

# BEYOND THE CLICHÉ



*Is it a boy or a girl?  
No! It is a person!*

## Goal

For the majority, gender identity and gender are consistent. They are physically male or female and feel that way too. This is not the case for everyone. There are people whose gender identity only partially or not at all corresponds to their physical sex. The generic term we use for this is transgender. This group is larger than is generally thought.

When confronted with the fact that something deviates from what he or she experiences as completely natural and normal, people start looking for identification: am I really sure that I am a man or a woman? What does this gender role include, and do I really belong to it?

Whom do I identify with? Where do I feel good?

Considering how a teacher interprets gender roles is very important in order to guarantee the wellbeing of the students.

## How to foster a good gender climate

	A person's gender is about their physical sex. By gender in this context we mean the sense of identity. It can be male, female or both.
	If you are assigned the female gender at birth and you also feel like a female, this is called cisgender. If this does not correspond then it is called transgender.
	Presenting someone to the public as transgender without his or her explicit consent is equivalent to expressing people as LGBT without consent and is totally unacceptable.
	There are no innocent jokes about LGBTI people. Be sure to let others know that you do not appreciate it. You never know who is listening and who is LGBTI.
	Not every man who wears women's clothes or every woman who dresses in men's clothes is a transvestite. Be careful about attributing motivations to people for doing something. It is often not straightforward or easy.
	When questioning a transgender person, ask them how they would like to be addressed and with which first name. Do not automatically refer to the birth name and previous gender. Respect the preference of the interviewee.
	Use the correct pronouns. Never assume someone's gender expression; you can easily ask how someone wants to be addressed. It is also best to use gender-neutral pronouns on the phone or in e-mail communication with external parties.

	The person you are reporting on has a specific life story. It is not necessarily representative and you do not have to present it that way.
	Try not to focus too much on sex. Transgender people struggle with the experience of their gender identity, not their sexuality.
	Transgenders sometimes want to share their story in the belief that they can help others that way. At the same time, they themselves would prefer to blend in with the group. Being filmed or photographed could haunt them for a long time, accept that not everyone wants that.
	The technical aspects of transition are interesting, but by no means a complete story. A transition is also a social change. Consider how this is processed by the person and his or her environment.
	Above all, try to see the person behind the story. Only then a person can feel comfortable enough.

## References

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Voorbij het cliché, over genuanceerde beeldvorming  
Uitgave van de Vlaamse Overheid