



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 21, 2015

Elementary School Transgender Lesson Draws Parents' Ire

Horace Mitchell Primary School in Kittery Point, Maine, is under fire for presenting a lesson from a book on transgenderism to its students without providing advance notice to parents. Superintendent Allyn Hutton stated it was an oversight on the school's part. "We have a practice of if a topic is considered sensitive, parents should be informed," she told [SeaCoastOnline.com](#) on April 17.



The lesson focused on a book that teachers read to the students, entitled *I am Jazz* (cover shown) by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings, the latter a 12-year-old honorary co-founder of the TransKids Purple Rainbow Foundation. The story is based on Jazz's own experiences.

The Amazon.com description of the book elaborates,

From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she had a girl's brain in a boy's body. She loved pink and dressing up as a mermaid and didn't feel like herself in boys' clothing. This confused her family, until they took her to a doctor who said that Jazz was transgender and that she was born that way. Jazz's story is based on her real-life experience and she tells it in a simple, clear way that will be appreciated by picture book readers, their parents, and teachers.

Some parents were angered by the lesson and the school's failure to alert them about it in advance.

"I feel like my thoughts, feelings and beliefs were completely ignored.... My right as a parent to allow or not allow this discussion with my child was taken from me," one mother wrote to Fox News' Sean Hannity. "It is very upsetting to me that I didn't have an option at all."

The mother said she tried to approach school officials about her concerns and was frustrated by their response. "When I spoke with the principal he was very cold about it," she said. "It's amazing how thoughtless the school has been with this whole thing."

According to that mother, her son was confused by the lesson and came home asking questions that he has never asked before, such as whether he's transgender, and if he is possibly "a girl in love with a girl."

Hannity reached out to Superintendent Hutton with questions about the lesson and received what seemed to be a generic response.

"I have spoken with the principal at Mitchell School who has been working with their guidance counselor to appropriately manage this situation and provide the appropriate information for the children at this age level," Hutton asserted. She added, "All information has been posted on the school's guidance blog for parent review."

That blog strongly defends the school's decision to teach *I am Jazz* to the students, ultimately arguing



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that the school is simply aligned with standards set by the state of Maine, which has a “strong stance in favor of LGBTQ rights.” The blog points to the 2005 Maine law that prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, and a 2014 ruling in Maine’s Supreme Court that determined a transgender female could not be denied the use of the boy’s bathroom under the state’s Human Rights Act.

According to the counselling blog, children are never too young to learn about transgenderism:

Some may think primary school students are too young to worry about addressing issues surrounding gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) students. Not so, experts say. It’s never too early to begin teaching children about respecting differences. When our students and their parents have questions related to LGBTQ issues, our goal is to foster healthy dialog, critical thinking and inclusiveness. With that in mind, our conversations include all students and perspectives to create a safe and supportive school climate....

A wonderful book to help children understand the perspective of a transgender student is *I Am Jazz*.

Hannity’s coverage drew national attention to Mitchell Primary School, compelling Hutton to issue something of an apology.

“The whole culture at Mitchell School is about teaching tolerance and respect,” she said. “The people presenting the lesson thought [*I Am Jazz*] was one more piece of teaching that lesson. In retrospect, we understand that toleration is tolerating people of all opinions.”



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