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Seattle schools roll out lessons on gender, identity

By Neal Morton, The Seattle Times

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With about 20 fidgeting first-graders seated on the carpet in front of her, Kimball Elementary teacher Jacqueline Martinez took an informal poll before reading time.

Are girls allowed to play with Lego blocks, she asked. Can boys like the color purple? Both questions drew a unanimous thumbs up from her students. But their opinions were a bit more mixed when Martinez asked if dads could cook in the kitchen, or if moms should mow the lawn.

“Some people think boys should only do some things, and girls should only do other things,” Martinez told the class.

Over the past month, teachers in a dozen elementary schools in Seattle have piloted similar lessons on gender and self identity that are designed to fulfill new state standards on health education. The standards, adopted last year, require schools to teach students as young as kindergarten about the different ways to express gender, while fifth-graders learn about ways to show respect for all people and how to identify a trusted adult to ask questions about gender identity and sexual orientation.

In Seattle Public Schools, a task force of parents and teachers spent about a year developing the lessons and selecting the books for specific grades, said Lisa Love, the district’s health-education manager. She said individual teachers and schools also have increasingly requested age-appropriate tools to help guide conversations with students about gender expression and gender roles.

“Rather than say, ‘Good luck, find your own way,’ we felt the need to show what can be consistently taught (across the district) and that align with the new state standards,” Love said.

“People may mistakenly assume this conversation is about body parts and sex or something very mature and adult,” she added. “But it isn’t at all. It’s entirely about who a person feels they are when they come to school.”

The new books include “Introducing Teddy,” a short story Martinez read to her class about a stuffed bear named Teddy who identifies as a girl and wants to be called Tilly.

“He doesn’t feel right to be a boy,” one student told Martinez.

Other books in the new set address gender diversity (for second-graders) the negative effects of bullying (for fourth-graders) and, for fifth-graders, how media and culture influence ideas about gender.

Love plans to collect feedback from teachers at the 12 pilot schools before the district expands the lessons and books in all elementary-school classrooms next year.

She also may use reports of bullying and harassment and student surveys to see whether the new curriculum helps promote safer schools.

At Kimball Elementary, Martinez said she wasn't worried about how her students would react to the lesson on gender roles and the book "Introducing Teddy." Sending a letter to parents made her the most nervous, she said.

"We have lots of different cultures and backgrounds" at Kimball. "I just want to do the right thing and be transparent with my families. This is a conversation we have together."

<http://www.columbian.com/news/2018/jan/12/seattle-schools-roll-out-lessons-on-gender-identity/>

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'One Million Moms' Is Furious That Scholastic Is Selling Books About Transgender Kids

"Scholastic is not safe for your child," the conservative anti-LGBTQ group warned parents.

By [Carol Kuruvilla](#)

A conservative ["pro-family"](#) group is trying to rally mothers against the Scholastic Corporation for publishing children's books that honor diverse gender identities.

One Million Moms, an advocacy group that has largely focused its efforts on condemning progressive ideology in the entertainment industry, on Wednesday aimed its sights on [Scholastic](#), one of the [world's largest publishers of children's books](#).

In a post on [its website](#), One Million Moms took particular issue with one book, *George*, a chapter book [intended for kids in grades 3 to 7](#). Written by the queer activist and author [Alex Gino](#), *George* tells the story of a transgender fourth grader. The 10-year-old hopes that by playing Charlotte in her school's upcoming production of *Charlotte's Web*, she'll finally get her parents and teacher to look past the gender that was assigned to her at birth and accept her as a girl.

George, which was published by Scholastic in 2015, was [praised by critics](#) as a "profound, moving" book. But One Million Moms doesn't think the book is "family-friendly" material.

"Scholastic is not safe for your child and parents should be warned," the [group wrote](#). "Scholastic does not have our children's best interests at heart."

One Million Moms asked its supporters to warn Scholastic that they would boycott the company unless it stops "publishing and promoting pro-homosexual and pro-transgender books for children."

Gino declined to comment on the One Million Moms campaign, while Scholastic did not reply to HuffPost's request for comment.

When *George* first came out, Gino told [NPR](#) that they hoped the book would help transgender kids feel less alone.

Studies show that people who identify as transgender and [face rejection from their families](#) are at increased risk for [depression and suicide](#). According to a survey conducted by the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#), the majority of transgender people who were out or perceived to be transgender between kindergarten and 12th grade experienced some

form of mistreatment, including being verbally harassed (54 percent), physically attacked (24 percent) and sexually assaulted (13 percent).

As part of its pitch against Scholastic, One Million Moms cited a statement from the American College of Pediatricians that claimed accepting kids' transgender identities amounted to "child abuse." According to the [Human Rights Campaign](#), the American College of Pediatricians is a [small](#), socially conservative organization that holds extreme views about LGBTQ people.

On the other hand, the American Academy of Pediatrics, which is composed of 66,000 pediatricians in the United States, has [expressed support for transgender children and adults](#) and condemns attempts to stigmatize or marginalize them.

One Million Moms is a division of the [American Family Association](#), which the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) designated as an extremist group for its anti-queer ideology.

In addition to its campaigns against diverse gender identities, One Million Moms has also expressed outrage over companies that showcase same-sex relationships in their advertisements and television shows — such as [Disney](#), for featuring a two-mom family in the kids' show "Doc McStuffins," and [Campbell's Soup](#), for featuring gay dads in an ad.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/one-million-moms-transgender-book_us_5a58f4b4e4b03c4189654d9c