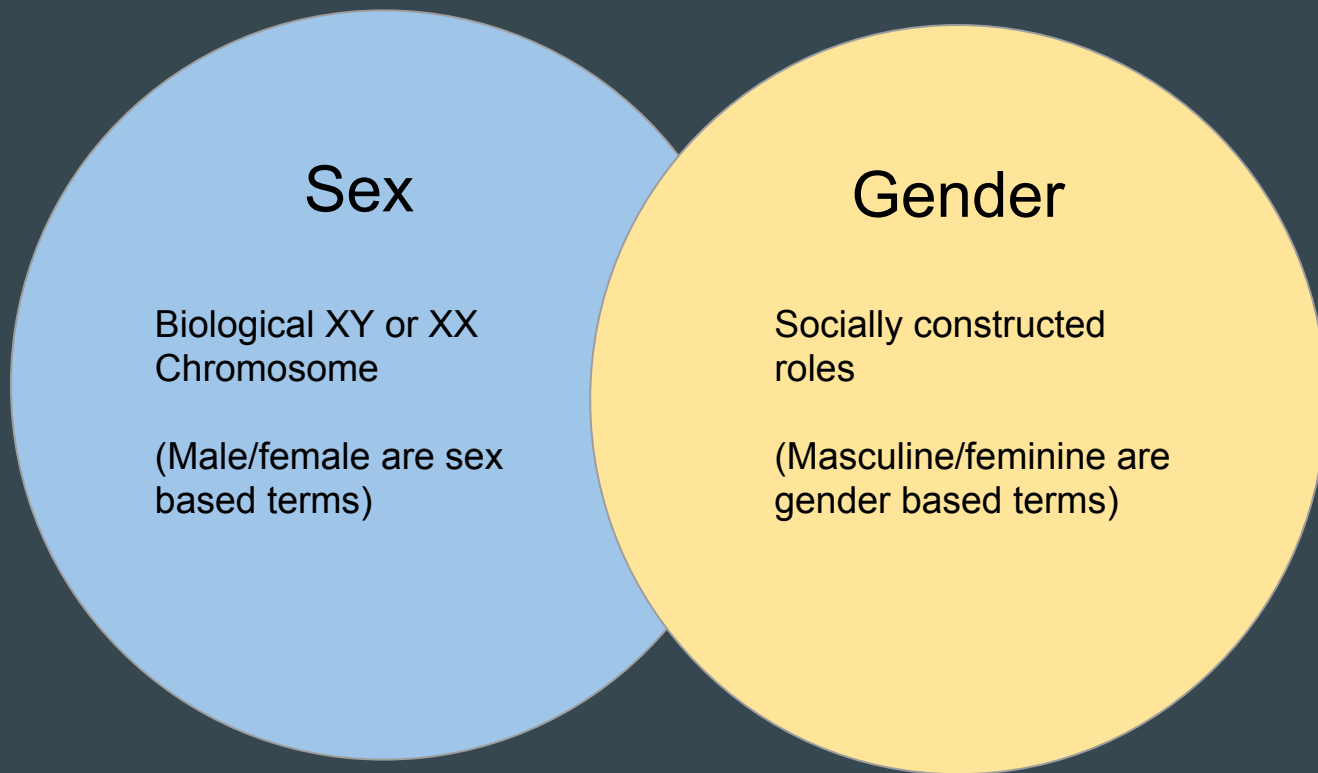


Sexual Orientation:

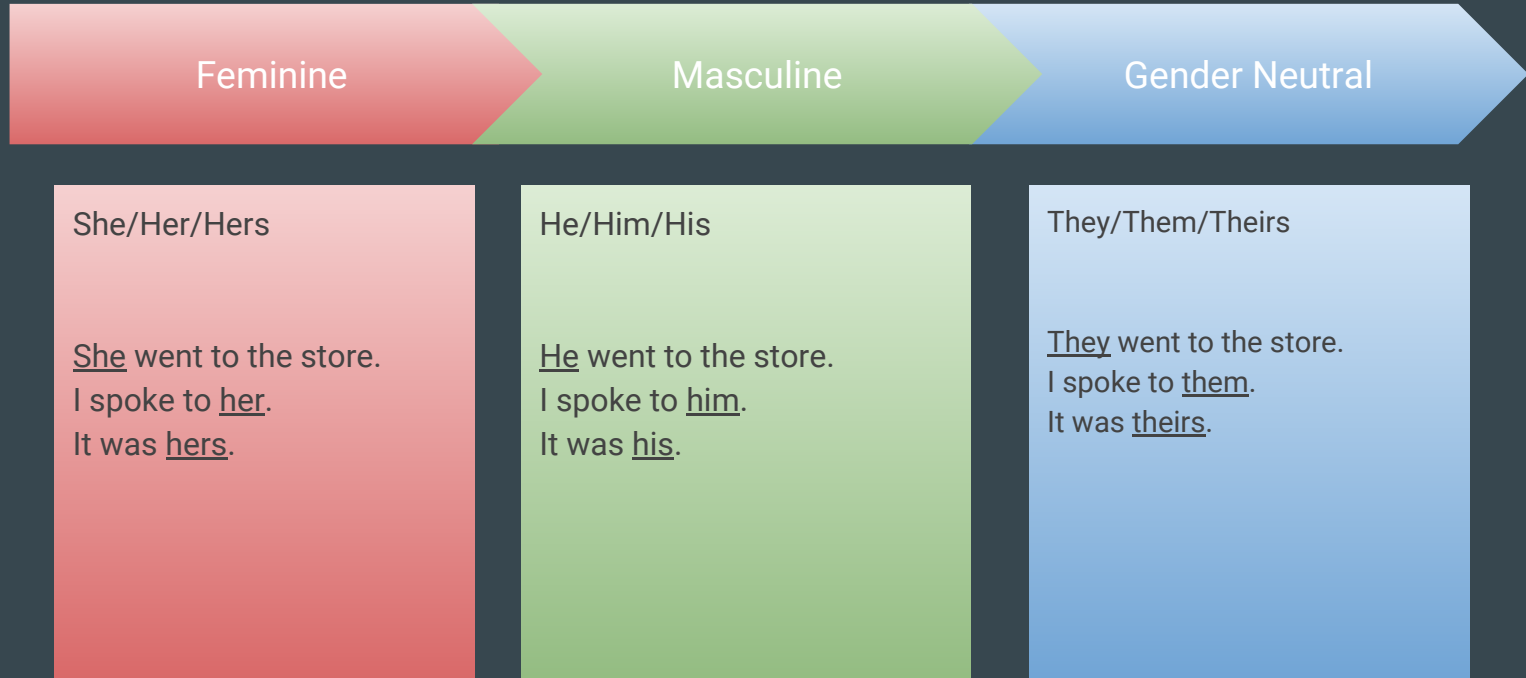
the person one is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to (leads to identifying as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc.).



What is the difference between sex and gender?



Which Pronouns are which?



There are various other pronouns, these are the three most commonly used pronouns.

A person wearing a grey hoodie and a grey beanie is shown from the chest up. They are looking slightly to the right. The background is a blurred city street with buildings and cars. A large white circle is superimposed over the person's face and upper torso, and the word "PRONOUNS" is written in white capital letters inside the circle.

PRONOUNS

Communicate Acceptance

- Ask- about identity and pronouns
- Follow their Lead- even if and when it changes
- Check how words are used in your organizations - forms, attendance lists, etc.
- Be genuine- even if you don't understand, ask



Skills to use

- Meet students where they are at.
- Create an atmosphere of acceptance and celebrate diversity.
- Gain trust early and build empathy.
- Provide language for respectful discussion and model supportive responses.
- Ensure that all students can express their thoughts and feelings, while maintaining a safe environment.

Creating a Safe Place - What to know

- LGBTQIA Students are free to discuss their identities, including dating and romantic interests, on the same terms as other students.
- LGBTQIA students are able to participate in all school activities as other students.
- Transgender students are allowed to use the bathroom and locker rooms that correspond with their gender identity.
- Students should have a clear understanding about the procedure on how to report bullying.
- Faculty and staff should respond effectively to reports of bullying behavior.

Creating a Safe Place - What to know

- Students are able to dress in a way that fits their gender identity, subject to school dress code policy.
- Schools cannot require medical records from students who may be transitioning genders.
- Make sure that all forms, school records, attendance lists, substitute lists are updated with appropriate names for students. You do not want to out anybody.
- Provide positive information about LGBTQIA+ folks in the library and in the health education curriculum.

Laws for protecting students.

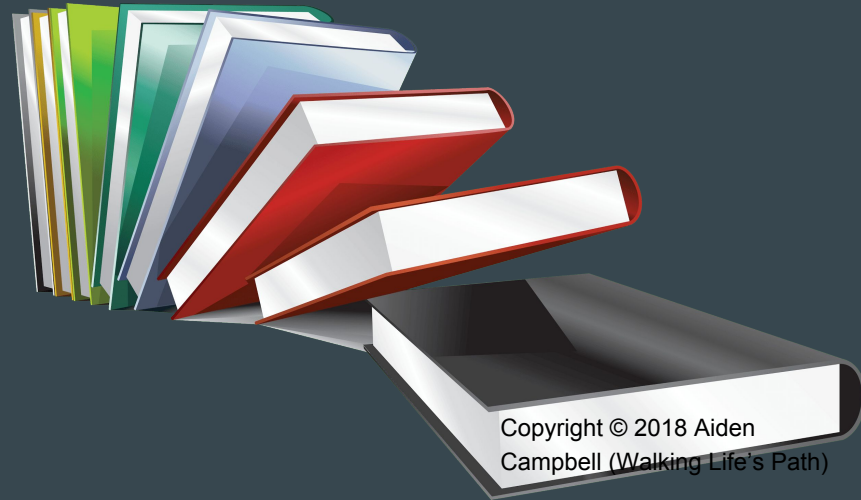
John Doe et al. v. Regional School Unit 26 2014 ME 11

In 2014, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court held that making a transgender girl use a different bathroom than other girls violated the law.

This court case involved Nicole Maines, who had been forced to use a staff bathroom when she was a student in the Orono schools. The school implemented this rule for her because a male student followed Nicole into the bathroom claiming he should be allowed to use the women's restroom if she can.

Maine Human Rights Act

- January 13, 2016, the Maine Human Rights Commission issued a memo about transgender student rights in school.
- Areas that are included in the Human Rights Act are:
 - Bathrooms
 - Sports
 - Locker rooms/Changing areas
 - Name and Pronouns
 - Dress Code
 - Privacy



Human Rights Act

“Whenever educational or extra-curricular opportunities offered by a covered educational institution are offered separately to students based on sex and/or gender, students should be allowed to participate in accordance with their gender identity.”

If a school divides anyone who does something at or with their school into boys or girls, treat a transgender person the way you would treat someone who was assigned to that affirmed gender at birth.

Can schools question your gender identity?

- Schools should accept a student's assertion of a gender identity when there is "consistent and uniform" assertion of their gender identity or any other evidence that their gender identity is sincerely held.
- A school can ask for additional evidence if there is a "credible, objective reason" to believe it is being asserted for an improper purpose.
- A school may not require medical records.
- Student can provide a written statement from a medical provider.
- Students can provide a document that shows the correct gender marker.
- Student can provide a statement from family or from an adult close to them who knows about their core gender identity.

Facilities

- Students must be allowed to use the bathroom, locker room, and shower facilities corresponding to their gender identity.
- Unisex facilities are ok but must be provided to all students.
- If there is sex-segregated housing, students reside in housing matching their gender identity.



Harassment

- If the school knows you are being bullied or harassed because of your gender identity or expression, they have to take “prompt, appropriate action.”
- Failure to do so can lead to legal issues such as lawsuits.



Names, Appearance, and Pronouns

- Official record must list “legal name” but at the written request of a student, and consistent with student’s gender identity, the school shall use the student’s preferred name and pronouns consistent with their gender identity on all other documents.
- If the student wishes, the school staff must address the student by the chosen name and pronouns consistent with the students gender identity.
- The school should also, upon request, instruct the other students to use the chosen name and appropriate pronouns.
- Mistakes are OK, but a pattern of refusal to acknowledge a students gender identity by not using their chosen name and pronouns might violate the law.

Appearance

- Students should be allowed to dress in a way consistent with their gender identity.
- If there is a dress code, the student still has to follow that dress code.
- Students' presentation may change from day to day.



Final Considerations

What if the parents don't know?

- If the student and their parent(s) don't agree about the students gender identity, the school should follow the wishes of the student whenever possible.
- It is not the responsibility of the school or the teacher to share about a students gender identity or sexual orientation unless there is a threat from the student to harm themselves or others.
- It is the priority of the teacher to protect the safety of the student at all times, even if directly asked they are not required to share something that may affect the safety of the student at home.

What if the parents don't know?

- If a teacher or staff is unsure how to address a student in front of their parents, it is okay to ask the student how to refer to them. This is protecting the safety of the student from potential harm.



What we learned

- Statistics on our students' experiences in York County
- Gender and sexuality basics
- Laws around gender and sexuality in Maine
- Best practices for schools and teachers in supporting students

Q&A

How to be an Ally

Thank You!