

NEWS BREAK

Sunday's News Break selects an article from Sunday, October 9, 2016 of The Seattle Times Print Replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions. **Please remember to always preview the content of the article before sharing with your students.**

Article: A FAMILY QUEST, A MEDICAL QUANDARY: TRANSGENDER KIDS (MAIN, A1)

Pre-Reading and Vocabulary

- ***What is your prior knowledge about gender diversity and transgender people? Have you or your family been touched by this issue?***

Vocabulary: Match the words to the numbered definitions in the chart below.

A. amalgamate	1. something that changes its position, attitude, etc... fairly regularly: <i>the pendulum of public opinion</i>
B. cusp	2. the quality or state of being deformed, disfigured, or misshapen.
C. deformity	3. a district, territory, or region
D. pendulum	4. a point that marks the beginning of a change
E. province	5. thinly scattered or distributed
F. sparse	6. to mix or merge so as to make a combination; blend; unite; combine
G. transgender	7. noting or relating to a person whose gender identity does not correspond to that person's biological sex assigned at birth

Comprehension

1. The scarring, Corina Pfeil said, could have been minimized had Skyler gotten treatment earlier — specifically, “puberty blockers.” What does this medication do?
2. Even now, on the cusp of a change she and her son have been pushing for, she can't help but reflect on the hurdles they faced since a 13-year-old Skyler began saying, tentatively at first and then more firmly, that the female body he inhabited just felt what?

3. Once, transgender care was the province of adults. Now, more and more kids are seeking treatment, hundreds of them locally. They're encountering a medical system that is what?
4. "The pendulum shifted so drastically," said Laura Edwards-Leeper, a psychologist at Oregon's Pacific University who studied with Dutch pioneers in the field and helped develop one of the first U.S. programs for transgender kids in Boston in _____. At that time, helping kids transition in sometimes irreversible ways was considered what? Now, families are pressing for earlier interventions and fewer hoops to jump through.
5. On Tuesday, Seattle Children's opened a clinic for who and what will they offer?
6. Where did he "tune in" for information?
7. A report in August by the Williams Institute, a think tank at UCLA, estimates that a much higher percentage of teens identify as transgender than adults? What are the statistics?
8. The Polyclinic's Dr. Kevin Hatfield, who by his account has one of the largest transgender and gender-questioning clientele on the West Coast, estimated that he sees about _____ kids. The youngest is _____. Born a boy, the child started saying "I'm a girl" as soon as she could talk, Hatfield said. At that age, you don't treat medically, said the family physician. Instead, he counsels parents to "accept your kid" and "come back and see me when puberty is closer."
9. What is the bigger debate for the medical industry?
10. "We know that gender-nonconforming youth who are not supported are at increased risk for what three things?

Group Discussion Questions or Extension Essay Questions:

- *Did this article help you see transgendered people in a new way? Why or why not?*
- *Did this article stir up empathy in you for the inner struggles they are dealing with? Why or why not?*

"It gets really murky in the pediatric population," said Dr. Alexander Gougoutas, a UW Medicine surgeon the Pfeils approached at one point. "It draws out all sorts of questions about informed consent. Are they truly able to make these decisions? Are their minds going to change? Are their parents influencing their decisions?"

It's not just doctors wrestling with these concerns. Aidan Key, founder and executive director of Gender Diversity, a Seattle group that supports transgender people, said everyone — whether a teacher, janitor or bus driver — is asking "either silently or aloud" these collective societal questions.

- What do you think about these collective societal questions? Are teenagers truly able to make these decisions? Are their minds going to change? Are their parents influencing their decisions?"

"Most people have no frame of reference for this," he said, and that includes parents. A child's declaration of identifying with another gender "tends to hit any family like a ton of bricks."

Some parents can't accept it. Others wonder whether their kids are experimenting or pushing boundaries. Many, though, wholeheartedly get on board. And to them, the medical response can seem inadequate.

- How would their parent's reaction make a difference?

The sparse research available at the time, as now, encouraged caution. One study by Dutch leaders in the field found that many of their patients 12 and under who seemed uneasy with their gender felt differently over time.

But those with the most extreme feelings tended to see them persist into the late teens and 20s, with puberty often serving as a decisive time, according to that and a follow-up study.

Skyler's feelings continued. By 13, he was exploring a gender-neutral identity, neither male nor female, and using the pronoun "they."

YouTube and TV made him aware of the concepts, he said. "I wanted to try it out," he recalled. Just a simple word change took a weight off his shoulders. "It felt right, or at least close to right."

- Do you think YouTube and TV are the best places for Skyler to get his medical information from? Why or why not?

Being transgender can mean different things for different people. Some, especially younger kids, are at least temporarily content to "socially transition" by changing their pronouns and aspects of their appearance like clothing and hair length. Others want full-on surgical transformation. Still others opt for breast surgery but not genital surgery, or hormones without surgery.

Whatever their choices, young people are speaking with confidence, said Key, of Gender Diversity.

- Why are transgendered teens speaking with confidence at this time?

Edwards-Leeper, who leads training workshops that have drawn staff from Seattle Children's, takes note of what she referred to as "gobs and gobs of research" showing that young people's brains keep developing until they're 25. She stresses the need for a comprehensive evaluation to help kids figure out the "very, very complicated" issues of gender identity.

Occasionally, she said, she sees kids who seem to feel boxed in by well-intentioned parents eager to affirm them.

While many who work with these kids say it's extremely rare for kids to reverse course, Edwards-Leeper resists drawing conclusions. "We just haven't been doing this work long enough," she said.

"Like all things in medicine, I can't tell you with certainty what a 12-year-old will say at 18," said Group Health's Sucato.

- The human brain keeps developing until the age of 25. Should they be making decisions about their body prior to that age? Why or why not?

News Break is posted to the Web on Wednesday and Friday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the electronic edition for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.
Copyright © 2016 The Seattle Times Company

Newsbreak Answer Key: October 9, 2016

Vocabulary

- A. 6**
- B. 4**
- C. 2**
- D. 1**
- E. 3**
- F. 5**
- G. 7**

Comprehension Questions

1. Medications taken during adolescence to suppress breast development and other hormonal changes.
2. Wrong
3. Spottily prepared, lacking much research and still thinking through what kind of treatment is appropriate at what ages.
4. 2007; controversial
5. Transgender and gender nonconforming people ages 8 to 21. Offering puberty blockers and hormones that allow those who take them to develop characteristics of the desired gender. The hospital's Gender Clinic will not yet offer surgery but will refer patients to outside providers.
6. YouTube and TV
7. Teens who identify as transgender (between 1.3 and 3.2) than adults (0.6).
8. 275; 4 years old
9. The bigger debate is when to start hormones and perform surgery.
10. Substance abuse, eating disorders and suicide.