



# Welcoming Schools

## Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender

It is important to practice how to respond to questions related to gender and how to interrupt gender based teasing and bullying. Being prepared will help you embrace teachable moments with your students to foster a gender inclusive school.

### “Why does Martin like pink?” (Martin identifies as a boy.)

- + Here at (name of school) we all get to like what we like. What is your favorite color? Why do you like that color?
- + There are so many beautiful colors, we can all like different ones.
- + There is no such thing as boy colors or girl colors. Colors are colors. All people like different colors.
- + It is not okay to tease people for the colors that they like. We are all different and we can like different colors that make us happy.

### “Why is her hair so short? She looks like a boy.”

- + People of all genders can have long hair, medium hair or short hair. And some people do not have any hair.
- + That’s just how she likes it. How would you like your hair to be?
- + Hair is hair. That is how she likes it.
- + There is no such thing as “boy” hair or “girl” hair. Here at (name of school) we all get to have our hair the way that makes us happy.
- + You cannot tell someone’s gender from how they have their hair.

### “Juan plays with dolls. That’s weird.” (Juan identifies as a boy.)

- + It’s true that some boys don’t like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some of you like to draw and some of you don’t. Some of you like to play kickball and others don’t. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because of their gender.
- + The dolls are for all children in this classroom.
- + Sometimes this is confusing. We get messages about some toys being for boys and some toys being for girls. They are just for kids!

### You overhear a student say to another student who identifies as a girl, “You look like a boy.”

- + Why do you say that?
- + There is no one way for girls or boys or people of any gender to act or look.
- + Those are the kinds of clothes that she likes to wear. Why do you like to wear what you’re wearing?
- + Here at (name of school) we all get to wear what makes us happy and comfortable for learning and playing.

### “But he’s a boy, why does he dress like a girl?”

- + There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress. There are lots of ways that people of any gender can dress.
- + Some boys like to wear pink or to have long hair. All of these things are OK in our school.
- + There are many ways of being a boy (girl), and all are okay ways of being a boy (girl).

- + Those are the kinds of clothes that he likes to wear? What kinds of clothes do you like to wear?

### **“Dominic is always hanging out with girls. Why?”**

- + Here at (name of our school) we want everyone to play together with lots of different friends.
- + Dominic hangs out with friends who he likes to spend time with, just like you do with your friends. We all like to spend time with people who share our interests.
- + We can all be friends with people of many genders.
- + Do you want to play with Dominic? Do you want me to help you feel included? I am sure they would love to play with you too.
- + Here at (name of our school) all children can play and do things together. He’s a boy who likes to play with girls and that’s OK.

### **You overhear a student call another student who identifies as a boy, a “girl” in an insulting way.**

- + That’s not OK at our school to call someone a “girl” to insult them or make them feel bad. We don’t use gender as a put-down.

### **You overhear a student say, “Boys are better at sports than girls.”**

- + Some boys are good at sports and some are not, and some girls are good at sports and some are not. All kids have different things that they are good at.
- + Some people are good at sports and some are not.
- + People of all genders are good at different things.

### **You overhear a student say, “Girls are better at art.”**

- + “No group is best. Some people are good at art. Some people are not.”

### **You see that some children who are playing soccer at recess are excluding others because of their gender.**

- + We don’t exclude any gender in play. Here at (name of school) we include everyone.

*Ideas based on: The Gender Inclusive School by Gender Spectrum, Graciela Slesaransky-Poe, “Not True! Gender Doesn’t Limit You” by Lindsay Lamb, et al. Teaching Tolerance, and Johanna Eager*