

FORMS OF SEX BIAS IN THE CLASSROOM

Invisibility

Teachers generally interact far more frequently with boys than girls, rewarding them for their academic work, punishing them, talking to them, questioning them, and years later, remembering them far more often than girls. Girls often form a quiet background.

Stereotyping

Many teachers overlook individual differences and assume that all males share one set of abilities, interests, values, roles, and that all females share a different set of these characteristics. This ignores individual differences.

Fragmentation/Isolation

By arbitrarily separating boys and girls in classroom procedures such as lining up, the formation of work groups, and the organization of recreational activities, teachers promote the artificial separation and isolation of the sexes.

Linguistic Bias

Sex-biased words such as "mankind" and "salesman," and the constant reliance on the pronoun "he" to refer to both males and females are examples of sexist language patterns which belittle the role and importance of females.

Imbalance/Selectivity

Special education programs respond to learning problems which tend to affect boys while generally overlooking those which hamper girls. For example, there are many remedial programs for students with problems in reading, few for those with problems in math.

Unreality

Activities provided for students in their classrooms should prepare them for the reality of their future lives. For example, it is unrealistic to develop curriculum that assumes that males will work outside the home and females will not.

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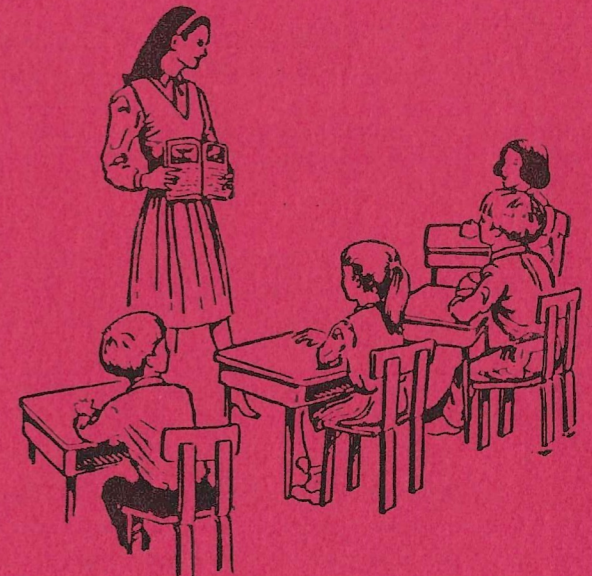
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DO YOU PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASSROOM?



DO YOU PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR
THE STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

- Have you ever asked for "three strong boys" to carry books?
- Do you group your students in two lines, one for girls and one for boys?
- Do you praise boys for their accomplishments and girls for their appearance?

These actions discriminate on the basis of sex. The discrimination may be subtle but the impact on students can be great. Students receive messages from these behaviors. Girls and boys begin to see themselves as very different, and not equal.

If you truly want to encourage equal opportunity in your classroom, you'll need to do two things:

- (1) Become more aware of the forms of bias that can exist in a classroom. (See page 4 of this brochure.)
- (2) Assess your own behavior in your classroom to see where you can improve. (See pages 2 and 3 of this brochure.)

SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST
FOR NONSEXIST BEHAVIOR

Rate yourself for each item on this checklist. Review your ratings and evaluate your overall performance. Keep up the good work in your strong areas, and begin to work on your weaker areas.

- | | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. <u>Attitude.</u> I take the idea of equality seriously; for example, I do not put down men or women, or joke about their abilities, roles, or ethnic background. | — | — |
| 2. <u>Language.</u> I use nonsexist language; in other words, I do not refer to all doctors or lawyers as "he," or all nurses or secretaries as "she." | — | — |
| 3. <u>Generalization.</u> I avoid generalizations that refer to sex stereotyping; for example, "You drive like a woman," or "You think like a man." | — | — |
| 4. <u>Types of Examples.</u> I use examples in my teaching showing both men and women with a wide range of feelings, interests, and career choices. | — | — |
| 5. <u>Comparisons.</u> I avoid comparison of students based on gender; for example, I would not say, "The girls are working harder than the boys." | — | — |

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| 6. <u>Equal Attention.</u> I give equal attention to boys and girls; I do not show preference for one sex over the other. | — | — |
| 7. <u>Values.</u> I reinforce student expression of values without regard to their sex, so that both boys and girls can express assertiveness and gentleness. | — | — |
| 8. <u>Vocational Interests.</u> I help students explore all vocational interests, not only those traditionally associated with their sex. | — | — |
| 9. <u>Academic Performance.</u> I expect equal academic performance from boys and girls; that is, girls are not assumed to be better in verbal skills and boys superior in math and science. | — | — |
| 10. <u>Classroom Behavior.</u> I expect the same behavior from girls and boys; for example, I do not expect chivalrous behavior only from boys, tolerate language (slang, swearing) from boys that girls may not use, or require neatness from girls and not from boys. | — | — |
| 11. <u>Bulletin Boards.</u> All visual materials in my classroom are nonsexist and nonracist, showing men and women in a variety of roles which reflect the many interests of girls and boys. | — | — |
| 12. <u>Grouping.</u> I avoid dividing or grouping students on the basis of sex, for example, in lunch lines, in seating, or for academic or athletic competition. | — | — |