

Presentation at CATA conference on behalf of Resist Gender Education

In the 1980s the Labour Department ran a very successful campaign: “Girls can do anything.” It was aimed at encouraging girls into non-traditional careers that were then male-dominated. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, no doubt, was a beneficiary of this campaign. By the mid-1980s, the idea of girls being able to do anything had become widely accepted. Sexist stereotypes had been smashed... or so we thought.

Gender identity ideology has brought them back, with a vengeance.

Instead of “girls can do anything”, today’s kids learn that “anyone can be a girl”. They are taught that sex is determined, not by a person’s sexed body, but by what the person likes. So, if a girl likes stereotypically “boyish” things, then she must *actually* be a boy. According to this popular picture book, *Jack (not Jackie)*, all it takes to reveal that inner boy is to dislike wearing dresses... or have a short haircut.

From as soon as they can enjoy picture books, children are being fed gender identity beliefs, as if they are fact. Stories tell them that sex is “assigned at birth” and that sometimes adults get it wrong; that there are multitudes of inner gender identities and only YOU know which one is right for you. *Call Me Max*, a picture book that teachers are reading to kids in primary schools, helpfully lists a smorgasbord of identities a child might choose:

trans, genderqueer, non-binary, gender fluid, agender, two spirit, and so on.

Remember, these concepts are being taught to children who don’t yet have the cognitive ability to cross the road by themselves.

The Gender Identity dice game reminds kids that there are no rules; congratulates them on having ‘cool’ parents if they haven’t been told whether they’re a boy or a girl; and says kids can change their minds about their identities as often as they like because it’s how they FEEL that’s the most important.

Is it any wonder that children are becoming horribly confused? Is it any wonder that a 10 year old I know came home from “Relationship and Sexuality Education” very worried about puberty because she thought that was when she would have to choose her sex and she just didn’t *know* whether to choose to be a boy or a girl?

A new Relationship and Sexuality Education, or RSE, guide was produced by the Ministry of Education in 2020 but most parents and even a lot of teachers are oblivious to its contents. While it contains many positive messages about building strong and healthy relationships, it also teaches a belief system that does not have majority support: gender identity ideology. This ideology elevates an unobservable, unmeasurable, subjective feeling above the objective, scientific, reality of binary sex.

The glossary summarises the incoherent and inconsistent beliefs that underpin the RSE Guide:

that sex is assigned at birth – when we know it is observed and recorded at birth.

that there are three sexes (male, female and intersex) – when we know intersex is a medical condition affecting 1 in 5000 people, not another sex.

that gender is on a continuum and that it's an incorrect assumption to say there are only two genders – when we know that sex is binary and 'gender' is not a synonym for 'sex'.

that gender is not fixed or immutable – when we know that changing gendered behaviour does not change a person's sex. (Incidentally, this assertion is in direct contradiction to the Conversion Practices Prohibition Act, which says gender cannot be changed.)

Perhaps most insultingly, the glossary does away with the concept of same-sex attraction altogether by defining 'gay' as a person emotionally and sexually attracted to the same *gender*. Being same-sex attracted has been re-classified as discrimination.

Of course, young people do need truthful and positive education about relationships and sexuality, but the Ministry of Education Guide imposes adult concepts onto very young children: In Years 3 & 4, for example, seven to nine year olds are supposed to be able to identify gender stereotypes, understand the difference between sex and gender, and know there are diverse gender and sexual identities in society... All this, when many of them are still learning how to tell the time!

As well as teaching children the nonsense that sex is on a spectrum and can be changed as often as they like, many schools are now encouraging social transitioning – enabling a child to choose a new name and pronouns and start wearing the clothing stereotypically associated with their chosen identity.

Now, when a child expresses discomfort with their sex, instead of trusted adults giving body positive messages like “girls can do anything” or “boys make great ballet dancers too”, they tell them not to worry, we'll all pretend you're the opposite sex and when you're older a bit of hormone therapy and surgery will fix everything!

On the surface, social transitioning seems like a kind and inclusive thing to do but, in reality, it is the first major step towards radical medical interventions and something that teachers are not qualified to understand or endorse. Nor is school an appropriate place for a child's ever-changing internal feelings to be so publicly revealed.

It is not open-minded or compassionate to lead children to think that their problems can be instantly resolved by a rejection of their own bodies and a denial of their biological sex.

Social transition may actually make it harder for children to resolve their gender distress because what child later wants to admit they've made a big mistake when every adult has enthusiastically affirmed their self-diagnosis? What child wants to give up the higher social status provided by their trans identity? Children can become locked into a lifetime of medical dependency, accompanied by fragility and a sense of entitlement, because they have been told repeatedly that whatever they feel *must* be right.

Of extreme concern to parents is the MOE recommendation that they should not be informed when a child starts socially transitioning at school. When schools use new names and pronouns for students and collude to hide it from their parents, they are reinforcing the message that parents are automatically old-fashioned bigots, and even toxic. Such self-righteous secrecy callously isolates distressed teens from the support of those who love them the most.

Some schools are even deviating into providing actual medical advice. In a flyer sent to all Year 9s (12 & 13 year olds) at a Wellington school early this year, students were offered advice on using breast binders, which have known damaging side effects, and on how to take the major step of

starting on hormones... This, at school, during lunchtime, by staff who are wholly medically unqualified.

By law, schools are required to consult with their communities every two years about the relationship and sexuality curriculum so that parents can withdraw their children from this instruction if they disagree with the content.

However, The RSE guide proposes that gender identity beliefs be taught, not just in dedicated health classes, but in every subject across the curriculum. When science teachers are saying that biological sex has been “constructed” or are telling students about puberty blockers, how can parents possibly keep their children away from this indoctrination?

The teaching of gender beliefs has permeated every subject. Even Outdoor Education. A new teaching resource called “Going with the Flow” purports to be about enabling girls to enjoy the outdoors even when they’re menstruating.

In fact, it is largely a repetition of all the gender diversity babble students have already been taught. The fact that only females can menstruate is denied with wording like *people who menstruate* or the nonsense *if you’re thinking that girls and women are the only ones who menstruate, you’d be wrong*. Menstruation is treated as something yucky and especially upsetting for the girls who think they are boys, who therefore need extra special consideration.

This same resource puts the comfort of transgender students ahead of the comfort of everyone else. If a male says he’s a girl, he is to be housed with girls on school camps and they or their parents get no say in the matter.

We all know girls will be the ones to choose not to participate at all if they don’t feel comfortable or safe.

How did we get into this mess? Certainly not after widespread community consultation. The MOE Guide was largely written by university academics and no parent groups are listed in the acknowledgments.

Children *should* be taught to be accepting of difference but we can easily do that without mentioning gender identities or transgenderism at an early age. Discussion of such ideas properly belongs with older students, and then they should be presented in a balanced way, as with any subject that is contentious, with the beliefs and values of parents being equally respected.

Why have some schools so enthusiastically taken up gender identity beliefs?

It’s an over-reach of empathy by the staff. The mistaken idea that inclusion means approval of whatever another person believes, whereas, of course, we can accept and include others without subscribing to their beliefs, as we do all the time with religious differences.

It is also a failure to admit that there is a vast difference between a healthy bit of gender non-conformity and the extreme body dysmorphia that is facilitated by this constant transgender rhetoric.

The “girls can do anything” campaign helped girls to break out of restrictive sex stereotypes. Transgenderism does the opposite by advocating that the right response to emotional distress or feeling restricted is to permanently change and damage a healthy body.

Not all schools have so far embraced this ideology, but government policy has trapped every principal and teacher in a web of deceit.

When the sex self-ID Act comes into effect next year, a child may arrive at school with an altered birth certificate, making proper safeguarding an impossibility because the school won't even know the child's correct sex.

Affirming the gender beliefs of one student will inevitably conflict with the rights of others – for example to single-sex changing rooms or dormitories. Social transition at school sets up new opportunities for bullying or punishment if the new names and pronouns are overlooked by others.

And what about teachers who do not subscribe to these beliefs? If the Health teacher is teaching that sex is on a spectrum, how does the Science teacher counter that? How can they teach the fact that sex is immutable when there are sometimes multiple students in a class who insist they have literally changed sex?

There are obvious major conflicts and contradictions between the Bill of Rights, the Education Act, the Care of Children Act and Ministry of Education policies. But when the MOE was asked about these in an OIA request earlier this year, its response was that it had not sought *any* legal advice in relation to the specific questions posed. Questions such as:

What is the risk of litigation to schools and teachers if they change a child's name and pronouns or engage in other social transitioning steps, without the parents' explicit consent?

Do students or staff have the right to ask others to use their preferred opposite sex or neo pronouns (as that is their protected belief) AND is there a matching right for students and staff to decline to do so (as that is their protected belief)?

This legal minefield affects everyone working with children and their parents and it needs to be urgently investigated and resolved.

How can we start undoing the damage from this ideology? Firstly, parents need to be active in protecting their children from indoctrination at school. You can look on the Resist Gender Education website for information, advice, templates, and other resources www.resistgendereducation.nz.

Ask your school to carry out a full community consultation and for Relationship and Sexuality Education to be covered only in dedicated Health classes. Ask for a School Body Positive Policy to be implemented that confirms there is no right or wrong way to be a boy or girl and that the school does not reinforce harmful sex stereotypes.

Secondly, every adult has the responsibility to speak up and advocate strongly for the right of children to reject gender stereotypes and be their authentic selves without discrimination, labelling or medical intervention to 'fix' them.

No more telling lies to kids.