

[PUT ON SCHOOL LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

Dear 6th Grade Families,

I am writing to inform you of our upcoming unit on gender identity. We will be reading about the award-winning activist Jazz Jennings in her memoir *Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen*.

Jazz Jennings is a 17-year old activist fighting for transgender rights. Born biologically a boy, Jazz transitioned to a girl at the young age of five with the support of her family. At the age of six, Jazz shared her story in an interview with Barbara Walters on the 20/20 television show that aired publicly at a time when audiences were far less aware of the transgender movement. This interview kicked off a slew of prominent interviews (including one with Oprah), a documentary, her own YouTube Channel, a children's book and her own reality TV series on TLC. Jazz was even named by *Time* Magazine as one of "The 25 Most Influential Teens of 2014" and by Huffington Post as one of the "14 Most Fearless Teens" in 2014. As a result of her media attention and her message about love and acceptance, Jazz has emerged as a trailblazer in helping to shape mainstream attitudes toward the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community.

Being Jazz is an essential part of our curriculum because it is the only English unit to address contemporary questions about gender identity throughout our school. Students will have a window into the experience of a person who believes she was born into the wrong body and the controversies that surround the transgender movement. This unit will spur healthy debate about the meaning and validity of gender roles in our society. Students will be encouraged to *respectfully* express their beliefs about transgender issues. Significantly, students will read this memoir alongside their unit on puberty in Science class in an effort to familiarize students with the anatomical terms surrounding gender. By representing LGBTQ in the curriculum, we believe *The Being Jazz* unit can help affirm identities of our LGBTQ students, foster awareness and ultimately build a supportive and safe environment for all students.

While this book is written in an upbeat and humorous tone from the perspective of a middle school student, it is important that you know that there are sexual references and issues of depression addressed throughout the text. If you are concerned or have questions, please don't hesitate to call.

Thank you for your continued support in your child's literacy and intellectual development.

Best,

6th Grade English Teacher
[Phone Number/Email]

Principal
[Phone Number/Email]