

# **The Place for Girls' Schools in a Non-Binary Gender World: A Human-Centered Design Approach**

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# NCGS: Task Force Objectives

- Develop scope for how to advise member schools
- Make recommendations re: professional development
- Identify resources to support member schools



# NCGS: Task Force Recommendations

- Consider needs/concerns of each student on an **individual case by case basis**
- Focus on **healthy development** of all students and providing **safe environments** where students can express their gender identity
- Approach issues in a way that reflects “**seeking to know and understand**”
- Understand **legal terrain is changing quickly** and varies by region
- Make decisions, policies, and procedures **consistent with mission and diversity statements**
- Dedicate resources to **community education**

# NCGS: Position Statement

## NCGS Position Statement:

NCGS believes the education of girls **must ensure intellectual and social safety**. Forging strong communities built on **supportive relationships** are hallmarks of all-girls schools. NCGS recognizes that when students transition—or begin to question their gender identity—they remain at the core **young people with whom our schools have built trusting and safe relationships**. Therefore, NCGS encourages our schools to consider, at every point, the importance of **working in a supportive way** with students and families on a **case-by-case** basis during enrollment processes and as students identify as transgender within their school communities.

# NCGS: Resources



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- [the case for girls' schools](#)
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**Registration Open for Educating Girls Symposium in New York**

Registration is open for the upcoming

**NCGS Starts Monthly Podcast: PEP Talks**

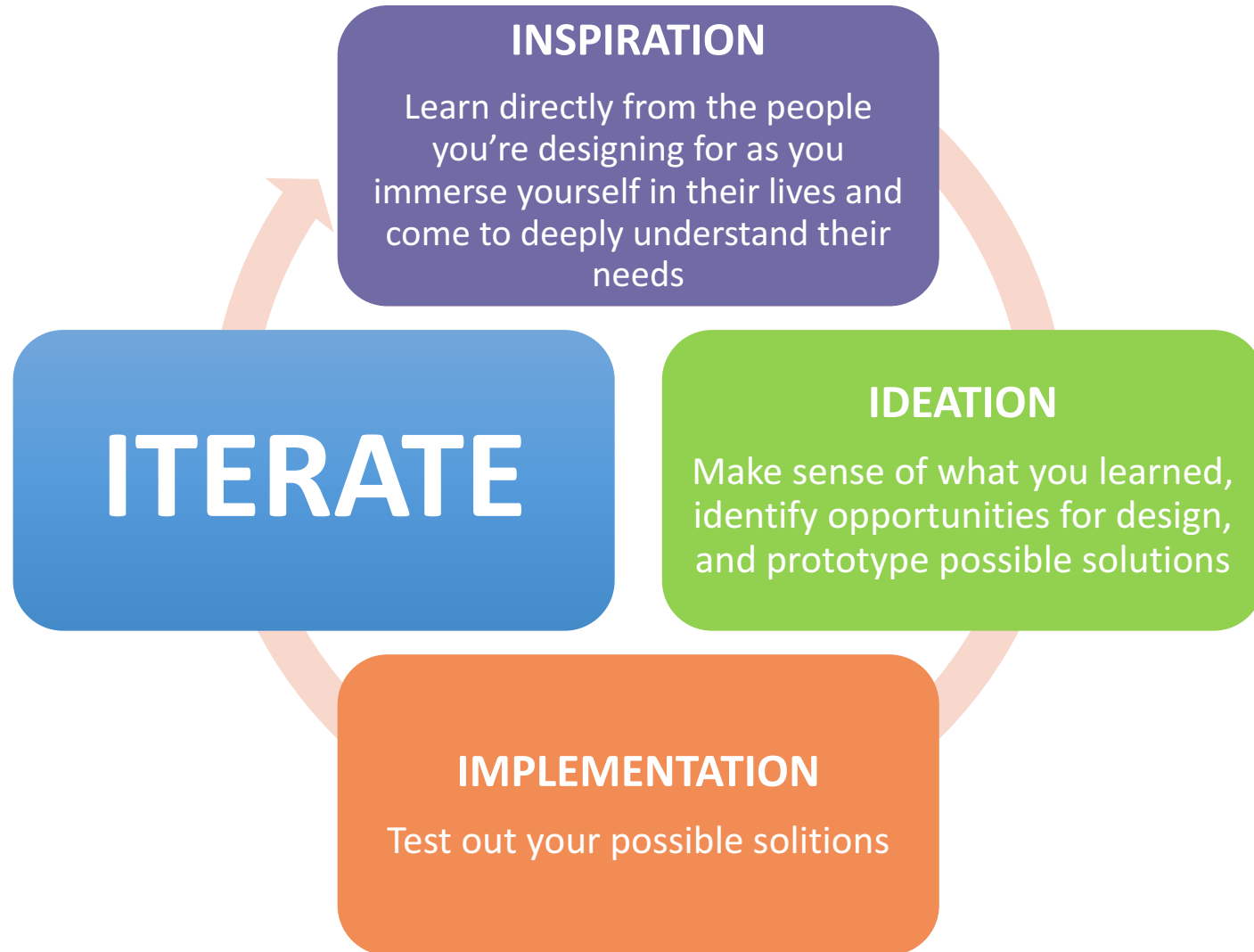
Created by NCGS, **PEP Talks: Podcast on**

**Infographics on Benefits of Girls' Schools Available for NCGS Members**

NCGS is offering its member schools

To access all of NCGS’s transgender / gender identity resources, visit our home page (ncgs.org) and click here on “Resources.”

# Human-Centered Design





# Why Getting this Right Matters



# Noteworthy Data

The CDC found in 2016 (surveyed 15,600 LGB youth):

- 3x more likely to be raped
- 40% seriously contemplated suicide
- 29% made an attempt in the last year

GLSEN and others:

- 2x more likely to skip post secondary education
- 49% received electronic harassment
- 75% felt unsafe in school
- 74% verbally harassed

## Noteworthy Data (cont.)

- >3x more likely to abuse substances
- 6x more likely to suffer from depression
- 42% report self-injury (cutting)
- As Adults: (your future students, your faculty and staff, etc)
  - 28 states allow firing for LGB and 33 for Transgender
  - > 50% are not out at work
  - 35% felt compelled to lie at work
  - 1 in 5 Transgender adults have been turned away by health care providers

# What do we hear from our youth?

## MYA is 19 yrs old:

- “it’s not just the students who say hurtful things
- micro-aggressions are common
- “health and sex ed either never includes us, or talks about us in terms of disease”
- many times the teachers want to support us, but administration is afraid of the parents with the money
- “it’s like we are invisible”
- “I had to use the bathroom across campus, so I just didn’t go”
- “actually my teacher outed me, and that didn’t go well”





# So why are you an educator?

- To pass on the love of learning
- To expand the child's knowledge base
- To help them “grow into themselves”
- To excite them about their own future and possibilities
- Definitely NOT to have them feel isolated, depressed and invisible...



# Terminology: Words Matter

## Sexual Orientation

- Sexual Attraction
- Emotional Attraction
- Sexual Behaviors
- Partnership decisions
- Identity
- Community



## Gender Expression

Behaviors that express, or can be interpreted as expressing, something about gender

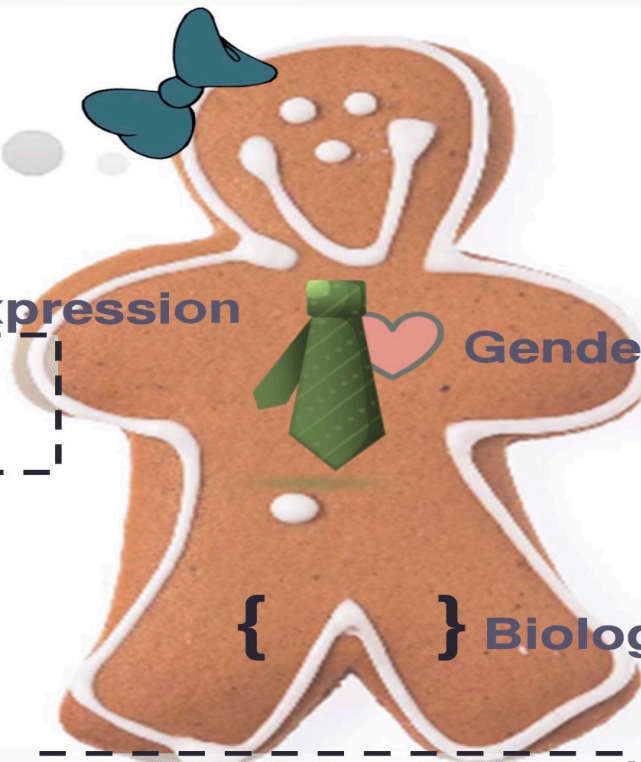
## Gender Identity

One's understanding of oneself in relation to concepts like man, woman, trans, genderqueer, and many others

## { } Biological Sex

☐ **Assigned Sex**

Includes genotype, internal and external sex organs, hormone levels, secondary characteristics, ...



# Transgender Terminology

## TRANSGENDER

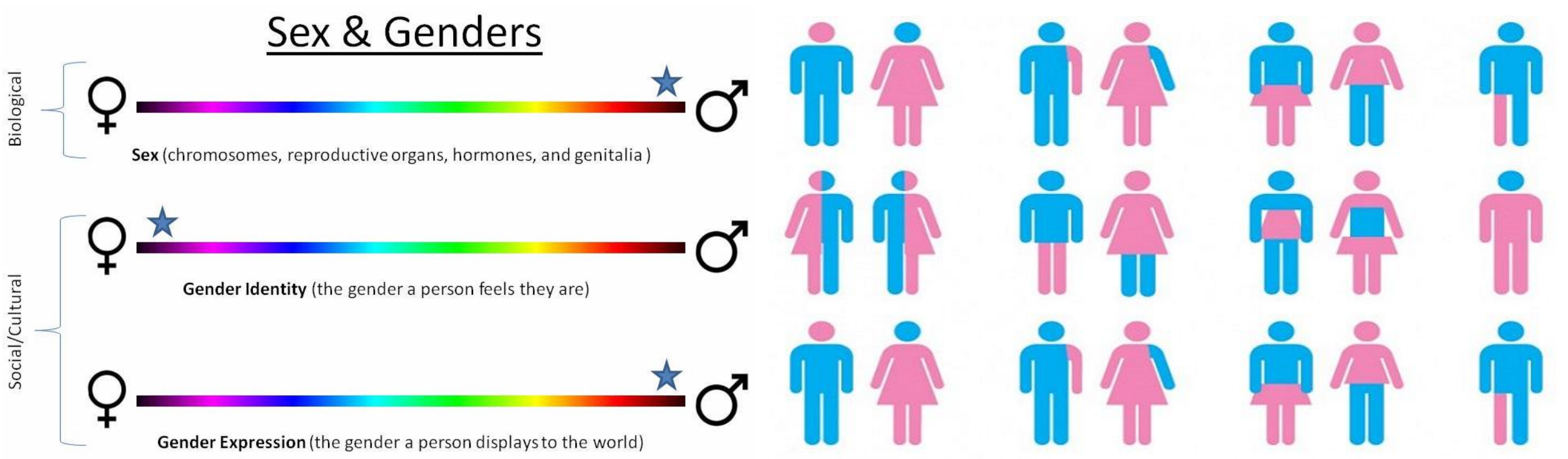
The term *transgender* refers to people whose gender identity (the sense of gender that every person feels inside) or gender expression is different from the sex that was assigned to them at birth. At some point in their lives, transgender people decide they must live their lives as the gender they have always known themselves to be, and often transition to living as that gender.

✓ Terms to Use	Usage Examples	✗ Terms to Avoid	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>transgender</b> (adj.)</li></ul>	<p>"transgender person"</p> <p>"transgender advocate"</p> <p>"transgender inclusion"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "transgendered"</li><li>• "a transgender" (n.)</li><li>• "transgenders" (n.)</li><li>• "transvestite"</li><li>• "tranny"</li></ul>	<p><i>Transgender</i> is an adjective, not a noun. Be careful not to call someone "a transgender." Do not add an unnecessary "-ed" to the term ("transgendered"), which connotes a condition of some kind. Never use the term "transvestite" to describe a transgender person.</p> <p>The shorthand <i>trans</i> is often used within the LGBT community, but may not be understood by general audiences.</p> <p>Always use a transgender person's chosen name. Also, a person who identifies as a certain gender should be referred to using pronouns consistent with that gender. When it isn't possible to ask what pronoun a person would prefer, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person's appearance and gender expression.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>gender identity</b></li><li>• <b>gender expression</b></li></ul>	<p>"Everyone should be treated fairly, regardless of gender identity or expression."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "sexual identity" (the correct term is <i>gender identity</i>)</li><li>• "transgender identity" (use <i>gender identity</i> to refer to a person's internal sense of gender)</li></ul>	<p>Not everyone who is transgender identifies that way; many transgender people simply identify as male or female. Also, note that <i>gender identity</i> (one's internal sense of gender) and <i>gender expression</i> (how a person outwardly expresses their gender) are not interchangeable terms.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>transition</b></li></ul>	<p>"She began transitioning last year."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "sex change"</li><li>• "sex-change operation"</li><li>• "pre-operative" / "post-operative"</li><li>• "pre-op" / "post-op"</li></ul>	<p><i>Transition</i> is the accurate term that does not fixate on surgeries, which many transgender people do not or cannot undergo. Terms like "pre-op" or "post-op" unnecessarily fixate on a person's anatomy and should be avoided.</p>

# Transgender Terminology

- **Male-to-female (MTF):** Born male, living as female.  
Transgender woman.
- **Female-to-male (FTM):** Born female, living as male.  
Transgender man.

# Gender Identity



# Two Pillars



# Essential Assertions

- Westridge is a school committed to educating girls.
- Westridge encourages and expects open, inclusive, and respectful dialogue.
- Westridge celebrates and supports the unique qualities of each girl as she journeys toward self-discovery.
- Westridge welcomes students and families from many different walks of life and many different perspectives.
- Westridge holds at its core the values of Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, and Inclusion.

# Process & Timeline

- First meetings in March, 2016
  - Board, Faculty/Staff, Student Groups, Parent Focus Groups, Administration
- Participants in Task Force:
  - Four Board members, four administrators, four faculty/staff, four students
- Content of initial meetings:
  - Education
  - Conversation about inclusion
  - Conversation about what makes Westridge so special
  - Beginning of conversation about what it means to be a girls' school.



# Threats to the Process



# Threats to the Process: Hidden Dysfunctions

- Some members' discomfort with students on the task force, especially students who would potentially be directly affected by decisions
- Board Chair and Head misalignment and mistrust: "Why didn't you tell me about this student?"
- Some in conversation working to polarize rather than unite the Board
- Refusal of some to acknowledge the complexities in these decisions
- Lack of understanding about fundamental characteristics of a healthy girls' school
- Fear (of being overrun by transmales, of male anatomy on campus, etc.)
- Blaming the process when they are not comfortable with the direction or outcome

# The “Audit”

- D R & I is more than this topic
  - Take the time to do an institutional audit
- Look at language in brochures and forms
- Walk around your buildings and campus
  - Is it “welcoming” ?
  - Do you “expect everyone”?
- Listen to each other
  - “Hi sweeties, what activity are you doing today?”

# Recovery: Holding to Process, Modifying Timeline

## Third Task Force Meeting: Recommendations/Suggestions to the Board

### Admission:

- Any applicant who identifies as a girl, and wants to be known as a girl, will be considered for admission

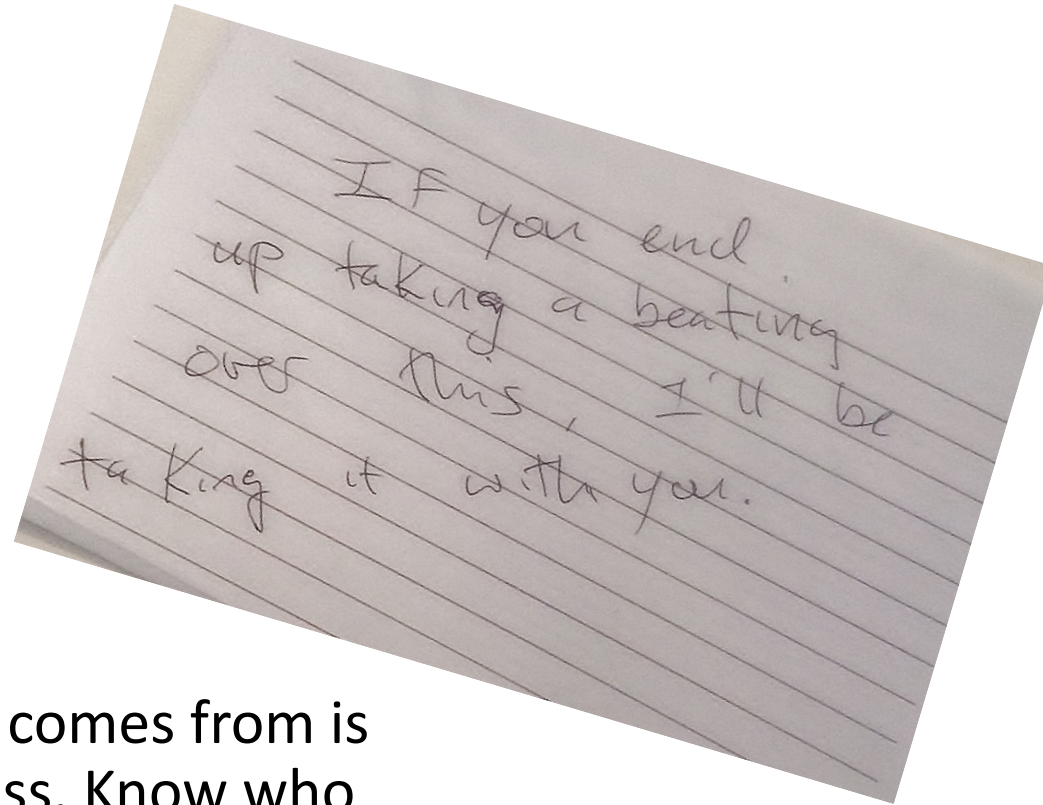
### Retention/Inclusion:

- We are a school committed to inclusion
- We are committed to ensuring a safe place for students as they explore their identities
- Students will be supported on their journeys once enrolled and will be given the opportunity to stay enrolled at Westridge (assuming they are in good standing academically and behaviorally)

# Lessons Learned

- Know your Board. Inside and out. If your Chair doesn't do pre-work and have individual conversations with them, you must.
- Clarify the roles of each constituent in this process.
- Circle back. And then circle back again.

# Lessons Learned: Know Your Allies



Knowing where your support comes from is vitally important in this process. Know who can give you authentic, supportive feedback and who will stand in the gap in rough moments.

# Lessons Learned

- What other schools are doing is helpful, but this is so personal and emotional for people that what other schools are doing sometimes does not matter.
- Don't be afraid to “kick the can down the road” a little bit to gather more information.
- Don't abandon the process, even when others threaten to undo it.
- Know how your community makes decisions.

# Lessons Learned

Start with your values.

When you get attacked, return to your values.

When you are called names, call back with your values.

When you are lost, claim your values.

Be open to learning.

Be willing to admit that human process is messy and flawed.

Hang with it, even when you want to quit.

Know the law.

Know your constituencies.

Know and believe in your process.

And know that you will find your community's path forward.



# Keeping Kids Safe

- **Schools with GSA's have better statistics**
- **Educate your faculty and your parents**
  - **include ALL those working in the building**
- **Look at your curriculum**
  - **we all need to see ourselves in the future**
- **Find those resources in the community and online, and make them known**
- **Include relevant books in your libraries**
- **BE AN ALLY**

# What We Didn't Learn: Teachable Moments

- America The Beautiful
- Katherine Lee Bates
- "So much of me died with Katharine Coman that I'm sometimes not quite sure whether I'm alive or not."