



# 21/22

## REFLECTIONS

### Chapter 6 – Their Identity

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*Thank you to everyone who has begun sharing your deployment stories. Your reflections are inspiring and I've already learned so much from you.*

Today, I am sharing a reflection from Tina Southern, a Mental Health Practitioner with Human Relations, Diversity & Equity who was recently deployed at one of our high schools. Their identity affirmation practice taught me so much about how we can model affirming practices for our students, creating safe and welcoming spaces for students to express themselves more fully and authentically.

Thank you, Tina.

#### INTRODUCTIONS

Whenever I introduced myself to a new class, I made sure to use my pronouns and gave an example of how to use them.

"Hi everyone! My name is Mx. Southern and I use they/them pronouns. That means when you talk about me, you can say, 'They said to do this. Go talk to *them*.' I'm going to call roll, so please let me know if I'm saying your name correctly and if you have another name or pronoun than what is on my roster. I'll do my best to remember, and I'll remind you about mine as well."

And wow! This introduction opened the door to so many great discussions about names and pronouns with some of the students. I had at least one student from each class notify me of another name and/or pronoun they would rather use. Some students came out to me, and I helped them start the process of changing their name within the district.

Simply adding a few statements to my daily greeting made such a huge impact on all of the students, not just the transgender, nonbinary, or gender diverse students. They all knew that I saw them for who they were, and wanted to see them completely. Modeling inclusivity doesn't have to be a huge task. It can be as simple as introducing yourself and, in doing so, providing space for others to do the same.

*Sincerely,*  
**Pia and Tina**

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