

Gendering Education Needs to Stay in the Home

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When school educators teach lessons on gender identity it adds to the confusion many students struggle with already, and it alienates many of them from their parents. Schools should not do any more than a parent to teach a child what it means to be a boy or a girl, and they certainly should not allow a student to change their name and pronouns while at school without their parents' consent. Schools should support the primary role of the parent as the arbiter of their child's moral training and how their children will come to understand sex and gender.

Our schools have come a long way from the bygone days of unequal educational opportunities for girls who were often left out of STEM classes or access to the same athletic extracurricular activities as boys. Most would agree that in our Texas public schools our girls, and our boys, have equal access to most of what they need to compete for jobs and college admissions. The problem of sexism seems to have just about disappeared, but the new challenge is gender confusion and gender neutral schools.

Recently a fourth grade teacher showed a picture book about a transgender child learning how to talk about his new identity with his friends and family. That lesson ignited a debate at a well-respected school district in Central Texas. Many parents thought the book was inappropriate for a public elementary school, while some parents of transgender children commended the teacher. My view is that this type of material needs to be approved by parents before it is taught, and parents should have the right to opt out of any such instruction given to their children. While some will argue that it is psychologically beneficial for transgender identifying students to feel accepted and affirmed with these lessons, I'm concerned about the unnecessary confusion these lessons may have on unsuspecting children. When a fourth-grade boy is required to affirm in thought, word and deed that a girl is now a boy, this does not just call into question his own "identity", and that of everyone he knows, but also the scientific definition of what is a male and a female.

I'm in the science camp that sees a real danger in the denial of sex, and the unabashed acceptance that sex is rooted in subjective identity, instead of objective biology. Unlike our new Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown, I believe there is an objective truth for what is a "women". Those most vulnerable to this sex denialism are children. What about the rights of children and parents who are not confused about their sex or gender, or just don't have an opinion yet, or even care? Kids should be left alone to figure it out at home, on the playground, out in the woods, or in a school focused only on math, science and reading instruction. Personally, I reject state sponsored coercion to call someone a 'women' or a 'man' simply on the basis of his or her subjective feeling about it.

While I am attentive to the emotional turmoil that some children experience about their sex and gender identity, and I certainly support any young person who is hostile to the old gender role silos, I believe we should proceed cautiously in adopting the gender pronoun language of the LGBTQ+ community, and withhold the unbridled acceptance of sex transitioning medical treatments for any child that wants it. Childhood and adolescents has several stages of psycho-social and identity development (read Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson), and it's a confusing time for many. The rush to adopt new pronouns, clothing, mannerisms, and especially to change one's body chemistry or body parts before they reach adulthood, is most likely to be harmful for these "developing children". An April 2021 study in the Journal of Homosexuality revealed that many regret undergoing gender affirming care: 70% said they de-transitioned after realizing their gender dysphoria was related to other issues. Furthermore, another recent study by the Society of Evidence Based Gender Medicine shows that between 61 and 98% of children treated with psychological counseling for gender dysphoria eventually become reconciled to their natal sex.

Gender affirming care that immediately supports a child's wish to physically change the sex they were born with is void of creativity and of any hope that a child can use art, spirituality, networking with other like identifying individuals and groups, counseling, exercise, and numerous other constructs and tools to live happily in the body they were born with, independent of their gender identity. But in fact, most children whose gender identity does not relate to their biological sex can gain psychological peace as a transgendered being through means other than the radical act of medical procedures and potions. Sex change procedures and hormone injections may seem to open one door, but it closes many others. This should concern us all.