September 4, 2018

Dear teachers

CC: principal/vice-principal

It’s been very nice meeting all of you this week, As you know, our child [NAME} uses 'they/them' pronouns instead of he or she. While their gender identification is fluid, they often identify as non-binary rather than "boy" or "girl".

We would appreciate attempts at following gender inclusive classroom practices, and know that you’ve already been working on this at the school. This has benefits beyond the individual learning environment for[NAME}. Gender Inclusive classroom practices have been shown to reduce gender stereotyping (see the article: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/beyond-pink-and-blue/201403/the-way-we-talk-about-gender-can-make-big-difference>). It models a practice of respect and inclusion for all. As well, inclusive classroom practices are keeping in line with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the TDSB Guidelines for the accommodation of transgender and gender independent/non-conforming students and staff.

We would be happy to support you in this endeavor by meeting with you any time, or participating in school activities (ie. Coming in to read a story or to present on gender inclusion, supporting a ‘gender justice’ student club). We’ve also shared below several ways that teachers and administration can support gender inclusive classroom practices:

 1) You can use gender-neutral pronouns to refer to our child or any child where their gender is unknown (e.g., “Their backpack is in the classroom”; “They had fun playing today”; “Look at them climb!". )

2) You can use gender inclusive classroom strategies (e.g., avoiding grouping children by assigned sex) and using inclusive language (such as kids, friends, class, everyone, folks) instead of “boys and girls”. This can be extended to language pertaining other people including family members—parents instead of "mom and dad," grandparents instead of "grandma and grandpa" and sibling instead of "brother or sister" and various professions (ie. Mail carrier instead of mailman, trash collector instead of garbage man, police officer instead of police man, firefighter instead of fireman). More here: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-to-use-gender-neutral-words>

3) You can use books that reflect a variety of genders. Some titles include those published by Flamingo Rampant Press (*“Super Power Baby Shower!”*  By Tobi Hill-Meyer and Fay Onyx or “*Bell's knock knock birthday”* by George Parker are two good ones from this press).

4) Making sure that if there are sex segregated facilities (e.g. washrooms, changerooms) that children are encouraged to use the one that they feel more comfortable, and that it’s common knowledge and signs on the washroom indicate that anyone who identifies as “girl” or “non-binary” may use the girls’ washroom, for example. All-gender facilities that aren't sex-segregated is another option (ie. The single stall bathroom in the kindergarten classroom is great, but non-binary/trans student should not feel they must use only that bathroom.

5) Creating a positive environment through the use of posters, signs, pride flags, student clubs that show that inclusion is an important value of [SCHOOL].

6) Have teachers and staff view a presentation like <https://create.piktochart.com/output/31378751-creating-a-gender-inclusive-primary-classroom> which includes information for Ontario elementary school teachers as well as specific age appropriate school strategies

We would be happy to discuss any of these items further with you if you have any additional questions, concerns or if you’d like to meet to discuss any of the above. We thank you, in advance, for your time and openness.

Sincerely,

[Parent name(s)]