

# Hi Sam

## Sensitizing Youth Through Play

Pedagogical Guide for Elementary Schools



Gender Creative Kids

**Wedge**

**lg2**



**Québec** 



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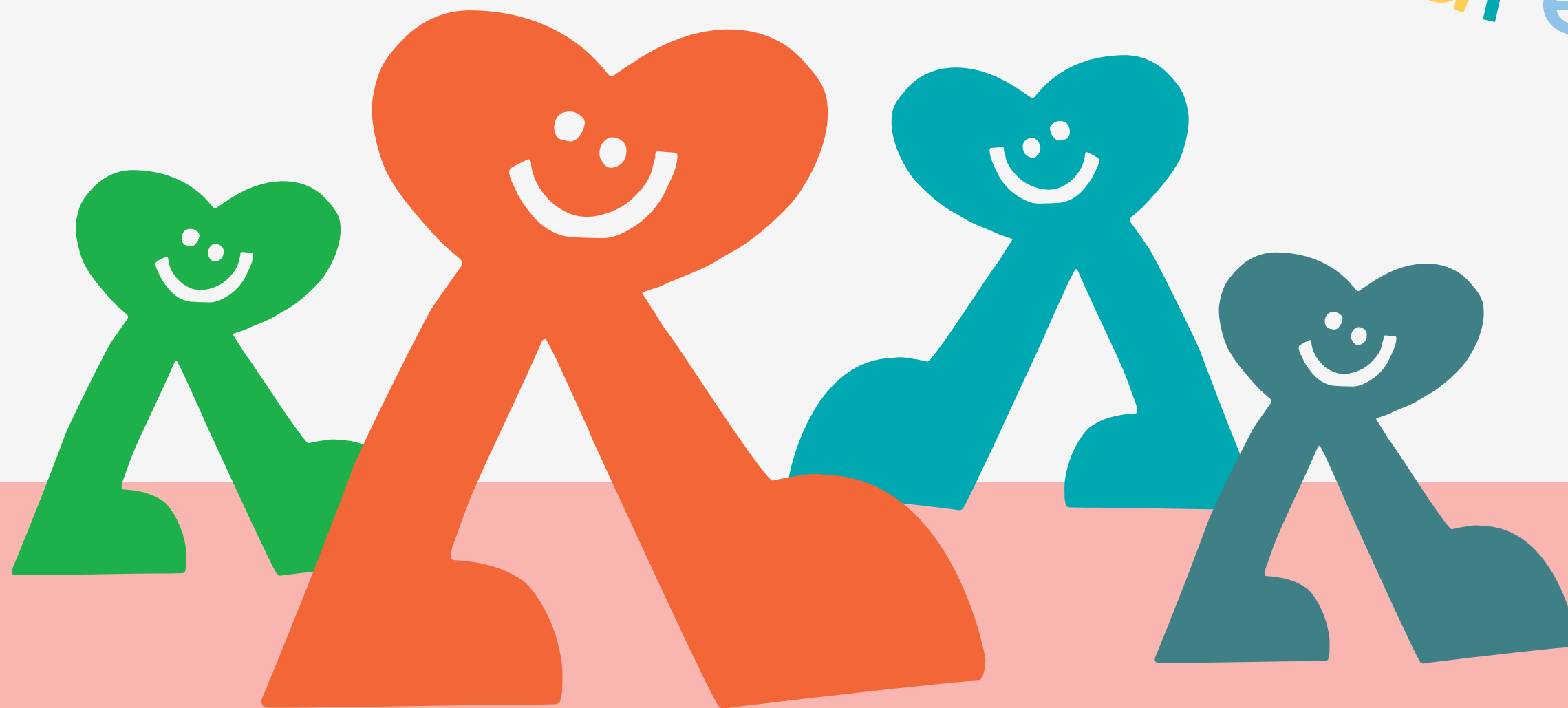
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Fall 2020

For the  
wellbeing

of all  
children



Gender Creative Kids

# Acknowledgements



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This guide was also developed in collaboration with the project’s Expert Committee, without which these educational tools wouldn’t have seen the light of day. This committee is made up of people with personal and/or professional expertise, whether they are researchers, teachers, students, parents, trans and/or non-binary youth or at the intersection of these different identities. Thanks to their different experiences, knowledge and various ideas, we have created tools that reflect the experiences and needs of the children and youth who are directly affected by these issues.

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# Introduction

## 01

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Research on trans children and youth and their families highlights the difficulties faced by these youth throughout their lives. For instance, trans youth are more likely to experience rejection, violence, bullying and discrimination, which have a detrimental effect on their mental health and can lead to them suffering from anxiety, depression and/or suicidal ideation.

Studies show that these difficulties, even those that seem at first glance to be more personal, are not caused by being trans, but rather are manifestations of transphobia and lack of acceptance by family and society in general.

While trans issues are gaining more and more visibility in the media and in public spaces, the violence against trans and gender creative children and youth emphasizes the lack of necessary knowledge and tools that would make the various spaces these youths navigate, including schools, sufficiently open and adapted to welcoming gender diversity.

**It is in this context that Sam was born.**





Gender Creative Kids Canada, in collaboration with the Montréal creative agency Ig2, decided to create a tool to help trans children and youth and their families by making our society a safer and more inclusive place.



Based on the premise that **nobody is born transphobic**, the “You Inside Project” came to life with the creation of the educational tool “Sam” along with the animated short film “Sam’s Story.” In order to **stop transphobia before it starts**, we have to build innovative educational tools specifically for young children. The “Hi Sam: Sensitizing Youth Through Play” project is therefore designed in continuity with the educational tool “Sam” and the short film to assist users with specific guidelines.



## What Exactly is the “Hi Sam: Sensitizing Youth Through Play” Project?

Empathy  
Openness  
Acceptance

Guided by these three fundamental principles, namely empathy, openness and acceptance, this project not only raises awareness among children about gender diversity, but also demystifies the vocabulary as well as the prejudices and misconceptions some students or teachers may have.



In addition, by providing school staff with the language and tools to address these issues, “Hi Sam” gives them the opportunity to become actors of social change by fighting gender stereotypes and therefore contribute to the promotion of an open, inclusive and safe school environment for all.

## Who Should Read This Guide?



This guide is mainly designed for teachers who work in Québec elementary schools, more specifically at the second cycle. This guide can also be used by anyone who wishes to learn more about gender diversity and self-expression in children and who plans to facilitate activities to raise awareness in other intervention contexts that involve children.

For teachers:

As part of your work as a teacher, you are expected to facilitate educational activities as part of the sexuality education curriculum. Gender diversity or creative self-expression in children may, however, be an unknown territory or difficult to discuss: this guide will allow you to familiarize yourself with these topics and provide you with the necessary vocabulary to talk about this topic. This guide will also provide you with ideas of sensitization activities for your students that can easily fit into your mandate.

**This guide is based on a few founding principles:**

**The word “trans” is used as an umbrella term to describe the identities of all people whose gender identity differs from the identity that was assigned to them at birth.**

However, as explained in the next section, we recognize that this term remains limiting, and that the vocabulary a person uses to describe themselves can vary and evolve over time.

**There are many variations and different ways of perceiving, feeling, and understanding gender around the world, and these have been greatly influenced, and even erased, by colonialism.**

Given the Québec context in which this guide was written, the text refers only to general terms used in everyday language, all while recognizing that these terms may not apply to certain communities.

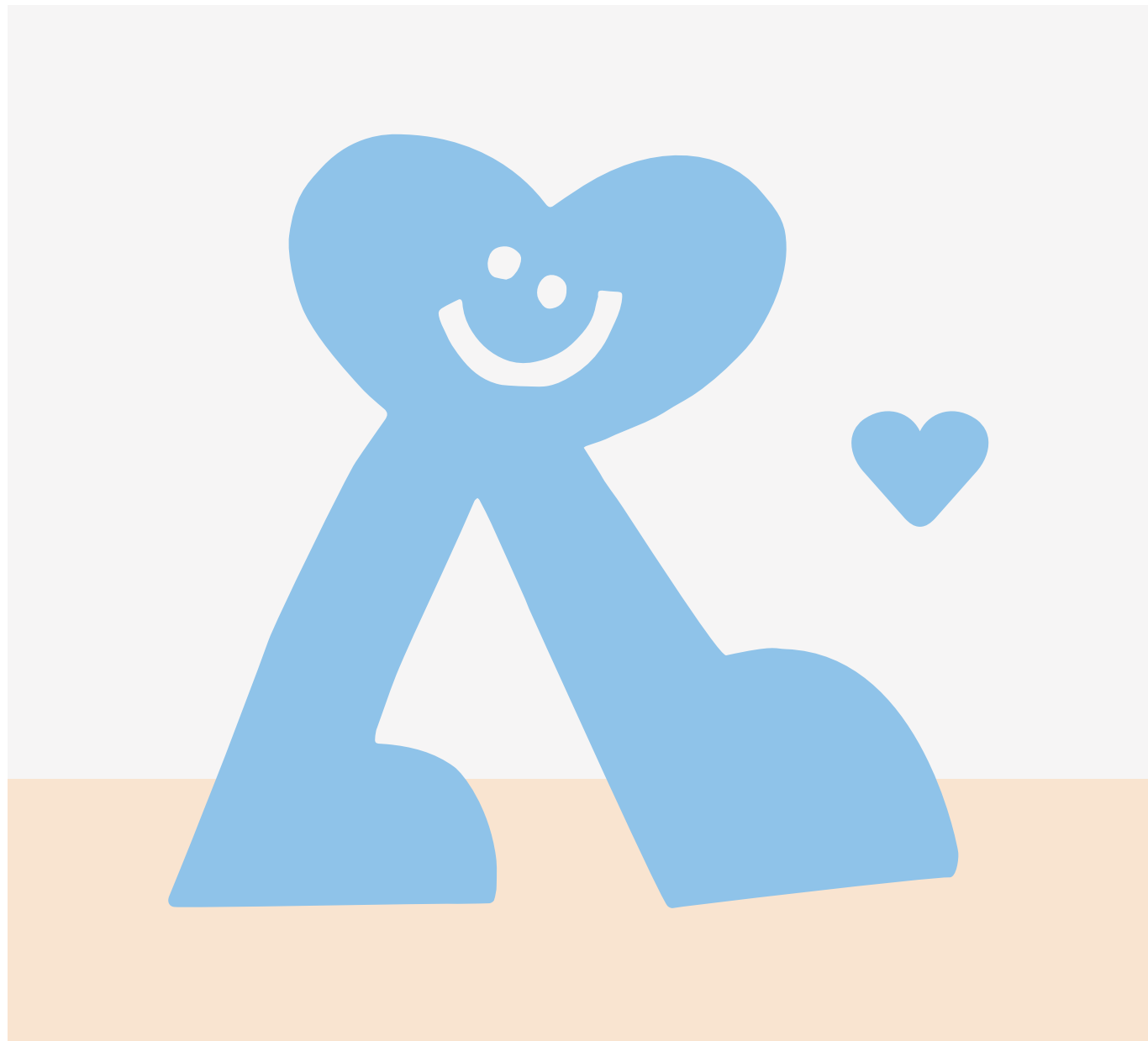
**This guide has been written using inclusive writing strategies.**

For instance, the singular “they” is used instead of “he/she.” More such linguistic strategies have been used to make the French version of this guide inclusive as well.

**While this guide seeks to be a resource for raising awareness on the realities of trans and gender creative children and youth as well as the issues that affect them, we want to acknowledge that a few pages could never describe the endless complexities of these issues.**

The experiences of these communities evolve over time and are in constant interaction with several personal, social and structural factors, as well as with the diverse social positions that people occupy. We therefore encourage you to continue to inform and educate yourself on these issues, and on the social and legal developments that directly affect these communities.





# The Gender Lexicon

## Naming Without Marginalizing

# 02

## A Few Definitions

### Sex

Sex is a medical and legal category. At the birth of a child, medical staff assign a sex designation to the child, which will then appear on their official identification documents as their gender marker. This designation is based on a binary understanding of the child's anatomy and secondary sex characteristics (ex: penis vs. vagina).

### Gender identity

Our deep sense of self, be it masculine, feminine, neither, a mix of both or any other variation. Our gender identity is something that we feel inside, a very intimate and powerful feeling.

People whose current gender identity is the same as the one assigned to them at birth often think that they do not have a gender identity. However, cisgender (non-trans) people also have a gender identity. While many people identify with a single gender identity, it is also possible and valid to identify with several gender identities (like some gender-fluid people do) or no gender identity at all (like some agender people do).

“Gender identity” also refers to the words we use to describe it (ex: man, woman, non-binary, etc.). The language used by someone to name this identity exists on a spectrum and can evolve over time, for instance through one's self-discovery and as one gains access to a more diversified vocabulary.

### Gender expression

The way we present our gender identity to the outside world, whether it be through our behaviour, our clothes, our hairstyle, etc.

Any person's gender identity can either fit within social gender stereotypes, or not fit within them at all. Contrary to popular belief, **someone's gender expression is not a reliable indicator of their gender identity or sexual orientation.** Some people may have a gender identity that differs from what they project to others because they fear negative consequences or violence, or simply because of a personal preference.

### Important



**The only reliable indicator of someone's gender identity is their self-identification,** which means their intimate feelings about who they are, and the words they use to describe themselves.

## Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to the emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction (or lack thereof, which can be partial or complete) towards one person or several people (ex: gay, lesbian, straight, asexual, pansexual, etc.).

In the same way that it does not indicate gender identity, gender expression is not a reliable indicator of someone's sexual orientation, or of the future sexual orientation of a child. For example, if a little boy shows interest for objects or clothing traditionally deemed "feminine," he is not more likely to be, for instance, homosexual, than a little boy whose interests remain within the realm of gender stereotypes and norms. Assuming a person's sexual orientation, or a child's future sexual orientation, based on how they present themselves to the world is not only misleading, but also never necessary or appropriate.



### "Gender identity" and "sexual orientation" are not synonyms.

Also, the sexual orientations of trans people can be as fluid as those of cisgender people (non-trans people), which means that a trans person can be straight.

## Gender assignment at birth (or assigned at birth)

In the current legal and medical context, a doctor has to assign a sex designation to children when they are born. This designation is based on the genital anatomy of the child. A child born with a vagina is therefore assigned "F" at birth, while a child born with a penis is assigned "M." This **sex** designation is considered as the **gender identity** of the person not only medically and legally, but also socially.



**Opt for the expression "assigned female/male at birth"** and avoid expressions like "born in a female/male body," "biologically female/male," or "female who became a boy/man or male who became a girl/woman." These expressions reinforce the belief that our identity is defined by our anatomy, or that there are only two types of bodies. Someone's identity should never be reduced to their genitals. For example, a woman, whether she is cisgender or trans, has the body of a woman because she is a woman, regardless of her anatomy or physical appearance.

## Trans

Today, the word "trans" is used as an umbrella term that refers to many different realities. A trans person is a person whose gender identity differs from the identity that was assigned to them at birth. For example, a trans man is a person who was assigned female at birth and who self-identifies as a man, while a trans woman is a person who was assigned male at birth and who self-identifies as a woman. This umbrella term is the most commonly used when referring to trans people.



## Transsexual

The word "transsexual" originated in the medical community. By using this word, medical professionals highlighted the idea that a trans person is inevitably a person who wishes to change their genitals through surgery.

Although this term is less commonly used, some people within trans communities have reclaimed the word and use it to self-identify. It is important to respect everyone's right to self-identification, which includes the words they choose to describe themselves.

## Transgender

The word "transgender" comes from trans communities themselves. Deconstructing the idea that a transition necessarily involves permanent genital modifications, trans people have claimed that a transition first occurs in the realm of one's **gender identity**, regardless of one's anatomy.

## Cisgender

A person whose gender identity corresponds to the one assigned to them at birth, as opposed to a trans person. For example, a person who was assigned female at birth, and who self-identifies as a woman.



Please note that trans people today choose to use the terms "transgender/transsexual" without necessarily referring to their surgery status. **Again, rely on the self-identification of a person without worrying about their anatomy, while using the word "trans," an inclusive term of all individual journeys, when referring to trans people in general.**

## Non-binary

The word “non-binary” brings forward the existence of more than two gender identities. In this sense, a non-binary person self-identifies this way to affirm a gender identity that exists outside the female/male or woman/man binaries. For example, non-binary people can define their identity as both “masculine” and “feminine,” or as neither while defining their identity in other ways on the gender spectrum.

When it comes to pronouns used by non-binary people, there are many possibilities. The most popular gender-neutral pronoun is the singular “they/them/their,” but other people use pronouns like “ze,” “sie,” “hir,” or others. While some non-binary people may prefer gender-neutral pronouns, others prefer to use “he” or “she,” and some like to alternate between these two.



### There is no specific gender expression for trans or non-binary people.

Just like cisgender people, gender expression varies from one person to another. For example, a non-binary person will not necessarily present as “androgynous.”

## Gender creative child

A child who does not conform to socially prescribed gender norms. The term “gender creative” was coined by the American psychologist Diane Ehrensaft in the early 2000s. Gender creative children express their identity in ways that differ from socially prescribed feminine or masculine gender stereotypes. **These children, however, do not necessarily identify as trans, and their creativity does not imply that they will self-identify as such in the future.** For example, a gender creative child might be a boy who enjoys wearing pink skirts, or a “tomboy” girl, all while never questioning the gender identity that was assigned to them at birth.

## Two-spirit

This term is used by some Indigenous communities to describe people with fluid gender and/or sexual identities, who take on spiritual roles and responsibilities in their communities [1;2]. Given the existence and the importance attributed to these identities in Indigenous communities predating colonial attempts at cultural erasure [2], this term is used nowadays to reconnect with traditions related to gender and sexual fluidity and to move beyond Eurocentric binary categories [3].



**“Two-spirit” is not synonymous with “trans” or “non-binary,”** and a non-Indigenous person should never use this term to identify themselves.

## Intersex

A person who is born with a reproductive system, a sexual anatomy and/or chromosomal variations that do not correspond to the medically defined normative criteria for the categories “male” or “female.” Note that there are multiple possible external and/or internal anatomical variations, and that a person can be intersex without necessarily knowing it since some variations are not “visible”.



**“Intersex” and “trans” are not synonyms. In addition, the term “hermaphrodite” should not be used.** The word “intersex” is the appropriate term.

## Gender dysphoria

This is a medical term used by the American Psychiatric Association in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The term refers to the significant distress or discomfort a trans person might experience due to the difference between their expressed/experienced gender identity, and the gender assigned to them at birth [4]. That being said, not all trans people experience gender dysphoria.

However, being trans is not a mental health issue. Instead of putting the emphasis on the trans identity itself, the diagnostic merely highlights an element (the dysphoria) that may be difficult to live with.

In addition, gender dysphoria, or simply “dysphoria”, when it is used in everyday, non-medical language by trans communities, refers to a discomfort a trans person might feel about their body. Additionally, “social dysphoria” is often used to refer to the discomfort or distress caused by situations where there is discrimination, judgment or violence related to a person’s gender identity or expression.





It is important to note that gender dysphoria may emerge at different life stages. While some start experiencing it in childhood, others will first experience it around puberty (when physical changes occur) or throughout their adulthood. In cases where children experience gender dysphoria, it can manifest itself in several different ways: sometimes through interests that are non-conforming to gender stereotypes, and other times through clear verbal statements. It is important to keep in mind that children will express themselves in a language that is familiar to them, often referring to the discomfort they feel in their bodies in general, or in relation with a specific body part, although in reality these words do not necessarily encompass the complexity of their feelings. **It is therefore all the more important to provide adequate and specialized support to these children to allow them to find the appropriate words to describe their feelings, as well as to help them find the necessary tools to alleviate their dysphoria.**



**A trans person is not necessarily “born in the wrong body.”** While popular discourse often implies that all trans people are uncomfortable in their body, some people, including some children and youth, do not feel such discomfort.

## Misgendering

Using the wrong pronouns to refer to a person, regardless of whether it is intentional or not. For example, speaking of a person while using male pronouns (“he”) even if this person uses female pronouns (“she”).

## Deadname

This term refers to the name, given at birth, **that a trans person no longer uses.** This name should not be used by people close to them either. Please note, however, that some trans people choose to keep the name that was given to them at birth; in this case, it would not be a deadname, and it would therefore be appropriate to use.

## Gender stereotypes

Exaggerated social expectations, based on socially constructed norms, of masculine and feminine behaviours and appearances (gender expression). For example, the idea that dresses can only be worn by girls/women, and that all boys must like playing with toys such as trucks and construction tools.



## Gender roles

Social norms defining what is considered appropriate masculine and feminine behaviours, as well as the roles women and men should play in society.

## Homophobia/Transphobia

Hatred, prejudice and behaviour, in any form, that leads to the rejection or discrimination of sexually and/or gender diverse people.

These can be manifested as verbal, physical or psychological abuse, or as discriminatory behaviour (ex: denying access to health care or denying access to washrooms on the basis of gender identity/expression and/or sexual orientation).

## Heteronormativity/Cisnormativity

Normative ideologies or discourses that reinforce the assumption that all people are cisgender and heterosexual, or that they should be.

## Heterosexism/Cissexism

These two concepts emerge from the two previous ones. If heteronormativity and cisnormativity reinforce the assumption that all people are cisgender and heterosexual, heterocissexism maintains this social norm through practices or behaviours that erase, invisibilize, stigmatize or discriminate against any person who is not heterosexual and/or cisgender. For example, this could consist of talking about sexual health while only mentioning heterosexual relationships between cisgender people.

## Gender-affirming (or gender affirmative)

This term refers to any approach or practice that allows children to live in their authentic gender identity and to express it freely without restraint or rejection [5;6]. According to this approach, gender variations are not pathologized and in cases where mental health issues occur, they are caused by external factors, such as transphobia and social rejection [5].

# The Transition Journey

The journey a person undertakes to live and affirm their authentic gender identity. These transitions can take many forms, including **social, legal and/or medical**. **It is not necessary for a trans person to undertake any transition path to be valid.**



**A transition is not synonymous with the expression “sex change.” Nor is it a transformation.** Trans people do not undergo a transformation, but rather undertake a journey that allows them to affirm and to better reflect their authentic gender identity. **Therefore, please use phrases such as “this person has transitioned/started a transition journey or process” and avoid the use of phrases such as “this person has undergone a transformation/transformed/had a sex change”.**

## Social transition

A social transition encompasses a few elements, such as:

### The coming out

Revealing one’s gender identity to family, friends, partners, colleagues, etc., and choosing one’s new name and pronouns that better reflect the person’s authentic gender identity. It is important to understand that coming out is not an isolated event, but rather something a person has to do several times during their journey, especially in spaces where people are aware of the gender identity assigned to them at birth. For example, a trans person could come out to friends, then a few weeks later to parents, then to their school, etc. In addition, every moment a person has to present an identification document that does not match their gender identity is a coming out moment.

As far as children are concerned, there may not necessarily be a clear coming out moment. In cases where children express variations in terms of their gender identity and/or expression early on, some indicators in the child’s development may lead parents to look for information and support in order to better understand what their child is going through. This can be a way for parents to progressively learn that the gender identity of their child differs from what was assigned to them at birth. Moreover, when it comes to revealing the child’s gender to friends and family, it is often the child’s parents who make the announcement while trying to educate those around them, including school personnel.

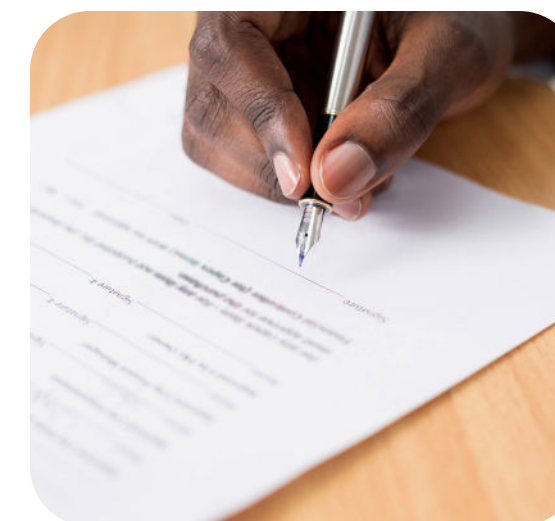
## Changes in gender expression

A person may choose to change their appearance to better reflect their authentic gender identity. Apart from style-related choices (clothing, hairstyle, makeup, etc.), some people choose to use **gender-affirming gear**: this gear helps modify the appearance of certain gendered body parts without requiring medical interventions. For example, a transmasculine person may use a binder, a compression undergarment that helps flatten the chest, and a transfeminine person may use breast forms.

## Legal transition

This concerns **changing the name and/or the sex designation as they appear on legal documents**, such as a person’s birth certificate and other identity documents.

Please note that recognizing a child’s identity in a school setting should under no circumstance depend on whether the child has begun a legal transition. Please refer to page 29 for more information on the legal framework in which these changes take place as well as your professional obligations.



## Medical transition

Some people may choose to turn to certain medical procedures to prevent some changes and/or to change their appearance to better reflect their gender identity. Here are a few examples of such procedures:

### Puberty/ hormone blockers

these blockers are generally prescribed to adolescents at a certain stage of puberty (Tanner stage 2) to delay the development of undesired secondary sex characteristics (for example, breasts or menstruation for transmasculine youth, and facial hair or the Adam’s apple for transfeminine youth). These hormone blockers are not prescribed to prepubescent youth.

### Hormones/ Hormone replacement therapy

Hormones, like testosterone or estrogen, can be prescribed later to teenagers to bring on physical changes that better reflect their gender identity. These changes are semi-permanent, meaning that some of them can be corrected through medical interventions like laser hair removal or plastic surgery.

### Gender-affirming surgeries

Surgical interventions that bring permanent modifications to the body in order to better reflect a person's gender identity. Contrary to popular discourse, **there is more than one single gender-affirming surgery**. Each surgery meets the specific needs of an individual. **Gender-affirming surgical interventions are numerous and diversified** (mastectomy or top surgery, vaginoplasty/phalloplasty or bottom surgery, facial "feminization", Adam's apple reduction, hysterectomy, etc.), and each person chooses whether they want to have these surgeries, and if so, which ones.

Gender-affirming surgery is generally not allowed for people under the age of 18, except for mastectomy in certain cases.

**In all cases, it is not necessary to have, or want to have, medical interventions to be trans.**

**A transition does not follow a linear path** with a list of steps that all trans people must go through sequentially in order to become "sufficiently trans/masculine/feminine/non-binary." For example, not all trans people choose to change their name or to undergo gender-affirming surgeries.

There are also **accessibility issues related to transition means**. While certain transition means are covered by the public régime d'assurance maladie Québec (RAMQ), such as hormone replacement therapy and certain surgeries, many remain at the expense of individuals themselves. Moreover, some requirements and eligibility criteria related to a legal and/or medical transition prevent some trans people from accessing them.

**When it comes to children and youth, having access to transition means, be they social, legal or medical, largely depends on family support.** When their gender identity is not recognized within their family and there is a lack of support, children and youth often do not have the opportunity to initiate a transition journey at all, and in some ways, cannot exist as themselves.

## In Summary

### The word "trans," like any other word used to name a gender identity or a sexual orientation, is an adjective

Trans people are first and foremost people. Opt for "trans child/youth/person" when referring to them, and avoid expressions like "the trans," "the transgenders," "the transsexuals," etc.

### When talking about a group of people or about a transition journey, use inclusive and up-to-date terms

The word "trans" seeks to be inclusive of all the potential ways a person might choose to affirm their gender identity. Opt for this term when you refer to trans people in general.

### The importance of self-identification

There are plenty of words to describe one's gender identity and sexual orientation, and each person is free to use the words that they feel work best to describe their own gender identity and sexual orientation. In that sense, respect a person's self-identification and avoid putting labels on them just because these labels feel more comfortable to you.

### Every trans person is valid and goes through a unique journey

There is no such thing as a "typical" transition path. For example, some trans people do not wish to change their gender marker or pronouns or to begin a medical transition journey. Thus, a transition does not follow a linear path with a list of steps that all trans people must go through sequentially in order to become "sufficiently trans/masculine/feminine/non-binary."



# Scientific Literature

## An Overview

# 03

## Gender Identity Development

In general, gender identity development, whether in trans or cis people, occurs during early childhood [7;8;9]. Questioning and identification with a gender identity that differs from the one assigned to them at birth also generally occurs before adulthood [9;10;11], but recent research shows that there is a wide variety of trajectories of realization and affirmation of one's gender identity that are influenced by both individual and social factors [12;13;14].

This combination of factors results in several possibilities of non-linear trajectories of affirmation and consolidation; while some children express this early in their development, it is not necessarily the case for all trans people [14]. When it comes to young children, it has been shown that they have an awareness of their gender identity that is as strong as that of cisgender children [15]. When it comes to neurodiverse\* children and youth, the experiences around the exploration and realization of their gender

identity as well as their needs related to a transition process are similar to those of neurotypical trans people [17]. However, these neurodiverse children and youth often have their identities and/or gender expressions questioned because of their diagnosis [17]. There is, however, a clinical consensus that gender diversity and neurodiversity are two independent phenomena that can coexist [18]. Neurodiversity should therefore never be used as a justification to restrict access to transition resources for youth who need them [17;18].



\* The concept of neurodiversity emerged in response to dominant discourses which pathologized autism [16]. The idea of neurodiversity offers a new vision of autism, depicting it as a part of the multiple variations of human functioning [16], be it either in terms of learning, understanding or communicating. Therefore, autism is no longer regarded as a disability or a deficiency but as a part of human diversity, suggesting that it is best to move away from corrective measures, and instead to look into support and into adapting resources and services.

## Trans Youth and Exposure to Violence

Exposure to violence and discrimination based on gender identity or expression is one of the major issues impeding the safety of trans and non-binary youth [19;20]. The reality is that trans youth suffer from physical and verbal assault [19;20;21] as well as from sexual harassment [19;20] because of their gender identity.

Lack of parental support, or even parental rejection and violence, are issues that trans youth often face [19;20;22;23] and they have a significant impact on their mental and physical health, and increase the risk of suicide attempts [24]. Inversely, trans youth who are supported by their family show better mental health outcomes [24;25;26;27] and are able to navigate other difficult challenges more easily [23;28].

In the school context, many trans youth see their school as a hostile place [29;30]. It is common for them to experience hostility from students, teachers or administrative staff [23;31]. These challenges have a significant impact on their academic success, and some feel they do not have any other choice but to avoid school or even drop out [30;32;33].

It is important to emphasize that the experiences of these communities evolve over time and are in constant interaction with many personal, social, and structural factors, as well

as with the various social positions that people occupy. Moreover, within these communities, different systems of oppression interact, creating trajectories that are more challenging than others. For example, racialized [34;25;36] and/or migrant [23;37] trans youth remain disproportionately exposed to violence and barriers to access transition means.

Violence based on the gender identity or expression of these young people also leads to a deterioration of their mental health. Trans youth indeed show higher levels of psychological distress than youth who do not identify as trans [38], and several studies show that this population is more likely to suffer from depressive disorders, anxiety, suicidal ideation, self-harm and to attempt suicide [19;20;21;22;33;39;40]. Yet many young trans people encounter numerous barriers when trying to access physical and/or mental health care [11;19;20;23;41;42;43].



## What About the Situation in Schools in Québec?

In a study conducted in Québec in 2009 [32], trans youth reported having experienced both homophobic and transphobic violence, exclusion, harassment and physical as well as verbal assault. In these cases, schools did not have clear protection and inclusion policies in place, which significantly affected the support these young people could have only hoped to have.

A few years later, other studies looked at the exposure of trans Québec youth to violence in schools or in other spheres of their lives. According to a recent study, 83% of trans youth have experienced exclusion, while 37% have experienced harassment, bullying, rumours or threats [22]. In comparison with their cisgender peers, trans youth were 5 to 7.5 times more likely to experience unfair treatment [22]. In another Québec study, several trans youth described educational institutions as spaces conducive to discrimination and violence [23].

However, Québec has taken measures to improve the situation of the province's trans children and youth, notably by passing Bill 103 in 2016. Firstly, the Civil Code of Québec was amended in order to allow underage trans people who are Canadian citizens to change their sex designation. Secondly, two new grounds on which discrimination is prohibited

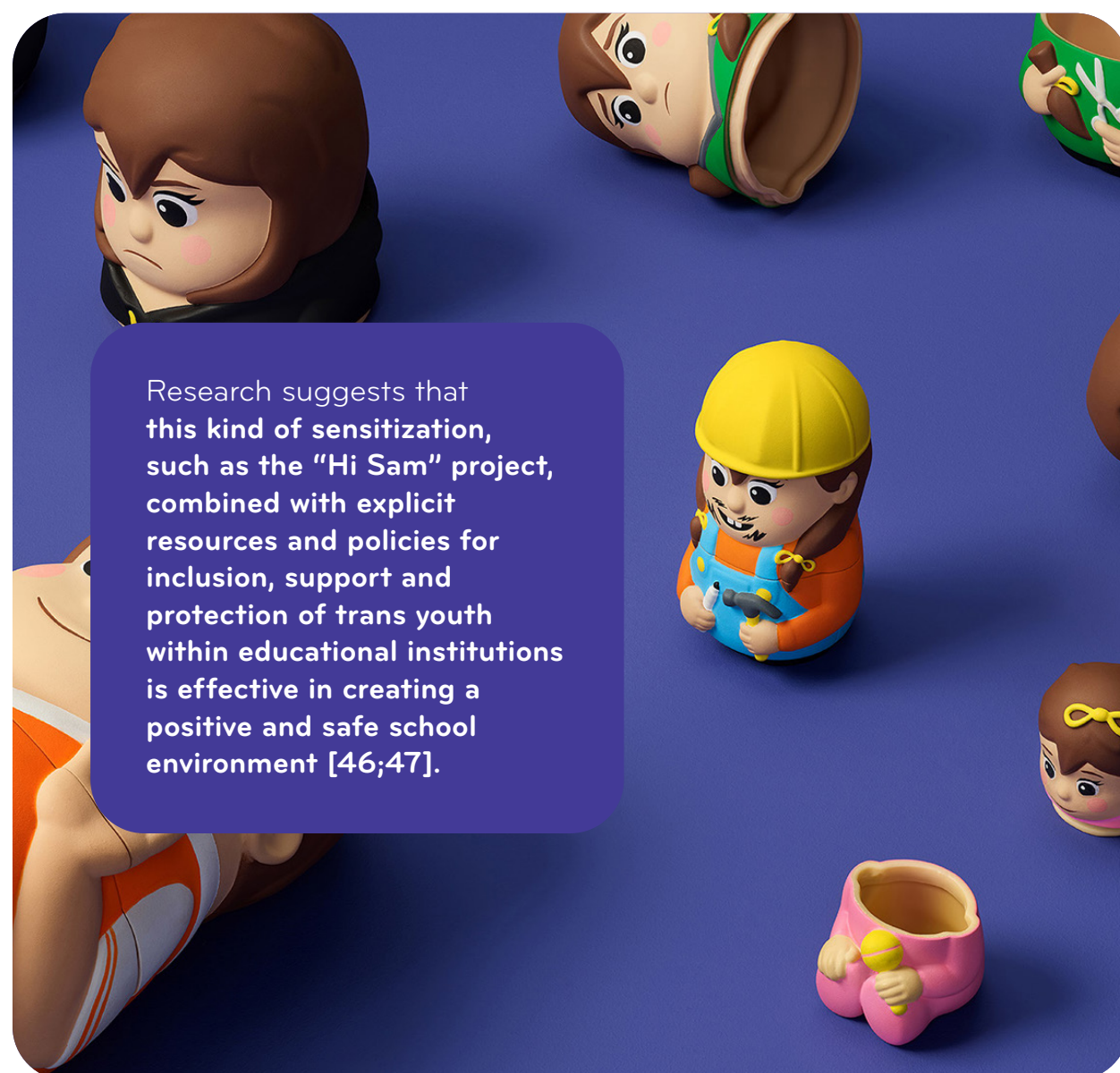
were added to the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, namely "gender identity" and "gender expression." Although there remains a gap in scientific literature when it comes to the experiences of trans youth since the passage of this bill and on its impacts on the rates of violence, youth and families who attend our organization only confirm what we already know: **transphobia is still present in schools.**





## Hi Sam: A Huge Step Towards Safety in Schools

In recent years, several studies and reports have made gender affirmative recommendations and guidelines for schools, such as the Commission scolaire de Montréal [44] and the Table nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie et la transphobie des réseaux de l'éducation [45]. One of the most common recommendations is to sensitize students and school staff to gender diversity issues.



## In Summary

**Generally speaking, the development of one’s gender identity occurs during early childhood,** but these realization and self-affirmation journeys may vary and are not linear.

**Trans youth are disproportionately more likely to experience violence in every sphere of their lives.**

Inevitably, violence related to gender identity and/or expression has major negative repercussions on the mental and physical health of youth, and can even lead some to suicide.

Violence based on gender identity and/or expression experienced in a school setting, combined with the lack of support and explicit protection policies, **hinders academic success and increases dropout rates.**

The situation is not any less worrisome in Québec. Despite certain social and legal breakthroughs, **trans and gender creative children and youth remain disproportionately exposed to violence in schools.**

**Projects that raise awareness, such as the “Hi Sam” project, combined with inclusion, support and protection resources and policies within educational institutions, contribute to fighting against violence and creating a positive and safe school environment for all.**



## Legal Framework

Rights of Trans Children and Youth and Responsibilities of Educational Institutions (as of the fall of 2020)

# 04

## Fighting Against Bullying

According to the Education Act (EA) and the Act Respecting Private Education (ARPE), all educational institutions have a legal obligation to implement an anti-bullying and anti-violence action plan in order to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all students. Included in its anti-bullying plan, the educational institution must have “prevention measures to put an end to all forms of bullying

and violence, in particular those motivated by racism or homophobia or targeting sexual orientation, sexual identity, a handicap or a physical characteristic” (EA, art. 75.1). Moreover, the school must put in place support and guidance measures for all parties involved in any situation involving bullying or violence.

## Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms

In 2016, Québec passed Bill 103—An Act to strengthen the fight against transphobia and improve the situation of transgender minors in particular. This legal breakthrough allowed trans people to benefit from a legal protection by integrating **two new grounds on which discrimination is prohibited** in the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, namely **gender identity** and **gender expression**, into article 10.

This means that any intentional and persistent refusal to respect a child’s gender identity or gender expression, as well as the **refusal to take the necessary measures to foster a favourable environment for a child’s development may be considered as a form of discrimination or harassment and may entail legal repercussions**. For example, preventing a student from using the bathroom of their choice, from choosing how they express

their gender, or not using their chosen name or pronouns constitute forms of discrimination.



## Guidelines for a Change of Name and a Change of Sex Designation



In Québec, it is possible to change the sex designation on birth certificates since 1978. However, **it wasn't until 2016 that the government granted this right to minor Canadian citizens** with the adoption of Bill 103.

Today, children and youth under the age of 18 can change their sex designation and their name, regardless of whether they have had medical treatments or surgical modifications. The government therefore recognizes that trans people do not need to undergo a medical transition in order to transition legally.

As of the fall of 2020, in order to change their sex designation, a child or youth must:

### 14 to 17-Year-Old Youth

- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Have been living in Québec for at least one (1) year;
- Provide a letter from a physician, psychologist, psychiatrist, sexologist or social worker who declares having evaluated the person and who is of the opinion that changing this designation is appropriate;
- Make a statement under oath;
- Have the form signed by a Commissioner of Oaths;
- Pay \$140.

\* Youth aged between 14 and 17 may apply for this change on their own, **without their parent's/parents' or guardian's/guardians' consent.**

### Child/Youth Under the Age of 14

- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Have been living in Québec for at least one (1) year;
- Provide a letter from a physician, psychologist, psychiatrist, sexologist or social worker who declares having evaluated the person and who is of the opinion that changing this designation is appropriate;
- Make a statement under oath;
- Have the form signed by a Commissioner of Oaths;
- Pay \$140.

\* Children or youth aged under 14 cannot apply for this change on their own. The request must be made by one of the parents/guardians, and the child/youth **must have the consent of both parents/guardians.**

While a child/youth may change their name at the same time as their sex designation by adhering to the framework above, **other eligibility requirements apply if they want to only change their name.** Several conditions, such as the mandatory parental consent (even for youth aged 14 and up) and

the obligation to prove that the change is motivated by a serious reason according to the Civil Code of Québec, represent important obstacles. It is also important to note that the eligibility to a name change does not guarantee that the change will be granted by the Directeur de l'état civil (Registrar of Civil Status).

## Important Remarks Relevant to Your Work

Although these legal and social breakthroughs are significant and should be celebrated, these changes remain inaccessible to several groups of youth. Numerous eligibility conditions represent obstacles to the exercise of this right.

It is possible that certain students in your educational institution may not be eligible for a name change or a sex designation change because of one or several eligibility requirements listed above. **However, according to the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, the educational institution is bound to respect the identities and the gender expressions of its students, and therefore to use their chosen names and pronouns.** Under no circumstance should the students be required to make legal changes in order to be able to exercise their right to be recognized and respected in their school environment.

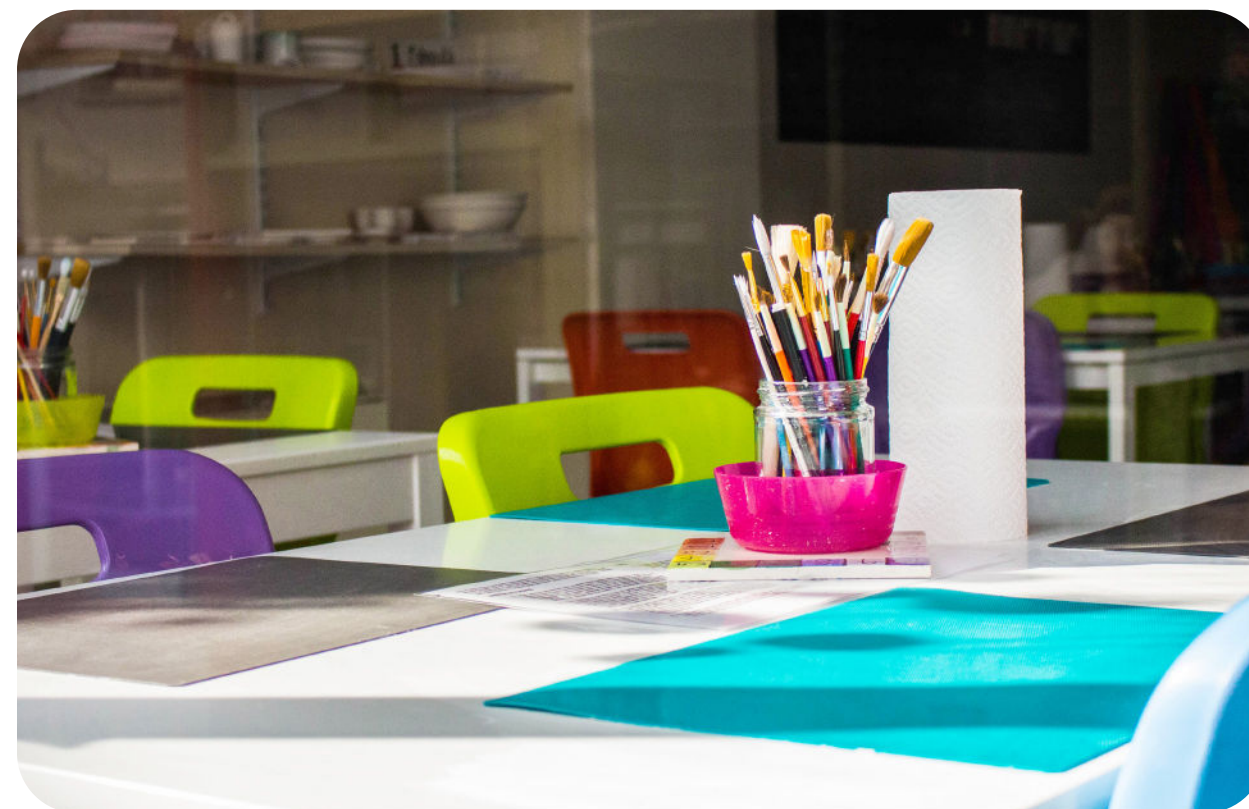
**It is therefore the educational institution's duty to make the necessary changes in the students' administrative records.** Acknowledging these obstacles and fostering a space where children can authentically express their gender identities is an act of advocacy and a significant contribution to the empowerment of these children.



## Sexuality Education Program in Schools

In the current school system, the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) gives sexuality education a formal place in the curriculum of Québec students. Since 2018, the content proposed by the MEES is mandatory for all elementary and secondary students at both private and public schools in Québec.

Unlike previous versions of this content, **issues surrounding gender identity, gender roles, gender norms and stereotypes must be discussed as early as of the first year of elementary school.** In addition to these topics, teachers must also discuss the individual role each student can play in order to participate in the construction of an egalitarian society where diversity is respected.



## For more information

- **Bill 103**  
[www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-103-41-1.html](http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-103-41-1.html)
- **Sex designation (and name) change (eligibility conditions, forms, etc.)**  
[www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/change-sexe.html](http://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/change-sexe.html)
- **Name change (exclusively)**  
[www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/change-name.html](http://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/change-name.html)
- **The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (namely Article 10)**  
[www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/c-12](http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/c-12)
- **Civil Code of Québec (namely Division IV—Change of Designation of Sex)**  
[www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/CCQ-1991](http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/CCQ-1991)
- **An Act Respecting Private Education**  
[www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/E-9.1](http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/E-9.1)
- **Education Act**  
[www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/I-13.3](http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/I-13.3)
- **MEES's Sexuality Education Program**  
[www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/parents-and-guardians/sexuality-education](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/parents-and-guardians/sexuality-education)

## In Summary

Educational institutions must implement an anti-bullying plan and implement support and guidance measures for all students, including trans students, in accordance with the EA and the ARPE.

A person's gender identity and gender expression are protected by the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Any discrimination on these grounds may entail important legal repercussions.

Minor Canadian citizens have the right to change their sex designation and/or their name through the Directeur de l'état civil (Registrar of Civil Status).

Certain eligibility criteria represent important barriers to name and sex designation changes. However, **this should not affect the educational institutions' ability to make these changes within the internal administrative records of their students.**

As part of the Sexuality Education Program developed by the MEES, educational institutions must cover **issues related to gender identity, gender roles, gender norms and stereotypes as early as of the first year of elementary school.**



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Demystifying Myths One Answer at a Time

# 05

What should I say to a student who asks me, “why are some children trans?”

One question that might emerge from discussions with children is about the reason why someone is trans. The clearest and most respectful way to explain this to them is to simply tell them that it is part of human diversity and that each child is unique.

For a more detailed response, opt for a simple narrative. For example: “When a child is born, the doctor tells their parents whether they are a boy or a girl, but this is not always the case. It is possible that some children feel inside themselves that they are, for instance, more of a girl than a boy, or vice versa, neither or a little bit of both. It is a very powerful feeling which we must respect, just as we would like to be respected for who we are.”

**How many trans people are there?**

Unlike other social groups, there is no data allowing to quantify trans people in the world or in any given geographical area. The reality is that certain trans people, children and their families, prefer not to disclose this information for safety (or any other) reasons. However, the latest studies estimate that between 0.7% and 1.8% of youth identify as trans [48;49].

It is important to remind ourselves that numbers should never delegitimize how important trans people’s lives are. Whether it is a single person or a million people, these children and youth are entitled to rights that are protected by our laws and by the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. We therefore have the obligation to respect the physical, moral and psychological integrity of trans people and to ensure that we create a safe environment for everyone. Regardless of how many trans children you believe attend your educational institution, it is always useful to educate yourself on trans-related issues and to implement inclusive practices in your work (or even in your personal life!).

**Are there more trans people today?  
Are youth following a new trend?**

Trans people have always existed. The reason why we may feel as if there are more and more trans people is simply caused by the fact that more trans people express themselves openly and are out to their friends and families and to the general public.

With the increasing visibility of trans people in public spheres and in the media, trans people can finally identify with someone who is going through the same thing as they are. This is also true for children; although children do not necessarily have access to media platforms because of their young age, their parent(s) are becoming increasingly aware of these realities. Trans people and their families also have access to more information, resources and words, which allows them to speak about and name what they are going through and to find the support they need. Lastly, because of a more welcoming social context, trans people now feel safer than ever to explore and express their gender identities.



**Are children who have been exposed to Sam or to questions around gender identity more likely to become trans? To put it differently, is there a “risk of contagion”?**

**No. Being trans is neither a disease, nor a virus, nor a choice.** One does not become trans after being in contact with other trans people.

The word “contagion” unfortunately comes up frequently. More specifically, this kind of discourse can be heard in conversations about youth’s exposure to trans issues on the internet, and therefore the idea of a “contagion” of trans identities through social media. There is, however, absolutely nothing contagious about it. As mentioned earlier, being in contact with other trans people allows children who are already questioning themselves to identify with similar people and to have access to words to name their experiences. In fact, a Canadian research led by Pullen Sansfaçon and her colleagues [14] highlights how important it is for trans youth to be able to identify themselves with others in order to affirm their own gender identities.

In fact, associating exposure of children to trans issues with a “risk of contagion” is not only wrong, but also problematic. When we talk about “contagion” or negative influence, it is implied that being trans is a disease, or that it is an unfavourable and harmful outcome. The emergence of this type of fear is a sign of the need to continue to reflect on our prejudices and our openness to sexual and gender diversity.

Creating spaces for discussions on gender diversity is, on the contrary, beneficial to the development of all children. On the one hand, raising awareness on diversity helps develop openness and empathy in children, as well as respect and acceptance of the diversity of what self-expression may look like. **Raising awareness at an early age therefore prevents transphobia and prejudices against trans people or against people who express their gender outside of gender stereotypes.** On the other hand, this type of education allows to accompany children in the deconstruction of binary conceptions of gender expression, to broaden their horizons and to encourage a reflection process on all the possibilities of expression and fulfilment.

Is being trans  
a mental health disorder?

No. As mentioned previously, being trans is not a mental health disorder. However, studies do show that trans youth are more at risk of suffering from mental health issues mainly caused by **external factors** such as social and family rejection, identity- and gender expression-based violence and discrimination impacting several different spheres of their lives. Moreover, like any other person, trans people's mental health can be affected by factors which are not directly related to their gender identity.

Is a little girl who enjoys playing with trucks or  
a little boy who enjoys wearing dresses necessarily trans?

No. The fact that a child is creative in their gender expression does not mean that they are trans. **Exploring one's gender expression and identity is a completely normal and healthy part of human development, and all children go through such exploration.** While some children feel comfortable in gender expressions that align with gender stereotypes, others prefer expressions that stray from the imposed social norms. This is also applicable to adults: we explore different ways to express ourselves throughout our lives without necessarily questioning our gender identity. For example, some cisgender women like their hair short and enjoy wearing "neutral" or "masculine" clothes, and some cisgender men like their hair long and enjoy wearing makeup.

**It is therefore impossible to predict with certainty whether a child with a gender expression that does not conform to gender stereotypes will identify as trans in the future. However, what we can do is support them in their choices and provide them with the means and space for their personal growth and development, regardless of what that looks like.**

**Do all gender creative or trans children  
take hormone blockers?**

No. First of all, it is important to remember that a medical transition is by no means a mandatory step and that there are many reasons why youth would not undergo a medical transition. While some youth are simply not interested in taking hormone blockers, others do not have access to them because of a lack of parental support, or because of a shortage of gender-affirming medical care in their region, or because of the high costs associated with this process. The lack of specialized medical care and services in remote regions outside of big cities like Montréal is actually a very common issue that is difficult to navigate.

Regarding precisely the prescription of hormone blockers, it is accessible through endocrinologists. These hormone blockers are prescribed to youth at a specific stage of puberty, and the blockers are taken over a limited period of time. Please also note that no gender-affirming surgical interventions are performed on trans children.





What are the guidelines in terms of care and support in the health care and psychosocial services systems?

While previous intervention models were based on approaches that sought to modify or prevent the development of trans identities, the gender affirmative approach is becoming more and more used by specialists all around the globe [6;50;51]. There still remains, however, quite a lot of room for progress. For example, while the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care for trans people [52] represent a breakthrough in terms of intervention approaches, these guidelines still do not meet the needs of trans communities, particularly those of trans children and youth.

In Canada, Ontario became the first province to legally prohibit any practices aiming to change the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of a person through the passage of Bill 77 in 2015. Manitoba and Nova Scotia have followed in this direction as well. At the time of writing these lines in 2020, the Canadian federal government introduced a bill to prohibit the provision of conversion therapy in Canada, and so did Québec.

Several professional associations have supported these legal and social developments. Local examples of such associations include the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health [53], who published a public declaration in favour of Bill 77, while the Canadian Psychological Association [54] issued a policy statement specifying that the role of psychologists should be to assist families and children through gender-affirming interventions. Other examples include the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec and the Canadian Paediatric Society who all issued guidelines based on gender-affirming interventions and care.

Regardless of the context in which care or services are provided, the guidelines are based on the same principle: intervening with respect for and affirmation of the person's gender identity, including, of course, the creation of the spaces needed to explore this identity.

## In Summary

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of trans people in our society, including the number of trans children. That being said, **respecting the rights and the dignity of trans and/or gender creative students should not, under any circumstances, depend on how high the proportion of such students is within your educational institution.**

**The increasing visibility of trans people, combined with increased access to information and social acceptance allow people and families who are questioning themselves to put their feelings into words.** This explains, to a large extent, why we may feel as if there are more trans children and youth today.

However, this phenomenon should not be confused with "contagion," or "bad influence". **Being in contact with trans people does not encourage cisgender children to become trans.**

**The exploration of our own gender identity and gender expression is part of everyone's human development.** Gender creativity, a form of self-expression that strays from gender stereotypes, **does not allow us to predict whether a child will identify as trans in the future or not.**

**Discussions on gender diversity are beneficial to all children as they facilitate the development of openness, acceptance and empathy,** allowing us to fight collectively against the prejudices that hinder the construction of a just and harmonious society.

**Gender-affirming practices, meaning those that allow all children to explore their authentic gender identity and expression, are increasingly being used throughout the world,** while practices that work against gender-affirming principles are on the verge of becoming legally prohibited in many parts of the world, including Canada and Québec.



## Tips and Tricks On How to Improve Support

# 06

## How Can I Tell a Child's Gender Identity?

A person's gender identity  
cannot be determined by another person

Since there are many ways to express one's gender identity, we cannot simply rely on stereotypical gender markers to determine a person's gender identity. The only reliable gender identity indicator is the person's self-identification.

In the same vein, not assuming a person's gender identity also means not assuming the pronouns they use. In your interactions, we encourage you to always specify which pronouns you use when introducing yourself and then to ask the person you are interacting with which pronouns they prefer to use for themselves. For example: "Hello! My name is [name] and I use [she/he/they] pronouns. How about you?"

Please note that the concept of chosen pronouns might be more difficult to understand for young children given their age, and their ability to name their pronouns may be limited. In most cases, children will simply use expressions such as "I am a boy-girl" or "I am a girl who used to be a boy" to describe their identity or their preferred pronouns. We therefore encourage you to pay close attention to the language the child uses to refer to themselves in their interactions with others in order to identify their chosen pronouns and gender agreements (in French), which you can then use when interacting with the child.



## The Importance of Confidentiality

### A person's trans identity is confidential information

Studies about and testimonies from trans people highlight the potential dangers that come with revealing someone's trans identity, such as rejection, isolation or discrimination. For these reasons, when a student tells you that they are questioning their gender identity or that they are trans, it is important to keep that information to yourself. While being trans is in no way shameful or bad, some people still react negatively when they learn that someone is trans.



Respecting a person's privacy and confidentiality is important. **Unless you have the child's free and informed consent, you should never disclose a student's trans identity (or anyone's trans identity) to their parent(s), to other students or their parent(s), or to your colleagues.**

### Just like the identity and name assigned at birth

Naturally, if you shouldn't reveal a person's trans identity, neither should you disclose the identity or name that were assigned to them at birth. For several trans people, these two aspects are a thing of the past. Hearing their deadname can be a violent reminder, which may sometimes trigger feelings of dysphoria.

### Avoid forcibly outing people by taking a few precautions

The fact that a student opened up to you does not mean that they are out to other people in their personal life or at school. To avoid a forced or accidental outing, first ask the student whether other people around them know about it. Then, ask the student about how they would prefer to be referred to in contexts where this information hasn't been disclosed, like in the classroom, or in meetings with their parent(s), etc.

We also encourage you to find out what motivated this student to share this information with you: do they wish to start a social transition at school? Do they need a specific type of support? Are they experiencing difficulties related to their gender identity, such as bullying? Etc. In these situations, do not hesitate to reach out and get support from a resource person or from community organizations (like Gender Creative Kids Canada) in order to support and guide the child through this process (while maintaining confidentiality, of course!).

## Dealing with Mistakes or Lack of Knowledge

### Misgendering or using a person's deadname: how to get back on track?

If you ever mistakenly refer to someone by using the wrong pronouns or their deadname (or in French, using the wrong gender agreements), opt for a direct apology rather than a long monologue describing your regret and guilt. When the person corrects you, thank them rather than apologize. For example: "You are totally right! Thank you for correcting me!", instead of, "Oh! I apologize, I am so sorry, I couldn't have known, it doesn't show, etc.". Apologizing to them will most likely give them the impression that they have to reassure you, when it is actually your responsibility to be cautious with the vocabulary you use. When you thank the person, you recognize your mistake while communicating to them that you are grateful for having been corrected.



**Please note that using this approach is just as important when speaking to children. Do not forget to do the same when a student corrects you.**

### Avoid responding to questions you do not know the answer to

When someone asks you a question you do not know the answer to, it is important for you to educate yourself on the topic before you respond. Giving an incorrect or incomplete answer may, for instance, mislead the group of students and even cause harm to a person who is directly affected by the topic. **Therefore, do not hesitate to reach out to organizations who are experts in the field, and to help your students seek out sources of information and support whenever necessary.**



## Avoid inappropriate questions

Some questions are completely inappropriate, especially when they are asked out of pure curiosity. Here are a few examples:

- Questions about a child's gender or name assigned at birth;
- Questions relating to a child's physical anatomy or genitals;
- Questions about steps taken or planned by the child in relation to a medical transition.



This applies to people of all ages.

# Creating Safe Environments for All

## Each trans student is unique, and so are their needs

Everything you have read up to this point has painted a general picture of the experiences and needs of trans and gender creative children and youth. While we have made an effort to make sure the information is always nuanced, it is still important to emphasize that each experience is unique. This means that, despite the similarities between one person's journey and another's, we cannot assume that all trans and gender creative students will have the same needs in terms of support, accompaniment, and/or transition.

In addition to the support measures that you can put in place to create safer spaces for all, it is crucial to pay attention to the specific needs of each and every student. Rather than imposing solutions that you believe are the best for the student, ask them what they would like to do. Here are a few examples of discussion points:

- **Gendered spaces, such as bathrooms and changing rooms:** Which gendered space does the student prefer using? Does the student prefer to use a washroom that reflects their authentic gender identity, or a private washroom that they can access at all times? Does the student wish to use a gender-neutral bathroom, and if so, does your school have one?
- **Socially transitioning at school:** Does the student wish to tell others at school about their identity? When? How? What do they need in terms of support and resources to get to where they want to be?



In any case, it is essential to always validate the student's feelings, to believe what they tell you, to respect their needs, their choices and their rhythm, and to refer them to the resources they need. **Remember that a strong and committed support system is one of the most important protective factors in the lives of trans and gender creative youth!**

## The trans identity is not necessarily at the heart of all the student's difficulties

While this guide highlights the struggles of trans children and youth that are directly related to their gender identity, it is not always at the centre of everything. Just like any other human being, a trans youth may go through challenging periods throughout their life, such as grief, parental separation, arguments with friends, etc. Likewise, a trans youth can just as much be supported, fulfilled and simply live their life.

## Don't wait to act, become an actor for social change now!

Be proactive, do not wait until you learn that there is a trans student in your school to become an ally. In fact, there are many ways to make the school environment safer for everyone. Here are a few examples of how you can do that:

- **Avoid grouping children according to their gender** (girls' groups and boys' groups);
- **Avoid expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes** by associating certain characteristics/interests with either boys or girls;
- **Offer activities that help raise awareness around trans issues**, like those suggested in this guide;
- **Modify and update your educational institution's inclusion and protection policies** by explicitly including trans and gender creative youth.



## For More Information

You have questions and would like to learn more? Gender Creative Kids Canada offers training for educational institutions that is specifically designed for their staff. This training aims to sensitize staff members to issues surrounding the lives of trans, non-binary, and gender creative children and youth, particularly in the school context, and to provide them with the tools they need to better accompany and support students who are directly affected by these issues. In addition, this training will enable staff to identify concrete and effective strategies to prevent and fight against transphobic bullying in schools.

- To register your school for this training or to learn more, please contact us at [education@contactgkc.com](mailto:education@contactgkc.com)

For more information on all the ways in which an educational institution as well as the people who work there can and must take to ensure the safety, development, and fulfillment of trans students, we strongly suggest consulting the following resource, a guide prepared by the Comité de travail sur les jeunes trans et les jeunes non binaires of the Table nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie et la transphobie des réseaux de l'éducation:

- Measures for openness to and support for trans and non-binary students: A guide for educational institutions  
[www.tablehomophobietransphobie.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/1718-020\\_BrochJeunesTrans-ANG\\_web.pdf](http://www.tablehomophobietransphobie.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/1718-020_BrochJeunesTrans-ANG_web.pdf)

For additional information on trans issues and supportive practices, you can take an online training designed by the Canada Research Chair of Transgender Children and their Families, the Groupe d'action trans de l'Université de Montréal (GATUM) and the Université de Montréal. Trans•diversité is a free online training on gender identity, trans and non-binary identities, and the best practices in terms of support for trans people, be it either in higher education or in everyday life. Please note that the training is only offered in French. To register for the training or to learn more, please visit the following address:

- Trans•diversité training  
[www.catalogue.edulib.org/fr/cours/UMontreal-DSG101](http://www.catalogue.edulib.org/fr/cours/UMontreal-DSG101)

## In Summary

The gender identity of one person cannot be determined by another. The only reliable indicator of this identity is the person's self-identification.

For reasons related to security and the respect of one's right to privacy, it is important to respect the confidentiality of information about a person's trans identity, as well as the name and identity that were assigned to them at birth.

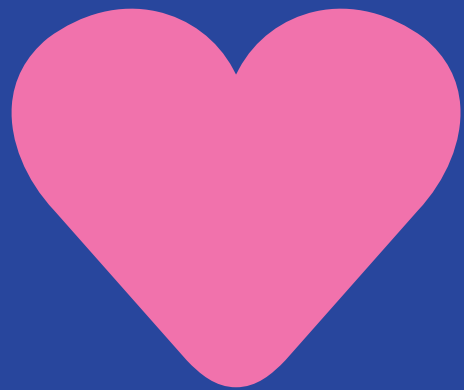
If you happen to misgender someone or use their deadname, opt for a short and direct apology. If they correct you, thank them.

Dealing with uncertainty and lack of knowledge can be challenging. However, we encourage you to educate yourself and reach out to resources and specialized organizations before responding to questions you don't know the answers to.

Similarly, avoid asking your students inappropriate questions out of pure curiosity.

Create safer and inclusive spaces for all students while paying attention to the individual needs of each trans and/or gender creative student.

There are many ways to make schools safer, even before learning whether there are trans or gender creative students in your school. We strongly encourage you to look into the existing literature on this topic starting today!





07

HI SAM

SENSITIZING  
YOUTH  
THROUGH  
PLAY



Sensitization Activities for  
Elementary School Students

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In this section, you will find four playful sensitization activities for elementary school students. All of the activities can easily be integrated as part of the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur's (MEES) sexuality education content, and each can also simultaneously meet some more specific objectives related to gender diversity. In addition, **the activities suggested in this guide can be adapted to all elementary school levels.** This guide therefore provides you with tools that allow you to diversify your students' sexuality education while meeting the Ministry's requirements.



The pedagogical exercises listed in this guide do not cover all the themes included in the MEES's mandatory content. That being said, we encourage you to utilize the knowledge you have gained from reading this guide when you facilitate other sexuality education activities in the classroom, regardless of their source. For example, if you find that an activity from another source that seems to take a binary and reductive view of gender and trans realities, do not hesitate to adapt it in order to make it more inclusive and respectful of gender and body diversity, and of the multiple ways one can express their identity.

The proposed activities follow a logical order, starting with a general introductory activity and gradually moving on to terms and issues more specifically related to gender diversity. We therefore advise you to follow the suggested order, especially if you have not previously addressed these issues in class. Finally, each activity is well detailed, using a step-by-step approach to make your job easier and to give you all the necessary tools to carry out these activities with confidence.



## PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTION WITH STUDENTS USING SAM

The execution of the activities requires the use of Sam, an educational tool that integrates play into learning. Here is some important information to keep in mind before getting started with the activities:

### Sam's story represents a single journey which is unique to Sam

The educational tool Sam was designed to illustrate an example of a child's gender identity development journey. While research shows that trans youth can follow at least three different gender identity development paths, and that there is some consistency in identity development journeys, Sam as a tool cannot represent every journey and only provides a glimpse of what gender creative children may experience. In fact, gender identity development does not occur in a series of sequential stages, but is rather a fluid process, with opportunities for moving forward, pausing, and moving backward.

### Sam's gender identity is unknown

As discussed earlier in this guide, **the only reliable indicator of a person's gender identity is their self-identification**. Since Sam is unable to speak, we cannot rely on the tool's gender expression to determine its gender identity.

As the activities unfold, questions about Sam's gender identity will inevitably emerge. These moments are precious opportunities to raise the students' awareness on gender diversity, body diversity, and the notion of consent.



Here are a few questions you may be asked, as well as possible ways for you to respond to them:

Is Sam a boy or a girl?  
How can we know if Sam is a boy or a girl?

#### Answer:

Very good question! It can be difficult sometimes to know whether a friend close to us is a boy or a girl, and that might make us uncomfortable. For example, if I want to know whether Sam is a boy or a girl, I could ask Sam politely and privately, and tell Sam that I will respect whatever answer I receive. If Sam chooses to confide in us, it is important to keep that information to ourselves since it can sometimes be a delicate topic for some friends. The most important thing is to respect who Sam is and to try and understand how Sam feels.

But if Sam is dressed like a boy/like a girl/has short hair,  
then Sam must be a boy/a girl?

#### Answer:

There are a lot of different types of clothing in various colours throughout the world. Some types of clothing or colours are associated with boys and others, with girls. It is, however, important to keep in mind that everyone can wear any type of clothing they choose. For example, it is absolutely normal and okay for a boy to wear a pink dress because he finds it beautiful, or for a girl to wear a cap and overalls with neon coloured dinosaurs. Therefore, we cannot say that a person who wears a dress is automatically a girl or that a person who wears a cap or overalls is automatically a boy. Everyone has their own taste in terms of clothing and that's great!

Does Sam have a penis or a vulva? We can take a look to know whether Sam is a boy or a girl!

**Answer:**

Each person's body is unique. We may sometimes wonder whether our friend's body looks like ours. However, for everyone, our body and our genitals are intimate parts. For example, we do not show our penis or vulva or butt to strangers. Just like us, Sam has a body with intimate parts. It is best not to try and figure out what is hidden in Sam's underwear or in the underwear of the people around us. However, if a child wishes to confide in you something about their body or genitals, it is important to talk about it with someone you trust so that they may answer your questions or reassure you if you have doubts. There is nothing wrong with having questions about our body and the way it works: that's absolutely normal.

**Talking about Sam during the activities: a little tip**

Given the ambiguity around Sam's gender identity, you need to be careful with the words you use to describe this tool. In order to maximize its potential, please refer to Sam by using "they/ them" pronouns. By doing so, you'll avoid gendering Sam.

**Sam: a fictive character, a global character**

Sam represents a child with a complex and complete personality who experiences emotions. Like any human being, Sam is cannot be reduced to a gender identity.

This educational tool personifies the fictional life of a child and encourages students to speak up with more ease. Mainly, Sam helps create a safer environment in the classroom. **Therefore, the students' comments should always be directed towards Sam, and not towards other students in the classroom.**

**Trusting the children's emotional intelligence**

Sam allows children to express themselves and to identify with the emotions that may be experienced by Sam. In order to deconstruct myths and prejudices with students, do not hesitate to question them on the "why" behind their reasoning and to provide them with counterexamples.



## WHAT TO DO IF A STUDENT DECIDES TO COME OUT?

As discussed earlier in this guide, Sam may allow students who are questioning their gender identity to recognize themselves and to find the words to express how they feel. A student in your class may then reveal that they are, in one way or another, creative in terms of their gender identity or expression. Therefore:

**During class**

You should always reorient the discussion towards Sam to avoid situations that may lead to judgment, bullying or to the exclusion of that student.

**After class**

Refer the student to the appropriate resources: the school board's sexologist, community resources, etc.\*

**Remote Support Service:  
You Are Not Alone!**



Our remote support service is there to answer all your questions. If ever you have questions or need more information about these sensitization activities or the project, or if you are faced with questions that require more information from us, **do not hesitate to use our remote support service by writing an email to [sam@contactgckc.com](mailto:sam@contactgckc.com)**

\* For more information, please refer to these sections in the guide: "Tips and Tricks on How to Improve Support" on page 45, and "List of Resources: Sexual and Gender Diversity Resources" on page 95.

## COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS: INFORMATION LETTER TEMPLATE



As part of the sexuality education content developed by the MEES, the Ministry offers a letter to be sent to the parents of students who benefit from this content.

Since discussions about sexual and gender diversity may raise questions for some parents/guardians, a similar letter template is provided on the following page to inform them on the nature of the activities proposed in this guide.

In the section titled “Frequently Asked Questions”, you will also find a few questions and comments that you may receive from parents/guardians, as well as examples of appropriate responses.

[Date]  
[School name]

**Subject: Activities to Raise Awareness Around Gender Diversity in Class**

Hello,

As part of the new sexuality education program developed by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES), schools are required to address issues related to gender identity, roles, norms and stereotypes beginning as early as the first year of elementary school. Therefore, as part of the curriculum offered by our school, your child will have the opportunity to attend one or several activities designed to raise awareness around gender diversity, offered by the organization Gender Creative Kids Canada.

According to the Education Act and the Act Respecting Private Education, all schools have a legal obligation to implement an anti-bullying and anti-violence plan in order to offer a healthy and safe learning environment for all students. In its anti-bullying plan, the educational institution must have “prevention measures to put an end to all forms of bullying and violence, in particular those motivated by racism or homophobia or targeting sexual orientation, sexual identity, a handicap or a physical characteristic” (EA, art. 75.1). Moreover, given that a person's gender identity and expression are protected by the Québec Charter of Rights and Freedoms, our school considers it primordial to foster an environment that is respectful of the rights of every student, including the freedom to express their identity authentically and safely.

Raising awareness around diversity helps develop open-mindedness and empathy in children, as well as respect and acceptance of plurality and individual choices. Raising awareness at an early age facilitates the elimination of prejudices against gender diversity, well before they crystallize in children.

Our school therefore offers age-appropriate sensitization activities that integrate play to keep things dynamic. These activities will be held shortly in your child's classroom and will be facilitated by the teacher responsible for the given period.

The educational tools used by the teachers, including the sensitization activities, are easily accessible through Gender Creative Kids Canada's website:  
[www.gendercreativekids.com](http://www.gendercreativekids.com)

Feel free to get in touch with the school administration with any questions or concerns.

[Signature]

(School Principal)

# ACTIVITY 7

## I EXPRESS MYSELF IN MY OWN WAY!



### PREPARATION

<b>Duration</b>	45 min.
<b>Required material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The educational tool Sam (do not take Sam apart)</li> <li>• Smart board*</li> <li>• Image of the three boxes (Annex 1.1)</li> <li>• Sticky tack</li> <li>• Illustrated cards (Annex 1.2)</li> </ul>
<b>Material preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print out the illustrated cards found in Annex 1.2. Keep them within reach.</li> <li>• Project the image of the three boxes found in Annex 1.1 on the board.</li> </ul>



\* If you don't have access to a smart board, you can use an ordinary board. You simply need to draw three squares on the board: a pink one (on the left), a white one (in the middle) and a blue one (on the right).



## EDUCATIONAL INTENTION

“ Becoming aware of the influence gender stereotypes have on personal preferences and of the limits to self-expression they create. ”

### Link with the MEES's sexuality education content

Theme	
Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms	
Level	Educational intentions
Elementary 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give examples of gender roles</li> <li>Become aware of different ways of being and behaving, beyond gender stereotypes</li> </ul>
Elementary 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity in your personal and social environments, including the media</li> <li>Make connections between gender stereotypes and the development of one's gender identity</li> </ul>
Elementary 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the norms that guide how one expresses themselves</li> </ul>

### This activity will allow students:

- To understand the following concepts: gender identity, gender expression, gender stereotypes and gender roles;
- To associate different ways of self-expression to a plurality of genders;
- To respect their classmates' personal preferences in terms of their individual gender expression and hobbies.



## KEY MESSAGE

“ All toys, activities, hobbies and clothes are made for everyone. We have the right to explore what we like, regardless of our gender identity or of who we are. ”



## INSTRUCTIONS

### Introduction

- Introduce the activity:  
“Today we will talk about the toys, activities and hobbies we may enjoy as children.”

### Procedure

- Show the illustrated cards, one by one, to the students in the suggested order (from #1 to #15) and ask them to place the cards in the box they choose:  
“According to you, do we associate [ex: nailpolish] to the pink, blue or white box?”
- Using sticky tack, stick the illustrated card in the box with the colour that corresponds with the student's answer.
- After that, ask the following questions:  
“Why do you associate it with that colour?” and “Does everyone agree with this answer?”.
  - If there is no consensus about where to place the card, stick it in the white box.
- After having associated each illustrated card to a box, take out Sam (do not take the educational tool apart).
- Introduce Sam as simply a child (whose gender identity is unknown) who is looking for a collection of toys/hobbies/accessories that they like.
- Ask the group of students:  
“Which of the boxes do you think Sam should draw from?” and “Why do you think Sam would like what this box contains?”

Here are a few possible ways to respond (next page →):

### Possible ways to respond:

**Sam would like the blue box better because he's a boy /  
Sam would like the pink box better because she's a girl**

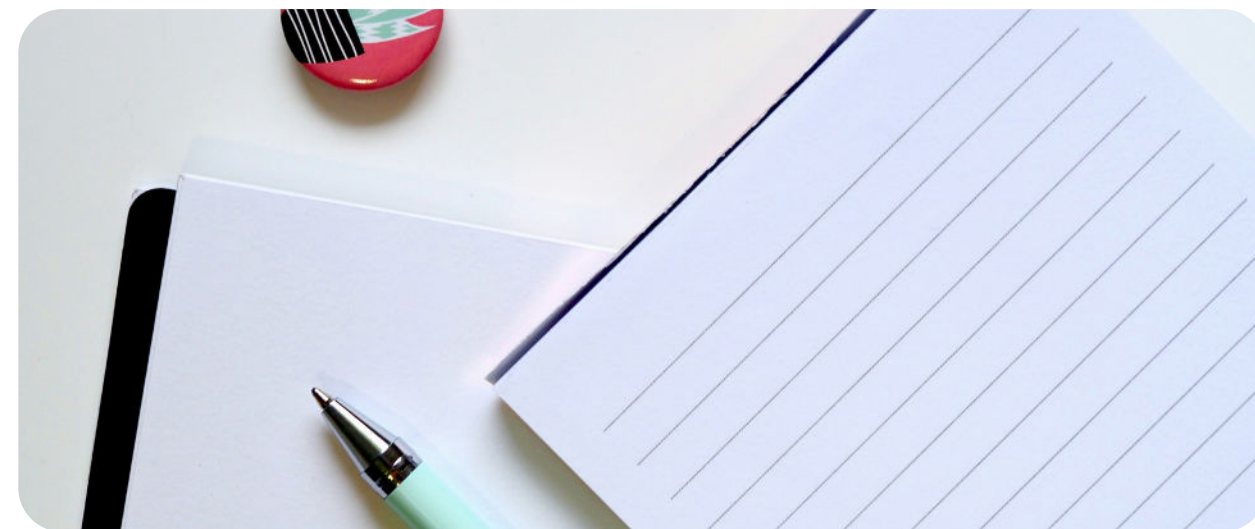
- We don't know if Sam is a boy or a girl.
- Girls can like what's in the blue or white box and not like what's in the pink box.
- Boys can like what's in the pink or white box and not like what's in the blue box.

**How do we know if Sam is a boy or a girl?**

- To help you with this discussion, please refer to the "Pedagogical Intervention With Students Using Sam" section, starting on page 59.

**Sam likes the blue/pink/white box better  
because there are more toys.**

- Sam, just like all children, may like all the activities in all the boxes.



**I would choose the blue/pink/white box,  
because it contains my favourite activity.**

- It might also be Sam's favourite activity. We'd have to ask Sam.

**Sam should not choose the blue/pink/white box,  
I know I would never choose it.**

- It's normal for each child to like different toys and activities. It's important to respect every child's choice.

**I don't know any boys who like X activity.  
I don't know any girls who like X activity. It's impossible!**

- People whose tastes are less common are often shy about expressing themselves. They may be afraid of getting hurt by others. Just like you and me, they deserve to have their personal tastes respected.

## Procedure (continued)

- Following this exchange, open the discussion on gender stereotypes.
- Ask the students about what motivates them to place certain elements in the blue box, and other elements in the pink box.
- Then, define the following concepts with the students. To encourage the development of their reflexivity, and if time allows for it, let the children propose definitions before providing them with the following definitions:
  - **Gender identity:** our gender identity is something that we feel very strongly inside ourselves, that tells us if we are a girl, a boy, a mix of both, neither, or any other variation. It's a very intimate and powerful feeling.
  - **Gender expression:** gender expression is the way we express who we are. For example, it's the way we style our hair, the clothes we choose to wear, the hobbies and activities we choose to participate in. There are many ways to express who we are, and they are all unique
  - **Gender stereotypes:** the way we express our identity is often influenced by gender stereotypes. Generally speaking, a stereotype is an incorrect belief which leads you to assume that if a group of people (e.g. girls, boys) share certain traits, then they are all the same. For example, a gender stereotype may be the belief that all girls [use a concrete example], and all boys [use a concrete example].
  - **Gender roles:** gender roles represent the belief that girls and boys each have distinct roles. For example, we often hear that there are female jobs, like [use a concrete example], and male jobs [use a concrete example].
- This discussion will allow you to progressively go back to the contents of both the pink and the blue boxes in order to place all the illustrated cards in the white square.
- When the entire set is in the white box, encourage the students to question the necessity of placing the elements according to gender stereotypes.
- Show the children that, in the end, all colours, hobbies and objects are made for everyone. Pink and blue are only colours, and we can choose whatever elements align with our personal interests, and not necessarily with our gender identity.
- **Therefore, Sam, just like any student in the class, may like any of the given elements, and draw from the white box, regardless of Sam's gender identity: girl, boy, or any other gender identity.**



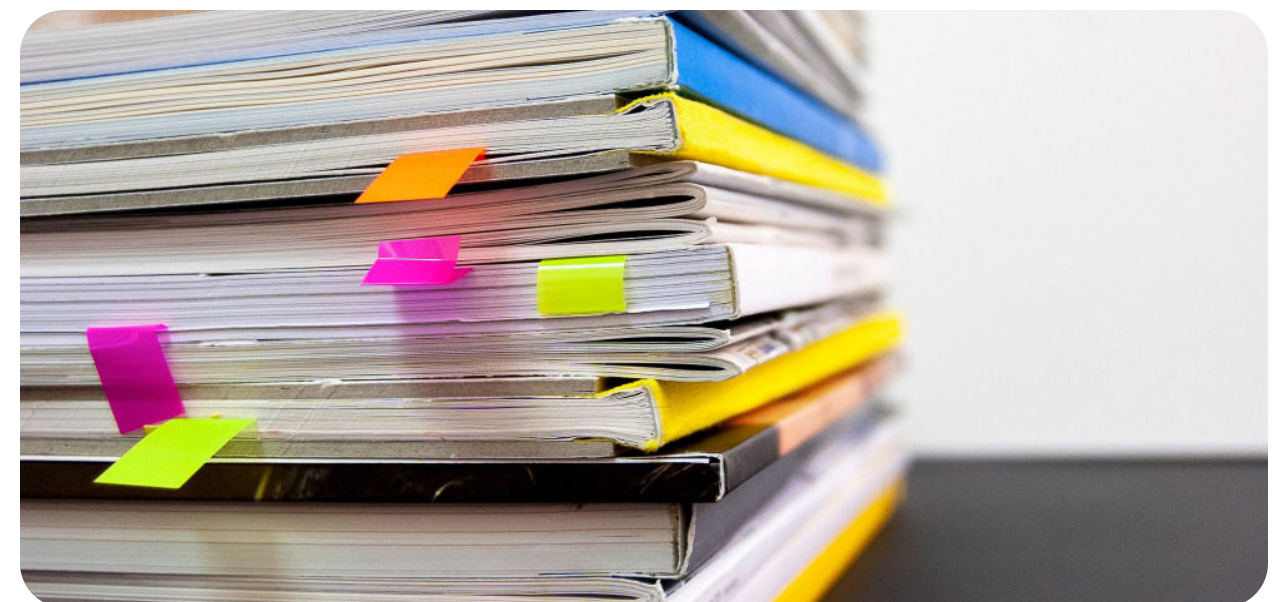
## TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION...

- Create a poster for the classroom, with the definitions for each of the concepts that were learned during this activity.
- Suggest a craft project for each child where they can create a poster with the key message "MY TASTES, MY CHOICE!", representing the preferences of the students to illustrate diversity.
- Broaden the scope of the conversation to include media personalities according to the students' knowledge. For example, you can discuss femininity and masculinity as portrayed on television or in cinema by considering some well-known fictional characters or talking about real famous people to deconstruct the stereotypes attached to them.



## THINGS TO INTEGRATE INTO YOUR WORK

- Opt for inclusive expressions when you refer to certain activities, hobbies or objects that are "traditionally" associated with girls or boys to avoid reinforcing the stereotypes that you have deconstructed in class.
- Correct students during class and outside of the classroom when stereotypes come up.
  - For example, whenever you hear expressions like, "A girl can't like boy stuff!" or, "Boys can't like girl stuff" or, "You can't play with that, you're a boy!"
  - Remind them what you've learned together in class.



## ACTIVITY 2

SAM'S  
STAR

## PREPARATION

<b>Duration</b>	45 min.
<b>Required material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The educational tool Sam (do not take the Sam doll apart)</li> <li>• A star for each student (Annex 2.1)</li> <li>• Smart board*</li> <li>• Sam's star (Annex 2.2)</li> </ul>
<b>Material preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print out the students' star (Annex 2.1)</li> <li>• Project the image of Sam's star (Annex 2.2) on the board</li> </ul>



\* If you don't have access to a smart board, you can simply draw a star on your ordinary board and point out the same elements as in Annex 2.2.





## EDUCATIONAL INTENTION

“ Encourage self-affirmation through authentic gender expression and encourage respect for the diversity and the uniqueness of people around us. ”

### Link with the MEES's sexuality education content

Theme	
Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms	
Level	Educational intentions
Elementary 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give examples of gender roles</li> <li>• Become aware of different ways of being and behaving, beyond gender stereotypes</li> </ul>
Elementary 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity in your personal and social environments, including the media</li> <li>• Make connections between gender stereotypes and the development of one's gender identity</li> </ul>
Elementary 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the norms that guide how one expresses themselves</li> </ul>

### This activity will allow students:

- To deepen their understanding of the following concepts: gender identity, gender expression, gender stereotypes and gender roles;
- To express personal preferences and choices in terms of their identity;
- To affirm themselves authentically;
- To respect the diversity and uniqueness of people around them.



## KEY MESSAGE

“ Each child is unique, just like stars. There are as many ways to express ourselves as there are stars in the sky. Because of this diversity, we cannot know someone's gender identity by simply looking at their star, as each child has their own distinct way to express themselves, but we can appreciate the beauty, the uniqueness and the originality of each child. ”



## INSTRUCTIONS

### Introduction

- Take out the educational tool Sam (without taking it apart) and introduce it to the students: *“Sam is a child, but we don't know if Sam is a boy or a girl (their gender identity) because we would have to ask Sam to know.”*
- Introduce the activity: *“Today, we will work on Sam's star to better understand all the aspects of Sam's personality. While we can't really ask Sam any questions, we can suggest ideas together about what Sam might enjoy doing.”*

### Procedure

- Each of the star's tips represents Sam's characteristics.
  - **Sam likes...** (What are Sam's favourite hobbies? What does Sam like to do?);
  - **Sam plays with...** (What are some of Sam's favourite toys?);
  - **Sam likes to wear...** (Does Sam like to wear nail polish? What are Sam's favourite accessories? What's Sam's favourite colour?);
  - **In Sam's room, there is...** (Wall colours, toys, bedsheet colours?);
  - **When Sam grows up, Sam will be...** (Future job).

(Continued →)

- Using the star on the board, fill in Sam's star with the entire class, discussing the personal characteristics that the students creatively come up with. Write their answers on the board without judgment.
- It is important to make sure to associate a diverse range of activities to Sam so that Sam's gender identity and gender expression may be plural. In the event of a lack of diversity, feel free to suggest elements to the students.

### Here are a few possible ways to respond:

Sam likes X because he's a boy /  
Sam likes X because she's a girl

- We don't know if Sam is a boy or a girl since, as we've talked about it, we can't ask Sam that question.
- Also, as we talked about it together [earlier/yesterday/last week], we have the right to have diverse personal preferences and tastes, regardless of our gender identity.
- Remind the students of the concepts defined in the first activity: gender identity, gender expression, gender stereotypes, gender roles.
- If questions about Sam's gender identity persist, refer to the "Pedagogical Intervention With Students Using Sam" section, starting on page 59.

I don't know any boys who like X activity.  
I don't know any girls who like X activity. It's impossible!

- People whose tastes are less common are often shy about expressing themselves. They may be afraid of getting hurt by others. Just like you and me, they deserve to have their personal tastes respected.

### Procedure (continued)

- Hand out a printed star to each student.
- Ask the students to each fill in their own star individually, but without writing their name on it so that they can do the exercise anonymously and therefore without fear of being made fun of.
  - Through this exercise, celebrate the expression of each student, regardless of their preferences: *"Children, just like Sam, are free to express themselves in any way they choose, regardless of their gender identity."*
- Collect the students' stars and display them on the classroom walls (leaving them anonymous).
- Look back on the activity as a group:
  - Highlight the diversity amongst the stars by displaying them on the classroom walls.
  - Emphasize the importance of respecting each and every star.
  - Draw attention to the diversity of expressions within the class, beyond gender stereotypes: *"By looking at the stars, we can't figure out which belongs to whom, but we can see the beauty inside and outside of each of you because you are free to express who you really are inside."*



## TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION...

- If you have enough time, continue the discussion on diversity in class by looking at the stars with the students.
- Encourage the students to talk about what they have learned about the plurality of gender expressions, as well as the way gender stereotypes influence their perception of each of the elements of their classmates' stars by asking them questions.
- Challenge your students! Try and associate certain elements of the stars to a gender identity to see how the students react. If there are no interesting contradictions, ask the students about the meaning of your assumptions in relation to what they've learned thus far.

## ACTIVITY 3

SAM'S  
STORY

## PREPARATION

<b>Duration</b>	60 min.
<b>Required material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational tool Sam (do not take Sam apart at the beginning, but you will do it during a part of the activity)</li> <li>• Short film "Sam's Story," available online for free*</li> <li>• Activity sheet for each student (Annex 3.1)</li> </ul>
<b>Material preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare the educational tool Sam by leaving it as one piece</li> <li>• Set up the necessary material to watch the short film "Sam's Story"</li> <li>• Print out the activity sheets and hand them out to students</li> </ul>



\* Link to Sam's story: <https://youtu.be/fdI9Sljy8sc>



## EDUCATIONAL INTENTION

**“ Develop an open-minded and respectful approach to gender diversity and its expression. ”**

### Link with the MEES's sexuality education content

#### Theme

Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms

#### Level

#### Educational intentions

#### Elementary 3

- Identify stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity in per-sonal and social environments, including the media
- Make connections between gender stereotypes and the development of one's gender identity

#### Elementary 4

- Make connections between gender inequalities and the establishment of harmonious relationships
- Understand the norms that guide how one expresses themselves

#### Elementary 6

- Explain how discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation can affect people
- Discuss the role that one can play in respecting sexual diversity and differences

#### Theme

Emotional and Romantic Life

#### Level

#### Educational intentions

#### Elementary 4

- Understand how certain attitudes and behaviours can influence interpersonal relationships

### This activity will allow students:

- To deepen their understanding of the following terms: gender identity, gender expression, gender stereotypes and gender roles.
- To understand the following new terms: sex assigned at birth, gender creative, trans, non-binary and transphobia.
- To recognize the important steps in the journey of a gender creative child.
- To recognize and name the behaviours to adopt in order to foster an environment that is welcoming to gender diversity.



## KEY MESSAGE

**“ Even though everyone does not experience the steps in the same way, all children explore their gender identity and their gender expression in unique ways. Sometimes the gender identity we feel inside corresponds to the identity that was assigned to us at birth. Some other times, the identity we feel inside is different from what was assigned to us at birth. Questioning and understanding our identity is an important step in the life of every human being. It is very important to have friends or relatives around us who love us and who understand us so that we can confide in them and express who we truly are without fearing the consequences. ”**



## INSTRUCTIONS

### Introduction

- Introduce the activity:  
“We will watch a short film about Sam's story. Then, I will ask you to fill in the four elements on your sheet so that we can discuss it as a group [name the elements].”

(Continued →)

## Procedure

- Watch the short film as a group without commenting (**stop the short film at 3:05 min.**)
- Ask the students to fill in the activity sheet.
- As a group, discuss the students' answers while making sure to ask for explanations (ex: *"Why is this an event that brought you joy?"*). This discussion will allow you to bring certain out certain prejudices, while helping students develop empathy and build a common understanding of Sam's story.
- Thank the students for sharing their thoughts with the class.
- Next, take Sam apart and deconstruct them into small figurines while leaving the heart inside the baby. Place the six figurines on your desk.
- Tell the students that you are going to watch the short film again, but that this time you will take the time to talk about the steps in Sam's life.
- Watch the short film a second time, this time pausing the video at each segment of the child's development: each segment is associated with a version of Sam and with a reality that may be experienced by a trans or a gender creative child.



## Happy [0:00 to 0:25]

- The first step is Sam's birth.
- In this step, Sam is given what we call a "sex assigned at birth".
- When Sam is born, just like you and me, the doctor assigns them a sex based on their physical characteristics: the vulva or the penis. The doctor therefore tells the parents whether Sam is a boy or a girl. Sam is given what we call a "sex assigned at birth".
- Sam, being a baby, does not have a say over this decision.
- However, their life as a baby is happy because Sam has everything they need: they have food, a roof over their head and their family loves them.



## Exploring [0:25 to 0:57]

- This step is where Sam is curious and starts exploring their interests, their identity and their gender expression.
- During this stage, just like all children do, Sam starts exploring their interests and building their identity and their gender expression through clothes, behaviours, toy preferences and their appearances. As we have seen in previous activities, there are endless ways to express one's gender. In addition, what is associated with boys and with girls changes from one culture to another.
- Some children, like Sam, can be gender creative and have certain interests and/or a gender expression that do not follow the feminine or masculine gender stereotypes.
- Generally speaking, it is Sam's parents who decide on the gender that Sam can express in public by choosing Sam's clothes and hairstyle for them. For example, Sam's parents want Sam to wear dresses, but Sam prefers wearing a construction worker costume and to draw a moustache on.



## Questioning [0:57 to 1:35]

- In the video we can see that Sam is going through a rough situation with their school peers. Sam, who would like to participate in an activity with boys their age, is not picked to be a part of any of the teams. Sam is confused when other students laugh at them because from Sam's point of view, it's absolutely normal to want to participate in those activities. Sam feels sad and angry. Sam ends up in a fight and the principal calls in their parents.
- While we may be tempted to assume that this is a common conflict that happens between students, such a situation can sometimes be a manifestation of a child going through internal questioning related to their gender identity, meaning the strong feeling inside them that tells them if they are a girl, a boy, or non-binary, which is a person who is neither a boy nor a girl, or a mix of both. Here, it is the exclusion from a group that Sam wants to be a part of that causes this emotion.
- As we may see, Sam is questioning themselves about their gender identity: is their gender identity really what was assigned to them at birth? Could everyone around them be wrong?
- These questions can leave a child confused and can sometimes be very distressing: Sam's emotions are boiling, a little like boiling water overflowing out of a pot. Sam starts feeling like something's wrong and they can't seem to fit in with their classmates because their gender expression is viewed as "different" from the others.
- All this questioning is distressing to Sam. While some children in the same situation might tend to withdraw and isolate themselves more and more, others will express their emotions through so-called aggressive behaviour, like insults, screaming, physical violence, etc.
- Other tough situations may contribute to the negative feelings felt by children who are in the same situation as Sam: bullying, harassment in bathrooms, rejection, being forced to wear clothing that doesn't reflect their identity, receiving gifts that are the opposite of what their tastes and interests are, etc.



## Conflicted [1:35 to 1:58]

- Questioning one's gender identity can often lead to feeling internally conflicted. In Sam's case, they feel different from their friends at school. They are asking themselves questions not only about their gender identity, but also about their gender expression, meaning the way they express their identity through their clothes, their haircut, etc.
- Sam is asking themselves whether the gender identity they feel like expressing every day really corresponds to what was assigned to them at birth. Sam therefore feels conflicted because they know, inside their heart, that the identity that was assigned to them at birth does not exactly correspond to the way they feel inside. Sam doesn't understand why they can't live their life as their authentic identity and express themselves however they choose.
- This is something that happens to all trans children and youth. Essentially, a trans person is someone who's gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. For example, a trans girl was assigned boy at birth, and a trans boy was assigned girl at birth.
- Sam doesn't know who to talk to and thinks that no one will understand them. They start questioning everything and hiding their feelings.
- Sam, like many other children, tries to alter their appearance to make it correspond to their authentic identity. We see Sam cutting their hair.



## Isolated [1:58 to 02:35]

- As we can see, Sam is isolated and rejected by the friends at school.
- Sam is bullied and excluded by the others. Sam feels lonely and a lot of other negative emotions. It is very difficult.
- Sam experiences what a lot of trans people unfortunately experience: transphobia. Transphobia refers to any kind of hatred of, prejudice against or rejection of trans people. For example, insulting or rejecting a friend because they are trans or gender creative is an instance of transphobia.
- Sam tends to isolate themselves and avoid talking about their emotions to other people. Deep inside, Sam is uncomfortable with the idea of growing up. Sam feels like nobody can understand them and that they will never be able to be who they really are. Sam would like things to be different.
- Thankfully, there is something that could help Sam: Sam talks to people they trust to better understand what's happening. Their parents also get help to better understand and support their child.



## Supported [2:35 to 3:05]

- In this step, we see that Sam can finally be whole. Thanks to their parents' love, Sam feels comfortable living and expressing their authentic gender identity and expression.
- Sam now knows that everyone is allowed to express themselves freely and that they are entitled to respect from everyone, including their classmates, their family and the school staff.
- During this stage, the support Sam gets from their family and friends is very important to their wellbeing. Sam is happy to have had people listen and support them and they feel good inside their heart.



## Procedure (continued)

- At the end of the discussion, take out the heart inside baby Sam and tell the students: *“Regardless of who we are, we all have a heart. Each of us needs to be respected and loved by the people around us. We all have a role to play to make sure that everyone feels respected and happy inside.”*
- In conclusion, ask the students:
  - *“How can we make sure that children like Sam, and all the other children, can feel good in our group?”*  
For example: by respectfully welcoming the uniqueness of each and everyone.
  - *“What should we do when we witness bullying?”*  
For example: despite feelings of anger, shame, fear or guilt, we should talk to an adult we trust who might be able to intervene. We can also show our support directly to the person who's a victim of bullying. It is important to act together to stop bullying at school.



## TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION...

- To continue the conversation further and to allow for a better grasp of the content, we strongly recommend completing the 4<sup>th</sup> activity with your students, regardless of their grade level.



# ACTIVITY 4

## CHARTER OF VALUES



### PREPARATION

<b>Duration</b>	30-45 min.
<b>Required material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smart board*</li> <li>• Note-taking software</li> </ul>
<b>Material preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None.</li> <li>• However, we encourage stimulating your students' creativity by turning your list into a collective art project. You simply need a large colourful (or white) poster and any arts and craft supplies you have at hand.</li> </ul>



\* If you do not have access to a smart board, you can simply take notes on a regular board.





## EDUCATIONAL INTENTION

“ Encourage the students to reflect on concrete ways to establish harmonious relationships. ”

Link with the MEES's sexuality education content	
<b>Theme</b>	
Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Educational intentions</b>
<b>Elementary 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make connections between gender inequalities and the establishment of harmonious relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Elementary 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation can affect people</li> <li>• Discuss the role that one can play in respecting sexual diversity and differences</li> </ul>
<b>Theme</b>	
Emotional and Romantic Life	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Educational intentions</b>
<b>Elementary 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how certain attitudes and behaviours can influence interpersonal relationships</li> </ul>

### This activity will allow students:

- To recognize and name the adequate behaviours to adopt in order to foster an environment that is welcoming to gender diversity.
- To become actively involved in respecting diversity and in fighting bullying and exclusion.



## KEY MESSAGE

“ Each of us has a role to play in the fight against bullying and in making sure that diversity is respected around us. ”



## INSTRUCTIONS

### Introduction

- Introduce the activity:  
“Today we will discuss actions to take and behaviours to adopt to help us fight against bullying and to make sure that everyone respects gender diversity and its expression at school.”

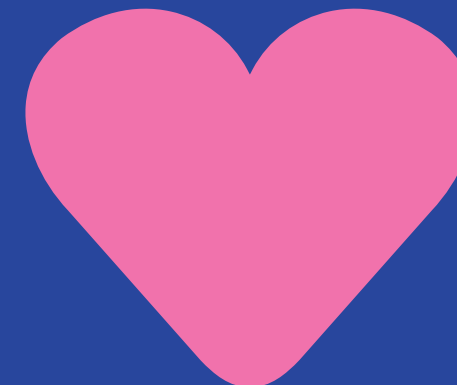
### Procedure

- Summarize what was covered during the first three activities.
- Emphasize the importance of respecting other people's personal choices and tastes (regardless of their gender identity), of being critical of gender stereotypes and to take action when we witness a situation that involves bullying and exclusion.
- Ask the students to collectively suggest actions that will help create and cultivate a class environment that is respectful of the gender expressions of all their classmates.
  - For example : “I respect everyone's personal tastes and I encourage others to take part in activities they like.”
- Collectively, come up with anti-bullying and anti-exclusion guidelines such as reporting to a trusted adult and supporting our classmates.
  - For example: “If I witness bullying, I report it to an adult at school,” “I politely invite a friend to come eat with me if I notice they are eating alone” or “I support my classmates by highlighting their strengths and what makes them unique”.
- Write down the answers on your poster/sheet to gradually create your collective charter of values with students.



## TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION...

- Display your charter of values in your classroom to promote an inclusive life code that makes everyone feel safer.
- **Contribute to social change by sharing your work with us!** We would be thrilled to share the fruits of your class' labour on our social media to inspire others to reflect on questions related to gender diversity and inclusion. You can simply send the document or a picture of your charter to the following email address: [sam@contactgckc.com](mailto:sam@contactgckc.com)





# List of Resources

In Regards to Sexual and Gender Diversity

08

## Community Resources

In alphabetical order:

### ALTERHÉROS

[www.alterheros.com](http://www.alterheros.com)

438.830.4376

info@alterheros.com

- **Neuro/Diversities**  
(a service offered by AlterHéros)  
neurodiversites@alterheros.com

### ASTT(e)Q

[www.astteq.org](http://www.astteq.org)

514.847.0067 poste 207

info@astteq.org

### ATQ (AIDE AUX TRANS DU QUÉBEC)

[www.atq1980.org](http://www.atq1980.org)

1.855.909.9038 extension 2

admin@atq1980.org

### CENTRE FOR GENDER ADVOCACY

[www.genderadvocacy.org](http://www.genderadvocacy.org)

514.848.2424 extension 7431

info@genderadvocacy.org

educator@genderadvocacy.org

### COALITION DES FAMILLES LGBT+

[www.familleslgbt.org](http://www.familleslgbt.org)

514.878.7600

info@familleslgbt.org

### COALITION DES GROUPES JEUNESSE LGBTQ+

[www.coalitionjeunesse.org](http://www.coalitionjeunesse.org)

514.318.5428

info@coalitionjeunesse.org

### CONSEIL QUÉBÉCOIS LGBT

[www.conseil-lgbt.ca](http://www.conseil-lgbt.ca)

514.759.6844

info@conseil-lgbt.ca

### DIVERGENRES

[www.divergenres.org](http://www.divergenres.org)

divergenres@gmail.com

### DIVERS-GENS

[www.diversgens.org](http://www.diversgens.org)

579.488.8004

info@diversgens.org

### EUPHORIE DANS LE GENRE

[www.euphoriedanslegenre.wordpress.com](http://www.euphoriedanslegenre.wordpress.com)

fiertetrans@gmail.com

### GENDER CREATIVE KIDS CANADA

[www.gendercreativekids.com](http://www.gendercreativekids.com)

514.526.KIDS

info@contactgckc.com

### GRIS-ESTRIE

[www.grisestrie.org](http://www.grisestrie.org)

819.434.6413

info@grisestrie.org

### GRIS-MAURICIE CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC

[www.grismcdq.org](http://www.grismcdq.org)

819.840.6615

info@grismcdq.org

**GRIS-MONTRÉAL**[www.gris.ca](http://www.gris.ca)

514.590.0016

(Messages can be sent through the website)

**GRIS-QUÉBEC**[www.grisquebec.org](http://www.grisquebec.org)

418.523.5572

liaison@grisquebec.ca

**HEAD & HANDS**[www.headandhands.ca](http://www.headandhands.ca)

514.481.0277

info@headandhands.ca

**INTERLIGNE**[www.interligne.co](http://www.interligne.co)

514.866.0103 (Montréal)

1.888.505.1010 (Toll free and text messaging)

aide@interligne.co

**JEUNESSE J'ÉCOUTE**[www.jeunessejecoute.ca](http://www.jeunessejecoute.ca)

1.800.668.6868 (telephone)

686868 (send CONNECT by text)

**JEUNESSE LAMBDA**[www.facebook.com/JLAMBDA.MTL](https://www.facebook.com/JLAMBDA.MTL)

514.528.7535

**PROJECT 10**[www.p10.qc.ca](http://www.p10.qc.ca)

514.989.0001

questions@p10.qc.ca

**TRANSESTRIE**[www.transestrie.org](http://www.transestrie.org)

819.415.2555

info@transestrie.org

**TRANS OUTAOUAIS**[www.transoutaouais.com](http://www.transoutaouais.com)

info@transoutaouais.com

**TRANS MAURICIE/CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC**[www.transmcdq.com](http://www.transmcdq.com)

873.886.9981

transmcdq@gmail.com



# Literary Resources on Gender Diversity, Creativity, and Stereotypes for Children

These different books can be easily integrated into your students' academic curriculum. For example, when it's time for reading activities, you can opt for one or more of the options mentioned below:

## In English

### **Annie's Plaid Shirt**

by Stacy B. Davids (author) and Rachael Balsaitis (illustrator), 2015

### **The Boy & the Bindi**

by Vivek Sharya (author) and Rajni Perera (illustrator), 2016

### **Bunnybear**

by Andrea J. Loney (author) and Carmen Saldaña (illustrator), 2017

### **The Gender Wheel: a story about bodies and gender for every body**

par Maya Gonzalez, 2017

### **I Am Jazz**

by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings (authors) and Shelagh McNicholas (illustrator), 2014

### **Introduction Teddy: A gentle story about gender and friendship**

by Jessica Walton (author) and Dougal MacPherson (illustrator), 2016

### **Is That a Boy or a Girl?**

by S. Bear Bergman (author) and Rachel Dougherty (illustrator), 2015

### **It Feels Good to Be Yourself**

par Theresa Thorn (auteure) et Noah Grigni (illustrateur), 2019

### **Juliàn Is a Mermaid**

by Jessica Love, 2018

### **Sex is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings, and YOU!**

by Cory Silverberg (author) and Fiona Smyth (illustrator), 2015

### **They She Me He: Free to Be!**

by Maya Gonzalez and Matthew SG (authors), 2017

## In French

### **Ada, la grincheuse et tutu**

by Élise Gravel, 2016

### **Anatole qui ne séchait jamais**

by Stéphanie Boulay and Agathe Bray-Bourret, 2018

### **Boris Brindamour et la robe orange**

by Christine Baldacchino (author) and Isabelle Malenfant (illustrator), 2015

### **Ciel**

by Sophie Labelle, 2018

### **La princesse qui voulait devenir générale**

by Sophie Bienvenu (author) and Camille Pomerlo (illustrator), 2017

### **Tu peux**

by Élise Gravel, 2018

### **Une fille comme les autres**

by Sophie Labelle, 2014

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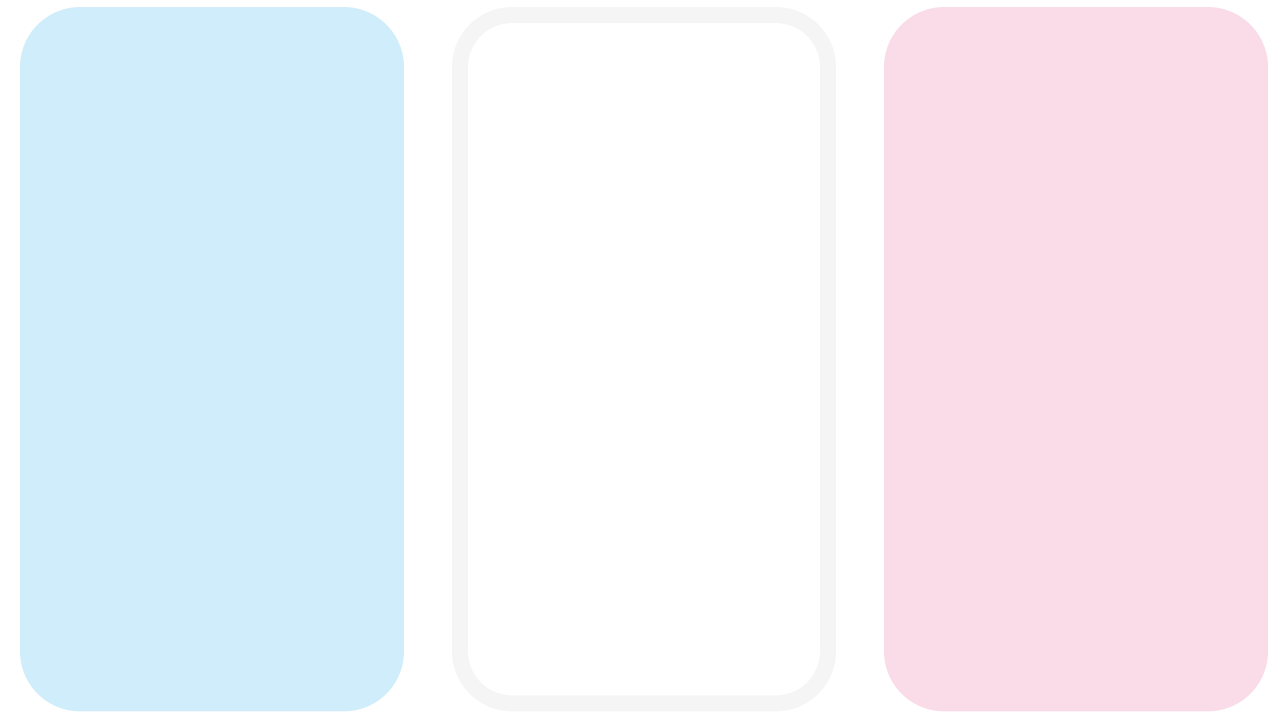
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## Annex 1.1 : Three Boxes



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Annex

# Annex 1.2 : Illustrated Cards\*

<b>Nail Polish</b> 	<b>Doll</b> 	<b>Construction Tools</b> 	<b>Video Games</b> 
<b>Skateboarding</b> 	<b>Remote-controlled Car</b> 	<b>Makeup</b> 	<b>Ice Skating</b> 
<b>Going to the Movies</b> 	<b>Talking on the Phone</b> 	<b>Reading</b> 	<b>Playing in the Snow</b> 
<b>Having Short Hair</b> 	<b>Playing Guitar</b> 	<b>Drawing, Painting</b> 	

\* Note : in order to facilitate the first activity (Activity 1), the illustrated cards must first be downloaded from our website.

# Annex 2.1 : Student's Star

**I play with...**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**I like to wear...**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**My Star**

**I like...**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**When I grow up, I will be...**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**In my room, there is...**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Annex 2.2 : Sam's Star

Sam likes...

Four horizontal teal lines for writing.

When Sam grows up, Sam will be...

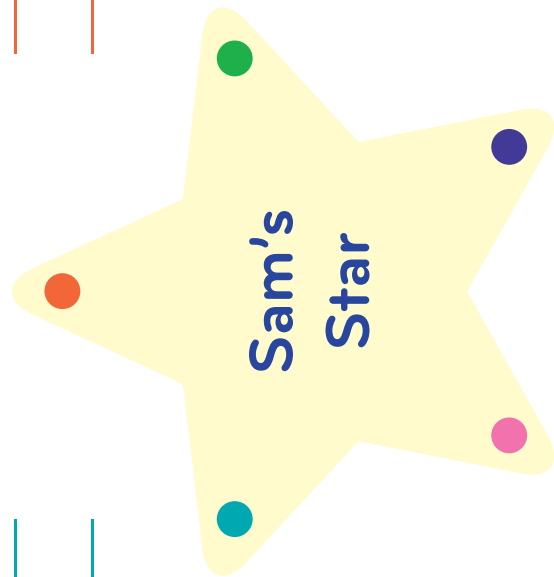
Four horizontal pink lines for writing.

Sam plays with...

Four horizontal orange lines for writing.

Sam likes to wear...

Four horizontal green lines for writing.



In Sam's room, there is...

Three horizontal blue lines for writing.

# Annex 3.1 : Activity Sheet

What I've seen...	What made me happy...
What made me sad...	Tonight, I will remember...

## Annex 1.2 : Illustrated Cards

Nail Polish



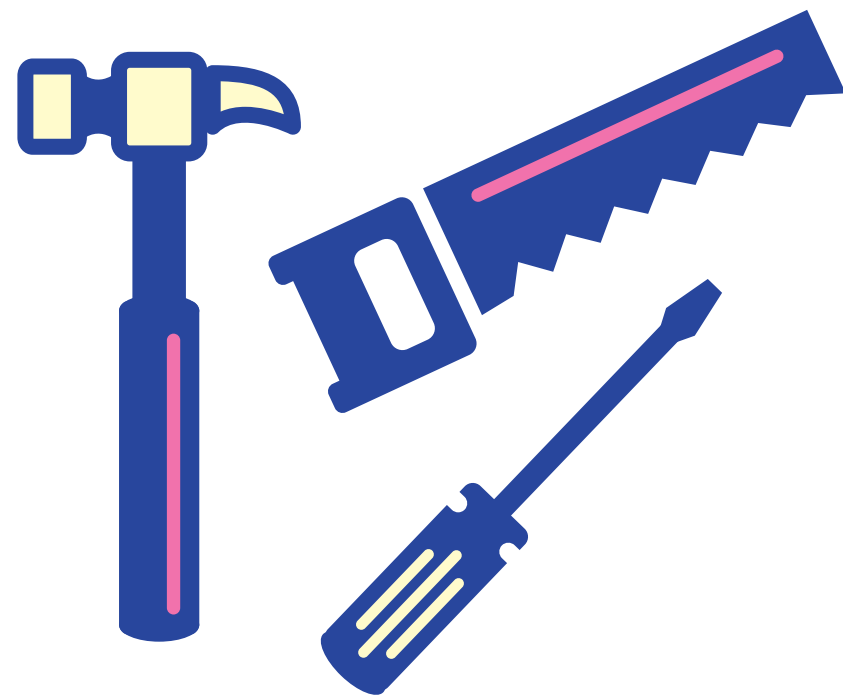
Doll



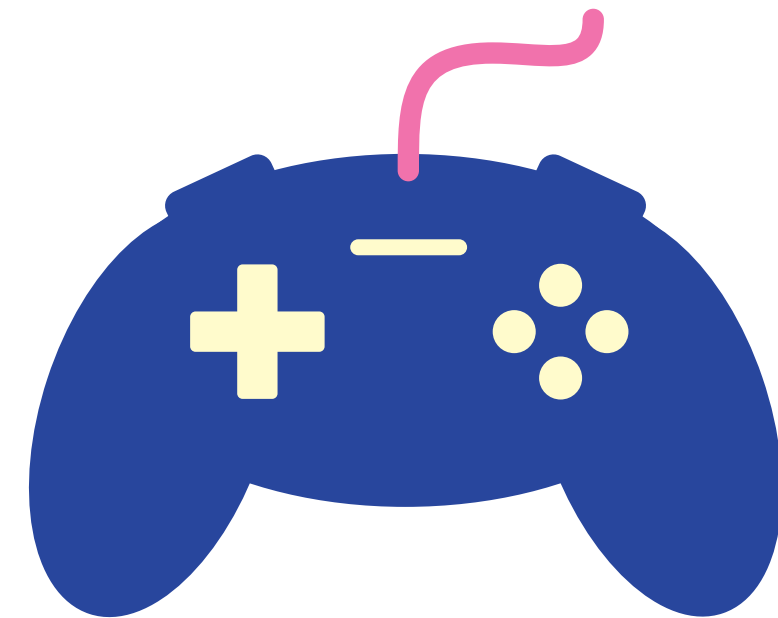
#01

#02

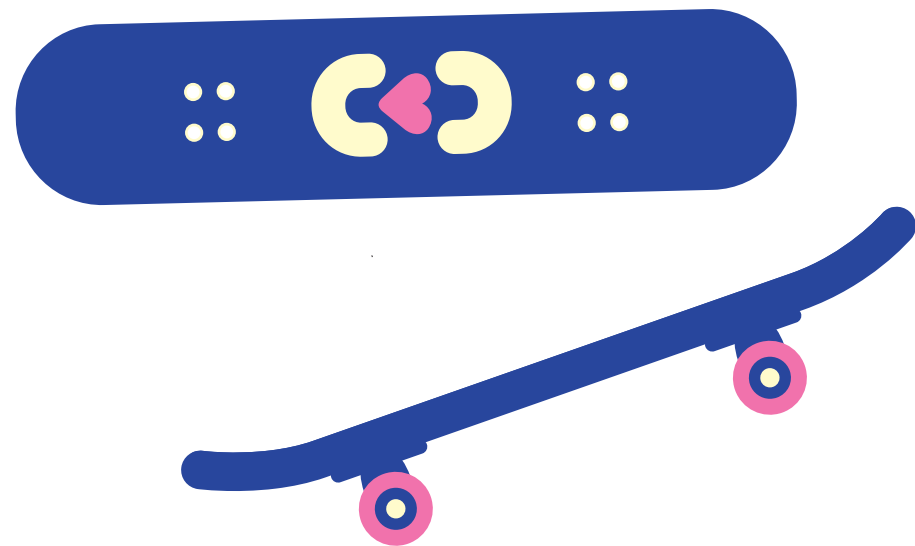
## Construction Tools



## Video Games



## Skateboarding



#05

## Remote-controlled Car



#06

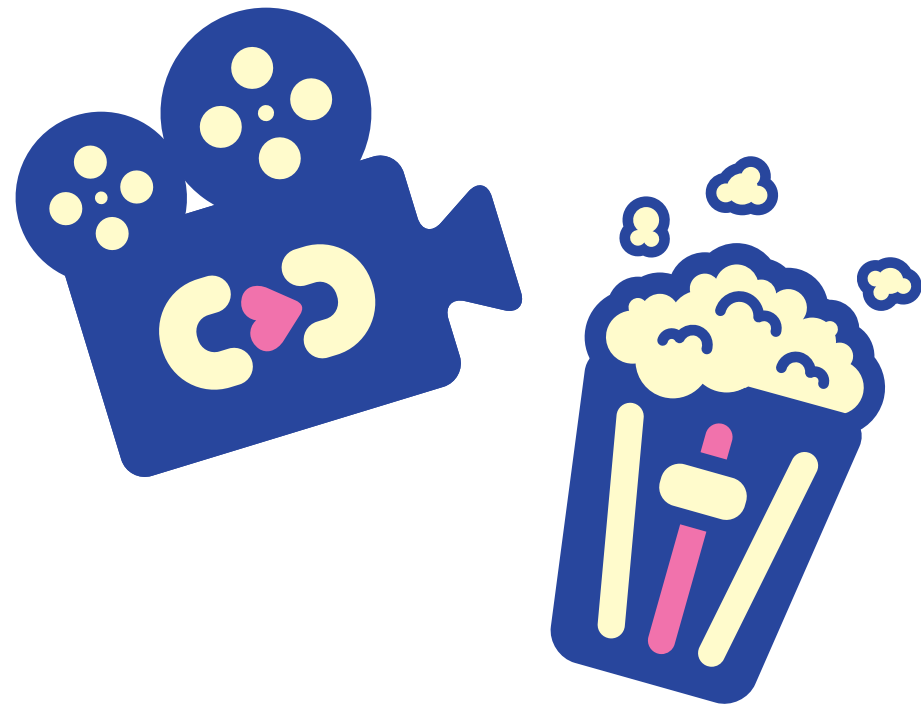
## Makeup



## Ice Skating



## Going to the Movies



#09

## Talking on the Phone



#10



## Reading



#11

## Playing in the Snow



#12

## Having Short Hair



#13

## Playing Guitar



#14

## Drawing, Painting



