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ABSTRACT

This booklet on gender equity challenges the old ways of thinking that limited expectations for girls and boys. Breaking the trap where gender determines what is possible means recognizing the limits of mindsets, opening eyes to new options, and encouraging young people to be all they can be. This booklet clarifies for educators and parents specific elements of federal legislation, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and helps teachers integrate gender equity activities into the daily classroom. The activities at the end of the booklet can be used by teachers, small groups, and individuals to increase gender equity awareness. Goals for teachers, parents, and administrators to attain are to encourage all young people to develop, achieve, and learn equally; place no limits on expectations due to gender; to provide an equal chance at learning for females and males; to open student options to learn subjects and prepare for future education, jobs, and careers; and to treat male and female students equitably. A 14-item bibliography concludes the booklet along with a 28-item supplement of additional readings and listings of related organizations. (JAG)

Equity in Education Series

WEEA Publishing Center

Gender Equity for Educators, Parents, and Community

Education Development Center, Inc.

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Contents

Introduction

Gender-role stereotyping begins in infancy. Research shows that many of the so-called innate differences between females and males are the result of adult interaction with young children. Because of this, it is important to help adults who work with children encourage equity and discourage gender-role stereotyping. We know that biological, psychological, and intellectual differences between males and females are minimal during early childhood. Nevertheless, in our society we tend to socialize children in ways that serve to emphasize gender-based differences.

As educational policies at all levels of government become more focused on bilingual and multicultural education programming, educators and the community at large have become more sensitive to the needs of children from a variety of different cultures, and to the needs of children with disabilities. At the same time, we are all becoming more aware of the failure of school systems to reflect the country's multicultural society and to provide equal educational opportunities for all of the nation's children, female and male, disabled or not.

Bias in any form can be subtle and difficult to confront. In our efforts to understand and practice the principles of equity in education we will inevitably challenge old ways of thinking and doing. Even though recognizing the need for change can be difficult, in doing so we will gradually learn more about what active, participatory education means.

The purpose of this gender equity booklet is to challenge the old ways of thinking that limited our expectations for girls and boys. Breaking out of the trap where gender determines what is possible means recognizing the limits of our mindsets, opening our eyes to new options, and finally encouraging young people to be *all* they can be.

The purpose is also to clarify for educators and parents specific elements of the federal legislation called *Title IX*, and to help teachers integrate gender equitable activities into the daily classroom. The activities at the end of the booklet can be used by teachers, small groups, and individuals to increase gender equity awareness.

This booklet is designed to help teachers, parents, and administrators to

- encourage both genders equally to develop, achieve, and learn
- place no limits on expectations due to gender
- provide an equal chance at learning for females and males
- open students' options to learn subjects and prepare for future education, jobs, and careers
- treat male and female students equitably

Join us in helping all young people think about their lives with open minds.

What Is Title IX?

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
> —The Preamble to Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was the first comprehensive federal law to prohibit sex discrimination against students and employees of education institutions. It is one of several federal and state antidiscrimination laws that define and ensure equality in education.

The language of Title IX generally makes it illegal to treat males and females differently or separately. In addition, districts are required to remedy the effects of past discrimination. Affirmative steps may be voluntary or remedial.

The regulations implementing Title IX, published in 1975, prohibit discrimination, exclusion, denial, limitation, or separation based on gender. The regulations cover in detail the following areas:

- Admissions and recruitment
- Comparable facilities
- Access to course offerings
- Access to schools of vocational education
- Counseling and counseling materials
- Financial assistance
- Student health and insurance benefits and/or services
- Marital and parental status of students
- Physical education and athletics
- Education programs and activities
- Employment

Although not named specifically in the regulations, sexual harassment is covered under Title IX and is prohibited between and among students and/or staff. Several procedural requirements also are required in the regulations.

Designation of Responsible Employee(s)

A school system or other recipients of federal funds must designate at least one employee as the Title IX coordinator to coordinate compliance efforts and investigate any complaints of sex discrimination. All students and employees must be notified of the name(s), office address(es), and telephone number(s) of the designated employee(s).

Establishment of Grievance Procedures
Each school system must adopt and publish grievance procedures to provide for prompt and equitable resolution of student and employee complaints of discrimination on the basis of gender.

Dissemination of Nondiscrimination Policy
Each school system must take specific and continuing steps to announce that it does not discriminate on the basis of gender. This notification must be made to applicants for admission and employment, students, parents of elementary and secondary students, and employees and must be included in all announcements, bulletins, catalogs, and applications.

Self-Evaluation
Each school system receiving federal funds (labeled "recipient") was to have evaluated its policies and practices as to their compliance with the Title IX regulations by July of 1976. Policies and practices that did not meet the requirements were to be modified, and remedial steps taken to eliminate the effects of discrimination. Even now, some states, districts, and schools advocate periodic evaluations or self-studies related to gender equity programs and activities.

Remedial and Affirmative Action
If a school system is found to have discriminated on the basis of sex, it can be required to take specific remedial steps to eliminate the effects of the discrimination. It may also take affirmative steps to increase participation of students in programs or activities where girls or boys have taken part only on a limited basis.

Why Is Title IX Important to School Districts?

Because Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, it is consistent with district goals of responding to each individual student's needs, interests, and talents and of ensuring a school environment that fosters tolerance and respect for all. Implementation of Title IX benefits students, both male and female, of all races, ethnic groups, and grade levels.

Title IX, particularly in its coverage of guidance, vocational, and career education, responds to the changing demands of work and home life in today's society. Today we see more women working outside the home, more single parents, and more men with increasing involvement in child care. These are the realities facing our graduates. Female and male students, therefore, need equal educational opportunities to give them access to the options they will need as adults.

Title IX compliance is required by the federal government. Adverse findings regarding complaints brought against a school district to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) can jeopardize federal

funding received by a district. Violation findings based on compliance reviews by OCR have the same results. A finding of gender-based discrimination also may result in the award of monetary damages.

Who Is Responsible for Implementing Title IX?

Although regulations require that at least one employee be specifically designated to coordinate compliance efforts, implementation of Title IX is the shared responsibility of *all* members of a school community. The recipients of federal financial assistance are ultimately responsible.

Members of the board of education are responsible for

- establishing policies related to Title IX compliance, including approval of a nondiscrimination policy statement and grievance procedures for students and employees
- authorizing policy and budget for overall programming and operation

Administrators are responsible for

- implementing Title IX and gender equity policy as established by the school board
- designing educational programs and services to improve compliance with Title IX
- monitoring and evaluating programs for their impact on females and males
- general supervising of service delivery and support staff to assure equity
- ensuring that sexual harassment prevention training is provided to all supervisory staff

Title IX coordinators are responsible for

- ensuring that procedural requirements of Title IX are being met
- developing and/or administering the grievance procedure
- monitoring Title IX compliance efforts
- coordinating Title IX record keeping
- providing technical assistance to other agency personnel in complying with Title IX

Teachers and counselors are responsible for

- ensuring that their individual professional actions comply with Title IX

Individual staff and community members may assume responsibility for

- calling attention to the need for institutional change
- working cooperatively to promote equity
- intervening when they see student-to-student harassment

Gender Equity and Expectations

Gender equity is something we may believe we already promote. It is

- an equal chance at learning for females and males
- open options to learn subjects and prepare for future education, jobs, and careers
- no limits on expectations due to gender
- equal encouragement for both genders to develop, achieve, and learn
- equitable treatment of male and female students

Examples of what gender equity is *not*

Expecting more of one gender than the other: Girls expected to be better at spelling, handwriting; boys expected to be more competitive

Expecting less of one gender than the other: Boys not expected to be considerate of others; girls not expected to hold their own in a debate

Excusing behavior based on gender: Girls being allowed to sit out a physical activity because it is "too scary" or "too strenuous"

Considering some jobs or careers less appropriate for one gender than the other: Girls discouraged from aspiring to be doctors; boys discouraged from being nurses

Considering a school subject more simple or difficult for one gender than the other: Presuming reading easier for girls, science easier for boys. Assuming math too hard for girls, reading too hard for boys

When we fall prey to behaviors and attitudes such as these, we are engaged in *gender-biased education.* Gender-biased education assumes that we should limit our expectations about abilities, interests, skills, and temperament by gender, that our outdated concepts about gender roles are considered biologically inherent, and that the current social trends toward equal opportunity for both girls and boys will go away if we ignore them. It results in our handicapping girls in their development of independence and self-determination, in our denying boys the opportunity to learn communication and relationship skills, and in *our* determining for young people what is possible for *them.*

Why is it so critical and imperative that we expand expectations and options? We need to counteract the gender-biased thinking that has resulted

in lack of awareness of options and lack of expectations for girls and boys, women and men, so that all people can lead interdependent rather than dependent lives.

Psychological and Social Repercussions of Gender Bias

Other effects of gender-biased thinking on the future quality of life of young people are found in the current research on a variety of subjects such as the developmental growth of females and males, violence in society, and career planning. The evidence shows differences between the genders in how they adjust not only in school, but in their future work and family lives. Gender bias is a two-edged sword. Both boys and girls pay a price.

The societal pressure is great for boys to conform to the stereotypical male role of being competitive and aggressive, and to distinguish themselves from any behaviors considered female—such as expressing feelings or working cooperatively. Yet the feelings are there, and when boys are not allowed to, or not encouraged to express them directly, they will express them indirectly. In school that results in boys having more overall difficulty adjusting to the environment.

- Boys constitute the majority of those students in special education classes. They represent 58 percent of those in classes for the mentally retarded, 71 percent of the learning disabled, and 80 percent of those in programs for the emotionally disturbed.[1]
- Boys typically receive more criticism and stronger disciplinary action from teachers than do girls.[2]
- In elementary and high school boys have higher rates of failing, dropping out, and becoming physically disruptive. And in later life boys who come to believe at an early age that girls and women are less valuable humans than they are, are more likely to act on those beliefs.[3]

The 1992 American Association of University Women (AAUW) study, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, reported that, with the exception of African American girls, girls' feelings of self-worth and confidence in their abilities fall drastically between the elementary and high school years. One of the results of this loss of confidence is their choosing from a narrow range of careers and eventually earning less than men.[4]

- Even when girls take the same math and science courses as boys and perform comparably, they are still much less likely than boys to pursue careers in math or science. If girls have problems with math, they are likely to interpret those problems as personal failures, while boys are more likely to interpret their math problems as a lack of interest in math. Girls who, against the odds, do pursue advanced math classes tend to reject gender-stereotyped expectations and do not necessarily see math as a male domain.[5]

- Women, who are most often the only wage earners in single parent families, constitute nearly 50 percent of the nation's labor force. Yet they are working mainly in a narrow range of occupations and earn on average 60 cents (white women 69 cents; African American women, 58 cents; Latina women, 54 cents) for every dollar earned by a man doing comparable work.[6]
- Forty-one percent of all African American women who work in the service sector work as chambermaids, welfare service aides, cleaners, or nurse's aides, and Latina women are disproportionately working in low-paying factory jobs.[7]

We can begin to see the reasons for some of the adolescent violence and alcohol and other drug abuse when we examine the cultural messages and social pressures that encourage boys to be more aggressive and domineering, while at the same time discouraging them from developing concern for others, understanding feelings, and developing nurturing skills. We see boys defining themselves in terms of not being girls, and in terms of competition, aggression, and individuality.

And we see girls accepting the cultural messages and social pressures that encourage them to value relationships more than themselves, to accept the responsibility for the needs of others before their own needs, and de-emphasize their accomplishments and self-sufficiency even to the detriment of their survival. We see girls defining themselves in terms of cooperation and appearances, and too often only in terms of who they are in relation to another person ("his girlfriend").

What cultural messages can we begin to use to encourage young women and young men to develop attitudes of self-determination and interdependency and to cherish a vision of all that they can be?

Where Does Gender-Role Stereotyping Begin?

Human cultures, our own included, invent ways of thinking about human beings. Whether one is male or female is a biological matter and has very little to do with traditional concepts of masculinity or femininity. There is considerable evidence that boys and girls are more alike than different. During the first three years, children try to figure out how they fit into their world. The basic self-image they will have for the rest of their lives is being formed.

Something important happens in the first three years of life to stereotype children according to gender-role expectations. Because more young children are in child care outside the home, children are now influenced earlier by caregivers, peers, and the wider culture, in addition to their parents. We expect boys to be rougher and hardier because this is the image of a "real man" in our culture. This stereotype persists, despite fewer boys than girls surviving birth and infancy. We expect little girls to be soft and feminine, though it is difficult

to distinguish between the sexes of infants and toddlers without such cues as barrettes and earrings and the still all too common practice of color coding children with pink and blue clothing.

From birth, girls and boys begin receiving very different messages. Many expectant mothers respond to the activity of the fetus differently if they think it's a boy or a girl. For example, some expectant mothers interpret an active fetus as a sign that the child is probably male.

What are these messages? Girls are taught from a very early age that they are fragile physically and they are encouraged to develop skills of cooperation and nurturance. But they are discouraged from being assertive or aggressive. Boys, on the other hand, are allowed much more physical freedom, and are encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy. They are discouraged, however, from developing emotional and nurturing qualities.

As children grow older, gender becomes a powerful weapon for controlling children's behavior. How many times have you heard someone say, "He throws like a girl"? This statement is meant as an insult.

We channel children into roles that do not reflect their diversity. Certainly, children need to know their biological and reproductive identity. But gender-role behaviors are among the first things children learn. Then as children grow older, gender roles become more stereotyped and restrictive. Both girls and boys are shortchanged in these limiting roles. Girls lose out in terms of physical development, concept of self, and training for independence. Boys are shortchanged primarily in the underdevelopment of their emotional and nurturing selves.

Sexism Is Usually Unintentional

No teacher or parent decides to teach unfair or inaccurate ideas about the differences between males and females. But teachers and parents, like the rest of us, have grown up hearing and believing gender-stereotyped messages and they pass those beliefs on to their students and children. These beliefs are communicated in two ways. The first is by treating males and females differently, at home and in the schools. The second is by permitting the repetition of images that define what society expects of women and what society expects of men. These images are repeated in the media, through language, and by adult role models.

We all have some sexist attitudes and act in some sexist ways. Being nonsexist means that our attitudes and assumptions about ourselves and others are based on individual capabilities and interests, not on stereotypes about men and women. It doesn't mean that women shouldn't be homemakers, or that men shouldn't be major providers. Being nonsexist means that roles will be assumed according to individual needs, desires, and talents.

Equal participation of males and females is not a reality in U.S. institutions. Although there are numerous laws supporting "equal opportunity" for groups who have been discriminated against in the past, institutions change slowly.

Currently, every major institution in our society is dominated by men: government, law, education, health care, defense, industry, religion, and other spheres of activity. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education. Yet there are educational practices, despite Title IX compliance efforts, that are sexist.

Schools in general and teachers in particular are very influential factors in a student's achievement and aspiration. Research shows that teachers most likely find the behaviors they expect.

Teacher Expectations and Behaviors

There is a significant relationship between expectation and behavior. The teacher's beliefs about a student's abilities or lack of them enormously influences both students' beliefs about their own abilities and the results of their efforts.

Research has now identified a series of adult verbal and nonverbal interactions that affect student achievement, aspiration, and self-image. In 1983 and 1984 the GESA (Gender/Ethnic Expectations and Student Achievement) work of Grayson and Martin identified the connection between the application of specific positive behaviors and equity concerns.

Teacher Behaviors That Affect Student Achievement

- Frequency with which teacher calls on student to recite or perform
- Affirmation or correction of student's performance
- Physical proximity of and to the student
- Individual help from the teacher
- Praise and reasons for praise of learning performance
- Personal interest and compliments by teacher
- Latency—time teacher provides between questions and answers
- Attentive listening to student
- Physical contact with student (arm or shoulder)
- Delving (providing clues) and higher-level questions to help student respond to questions
- Accepting or clarifying student's feelings
- Desisting—correcting behavior in a calm, courteous manner
- Expression of courtesy and respect in interaction with student

There is overwhelming agreement that one of the key goals of education is to encourage each child to develop to her or his fullest potential. Yet, with more than twenty years of gender equity research pointing to gender bias in the classroom, even the more innovative teacher education programs do little or nothing to prepare teachers to promote equity in their classrooms. How are the above behaviors used in biased ways by teachers? What is the effect of this bias on girls and boys?

Increasing Equitable Teacher–Student Interaction Patterns

We know from the findings of many research studies that even though most teachers believe they are completely fair and nonbiased in their treatment of children in the classroom, major differences do exist in the way they interact with girls and boys. Teachers are almost always completely unaware they may be treating girls and boys differently and that they may have different expectations for each gender. The results of these differential teacher treatments and expectations can lead to white girls and to males and females of color performing at a lower level than white males. We know that males receive more teacher attention than do females, and that African American females receive the least attention of all. Boys get the attention partly because they demand it, and the attention they receive is different in content as well as in quantity.

Students most likely to receive teacher attention were white males; the second most likely were males of color; the third, white females; and the least likely, females of color. Low achieving boys get a lot of attention, but it tends to be negative. Boys overall were more likely to be praised, corrected, helped, and criticized, while girls overall received the more superficial "Okay" reaction. The one area where girls are recognized more than boys is appearance. [8]

African American girls tend to be active and assertive in the primary grades, but as they move into elementary school they become the most invisible students in the classroom and are the least likely to receive clear academic feedback from the teacher. When their achievement is comparable to that of white boys, teachers assume the girls' success is due to hard work and they don't encourage them further, while white boys are encouraged to work even harder.[9]

Teacher remarks can either be helpful in offering students insight into their understanding of a particular subject or they can be unhelpful in their vagueness. Research shows that teacher reactions can affect not only learning, but also student self-esteem.[10]

Competent females are more likely to expect failure and have less confidence in their ability to succeed in new academic endeavors than do males with similar abilities. Boys are more likely to attribute their failures to a lack of trying and feel that more effort is needed to succeed, while girls are more likely to attribute their failures to a lack of ability.[11]

Females lack of confidence is especially apparent in some science and/or mathematics classes and is consistent with the societal expectation that males will be better in math than females. The researcher Jane Kahle has found that teacher-student interactions in science classes are especially biased in favor of boys.[12]

Most teachers would benefit by examining their patterns of interaction with students. After the initial evaluation, you may desire to see yourself through video and examine your interaction style in more detail; or, you may want to get feedback from other teachers and compare notes on problems in

managing an equitable classroom. To help you think about your typical relationship patterns with students, answer the following questions:

1. Do you plan activities or different roles within an activity for girls and for boys? How are they different?
2. Are the examples you use in classroom discussions or teaching situations mostly male or female? Do you use examples that show women and girls in nontraditional as well as traditional roles?
3. Whom do you ask to perform heavy chores in the classroom, females or males?
4. Whom do you ask to do secretarial chores and special tasks, males or females?
5. Do you define, up front, which behaviors are acceptable in your class and which are unacceptable? Are they the same for girls and boys?
6. What are your behavioral expectations for the girls in your class? Are these different from your expectations for the boys?
7. Do you display affection and displeasure in the same way toward girls and boys?
8. Do you censure girls and boys for different behaviors? What behaviors?
9. Do you punish girls and boys for different things? Do you punish them differently? How?
10. Do you reward girls and boys for different things? Do your methods of reward differ?

Teachers are in a strategic position when it comes to educating girls and boys about gender fairness, and it is never too early for that education to begin.

Promoting Gender Equity: Roles of Administrators, Teachers, and Parents

People are resistant to change, and apathy and fear are common forms of resistance. Change causes fears that relate to failure, the unknown, giving up the familiar, and diminished power or control.

A change agent must be sensitive to other people's sense of being threatened or feeling uncertain. Two ways of responding effectively to others' fears are to provide information and to offer understanding and empathy. According to Ronald Havelock in the classic text *The Change Agent's Guide to Innovation in Education*, a change agent can function in any or all of at least four primary ways. These include the following roles: catalyst, solution giver, process helper, and resource linker. [13]

The catalyst works at helping the group overcome its inertia and actually paves the way for change by lessening people's resistance to it. In education today, this role can be taken by parents, students, staff, or school board members who are concerned with the present workings of a school system. These individuals or groups do not necessarily have the answers, but they are dissatisfied with the way things are. They can energize the problem-solving process by voicing their dissatisfaction.

The solution giver has definite ideas about what changes ought to take place. Although the right solutions are of central importance, another factor in any change process is timing. The solution giver must know when and how to offer the solutions so that they can be implemented effectively.

The process helper is the key role of the change agent. This person can help in many ways, for example, by

- facilitating recognition and definition of needs by the group
- assisting the group in setting objectives for change
- showing the group how to find resources
- helping the group select or create solutions
- aiding the implementation of these solutions
- assisting in evaluation of the process and checking to see that needs are met adequately

The resource linker has the job of bringing together all the necessary ingredients to support the desired change. Resources might include financial backing; identifying and procuring people with time, motivation, and needed skills; and expertise in the process of change itself. The resource linker will be

adept at active listening, which is necessary to find the talents, motivations, and interests of group members, and to find the sources of resistance in the group.

A change agent needs a personal power base in order to be effective. This power base includes a support group, the ability to be assertive, knowledge of the subject area, and commitment to the task at hand.

A good change plan requires a systematic approach, with careful thought and planning, and could include the following steps:

- Identify the problem
- Develop a plan
- Do the necessary homework
- Implement the plan
- Evaluate and follow up

Administrators as Change Agents

Commitment. If the school district is not fully committed to gender-fair education, one meeting won't do much to change old habits and ways of thinking. Commitment starts at the top, with a school board, superintendent, central administration, and principals who look seriously at district needs. Through your example, others in the district will see gender-fair education as an important part of professional responsibilities.

Planning. One, or even a series of meetings can't stand alone. It must fit into a master plan for eliminating sexism. If the district's plan is a good one, it probably includes these essentials:

- A district and site self-evaluation/assessment
- Revisions for school board policy
- A list of what has to be done and who's responsible for doing it
- A program of inservice meetings, parent-teacher meetings, staff meetings and other actions for getting the message across
- A schedule with completion dates
- A committee of well-trained people available to see the program through and answer questions on a day-in, day-out basis
- Plans for follow-up and evaluation

The quality of the plan is a measure of how serious your district is about getting rid of sexism. If the plan's a good one, you'll sidestep problems like these:

- After an inservice meeting, a motivated teacher makes several gender-fair assignments, only to provoke a flurry of negative reactions from parents. The principal is caught in the middle because the district has not set and communicated a policy on gender-fair education.
- Another district tries a one-shot meeting, then claims, "We've done our job on gender fairness." Unless the meeting is part of an overall plan, the likely result will be confusion and misinformation among teachers and parents.

Achieving gender-fair education takes time and planning. One meeting just isn't going to do the job.

Focus. Each meeting must be planned with specific objectives for a particular audience. Here are several examples of meetings for different groups:

- At a meeting for the full staff, you explain what sexism is and isn't, introduce the school's and the district's gender-fair education plans, and conduct several activities to identify bias in the classroom.
- You schedule a parents' meeting to communicate the district's gender-fair education policy and explain how it will benefit all children.
- At an inservice workshop, you show teachers ways to assess and supplement biased texts and give them specific classroom assignments geared to the ages of their students.

Leadership. Even if a meeting is rooted in commitment and planning, even if its content is excellent, it will yield little without a skilled meeting leader. Let's face it: Sexism can be an explosive subject. Many people—no matter what their education—don't understand what sexism is or how it is at odds with the ideals of education. They may come to a meeting feeling defensive or antagonistic. It takes a flexible, well-informed leader to steer activities with confidence, to tolerate conflicting viewpoints, to field questions and discussions with tact, and to convey the district's sense of purpose.

Follow-up. What happens afterwards? The audience will glean more from a particular inservice meeting if they are expected to act once they return to classrooms and offices. It's as simple as the well-taught lesson: Students get more out of it if they know why they are doing it and what will be required of them in the future. Make certain the audience leaves with specific ideas for action and knowledge of the resources and support available to help them follow through.

Teachers as Change Agents

Teachers can act as change agents in many different ways—by educating parents about the need for gender equitable education, by advocating for change on a schoolwide basis, by educating themselves about gender bias in the classroom, and by changing their own teaching practices to be gender equitable. The first and most important of these is the self-education and awareness necessary to both recognize gender bias and to practice gender equitable teaching methods.

The tools we are suggesting here are partly based on the work done by gender equity researchers Dr. Myra Sadker and Dr. David Sadker. [14] They can be used by individual teachers or in preservice teacher training. The following steps are arranged in four successive levels of action: awareness, clarification, classroom behaviors, and professional and societal behaviors.

Level 1: Awareness

Learn which school policies and programs are gender fair and which are gender biased.

Familiarize yourself with the literature on gender-based stereotypes and with their harmful effects on girls and boys, men and women.

Recognize gender-role stereotyping and bias in various aspects of school life, such as

(a) textbooks and other school materials
(b) segregated activities and courses
(c) teacher-student interaction patterns and peer interaction patterns

Level 2: Clarification

Self-Analysis

Examine your own attitudes regarding gender bias. Can you remember instances of your own sexist comments or actions?

How has gender bias affected your life? How might gender bias affect the lives of the students in your class?

Compare your beliefs about female talents and abilities with the research.

School and Societal Analysis

Become aware of your own instructional interactions with females and males.

Analyze the ways in which gender bias operates in school policies and programs.

Review curricular materials for gender bias.

Identify bias in school staffing patterns.

Document ways that peer interaction inhibits development of female potential.

Document research findings that have identified crucial developmental times for females when gender-role stereotyping appears to be most harmful.

Level 3: Classroom Behaviors

Be continually aware of sexist roles and bring them up for class discussion when appropriate, rather than making a big deal of them at infrequent times. Make "awareness" an everyday thing.

Check your classroom practices. Do you line up the sexes separately? Do you expect boys to carry equipment, girls to take notes?

Create a classroom environment that supports student inquiry through the use of real-life situations.

Provide activities to develop the athletic potential of female students.

Structure school activities to open shop and various vocational options to female students.

Structure school activities so that home economics becomes a viable option for male students.

Create and practice classroom programs that boost the self-image of boys and girls.
Encourage the career and leadership aspirations of both girls and boys.
Accept dependence in boys and independence in girls.
Encourage risk-taking in both girls and boys.

Level 4: Professional and Societal Behaviors

Organize and participate in curriculum development programs to revise gender-biased texts and materials.
Advocate for and support candidates for elective positions (in school, organizations, and the community) on the basis of competence rather than gender stereotypes.
Lobby your professional organization for enforcement of legislation supporting equality of opportunity.
Support programs designed to increase the number of females appointed to school leadership positions.
Participate in programs designed to increase the number of males involved in education during the early childhood and primary school years.
Push for gender equitable distribution in school budgetary decisions.

Parents as Change Agents

This section offers guidelines to help parents who want to raise daughters and sons who respect their own gender without having contempt for the other gender, and to help parents work with school officials to create change in the school system.

At Home

Start by Finding out What Your Children Actually Think of the Other Gender
You might make a game of it, asking them to write (or dictate to you) an answer to how their lives would be different if they had been born the other gender. The results might surprise you and make a good starting point for discussion. You may not be able to dissuade your children with arguments about what girls and boys "can" and "cannot" do, but at least you'll be aware of their thinking.

Don't Split Children's Chores and Activities by Gender
Every time we reinforce what boys seem to see as the guiding developmental rule for boys: Don't be female, we teach boys to have contempt for females. The early segregation of chores not only makes boys disdainful of "women's work," but also deprives them of the housekeeping skills they will need as independent adults.

Support Your Child's Real Interests and Talents
Do not support only those interests you think are right for the child's gender nor only those the child thinks he or she is restricted to.

Encourage Your Daughter's Athletic Interest as Well as Your Son's
Research shows that girls show a tremendous longing to play sports—football, baseball, even wrestling—instead of simply cheering on the team. Sports can boost self-confidence and benefit overall health.

Remember the Power of Example
Everyone knows that children learn from what they see more than from what you tell them. What example—in overall happiness, self-respect, activities—are you setting for your children?

Remember the Important Role of Fathers
Girls often miss their fathers' company. They long to share activities with them. Men need to learn how important a role they play in generating their daughters' interests and ambitions.

Educate Your Sons about Stereotypes, not only Your Daughters
We often make suggestions about how to "fix" females. The solution to stereotyping is not just for females to do more things.

Finally, Be Alert and Concerned—and *Keep Your Sense of Humor*
Parents are only one of a thousand influences on children, and you can take neither all the blame nor all the responsibility for what your children think and do. Children are "raised" by their schools, times, and friends, not just by parents. So if your house contains a five-year-old G.I. Joe and a six-year-old Barbie, take heart. They have many years and influences ahead of them.

In the School System

Parents and involved community members can also be very effective advocates for change within the school system. You may find teachers and administrators that not only welcome your suggestions, but are at the forefront of implementing gender equitable policies and procedures. You may also find your efforts to effect change blocked by evasive rhetoric from school officials. This section is designed to help parents anticipate and prepare for responses that may be excuses for inaction.

- **We're the experts.** *We know best and must make these decisions. You don't understand all the complex issues involved.*
  Parents must continually assert they do know their children's needs and that no one else knows those needs better. School officials are paid by us to serve the needs of the children and the community.
- **Denial of the problem.** *That isn't the real problem in our school. Do you have any proof?*
  Perhaps school officials are not aware of the problems, and the parent group is serving an important role by informing them. Parents should come to the meeting with evidence—documented, if possible. Firsthand reports of parents and students are best.

- **Delaying.** *Yes, I know the problem exists, but we need time to figure out the best thing to do.*
  Ask specifically what is being done to solve the problem. Ask for school plans in writing, with a timetable and the names of people responsible for implementing a plan.

- **Passing the buck.** *Yes, that is a problem, but I can't do anything because my hands are tied (by district policy, the teachers' contract, higher officials in the school administration, the computer system).*
  Ask to see copies in writing of the school board policy, teachers' contract, or superintendent's memo that excuses the principal from acting. If the principal, in fact, is not accountable, then appeal over her or his head to the official who is responsible.

- **We're not so bad.** *Yes, it's a problem in all schools, but we're not doing any worse than the others.*
  Just because children in other schools or other school districts are not getting an equitable, quality education, officials in your school are not excused from doing their job properly. The standard for performance should be the needs of the children in your community.

- **Further study.** *This problem needs further study and research before we can act wisely.*
  Ask what can be done now to help the children who are suffering until the research is completed. (Also ask who is doing the study and ask for the timetables for the research and plans for implementation.)

- **No money.** *Yes, that's needed, but we are so short of funds and are already facing budget cuts.*
  Lack of funds is a convenient excuse. Dig deeper to the issue of priorities. Press the importance of what you see as priorities, but also raise the issue of getting more money for schools and for our children if the money pot is too small in the first place.

Dealing with Sexist Materials

During the summer of 1992 we analyzed the content of fifteen math, language arts, and history textbooks used in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. A 1989 upper-elementary history textbook had four times as many males pictured as females. In the 1992 D.C. Heath *Exploring Our World, Past and Present*, a text for sixth graders, only eleven female names were mentioned, and not a single American adult woman was included. In the entire 631 pages of a textbook covering the history of the world, only 7 pages related to women.

—M. Sadker and D. Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*

Can you present a balanced view when many of your teaching materials are biased? You can, as the activities in this section illustrate. As you use the exercises and ideas in this section, you may realize that a thorough revision of the curriculum is essential for gender-fair and nonbiased education.

Exercise 1: Where Are the Women?

Make assignments to compensate for the omission of women in texts. For example, if you're teaching a unit on the colonial period, assign several students to research and report on notable women in history and on women role models alive today. Ask students to look for realistic diversity in the portrayal of women—that is, stories that include women who are single, single parent heads of households, women of color, white women, lesbians, and women with disabilities. Ask students to speculate on why there is not a great deal of diversity in the portrayal of women. To what extent is this changing today? Is it likely to continue to change?

Exercise 2: Who Are the Main Characters and Who Does What?

Help students identify bias in a particular reading text by discussing these questions:

Who Are the Main Characters?

Are there more male or female characters in the story?
Are there any lesbian characters in the story?
Are there women with disabilities in the story?
Are there women of color in the story?
Are there working-class women in the story?
What was the most important thing the main character was doing?
Could this be done by a character of the other gender? Why or why not?

Does the mother work outside the home? Does the father?
Does the story seem to say that boys or men should do one thing and girls or women should do something else?
Does the book use the masculine pronoun (he, him, his) to refer to everyone?

Who Does What?

Who has most of the fun in the book, males or females?
Who solves the most problems?
Who works the hardest?
Who is the most interesting character?
Who is the best leader?

Or assign each student one chapter to analyze for exclusion of women or stereotyping of women and men.

Are females in the story passive or active?
Does the story portray working-class women as morally, intellectually, or culturally inferior?
Do the women's activities center around housework?
Are women with disabilities depicted as victims or as helpless and dependent?
Are girls or women "put down" or made to look inept?
Are women labeled as gentle, submissive, patient, easily frightened?
Are lesbians depicted as unhappy and portrayed outside of family or romantic situations?
Do females have more mishaps or make poor decisions more often than males?
Are females rescued by males?
Are women shown in uncomplimentary ways—nagging, angry, or cruel, as in fairy tales?
What about men? Are they stereotyped as athletic, strong, fearless, tall, dark, and handsome?

Exercise 3: What Do People Say?

Have students list remarks made by girls and women and those made by boys or men in a story or chapter. Do the quotations conform to gender, class, or race stereotypes?

Exercise 4: Bias-Free Bulletin Boards

Have students create bulletin boards to supplement the text. For example, students might clip and post magazine pictures and articles of men and women behaving outside of the usual stereotypes—a boy washing dishes, two same sex parents, a woman wearing a construction hard hat, a male being nurturing, a woman with a disability managing a business.

Exercise 5: Letters to Publishers

Write letters to publishers discussing bias in their books. Point out that when you buy new materials, you will use bias-free material or content as one important criterion in your selection.

Finally, remember that for the change process to succeed requires not only having cognitive information concerning *why* change is necessary, but also motivational influences or payoffs that are emotionally satisfying. Our knowledge that change is needed, for whatever reasons we can think of, is not sufficient to cause us to go through the uncertainty and risks that come with change. One of the payoffs of change is greater self-knowledge. The following activities for students in grades K–12 will help you, whether you are a teacher, parent, or administrator, learn more about yourself and about your students.

Suggested Activities

The five activities in this section are specifically intended to aid teachers in gathering information on how students perceive gender differences, to help pinpoint the factors that influence student attitudes, and to explore some of the ways in which gender-role stereotyping can be manifested. Keep in mind that these activities are written as suggestions to use with students in K–12 classrooms. Teachers should be creative and flexible in adapting the activities to their needs or in designing new, parallel activities for their classrooms.

Activity 1

Take a survey of your class about their attitudes toward the "proper" roles of girls and boys, women and men. Remember to ask "Why do you think so?" Keep in mind that it will be easier to interpret the results if you make this a written assignment. Some students, particularly those in older age groups, will respond more openly if you do not ask them to identify themselves. If you decide not to use names, be sure you have your students indicate their sex on their questionnaires. Some sample questions might be:

What are the differences between girls and boys? Women and men? What are the similarities?
If you had a choice, which sex would you prefer to be? Why?
Who is smarter? Who is more active? Why?
Can a man be a nurse? Why or why not?
Can a woman be a firefighter? Why or why not?

Student Discussion

It is important here not only to determine the differences students perceive in the roles of boys and girls, women and men, but also to get your students to verbalize why they think such differences exist. You might keep the following questions in mind to spur discussion with your class: Are you satisfied with the way things are? Do you all feel this way? Does this hold true for everyone? Can you think of examples where this is not true? How do you think these differences affect us? What changes would you like to see made? How would you go about making these changes?

Postactivity Discussion

Summarize the results of your survey. Did your survey show markedly different results for boys and girls in your class? Note whether or not your students seemed interested in this topic. Was there general consensus on answers to your questions? Was there conflict? Were you asked for your

opinion? If so, how did you respond? Were male and female roles clearly defined? Did you see restrictions for either gender being expressed by students? In analyzing your students' positions, what implications do you see for their education? What can you do about these implications?

Activity 2

Have your class keep a running list for several days titled "Ways I have benefited by being a female (male) today." Or ask them to keep two parallel lists, one for advantages and one for disadvantages. Collect the lists and discuss them with your class.

Student Discussion
Do students believe there are advantages and disadvantages to being male or female? Why or why not? What changes would students like to see that might distribute the advantages and disadvantages more fairly?

Postactivity Discussion
Summarize the kinds of advantages and disadvantages students perceive as gender related. Was there general consensus among your students on the advantages and disadvantages? Discuss with your students ways to help them overcome their perceived disadvantages.

Activity 3

Ask your students to keep a running list for one week on the activities they are engaged in at home. What chores are they responsible for doing?

Student Discussion
Do students think the chores they get have anything to do with whether they are male or female? Why? Who makes the decisions about how chores are assigned at home? Why? Would they prefer to do other chores than the ones they now have? Why?

Postactivity Discussion
Summarize the results of the one-week survey. Ask your students what changes they would like to see made and how they would like to have chores distributed in the family when they grow up. Why?

Activity 4

Ask your students to create two collages entitled MAN and WOMAN. Be clear about whether you are asking students to think about how men and women are perceived by people in general or asking them what they themselves think.

Student Discussion
Discuss the qualities suggested for women and men in the finished collages. After the class has agreed on the qualities represented by the collages, you may wish to write them on the board. What qualities do your students view as

positive? What qualities seem negative? How do students think these differences came to be? What resources did students use (e.g., magazines, newspapers)? Did the resources make a difference? Are students in agreement with the magazine portrayals? To what could they turn to produce a more realistic—or less stereotyped—collage? As a follow-up, have your students try a nonstereotyped collage.

Postactivity Discussion
Bring the collages to a class discussion so that you can discuss the kinds of qualities your students assigned to men and women. You may wish to use the collages for other class discussions in the future.

Activity 5

Have your students monitor television advertisements and programs or comic strips for a period of one week. Ask them to list or collect examples of women and men shown either together or separately in (a) unfair or discriminatory ways and (b) fair or equal ways.

Student Discussion
What do the media seem to be saying about male and female roles? How are women represented? Are they represented as often as men are or in as varied kinds of ways? How are men represented? Compare the ways in which men and women are represented in clothing, physical appearance, feelings and emotions, and actions.

Postactivity Discussion
After you have collected the results, discuss the following with your students: Are there ways you or your students can bring about change? One idea is to write a letter to one or more of your local television stations describing the results of your survey and class discussion. Tell the station manager what changes you would like to see, or congratulate her or him if you feel that the station is doing a good programming job in this respect.

The above activities are really designed to encourage discussion in your classroom. Once we begin to listen carefully to the arguments of others, and to reflect upon our own, we notice that decisions and judgments can be made in different terms, with different ideas about why something may be good or bad, desirable or undesirable. This is particularly true when the discussion is about social conditions and arrangements, and the arguments turn on what ought to be as much as on what now exists. As a final exercise, have students brainstorm about how they can act as change agents in their school to break down the stereotyped role definitions that exist. Can they formulate a workable plan to translate their ideas into actions?

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Organizations

American Association of University of Women (AAUW)
1111 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785-7700

Center for Women Policy Studies
2000 "P" Street, NW
Suite 508
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 872-1770

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
1 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-1431
(202) 408-5505

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208-5720
(202) 219-2289

Girls Incorporated
National Resource Center
441 West Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
(317) 634-7546

Girls Scouts of the USA
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10018
(800) 223-0624

National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-4000

National Black Child Development Institute
1023 15th Street, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 387-1281

National Coalition for Sex Equity in Education (NCSEE)
One Redwood Drive
Clinton, NJ 08809
(908) 735-5045

National Council for Research on Women
530 Broadway
10th floor
New York, NY 10012
(212) 274-0730

National Education Resource Center for Gay and Lesbian Youth
Education Development Center (EDC)
55 Chapel Street
Newton MA 02158
(617) 969-7100

National Middle School Association (NMSA)
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive
Suite 370
Columbus, OH 43221
(614) 895-4730; (800) 528-NMSA

National Organization for Women
1000 16th Street, NW
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