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Social Oppression and Transformation: Adapt A Module

**Compelling Unit Question:**What can schools do to reduce transgender students' encounters with bullying and harassment?

**Text Set:**

1. **Range of Gender Identities - AMAZE Org - YouTube Video**

[*Range of Gender Identities Video Link*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i83VQIaDlQw)

Conversations surrounding gender identity and sexual orientation can be very difficult to have with your family, particularly because of the intergenerational differences between family members. The video, “Range of Gender Identities' ' by AMAZE Organization follows a conversation between a family as they discuss gender and gender expression at the dinner table. The children begin by explaining the spectrum of gender identities, and how the labels male and female indicate a person's assigned sex at birth. The family then goes on to talk about how a person's gender does not have to match their assigned sex at birth; further defining what it means to be transgender, non-binary, and genderqueer. Additionally, the family members discuss the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation, noting that one does not indicate the other. To close out the video, the family shares the importance of respecting all people and how by honoring pronouns, and including everyone, we can act as allies to transgender people.

1. **What High School is like for Transgender Students - Elly Belle ~ Teen Vogue - Article**

[*What High School is like for Transgender Students Article Link*](https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-high-school-is-like-for-transgender-students)

Elly Belle’s piece, “What High School is like for Transgender Students” unpacks one student’s experience with transphobia at her high school, and the larger issue of a lack of support for transgender students at schools nationwide. Emme was 12 years old when she first came out to her parents, and since then she has tried to navigate this identity at school. Emme is one of many transgender students who face daily bullying and harassment. In many states, transgender students are also up against transphobic legislation and campaigns for conversion therapy. Emme shares the importance of advocating for transgender students by demanding schools implement comprehensive training on trans student issues, as well as offering emotional support and access to gender-neutral bathrooms for transgender students. Transgender students remain some of the least protected and most targeted students nationwide, pointing to the significance of providing more resources and support for students within schools.

**3. A Powerful Poem About What it Feels like to be Transgender - Lee Mokobe ~ TedX - Video**

[*Powerful Poem About What it Feels like to be Transgender Video*](https://www.ted.com/talks/lee_mokobe_a_powerful_poem_about_what_it_feels_like_to_be_transgender?referrer=playlist-the_gender_spectrum&autoplay=true)

In this poem, slam poet and cofounder of vocal revolutionaries, Lee Mokobe gives listeners a look into the experiences of trans-youth. Mokobe shares his journey as a transgender person, and the difficulty he has had navigating this identity in a society that wants him to be a girl. Mokobe offer insight into the experiences of Black and transgender people, who face marginalization based on race and gender. His poetry is extremely powerful, as he shares the shame and dehumanization he has experienced as a result of transphobia.

**4. Gender Neutral Bathrooms Benefit a lot of People - Taylor Reich - GGWash - Article**

[*Gender Neutral Bathrooms Benefit a lot of People Link*](https://ggwash.org/view/70800/why-the-washington-region-needs-more-gender-neutral-bathrooms)

In their opinion article, *Gender Neutral Bathrooms Benefit a lot of People. Our Region Needs More of Them,* Taylor Reich explains why gender-neutral bathrooms are the most inclusive and beneficial option for all people. Reich begins by talking about how many transgender folks do not feel comfortable or safe using gendered bathrooms due to the verbal and physical harassment that often comes with it. Beyond being more inclusive and safer for trans people, they are also safer for children and families who often have to separate to use different gendered bathrooms. Over the years gender-neutral bathrooms have become more prevalent, however without being federally mandated many states and public places still do not offer them. Reich ends the piece by empowering people to speak to local officials and lawmakers about the importance of gender-neutral bathrooms and the benefits they have for society as a whole.

**5. Trans Inclusion in Sports Doesn’t Hurt Cisgender Girls - James Factora ~ Them - Article**

[*Trans Inclusion in Sports Doesn't Hurt Cisgender Girls Link*](https://www.them.us/story/trans-inclusion-school-sports-study)

In this article, author James Factora unpacks the debate on transgender students' participation in sports. Factora begins by discussing the harm excluding trans students has on both their physical and mental health, stating it puts them at greater risk for anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. Beyond this exclusion being harmful to trans students, no evidence shows it hurts cisgender students and that allowing participation can even increase overall engagement. Encouraging and supporting trans students' participation in sports can increase their feelings of safety, and self-esteem, and lower their likelihood of self-harm or suicide. Schools should not only allow trans students to participate in their gender-affirming teams' but also mandate trans-inclusivity training, and make sure students' proper names and pronouns are used on rosters. The new attack on trans students' participation in sports is a direct example of transphobia in the school system, that is masked under the guise of uplifting and supporting women.

**Memo:**

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Hate Crime Prevention Act; the first statute allowing for the federal criminal prosecution of hate crimes that were motivated by the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity (Seider, Module 5C). In spite of the passing of this act, transgender students continue to be disproportionately impacted by bullying and harassment in schools across America. A study done by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that 86.3% of LGBTQ+ students experienced harassment or assault due to their sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression (GLSEN, 2019). Consequently, transgender students demonstrate a higher risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide contemplation. A national study showed LGBTQ+ students are four times as likely to attempt suicide compared to their straight-identifying peers (MYRB, 2020; Seider, Module 5C). Transgender students are some of the most vulnerable and least protected students within the education system, and it is time that schools begin to discern how they can support and include transgender students.

The unit's compelling question, “What can schools do to reduce transgender students' encounters with bullying and harassment?” aims to empower junior high students, educators, and school districts to think critically about how they can create more inclusive environments for transgender students. The question gets under students' skin, pushing them to reflect on how they have contributed to and perpetuated transphobia. Talking about these issues is interesting and engaging for students because due to the erasure of trans identities many students do not know much about gender identity. Each of the five-unit texts and videos highlights the importance of providing LGBTQ+ resources in schools and the added value of providing inclusive after-school activities. The unit encourages students to analyze and evaluate how their school is succeeding or failing its LGBTQ+ students. Additionally, the materials appeal to students' and educators' morals, empowering them to find creative ways to stand against transphobia. Gender identity is a salient part of identity; however, it has come to be viewed as highly controversial and undiscussable. Discussing transgender students' experiences with bullying and harassment, as well as brainstorming creative ways to create more inclusive school environments is the first step in creating school environments that uplift all students.

The video, “Range of Gender Identities” by AMAZE Organization starts off by providing students with an overview of the gender spectrum. This spectrum includes identities such as cisgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, and transgender (AMAZE Org, 2022). Although today we know that gender has a range, one-fourth of transgender students report schools denying them from using their preferred name and pronouns because they are different than their birth name or assigned sex at birth (GLSEN, 2019). This video can help teachers begin the conversation about gender identity, and educate students about gender versus assigned sex at birth. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of recognizing a variety of gender identities and pronoun series. Furthermore, the video brings playfulness to what can be difficult and uncomfortable conversations to have. Knowing these conversations are tough, the video normalizes students and teachers confusion and the possibility of making mistakes. This video is included in the unit, because it is both educational and thought-provoking, while also highlighting the power of entering into these discussions with respect and a willingness to learn.

The article “What High School is like for Transgender Students,” builds on the importance of treating transgender students with respect, further discussing navigating ally ship. Transgender students are forced to navigate the lack of access to safe bathroom spaces, being mis gendered, and bullying. The piece is moving because it shows the range of interpersonal and institutional barriers transgender students face. The text also pays homage to the unique experience of transgender women and their dual battle against transphobia and trans misogyny. Battered Women’s Support Services defines trans misogyny as the negative attitudes, expressed through cultural hate, individual and state violence, and discrimination directed toward trans women and trans and [gender non-conforming](http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/03/too-queer-for-your-binary/) people on the feminine end of the gender spectrum (BWSS, 2022). By hearing Emme’s story, students can gain a better understanding of how transphobia is fueled by toxic masculinity and overall societal bias against femininity (BWSS, 2022). Most importantly, the text provides a list of ways students can advocate for transgender students such as by demanding schools have comprehensive training on transgender issues, providing emotional support resources for trans students, and requesting the implementation of gender-neutral bathrooms. Following the Range of Identities video which provides a baseline understanding of gender and pronoun usage, this text dives into ally ship and offers students substantive ways to create change within their own school.

Lee Mokobe’s slam poetry draws on empathy and ally ship, offering a more intersectional lens about the experience of transgender people within the Black community. Mokobe’s poetry is very vulnerable as he discusses the immense shame he felt and the backlash he faced after coming out to his parents. In her discussion post, Kelly Ward says, “To people who are both sexist and transphobic, the idea of someone both “choosing” to change their gender is counter to their sense of the world.” Kelly and Mokobe stress that while it may be difficult to grasp, people have to understand that being transgender is not a choice so much as it is about living as one’s authentic self. Additionally, uplifting Mokobe’s voice is important because Black trans people are marginalized on the basis of both race and gender. A study done by the GLSEN, found that 97% of Black trans students were called a homophobic slur, and 90% experienced racist remarks in the past year (GLSEN, 2022). Schools have to be particularly conscious of this intersectionality and should work to provide additional resources for Black and transgender students. Mokobe’s poetry provides a break from the reading, appealing more to students' emotions and encouraging students to reflect on how they treat their friends and peers who are transgender.

To close out the unit, students will have the opportunity to read about two contemporary debates transgender students are dealing with; the right to use their preferred bathroom and the right to participate on their preferred sports team. The reading, “Why Gender-Neutral Bathrooms Benefit A lot of People,” addresses the first of these two issues, diving into the importance of allowing transgender people to use gender-affirming bathrooms and implementing gender-neutral bathrooms. In the same way, there are misconceptions about gender and sexuality, there are many false narratives about transgender folks' intentions behind using their gender-affirming bathroom. Conservative lawmakers often argue that allowing transgender people to use their gender-affirming bathrooms will cause an increase in violence against women in public restrooms. However, research shows that allowing people to use their gender-affirming bathroom as well as offering more gender-neutral bathrooms can increase safety, particularly for children, and trans people (Reich, 2019). This text is educational because it disproves false narratives that stem from transphobia. Additionally, it emphasizes why having gender-neutral bathrooms can benefit the community as a whole. At the end of the text, Reich also shares ways people can support transgender people. This activism can look like identifying single-occupancy bathrooms, speaking to your manager or teachers about implementing gender-inclusive bathrooms, and encouraging lawmakers to create protections surrounding using gender-affirming bathrooms and providing inclusive facilities (Reich, 2019).

The last text, “Trans Inclusion in Sports Doesn’t Hurt Cisgender Girls” written by James Factora unpacks the attack on transgender girls hoping to participate on women’s sports teams. Research shows transgender students' ability to participate in sports can reduce their risk of anxiety and depression, while also increasing the overall student population's participation in sports. Proposals against trans women’s participation on their gender-affirming team are a guise for trans misogyny and transphobia. These arguments also often perpetuate and are bolstered by sexist ideas about men's and women’s bodies or abilities. For example, the idea that men are stronger, and women are less capable physical competitors (Leaper and Brown, 2014). The inclusion of this text is intended to fire students up to take a stand on these issues knowing the harmful rhetoric and messages lawmakers are spewing about transgender students. These texts are also very relevant to middle school students who participate in sports. By bringing texts to the unit that also highlight how transgender students are unable to easily use the restroom and are excluded from sports, hopefully, students will begin to understand the dehumanizing nature of transphobia and lack of inclusion across schools in America.

Asking the question, “What can schools do to reduce transgender students' encounters with bullying and harassment?” is intended to help students reflect on how they can work to create a more inclusive environment for all students. Transgender students face the daily burdens of being mis gendered, being unable to use gender-affirming bathroom facilities, and being excluded from sports as well as their overall school community. The assigned videos and reading offer students both educational information about the institutional discrimination trans students face and personal perspectives on the trans experience. Furthermore, the unit content lists many ways students and educators can act as allies and advocates for trans students. Something group six discussed is that students may feel uncomfortable talking about these topics for fear of making a mistake or facing stigmatization themselves (Group Notes, Module 5C). These texts send the message that making mistakes is human, and that trying is better than continuing to ignore trans students' marginalization. The hope for this unit is the normalization of advocating for queer students, promoting a cultural shift surrounding transphobia, and improving trans inclusion. By providing a unit filled with gender terminology, a variety of ways to advocate for trans-inclusion, and a guidebook for talking with lawmakers, students and educators will be better equipped to address transphobia and misogyny within the education system.

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