



As many of us are aware, more and more students are coming forward and disclosing that they are transgender. And while the topic of gender identity appears to be full of controversy schools have a responsibility in supporting transgender students in a way that allows them the opportunity to be successful in school.

This alone may leave schools and administrators feeling overwhelmed because of the fierce backlash schools run into when supporting transgender students.

However, when a school approaches it in a diplomatic manner and from the standpoint of student rights and supporting any student, transgender or otherwise, this task may not seem quite as complicated as first thought.

The right **NOT** to be bullied or harassed is a widely accepted stance that schools, communities, parents, students take and agree on. Most all of us know bullying and harassing any student is simply wrong, this includes transgender or gender non-conforming. According to GLSEN.org, 80% of transgender students feel unsafe in school because of their gender expression. Every school needs to be aware of this alarming statistic.

School employees at every level should react quickly when they witness or hear name-calling or other harassment. In addition to taking action, school employees can offer support to the targeted student and/or alert guidance counselors and other supportive staff to the problem.

It is also very important that schools do not treat the person targeted as the problem. Sometimes when a student is harassed or bullied, schools may respond by physically isolating a student who is experiencing harassment, providing the student with an “escort” or suggesting that the student change their behavior to avoid mistreatment.

While escorts and physical separation might help when there is a serious, imminent threat to a student’s safety, generally, these procedures only give schools the illusion of having solved the problem as the environment has not really improved for students in a meaningful or sustainable way. Furthermore, such procedures many times can isolate and stigmatize the student targeted for harassment, especially those who are transgender or gender non-conforming.

And as we know, discipline is not the only possible solution, nor should it be. It should not be assumed that once a student had been disciplined for bullying or harassing another student that the problem has been solved. Written policies, counseling and trainings for staff and/or students should also be in place.

While, addressing bullying alone does not eliminate all obstacles schools face in supporting transgender students it is a necessary step in the right direction in making schools a safe learning environment for all students.

To learn more about transgender students see terms and definitions below and/or go the www.genderspectrum.org for more in depth information.

Bullying: Unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Gender: Complex relationship between physical traits and one's internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither (gender identity), as well as one's outward presentation and behaviors (gender expression).

Sex: In the United States, individuals are assigned "female" or "male" sex at birth, based on physical attributes and characteristics. This assumed physical dichotomy of sex is itself belied by a variety of naturally occurring conditions. Sex in some contexts, such as the law, is also used as an umbrella term that encompasses gender and gender identity. For the purposes of the discussion in this guide, however, "sex" is being used to convey those physical attributes and characteristics that are used to assign someone as "male" or "female" at birth.

Gender Binary: A social system that constructs gender according to two discrete and opposite categories — male or female.

Cisgender: A term for people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Spectrum: An understanding of gender as encompassing a wide range of identities and expressions.

Gender-expansive: Refers to a wider, more flexible range of gender identities or expressions than those typically associated with the binary gender system.

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender identity is different from what is generally considered typical for their sex assigned at birth.

Note: This term is an adjective. Using this term as a verb (i.e., transgendered) or noun (i.e., transgenders) is offensive and should be avoided.

Gender Nonconforming: Describes a person whose behaviors or gender expression falls outside what is generally considered typical for their assigned sex at birth.

Gender Spectrum: An understanding of gender as encompassing a wide range of identities and expressions.

www.genderspectrum.org/studenttransitions

<http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/model-school-district-policy-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-students>

www.impactprogram.org

Vaping: A Growing Trend amongst Youth

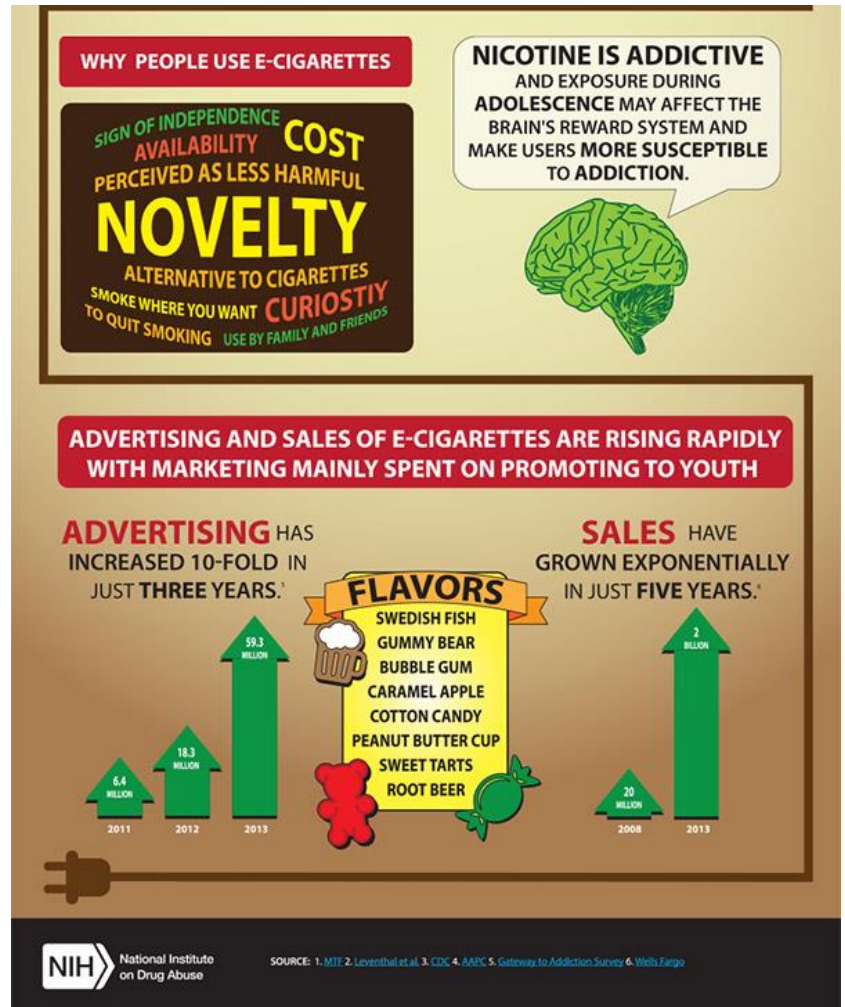
The e-cigarette first came into the market in 2003. Since then it has become increasingly popular amongst teens. According to the CDC, e-cigarette use among middle and high school students tripled from 2013-2014. Findings from the 2014 National Youth Tobacco Survey report that current e-cigarette use among high school students increased from 4.5 % in 2013 to 13.4% in 2014 while use among middle school students rose from 1.1 % to 3.9% over the same time period. Factors that may be contributing to this increase include advertising that is marketed to youth, flavorings, easy access (online availability) and health claims (SAMHSA 2014).

According to a report released by the CDC last spring, it is important for parents to be aware that nicotine is dangerous for kids at any age, whether it is an e-cigarette or a conventional cigarette. Nicotine exposure at a young age may cause lasting harm to an adolescent's brain during a time of critical development. For example, e-cigarettes can increase nicotine addiction among young people and may lead kids to try other tobacco products.

Aside from the use of e-cigarettes to vape nicotine and other flavorings, there has also been an increasing trend amongst youth to use e-cigarette vaporizers for other substances including liquid THC (the main psychoactive substance found in marijuana) and marijuana wax. Because of the highly concentrated levels of THC in both the liquid and wax form of marijuana the substances produce a more powerful high while giving off the appearance to be inhaling legal, nicotine vapors.

Likewise, vaporized marijuana doesn't have as strong a smell as smoked pot. Such substances not only offer a more powerful high but also a more dangerous high. While a pot cigarette can contain up to 18% THC, the liquid or wax form can contain up to 80% THC. This higher potency high can leave damaging effects on teen brain development.

Because vaping offers a more discrete way to use marijuana, parents need to be more vigilant and look for other signs of being under the influence or high. While vaping may give teens an avenue to be more covert in their use, the more powerful high also results in more powerful side effects including poor judgment and coordination. Awareness on the part of parents and



educators along with educating our youth on the increased dangers of vaping can serve as powerful strategies in prevention and intervention efforts.

References: www.cdc.gov; www.samhsa.gov; Journal of Pediatrics; National Institute on Drug Abuse (www.drugabuse.gov)

Encouraging Respectful Behaviors in Youth

Disrespectful behavior – yelling, cursing, arguing, refusing requests - in adolescents is a common concern among teachers and parents. The change in behavior, which appears to happen overnight, is part of the process of breaking away from parents and moving toward adulthood. Though disrespectful behavior is believed to be common or ‘normal’ in our society, it is important to address the behaviors early, as it can result in serious consequences. There are several ways teachers and parents can address disrespectful behaviors and encourage positive more appropriate behavior.

1. Develop open communication. Start with simple greetings and acknowledgments, like “Hello”, “Thank you”, and a smile. Kindness can go a long way.
2. Take the time to connect with them and develop a trusting relationship. Do not be afraid to break the ice. For parents this can be done by spending quality time together.
3. Respect is a two way street. Model respectful behavior and treat youth with respect.



Discuss what respectful behavior looks like. Teachers may use positive discipline in the classroom and take the time to give compliments.

4. Set clear boundaries that are realistic and be persistent. Communicate your expectations and the reasoning behind them.
5. Focus on helping youth find solutions to problems. Do not make the punishment the main focus when addressing disrespectful behavior. Teachers may role-play a problem situation with students individually or to the entire class.
6. Listen to what they have to say. Empathize with the emotions they are feeling, instead of demanding different behavior.
7. Provide positive feedback by acknowledging and complimenting respectful behaviors.

In an article by Marilyn Price-Mitchell, Ph.D, Price-Mitchell identifies ways to build respect through language. Her theory is centered on the belief that if we give respect we will get respect.

- Words of Encouragement – Let them know that they have the ability to overcome challenges.
- Words of Grace – Be willing to forgive mistakes and give them a chance to get it right.
- Words of Guidance – Encourage youth to ask questions.
- Words of High Expectations – Encourage youth to find their passion and pursue goals.
- Words of Hope – Help teens envision a better tomorrow.
- Words of Relationship – Encourage teens to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Words of Understanding – Try to understand their perspective by asking questions.
- Words of Unity – Develop a collaborative relationship with youth. Avoid “it’s my way or the highway” type of attitude.

- Words of Accountability – Help youth stay on track by holding them accountable for their actions.

Sources:

<http://crosswindyouth.org/troubled-youth/risk-factors-warning-signs/disrespect-authority/>

<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/teen-respectful-1360.html>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-moment-youth/201402/the-language-respect>

An excerpt from the book Positive Discipline A Teacher's A-Z Guide