

Gender Diversity: Breaking Down Silos

By Daniel Blinn (he/him) and Shae Morse (they/them)

Teachers often talk about working in silos. This can be isolating work. When we add gender diversity into the mix, this can make things seem even more isolating. Having capacity to support our colleagues, and by extension our students, means we are creating genuinely safe spaces.

In our current political climate, both nationally and internationally, we are seeing movements and legislation that target transgender and non-binary people. This creates unease for school personnel, especially if they are worried about public pushback to their personal gender identity and expression.

Historically in Mi'kma'ki, gender diversity has been valued and celebrated on this territory for the past 10,000 years. Two-Spirit Indigenous people have traditionally held revered roles of spiritual significance on Turtle Island. In our collective journey towards reconciliation, celebrating gender diversity is a must.

To best support our gender diverse staff members, we recommend using proper pronouns and names, ensuring all staff have access to a washroom that aligns with their gender, and advocating for protective HR policy.

Best practice #1: Using proper pronouns and names

In a profession where we can feel isolated, building strong relationships and getting to know our colleagues matters greatly. One way of doing this is by showing support when we state our pronouns verbally or in writing. Using proper names and pronouns signifies a willingness to get to know someone as they want to be seen.

If you make a mistake, there are three quick steps you should take:

1. Quickly apologize
2. Correct yourself; and
3. Move on!

When you have made a mistake, it's important to keep your focus on the person experiencing the mistake instead of apologizing repeatedly. Moving on indicates that you are aware of and are validating the person's feelings over yours.

Best practice #2: Washroom access

All people deserve to use the washroom with dignity and respect. Having single stall or gender-neutral options available, in addition to traditional male and female washrooms, is paramount. In recent years, schools have made progress concerning this matter. It is of the utmost importance that this practice continues to be supported.



Newer buildings are often constructed with these concerns in mind, including changing room space, but older buildings can pose numerous challenges to inclusive access. Connecting with the staff at your school to come up with solutions is important.

Best practice #3: Inclusive HR Policies

As the political climate changes, robust and protective HR policies are vital. HR policies that omit traditionally underrepresented groups are enacting a form of systemic discrimination through hidden curriculum. By omitting certain groups, an HR policy can undermine the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

The number of discriminatory incidents experienced by transgender and non-binary people climbed throughout 2024. Our HR policies must have explicit protections for sexual orientation and gender identity. These policies also need to ensure that they are creating safe spaces by encouraging the hiring of staff of various identities so that our students can benefit from a variety of perspectives.

Building our support for staff of various identities means that we are best equipped to support each other and our students. The more we work to break down the silos we find ourselves in, the more we will all feel connected and supported.

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