

Wall Street Journal article:

## **Gender Ideology Isn't Kids' Stuff**

### **Psychologically and emotionally, most aren't ready for it.**

A campaign is under way to introduce schoolchildren to the latest ideas about sexual orientation and “gender identity.” Pupils in New Jersey are expected to understand the differences between these concepts by fifth grade. An official of the National Education Association, the largest U.S. teachers union, recommends asking preschoolers their “preferred pronouns.” The NEA’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ Caucus has a reading list for elementary-school children that includes titles such as “My Princess Boy” and “Jacob’s New Dress.”

It’s important that children learn to accept differences; but indoctrinating them or promoting an agenda is another matter. Parents, many of whom find such ideas objectionable or exotic, are often kept in the dark about what their children are being taught, or told they have no right to opt out if they are informed. Parents around the country have filed lawsuits alleging that school officials withheld vital information about their own children from them.

Children develop at their own pace. Many aren’t psychologically or emotionally ready to discuss or think about their “identity.” I have seen many young adolescents overwhelmed by the need to know “who and what I am” in a heated and socially pressured environment. I have even had teen patients tell me that “identifying as heteronormative”—yes, they’ve been trained to talk that way—is stressful in an environment that idealizes being “queer.” Preadolescent children are only beginning to discover who they are. All children (adults too) have both masculine and feminine parts of their personalities, which they should be free to explore in play. If a girl doesn’t like wearing dresses and a boy enjoys playing with dolls, it’s cruel and destructive to lead them to believe they’re actually members of the opposite sex. The harm to children is physical as well as psychological.

Medical societies and some schools promote off-label puberty blockers and life-altering surgeries for children and adolescents diagnosed with “gender dysphoria.” Seattle schools teach fourth-graders that “some people decide, with the help of their doctor, to take medicine or hormones to change puberty on purpose to better match their gender.” Side effects of puberty blockers include mood disorders, brain swelling, seizures and cognitive impairment. The Florida Legislature last year passed the Parental Rights in Education Act, which requires that classroom discussion of sexual matters be “age-appropriate” and prohibits it altogether before fourth grade. It’s a good first step. Society needs to respect the role of parents and empower them to make decisions that are best for their families. For too long we have put the needs of adults over children when it comes to child care, education and safety—and now sexual ideology.

Ms. Komisar is a psychoanalyst and author of “Being There: Why Prioritizing Motherhood in the First Three Years Matters” and “Chicken Little The Sky Isn’t Falling: Raising Resilient Adolescents in the New Age of Anxiety.”

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