

Transgender Students' School Perceptions and Experiences

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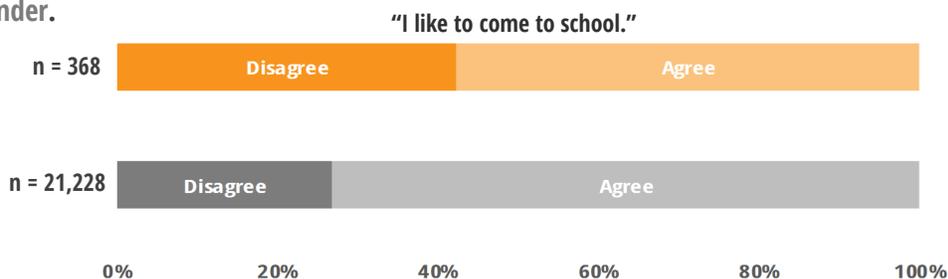
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In the Austin Independent School District's (AISD) 2016–2017 Student Climate Survey, middle and high school students were able to identify as something other than male or female. When asked their gender, students were able to select “boy,” “girl,” or “I'd prefer to self-identify.” Of the 23,126 middle and high school students completing the survey, 398 identified as something other than boy or girl. The report this research brief is based on analyzes extant student data (e.g., attendance and academic performance) and Student Climate Survey data to determine if transgender students differed from non-transgender students on any of these measures.

Findings from this report illustrate that transgender students often perceived schools as not safe or welcoming places. Compared with their non-transgender classmates, transgender students missed more school and had lower college intentions. These students felt less safe at school than did their non-transgender peers. Close to half of transgender students reported that they did not like coming to school (Figure 1). Additionally, transgender students had more negative perceptions of their classmates and teachers than did students who were not transgender. However, at campuses with active Gay-Straight Alliances, transgender students report feeling more welcome and supported.

Figure 1.

Transgender students liked coming to school less than did students who were not transgender.



Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

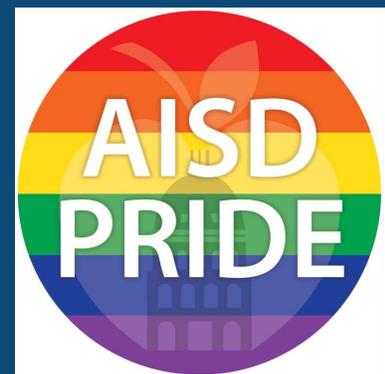
Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” and students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” or “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

How can we improve transgender students' experiences?

- 1) Ensure all middle and high schools have active and supported Gay-Straight Alliances
- 2) Implement LGBT-inclusive curriculum
- 3) Provide professional development opportunities to school staff to learn about transgender people and issues
- 4) Train school staff how to intervene in gender identity- and expression-based harassment and victimization
- 5) Ensure anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies include explicit reference to gender identity and expression.

What does transgender mean?

In this report, the term transgender is used broadly to describe students who do not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth. This includes students who were assigned male or female at birth and now identify as the opposite gender. It also includes students who identify as something other than the binary male and female (e.g., agender, genderqueer, gender fluid). Some distinguish between transgender to describe the former, and gender-nonconforming to describe the latter, but this report uses the umbrella term transgender to describe all of these gender identities.



The full report is located on the Department of Research and Evaluation's (DRE) website: https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dre-surveys/17.03_Transgender_students_school_perceptions_and_experiences_0.pdf