

- We live in a time we never made; gender and gender identity norms predate our existence;
- Non-gender and gender identity “differences” have been around forever but norms operate to pathologize, invalidate and delegitimize them;
- Children’s self-determination is taken away early when gender and gender identity are inscribed onto them. Their bodies/minds become unknowing participants in a roulette of gender and gender identity norms;
- Children have rights to their own (a)gender and gender identity legibility;
- Binary views on gender and gender identity are potentially damaging;
- Gender and gender identity must be dislodged/unhinged from sexuality;
- Humans have agency;
- We must move away from pathologizing beliefs that police humanity;
- Humans deserve positive recognition and acknowledgment for who they are;
- We are all entitled to the same basic human rights; and,
- Life should be livable for all.

*Figure 3.1: Axioms for Gender Identity Complexities Framework*

Principles	Commitments Advocating for Complex Gender Identities
1. Refrains from possible presumptions that students ascribe to a gender or their gender identity is readily discernable	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities never presume that students have a gender or understand how students self-identify
2. Understands gender as a construct which has and continues to be impacted by trans-secting expressions of gender identity (e.g., social, historical, material, cultural, economic, linguistic, religious)	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities are committed to actively push back against gender and gender identity constructs and provide opportunities to explore, engage and understand how they are constructed.
3. Recognizes that masculinity and femininity constructs are assigned to gender and gender identity norms and are situationally performed	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities challenge gender and gender identity norms and stereotypes and actively support students' various and multiple performances of gender and expressions of gender identity.
4. Understands gender and gender identity as flexible and dexterous	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities are mindful about how specific discourse(s) can reinforce gender and gender identity norms, and purposefully demonstrate how gender and gender identity are fluid, or exist on a continuum, shifting over time and in different contexts.
5. Opens up spaces for students to self-define with claimed (a)genders, (a)pronouns, or names	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities invite students to self-define and/or reject claimed or preferred gender, name, and/or pronoun.
6. Engages in ongoing critique of how gender and gender identity norms are reinforced in literature, media, technology, art, history, science, math, policy, etc.,	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities provide ongoing and deep discussions about how society is gendered and cisnormative, and invite students to actively engage in analysis of cultural texts and disciplinary discourses.
7. Understands how neoliberal principles reinforce and sustain compulsory heterosexism; how cissexism secures homophobia and cissexualism; and how gendering and a cisgender assumption secure bullying and transphobia	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities understand and investigate structural oppression and how heterosexism and cissexism sustain body-type violence, and then generate meaningful opportunities for students to become embodied change agents, to be proactive against, or to not engage in bullying behavior.
8. Understands that (a)gender and gender identity transsect with other identities (e.g. sexual orientation, culture, language, age, religion, social class, body type, accent, height, ability, disability, and national origin) and informs students' beliefs and thereby, actions	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities do not essentialize students' identities, but recognize how trans-sections of sexual orientation, culture, language, age, religion, social class, body type, accent, height, ability, disability, immigration status, and national origin, inform students' beliefs and thereby, actions.
9. Advocates for equity across all expressions of (a)gender and gender identities	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities do not privilege one belief or stance, but advocate for equity across all expressions of (a)gender and gender identities.
10. Believes that students who identify on a continuum of gender identities deserve to learn in environments free of bullying and harassment	Stakeholders who advocate for complex gender identities make their positions known, when first hired, to students, teachers, administrators and school personnel and take a stance when any student is bullied or marginalized, whether explicitly or implicitly, for their (a)gender identities.

Figure 3.2: Gender Identity Complexities Framework: Promoting (A) Gender Identity Self-Determination and Justice. Taken from Miller (2019), *about gender identity justice in schools and communities*.

Modified version of "Figure 1: A Queer Literacy Framework Promoting (A)Gender and (A)Sexuality Self-Determination and Justice." Originally published on p. 42 of *English Journal* 104.5 (2015). Copyright 2015 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Used with permission.

## Classroom/School Scenarios

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### **Read your scenario and discuss.**

- I.** A student/colleague/supervisor/or staff member in your (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ presents as gender fluid/ambiguous/creative/expansive/dynamic and you realize that you have failed to address a spectrum of how gender is represented in your classrooms or district and through your policies. How do you approach this topic without drawing attention to the student?
- II.** A student/colleague/supervisor/or staff in in your (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ tells you that they do not use pronouns and is (a)gender. In that moment, you recognize that you have not opened your (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ in ways that others feel comfortable disclosing their claimed names/identities/pronouns. How do you approach this topic?
- III.** A student/colleague/supervisor/or staff member in your (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ tells you that they are being bullied for being **trans\*\*** or gender non-binary In that moment, you recognize that while you have addressed some forms of bullying that you have not addressed **trans\*\*** and gender identity complex microaggressions. How do you approach this topic?
- IV.** A group of queer students of color approach you in (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ and tell you that no curricula, books, movies, art, or even discussions reflect their trans-sectional identities but that their peers are clearly recognized in the classroom, school, or district. How do you approach this?
- V.** You have a deep “AHA” moment one night while listening to NPR’s Radiolab. You realize that educational context are driven far more by Neoliberal values and principles than in times past. Pining for what once was, you tell yourself that all students deserve equitable schooling opportunities and deserve to be valued for who they are. How can you bring in a discussion to your (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ about how Neoliberalism perpetuates systemic oppressions that “reinforce and sustain compulsory heterosexism, and cissexism which secure homophobia, and cissexualism; and how gendering and a cisgender assumption secure bullying and transphobia.”
- VI.** A colleague, supervisor, staff member or student (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ tells you that gender is fixed, stable, and never changes. How do you respond? How do you offer a different perspective without negating their beliefs?
- VII.** First day of work (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ you make regrettable assumptions about someone else’s gender and identity and call them **he** or **she** based on how they look. After a professional development session, a **trans\*\*** and/or gender identity non-binary colleague, supervisor, and/or staff member comes up to you and says that they do not use pronouns and is/are (a)gender. How do you respond?
- VIII.** A student/colleague/professor, or staff member in your (fill in context) \_\_\_\_\_ tells you that they do not believe in gender and that femininity and masculinity are both constructed. You appreciate their insights and decide to make it into a learning unit. Tell us what you do!
- IX.** Drawing on the Supreme Court case of Gavin Grimm and the right to use a bathroom that matches his gender identity, what can you do to generate or further discussions about transgender and gender non-conforming students’ rights and protections in your educational context?
- X.** In your educational context, when you speak about people’s sex you consistently identify them as male and female. Unbeknownst to you, you have a colleague/student/supervisor/or staff member who is intersex but you have never brought intersex topics into focus in any of your work. One day they approach you and disclose their true identity. How do you respond and how do you begin to include intersex discussions in your work without relying on them to be your teacher?
- XI.** Please invent a scenario relative to your context.