

Should Children be Taught About Gender Identity in School

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It should come as no surprise to people that the LGBT+ movement has been gaining speed throughout the last fifty and a half years and this movement has had a great influence upon global society during the 21st century. The movement has grown so large that some states in our country are now teaching about Gender identity in their classes. According to the Los Angeles Times (Blume, 2022), the state of California now requires its students to be provided with materials to learn about the roles and contributions of people who are among those that identify as Bisexual, Transgender, Gay, Lesbian, etc. However, there has been both a political and religious divide over whether children should be taught about this or not. You have on one side that children should be taught that they are allowed to express themselves in any manner that they so desire. On the other hand, you have those who believe that children should not be taught such a serious topic at such a young age. Since Gender Identity is one of the most important aspects of our psychological perspective, it is necessary to ask ourselves whether teaching about Gender Identity in schools is a good idea or not.

One of the primary fears among those who argue against teaching this topic to young students in schools is because the teachers are not qualified to do so and that the way a child learns about this topic is at their teachers discretion, not the parents. The teacher is not the one who is specialized in the field of gender identity and many parents are worried that they may teach in a way that may be inappropriate. According to the Washington examiner (Tremoglie, 2022), a teacher hosted an afterschool drag queen show for students. This show featured many Drag queens performing inappropriate moves that outraged the parents of students in that school. The teacher had made announcements of this performance and

encouraged the students of that school to support the performers. The students were receiving a distorted view on what it means to identify with a different gender and most likely affected their own view on that gender. This was all thanks to the teacher's way of projecting gender identity. The teacher, although their pronouns were they/them and not specialized in the field of gender identity, thought that it was important to show their students about gender identity and the way they showed them was highly inappropriate. Because it is such an important topic, many parents were outraged about this highly inappropriate way of showing students gender identity. Many parents also fear that they may teach a one-sided view on gender identity and not an objective view. According to PewResearch (Horowitz, 2022), a study of parents showed that 31% of parents wanted schools to teach that their identity was determined at birth while that same number projected suggested that parents wanted their own child to determine their identity. However, 37% of parents who participated thought that it is not a topic that should be taught in schools. In this topic, many parents who were against teaching gender identity, especially in kindergarten, believe that a child at that age is not old enough to determine their identity.

When a child is born, the body parts of that child are not fully developed yet. The organ in our body that goes through the most development of all is the brain. The task of the brain is to solve math problems, sense danger, and most importantly of all, to make decisions. The parts of the brain that are primarily responsible for making decisions are both the Prefrontal Cortex and the Hippocampus. It is an obvious fact that the brain takes a long time to develop in our bodies. According to the National Institute for Health (Arain, 2013), the

Prefrontal Cortex is not fully developed until the age of twenty-five which is one of the last parts of the brain to develop. With this information, many parents have been questioning whether a child in grades Pre-K-12 is old enough to make this lifechanging decision on their own identity. They argue that the child has not fully grown up and cannot make sense of the world around them. Along with this, they claim that children during their younger years are not able to make smart decisions. They also fear that a child may be conditioned by teachers teaching gender identity in schools into thinking that this is okay.

For instance, a child has often been told by his parents that if someone that you do not know starts asking you to come into his car you do not listen to him and run home. According to Simply Psychology (Mcleod, 2023), this is known as Classical conditioning due to them being taught that strangers talking to you is associated with danger which could be the same as doing chores resulting in a reward. A parent who disagrees with teaching gender identity in schools believes that if the child is taught about gender identity enough, they will be conditioned into thinking that it is okay to determine your own identity. According to the Association for Psychological Science (Jaswal, 2010), a study on three years olds showed that young children tend to trust whatever someone says. A parent's fear may be that because of a child at that young of an age can believe anything that they hear, they will end up believing that gender identity is okay because their teacher said so. Those parents who do not want gender identity to be taught in schools want their own children to develop their own bias on this topic through their own reasoning and not from someone else's word. With children believing what

other people say so easily as well as not being able to make smart decisions at young ages, it comes as no surprise why so many parents do not want gender identity taught in schools.

In the 21st century, the suicide rate has risen higher and higher. According to Centers for Disease Control (Garnett, 2022), The suicide rate in the year 2000 was 10.4 per every 100,000 people. As of the year 2020, that current rate had risen to 13.5 for every 100,000 people. However, it is unfortunate that the numbers in teen suicides have also risen as well. The Suicide & Crisis Center of North Texas (Suicide & Crisis Center of Northern Texas, n.d) states that Suicide is the third leading cause of death among people between ages 15-24. Many people blame the internet or drug abuse for these numbers; However, the largest portion of teen suicides lie solely with LGBT's. According to Healthline (Mastroianni, 2021), a study showed that 5.4% of heterosexual teens were at risk of suicide attempts. Data from that same study also showed that 12% of teens who did not identify as straight were at risk for suicide attempts. That number is over double than that of their straight peers. This study also shows that a LGBT teen ideation of suicide is at 26.1% while for straight teens it is 13%. This data is quite alarmingly as it shows that LGBT teens contemplate suicide more than straight teens. According to the Trevor Project (The Trevor Project, 2021), These teens are suffering due to not fitting in with society and being targets for bullying due to their identity and is the leading cause of LGBT teens wanting to commit suicide. However, we must take into account that the teen who does not identify as straight may also be depressed not only from being bullied, but from also hating themselves for not knowing how to deal with their own feelings. Hormones within teens are at astronomically high levels during their teen years and there can often be hormone imbalances.

According to Grassroots Healthcare (Grassroots Healthcare, n.d), Imbalances in hormones often cause mood swings which are mentally unhealthy among teens. When a Teen identifies as a gender not of the one they were born with, they often question themselves on whether they fit in or not and worrying about this can make those teens feel depressed and possibly suicidal. We should always be ensuring the mental health of our teens so that they can live a fruitful life that impacts those around them

The question of whether gender identity should be taught in our schools is a highly complicated one, and it is a question that divides so many of us when we should be united. Whether its is due to political beliefs or religious beliefs, our society can not seem to agree on how this difficult topic should be taught to our children. However, the research that has been stated above suggests that gender identity should not be taught in the school system and that it is a parents duty to educate their children on this topic. There is just too high of a risk that a child at the age of six will learn about gender identity in the form of drag queen shows and other inappropriate sides of gender identity. Along with this, the teacher may impose their own bias on gender identity upon their students and since the child is young, they may end up believing what the teacher said about gender identity to be true without forming their own opinion. If a child believes what their teacher says, there is a possibility that they may end up making a decision to socially transition into another gender at the age of seven. Since their prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for making decisions, had not fully developed, they may not be fully qualified to make a decision that may possibly be irreversible. Along with this, the studies mentioned above show that LGBT teens are mentally suffering and are contemplating

suicide. The topic of gender identity is like the topic of how children are made, and the latter is something all parents have to talk to their children about at some point. The topic of gender identity is quite like the topic of reproduction. Regardless on someone else's opinion on this matter, this topic must stay out of our school systems in order to protect the mental health of our children and to ensure that our children make the right decisions in their lives.

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