

A close-up photograph of a person's open palm, facing the viewer. On the center of the palm, there is a tattoo of the rainbow flag, which is a symbol of the LGBTQ+ community. The flag consists of horizontal stripes of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

***“A Very Limiting Form of Acceptance”:
Transgender Youth in School Music***

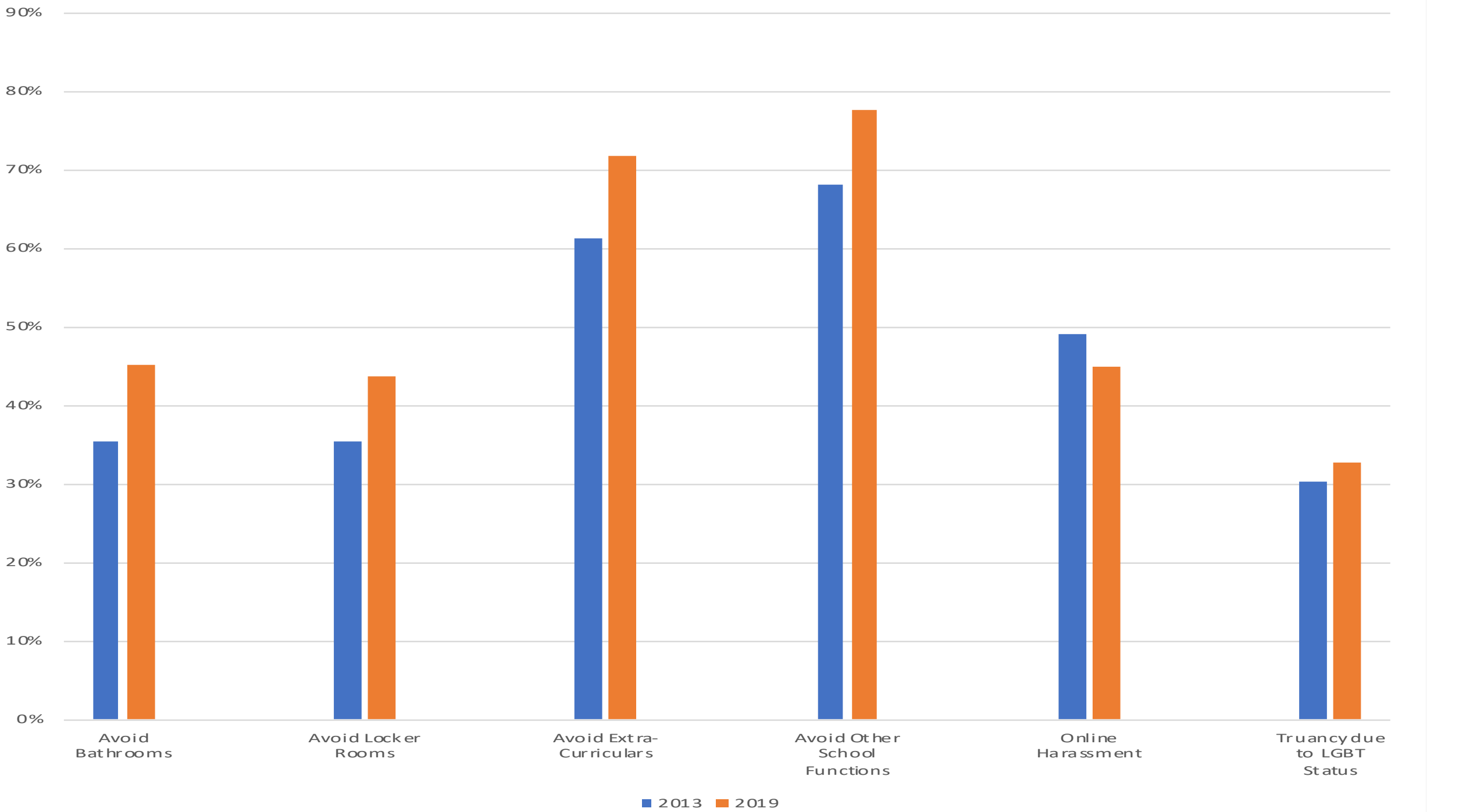
Emma Joy Jampole, PhD

California State University, Stanislaus

CASMEC • January 18, 2025

The Urgency of the Moment

- Many states are considering or have approved legislation to limit trans youths' participation in sports, access to health care, or use of chosen name or pronouns (ACLU, 2021; Butler, 2024; Chapel, 2022).
- “Don’t say gay” and divisive concepts laws are problematic for students, families, faculty, staff, and administrators (Butler, 2024).
- Trans students are more likely to experience bullying, online harassment, or assault than straight, cisgender youth (Kosciw, Clark, et al., 2020; Kosciw, Greytak, et al., 2014).





Applying Research to Practice

Research Study:

Jampole, 2022

Life history interviews with four trans/nonbinary band students

Pedagogical Article:

Cayari, Graham, Jampole, & O'Leary, 2021

Five actionable suggestions from trans music educators

“The Oboe Is My Voice”

Trans and
Nonbinary Youth
in School Bands

(Jampole, 2022)

Ari, nonbinary, flute player and piccolo specialist

Sam, nonbinary, tuba player

Danielle, transgender woman, woodwind multi-instrumentalist

Kelley, nonbinary, flute player

Common Themes

(Jampole, 2022)

- Early awareness of gender discordance
- Dysphoria, especially about voice

“No matter what you look like, if you sound like a male, you’re gonna get clocked. That’s just the reality of the situation we’re living in. ... I just want my voice to reflect who I am.”

(Danielle)

Common Themes

(Jampole, 2022)

- Early awareness of gender discordance
- Dysphoria, especially about voice

“I sing a tenor line with a feminine tone, it’s fine. But it’s just really difficult for me. If I’m in a rehearsal and I have to sing a line just to demonstrate what it is, I’m freaked out ... It’s still something that haunts me.”

(Danielle)

Common Themes

(Jampole, 2022)

- Early awareness of gender discordance
- Dysphoria, especially about voice
- Consideration of medical interventions

“I’m fine being a girl, except if I could remove my breasts and also have a hysterectomy, I would be very, very happy! So I think that’s how I feel right now. I don’t feel like a man, but there are parts of my body that are very female that I’m like, ‘Wow, I don’t like that at all! That doesn’t feel good, that doesn’t feel like who I am.’”

(Sam)

Common Themes

(Jampole, 2022)

- Early awareness of gender discordance
- Dysphoria, especially about voice
- Consideration of medical interventions
- Desire for a legible social position that aligns with identity
- Invisibility of nonbinary identity

“As a binary trans person, you can pass a little easier, and she [conductor Alexis Enyart] probably doesn’t have to come out every time she talks to people. They probably perceive her as a woman in a way that I probably am not perceived as nonbinary, because no one perceives anyone as nonbinary.”

(Ari)

Common Themes

(Jampole, 2022)

- Early awareness of gender discordance
- Dysphoria, especially about voice
- Consideration of medical interventions
- Desire for a legible social position that aligns with identity
- Invisibility of nonbinary identity
- Instrument choices were gendered, but this was not an issue.
- Band as a social identity/life world
- Band as a site for identity development

“Even now, me and my band friends, after graduation, we'll hang out over the summer. And we'll talk about memories ... We talk about other stuff, too, now, ... but it just seems that ... we always come back to the first memories we have together, like, ‘I remember meeting you in band in sixth grade.’”

(Kelley)

Suggestions from Trans Educators on Working with Trans Students

(Cayari, Graham, Jampole, & O'Leary, 2021)



Cayari, Graham, Jampole, & O'Leary, 2021

- Transgender youth are typically aware of their gender discordance at an early age.
 - Trans youth usually feel shame and keep their gender identities secret.
 - Puberty can exacerbate trans adolescents' dysphoria.
- Education, including music education, engages with gender.
 - Binary gender is typically normalized in schools (classroom organization, uniforms and dress codes, washrooms and locker rooms).
 - Gender influences musical roles and opportunities.

“Music classes can offer spaces for students to explore and express their gender through music making” (p. 52).

Five actionable suggestions

- Learn about trans communities.
- Inspect your language and biases.
- Respect the diversity of trans people.
- Promote healthy music making and identity development.
- Model allyship.

Learn About Trans Communities

- Trans youth may be expert in their own lives, but they are not obligated to teach educators or classmates about their gender identities, expressions, or understandings.
- There is no recognizable nonbinary gender presentation.
Nonbinary people are virtually always misgendered.
- There are few transgender or nonbinary role models in music education.
Trans adolescents long for queer adult role models.

Learn About Trans Communities

Social media and other online sources may be helpful in learning about trans identities, expressions, and communities ...

... but users must avoid flattening the diversity of trans identities into a few stereotypes or tropes.

Inspect Your Language and Biases

- Listen to your speech and that of others.
 - How often do you say or hear gendered expressions?
 - Binary expressions leave no space for nonbinary, gender nonconforming, genderfluid, or other identities.
- Use names and pronouns that students request.
- If a student asks you to use a particular name or pronoun, ask which name and pronoun to use when speaking with the parent/caretaker.



Respect the Diversity of Trans People

- The term, *transgender*, may encompass many diverse gender identities.
 - Binary
 - Nonbinary
 - Gender nonconforming
 - Genderfluid
 - Numerous additional gender identities
 - Identities and the terms used to describe them change over time.
- Other identities intersect with (and co-construct) gender identity.
 - Racialized, classed, and national identities
 - Faith, language, and other cultural traditions
 - Dis/ability, neurodiversity
 - Sexual and romantic orientation

Respect the Diversity of Trans People

- No individual can represent all trans people.
- Include various trans role models
 - Trans feminine, trans masculine, nonbinary, gender fluid, nonconforming
 - Various musical genres
 - Lucia Lucas
 - Amie Waters
 - Joe Stevens, Namoli Brennet
- Relationship of identity to music making
- Develop partnerships with trans artists.



Transcend Choir, NYC

Dr. Felix A. Graham, director



Promote Healthy Music Making and Identity Development

- Voice ranges
 - Social identity
 - Changes at puberty
 - Changes related to hormone therapy (HRT)
- Choir
 - Uniforms and staging: Voice range/section proximity

“Join the section that most matches their voice type but experience discomfort and friction with their gender identity or join the section that aligns with their gender identity, which may cause vocal discomfort that may lead to tension and dysfunction.” (p. 55)



Promote Healthy
Music Making
and
Identity
Development

Gendered ensembles

can serve to exclude trans youth or reinforce gender roles ...

... or might allow for inclusion (being “one of the girls” or “one of the boys”) ...

... or the challenging of gender roles.

Model Allyship

Not racist, or antiracist? (Kendi, 2019)

“Similarly, being *antitransphobic* includes advocating for the rights of trans people when they are not present as well as offering your physical (or digital) presence and emotional support while empowering trans people to speak for themselves.”

(Cayari, Graham, Jampole, & O’Leary, 2021, p. 55)

So,
what does this mean
for
music teachers?

Research to Practice: Schoolwide Implications

Strive to use pronouns and names that individuals request.

Avoid needlessly gendered language.

Extinguish bullying.

Support (or organize) your school's GSA.

Research to Practice: Music Ensembles

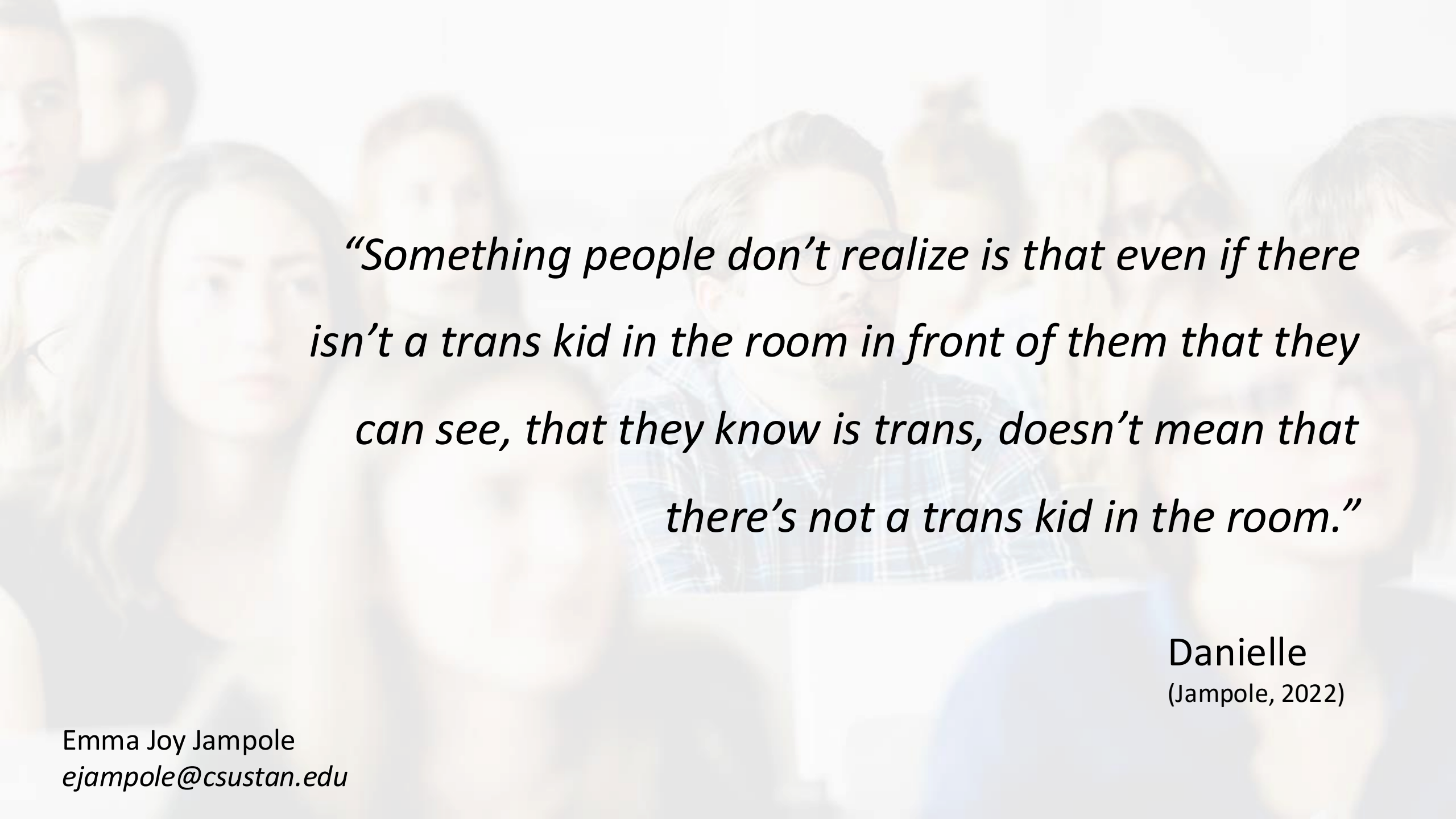
- Perform in concert black or other gender-neutral/gender-inclusive attire.
- Allow transgender and nonbinary students to choose their own roommates or to use single-occupant accommodations on overnight trips.
- Remember that every student and every situation is unique. Let the student's needs guide you.





Foster music learning spaces "where young musicians feel free to explore their autonomous voices without fear of censure"

(Cayari, Graham, Jampole, & O'Leary, 2021, p. 55).



“Something people don’t realize is that even if there isn’t a trans kid in the room in front of them that they can see, that they know is trans, doesn’t mean that there’s not a trans kid in the room.”

Danielle
(Jampole, 2022)

Emma Joy Jampole
ejampole@csustan.edu