

JULIE MENCHER, MSW

Educator, Consultant, Psychotherapist

Gender Diversity and Sexual Identity

Nothing short of a gender revolution is taking place, a cultural shift which challenges the gender binary of female/male. Adults are often playing catch-up with youth -- who increasingly view gender not as a given, but as a choice, not as a distinction between male and female, but as a spectrum of self-ascribed identities. It's a brave new world where gender is concerned, but educators can do a world of good in helping gender-variant youth, who are among the most at-risk students in your classrooms.

For single-sex schools, the challenge is unique – and girls' schools have it the worst. Girls' schools, whose very mission is grounded in the gender binary of female/male, are torn between protecting your contract with families, alums, and other stakeholders that you remain single-sex, and, on the other hand, facing a world in which the binary is increasingly obsolete, particularly among youth.

There's no one path that will fit all girls' schools; my own bias is that each school has to consider the changing gender landscape in the context of their own institution's mission, history, values and priorities, and stakeholders – as well as their local legal restrictions and position in the marketplace.

Challenges and Policy Dilemmas

Pronouns and Names

Residential Life

Athletics

Curriculum

Student Services (Health/Counseling/College Counseling)

School Traditions and Rituals/Invisible Culture

Parent Relations

Gender Expression/Gender Identity as a Diversity Issue

Admissions

Communication with Stakeholders

- Educate your school community on gender diversity
- Assess your school's mission and culture
- Communicate effectively with stakeholders

Julie Mencher, MSW
juliemencher@gmail.com
www.juliemencher.com
413-530-4348