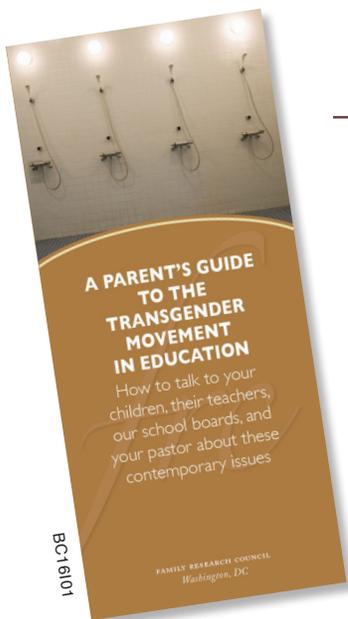


A Parent's Guide to the Transgender Movement in Education

BY PETER SPRIGG



BC16101

Why are we hearing so much today about the transgender movement in general, and about who should use which bathroom, locker room, and shower in particular? And how does this affect your child's school? Family

Research Council (FRC) is pleased to offer this concise guide for parents to understand what is happening in American culture and schools today, and what you can do about it.

What Does "Transgender" Mean?

The term "transgender" is now commonly used to refer to people who identify psychologically with the opposite sex from what they actually are biologically. A person who was born biologically male, but who wants to be, or feels psychologically that he actually is, female, would be considered transgender; as would a person born biologically female who wants to be, or feels she is, male. (Some people who self-identify as transgender rebel against what they call "the gender binary" by refusing to identify as male or female.) Note that identifying as transgender is completely different from being "intersexed"—that is, having a "disorder of sexual development" (DSD) which makes the person's biological sex at birth ambiguous. Most people who identify as transgender do not have a biological intersex condition. While some people have "gender reassignment surgery" to alter the appearance of their bodies, this is not considered necessary to adopt a "transgender" identity.

After extensive lobbying by transgender activists, in 2013 the American Psychiatric Association changed its diagnosis of the transgender condition as "Gender Identity Disorder" to "Gender Dysphoria." (The change was intended to suggest that it is not the gender identity issue, but only the subjective distress it causes, that is problematic.) It remains on the list of mental disorders, though, in order to allow insurance

to pay for hormone treatments or surgery.

Although transgender activists often argue that some children are "boys born in girls' bodies" or "girls born in boys' bodies," no scientific evidence has proven this. In fact, research has shown that most people (about 75%) who struggle with gender identity issues in childhood do not grow up to identify as transgender adults. Experts have had considerable success in treating children to help them overcome gender dysphoria. They have also reported that gender dysphoria often occurs with other mental health problems in adults, and that it "improved in parallel during treatment" for those conditions. Family Research Council believes that such treatment is a more compassionate approach than encouraging people to "transition" from one gender to another. While transgender activists argue that supporting such a transition (and, if desired, hormone treatments and surgery) is necessary to protect or enhance the mental health of transgender people, research actually shows that social transition and sex reassignment surgery do little to reduce serious underlying mental health problems.

A list of resources for individuals and families struggling with gender identity issues is included at the end of this pamphlet.

The Cultural Moment

In part, the growing attention being paid to the transgender movement is a reflection of the developments within the larger LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) movement. Although the lifestyles and interests of self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons are often very different, they have united in a movement to attack natural views of sexual morality and sexual identity.

The U.S. Supreme Court's June 2015 decision in favor of a redefinition of civil marriage to include same-sex couples (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) resulted in a reduction of attention being paid to the demands of self-identified lesbian or gay couples to be permitted to marry, and an increase in the relative atten-

tion paid to the demands of transgender activists to be accepted as actually being of the gender identity they prefer—including in assignment to bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers. That same month of June 2015, also featured a significant moment in popular culture—the “coming out” as transgender of Bruce (now “Caitlyn”) Jenner, the former Olympic men’s decathlon gold medalist.

The Political Moment

In February of 2016, the Charlotte, N.C. City Council adopted an ordinance adding “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” as protected categories under the city’s laws against discrimination, including discrimination in public accommodations. Under the usual interpretation of gender identity laws, one of the effects of such an ordinance would have been to allow biological males who self-identify as female to use public restrooms, locker rooms, and showers designated for females. In March 2016, before the Charlotte ordinance could take effect, the North Carolina state legislature acted to overturn it by declaring that only the protected categories found in state law would be permitted in local anti-discrimination laws. The same bill, House Bill 2 (HB 2), also provided that in government-owned buildings (including public schools and state universities), people would be expected to use facilities that are separated on the basis of sex in accordance with their biological sex as stated on their birth certificates.

The result was strong backlash from the LGBT movement and their allies in the business community, as well as dueling lawsuits, with the Obama administration suing North Carolina claiming that House Bill 2 violated federal law, and North Carolina suing the federal government.

In May of 2016, the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice wrote a “Dear Colleague” letter to every public school district in the country informing them of the Obama administration’s view that gender identity discrimination—including the failure to allow students to use the restrooms, locker rooms, and showers that correspond to their gender identity—is illegal under federal law. Over twenty states have now sued the federal government over this guidance.

These two events—the passage of House Bill 2 in North Carolina and the Obama administration’s letter

seeking to force schools to embrace the gender identity viewpoint—are the key reasons why the so-called “bathroom wars” have come to attention recently.

The Legal Argument

The Obama administration argues that requiring transgender people (including schoolchildren) to use bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms that correspond with their biological sex at birth, rather than their chosen gender identity, is a form of discrimination. They claim that discrimination in education based on gender identity is illegal under a 1972 law usually referred to simply as “Title IX,” which outlawed discrimination based on “sex.” The Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that “gender stereotyping” can be a form of “sex discrimination,” and the Obama administration argues that “gender identity” discrimination is a form of “gender stereotyping.”

Family Research Council, along with North Carolina and the other states that are suing the federal government, argue that Title IX must be interpreted in accordance with the original intent of the members of Congress who enacted it in 1972, and we believe it is clear they intended the word “sex” to refer to one’s biological sex, not to gender identity.

How to Talk to Your Children about Transgender Issues

The most important thing for Christian parents to communicate to their children about this issue is that God created each of us either male or female, as it says in Genesis 1:27 (NASB): “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” This short but profound verse implies several things:

- 1) Our “maleness” or “femaleness” is an essential part of our humanity as God created us;
- 2) It is good to be male, and it is good to be female, because in either case, we bear the image of God; and
- 3) We have neither the right nor the power to change the sex (male or female) that God has given us, because it is part of his created order.

Our sons should be taught to appreciate and celebrate being boys, and our daughters should be taught to appreciate and celebrate being girls. We need not hold to some stereotypes in terms of the adult occupations

that boys and girls can aspire to—girls can grow up to be astronauts or truck drivers, and boys can grow up to be nurses or ballet dancers. However, only a girl can become a mother or a wife; and only a boy can become a father or a husband.

The fact that some boys want to be girls and some girls would prefer to be boys may be disturbing and confusing to young children, so it is not wise to bring this issue up unless the child has already been confronted with it in some way. There is no need to create unnecessary anxiety which may interfere with your child's normal development of a secure sense of male or female identity.

Your child's first exposure to the transgender issue may come through the school's sex education curriculum—which may have an innocent-sounding name such as “family life and human development.” Even very young children are being exposed to concepts such as sexual orientation and gender identity using tools like a cartoon character known as “the Gender Unicorn.”¹ If your child is exposed to such teaching, be sure to reinforce the core biblical principles mentioned above. Tell your child that some people believe a person's feelings about being a boy or girl are more important than their body, but that you disagree and think it is a person's body that indicates whether they are male or female.

Even though the percentage of the population that identifies as transgender is very small,² there is a chance that someone in your child's school—either a student, or a teacher or staff member—may identify as transgender. It's even possible that someone may come to school identifying as one sex one year, and then come back for the new school year identifying as the opposite sex and using a new name. Emphasize that your son or daughter has a right to disagree with someone else's opinions and even to disapprove of things they choose to do. However, they should always treat the person as they themselves would want to be treated—with respect and loving care, even if they disagree or disapprove.

If there is a student who identifies as transgender in your child's school, then the issue of the bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers may arise directly. Tell your child that he or she has the right not to undress or be partially clothed in front of someone who is of the opposite biological sex, regardless of that person's gender identity, and also has a right not to be exposed

to someone of the opposite sex who is partially or fully unclothed. Of course, if anyone makes your child feel uncomfortable in the restroom, locker room, or shower, the child should immediately tell someone in authority in the school (a teacher or administrator) and should tell you as the parent. If the school insists that the transgender student has the right to use that facility, have your child ask to use a more private facility, such as a single-user, faculty, or nurse's restroom.

How to Talk to Your Child's Teacher

If you have concerns about what your child is being taught or exposed to in the school curriculum, the first person to talk to is your child's classroom teacher. In elementary school, the child may only have one main teacher; in middle or high schools, you may have to identify which teacher's class contains the material, such as a health teacher.

First, make a point of being informed about the content of the curriculum at your child's school. A broad outline of the topics covered in various classes may be available online at the website of the school or the school district. Detailed lesson plans, however, may only be available from the individual teacher. You have a right to know what your child is being taught, and many schools may even permit parents to sit in on classes at times. Find out if your school's curriculum discusses topics such as sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. If so, what does it say about these topics? What sources are cited for the material being taught? In many cases, information will be taught which is supplied by LGBT activist groups and is not necessarily objective or even scientifically accurate.

If you have concerns about what your child is being taught (perhaps because of a discussion with your child, or because you looked at a textbook or homework assignment), a conversation with the teacher can help you to understand who is really responsible for that material being taught. In some cases, an individual teacher may sympathize with your concerns, but is simply teaching the curriculum that has been mandated by the school district or even the state. In that case, you know that complaining to or criticizing the teacher will do no good, and you need to go to a higher authority. On the other hand, you may learn that the individual teacher has a personal agenda to promote the acceptance of the transgender movement

and is inserting material of his or her own choosing. In that case, you may want to challenge the accuracy or balance of the material, and if you are not satisfied with the response, then you will have legitimate grounds for complaining to the teacher's superior, such as the principal.

Find out if your state or school district allows you to opt your child out of lessons that are controversial or offensive to you. If so—exercise that right. If not, express your view that such an option should be granted to parents.

Emphasize to the teacher that you have taught and expect your child to treat everyone with respect and kindness, even if they disagree with their choices, and that you support efforts to prevent bullying of any child for any reason. This will put you on stronger ground to insist on the same from the teacher—that he or she respect your child's right to disagree with some of what is taught, and respect your right as a parent to teach your religious and moral values to your child.

Becoming a Citizen Activist

In raising concerns with your child's school, it is important to go through proper channels, address issues privately first, and not prematurely adopt an “us-against-them” stance. If not satisfied by conversations with the child's teacher, you can talk with the principal. If not satisfied with either the teacher or the principal, you can communicate or seek an appointment with the district school superintendent. If not satisfied with (or unable to get a response from) the superintendent, you may have to appeal to members of your district's governing school board (or School Committee or Board of Education—different areas use different terms).

If you have reached the point of complaining to the school board, it may be necessary to go public with your concerns. A first step to be taken seriously is to enlist as many allies as you can. Anything from a letter to the editor of the local paper to a posting on Facebook may be a way of alerting others to your concerns. Encourage people to communicate with the members of the board—in writing, in phone calls, or by giving testimony during public comment time at a school board meeting. Although not essential, you may want to actually form a new organization to represent your concerns—then you can create a website and an orga-

nizational structure that may aid your effectiveness. It may even come to the point where parents will file a lawsuit against the school district—this has happened in Palatine, Ill.³

Because of the Obama administration's position, the school board may tell you that their hands are tied, and that the federal government or federal law requires them to adopt pro-transgender policies. They may warn that the school district faces a cut-off of federal funds if it does not comply with the Obama administration's guidance. You can politely but firmly inform them that this is incorrect, because:

- Title IX (the law against sex discrimination in education) makes no mention of gender identity. There is no reason to believe the Congress and president who enacted it meant anything by the word “sex” other than one's biological sex at birth.
- Bills have been introduced in recent Congresses to prohibit discrimination in education based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but they have never passed.
- Although Title IX permits a cut-off of federal funds as a sanction for violating it, this penalty has actually never been applied.

You can also emphasize the rights of your child which you believe are being infringed upon, including the right to privacy and safety in the restroom, locker room, and shower.

With many lawsuits currently in the courts, the legal situation is very much in flux, but as of the time of this publication's writing, there is no Supreme Court ruling or other compelling precedent that supports the Obama administration's new interpretation of Title IX. Although the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled in favor of a transgender student in a lawsuit against a Virginia school district, the U.S. Supreme Court put that ruling on hold pending appeal. In August 2016, a federal district court judge in Texas ruled against the Obama administration guidance in a lawsuit filed by several states, and issued a nationwide injunction against enforcing the administration's position.

People may ask, “Well, what should we do about a transgender student?” Some children change their gender identity with the full support of parents (who have themselves been influenced by the culture), so it may be difficult for the school to refuse to recognize

this change altogether. However, even if a child who identifies as transgender is recognized by the school, you can emphasize:

- 1) Asking the self-identified transgender child to use private facilities—such as a single-user restroom or a private changing room—is a generous accommodation which protects the privacy and safety of all students.
- 2) Your child can be asked to treat someone who identifies as transgender with respect, but your child cannot be asked to give up his or her freedom of thought and free speech rights—by being forced to use the self-identified transgender person’s preferred pronouns, for example.

Engaging Your Church

Local church congregations are important social institutions in each community. Any effort to mobilize like-minded parents to express concern about school policies regarding human sexuality should not overlook the church.

First, talk to your pastor about your concerns. Ask if the pastor would be willing to be a spokesman for community efforts, or to talk to the congregation in a worship service. If not, ask if you can be given time to make an announcement to enlist support. The church can also be a good place to collect signatures on petitions to the school board or superintendent. Your church might also have an email newsletter or some other online resource that can be used to spread the word.

Some people may be concerned about the church becoming too political. While these issues do involve public policy decisions made by elected officials, they are not partisan—they need not involve political parties or elections. The church has an obligation to play a prophetic role, not just an evangelistic one, in its witness to the community, and seeking to influence the education of our children is a crucial area of concern.

Unfortunately, in some communities the schools and school system will insist on adopting policies that promote the transgender agenda and jeopardize the safety and privacy of students. In those cases, your

church may want to become more active in promoting and supporting educational alternatives such as homeschooling or Christian schools. Although this may not be an option for every Christian family, for financial or other reasons, there are undoubtedly more families that could choose an alternative to the public schools if they were willing to make the necessary sacrifices.

Many Christian schools were founded by and meet within churches. If this is not possible, the church might support another Christian school in the community, or offer scholarships to church members to attend one. The church could also hold seminars to educate parents about homeschooling, and make its facilities available to homeschool co-ops.

Resources

For more information on the transgender movement, visit the FRC website:

The Transgender Movement and “Gender Identity” in the Law (3-page summary of issue):
frc.org/transgenderidentity

Understanding and Responding to the Transgender Movement (42-page Issue Analysis with 7-page Executive Summary):
frc.org/transgender

Title IX and Transgendered Students (2 pages):
frc.org/issuebrief/title-ix-and-transgendered-students

Get information on how your pastor can mobilize your church at:

watchmenpastors.org
and on citizen activism through church Culture Impact Teams at: cultureimpact.org

Other organizations have useful resources as well, including:

The American College of Pediatricians

Gender Dysphoria in Children

acped.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/gender-dysphoria-in-children

Focus on the Family

Equipping Parents to Respond to Gender-Confusing Messages in Schools

media.focusonthefamily.com/free-downloads/pdf/Gender%20Confusing%20Messages_Schools_True_Tolerance_Primer.pdf

If legal representation becomes necessary, Christian legal advocacy groups may be able to help:

Alliance Defending Freedom

adflegal.org

Liberty Counsel

lc.org

Resources for People Struggling with Gender Identity and for Their Families

Comprehensive Counseling Services/Institute for Marital Healing

Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons

maritalhealing.com

maritalhealing.com/conflicts/genderidentitydisorder.php

Courage – A Roman Catholic Apostolate Courage International, Inc.

8 Leonard Street

Norwalk, CT 06850

Phone: (203) 803-1564

couragerc.net

Desert Stream Ministries

706 Main Street

Grandview, MO 64030

Phone: 866.359.0500 (toll free)

816.767.1730 (tel)

816.767.7221 (fax)

info@desertstream.org

desertstream.org

Harvest USA

harvestusa.org

Mastering Life Ministries

masteringlife.org

NARTH Institute (National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality)

narth.com

Parakaleo

A Christian ministry in the United Kingdom that reaches out to those with transgender issues.

parakaleo.co.uk

Restored Hope Network

restoredhopenetwork.com

facebook.com/RestoredHopeNetwork

rhngathering@gmail.com

Sy Rogers Communications

syrogers.com

Trading My Sorrows

Walt Heyer

tradingmysorrows.com

sexchangeregret.com

Help 4 Families

Denise Schick

help4families.com

Endnotes

- 1 A graphic of the “Gender Unicorn” can be found at the website of the pro-transgender website, “Trans Student Educational Resources” (TSER) at: http://www.transstudent.org/gender?gclid=CKKAtKvJ_c4CFZFZhgod1fMOAQ
- 2 A pro-LGBT think tank, the Williams Institute, estimated in 2016 that only about one in 160 American adults—0.6% of the population—identifies as transgender. Yet this was double the estimate they made in 2011. <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/how-many-adults-identify-as-transgender-in-the-united-states/>
- 3 Duaa Eldeib and Dawn Rhodes, “Lawsuit filed after transgender student gets locker room access in Palatine,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 2016, accessed September 22, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-transgender-palatine-high-school-lawsuit-met-20160504-story.html>.

About the Author

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Thank you for choosing this important resource from Family Research Council. I hope you find this "Parent's Guide to the Transgender Movement in Education"

to be helpful in protecting future generations from the scourge of the progressive agenda for your family, your community, and our country. And, I encourage you to share this vital information with as many friends and family members as you can.

We've created this and other publications to help families like yours. It's a tool to empower you in making a difference for our culture. I hope it inspires you to engage in this critical issue and so many more.

This guide is the latest among many. I encourage you to learn about other publications in support of our mission that we offer on our website, frc.org. And while there, you can learn the very latest by listening to current and recent recordings of our daily radio broadcast, Washington Watch. Together, we can bring about a culture in which human life is valued, families flourish, and religious liberty thrives.

President
Family Research Council

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM
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FREE TO BELIEVE

FreetoBelieve.com

The freedom to believe and live according to one's beliefs is the foundation for a civil society where people of differing beliefs can live and work together with mutual respect. These stories show what it means—and what it costs—to live out what you believe.

FRCBLOG.com
THE BLOG OF FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL

FRC Blog

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