

# The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know

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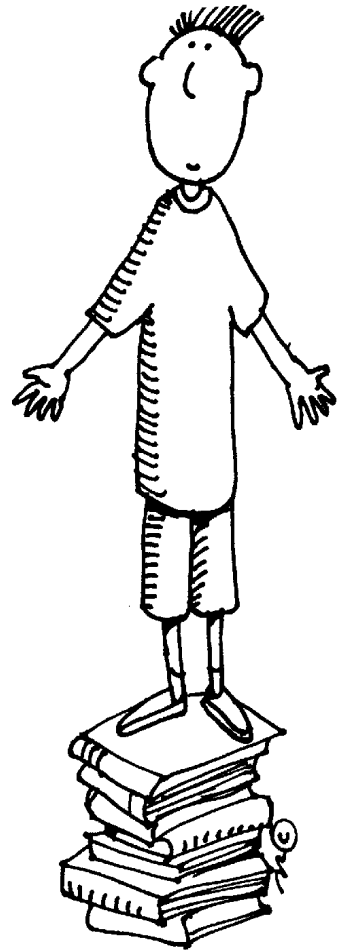
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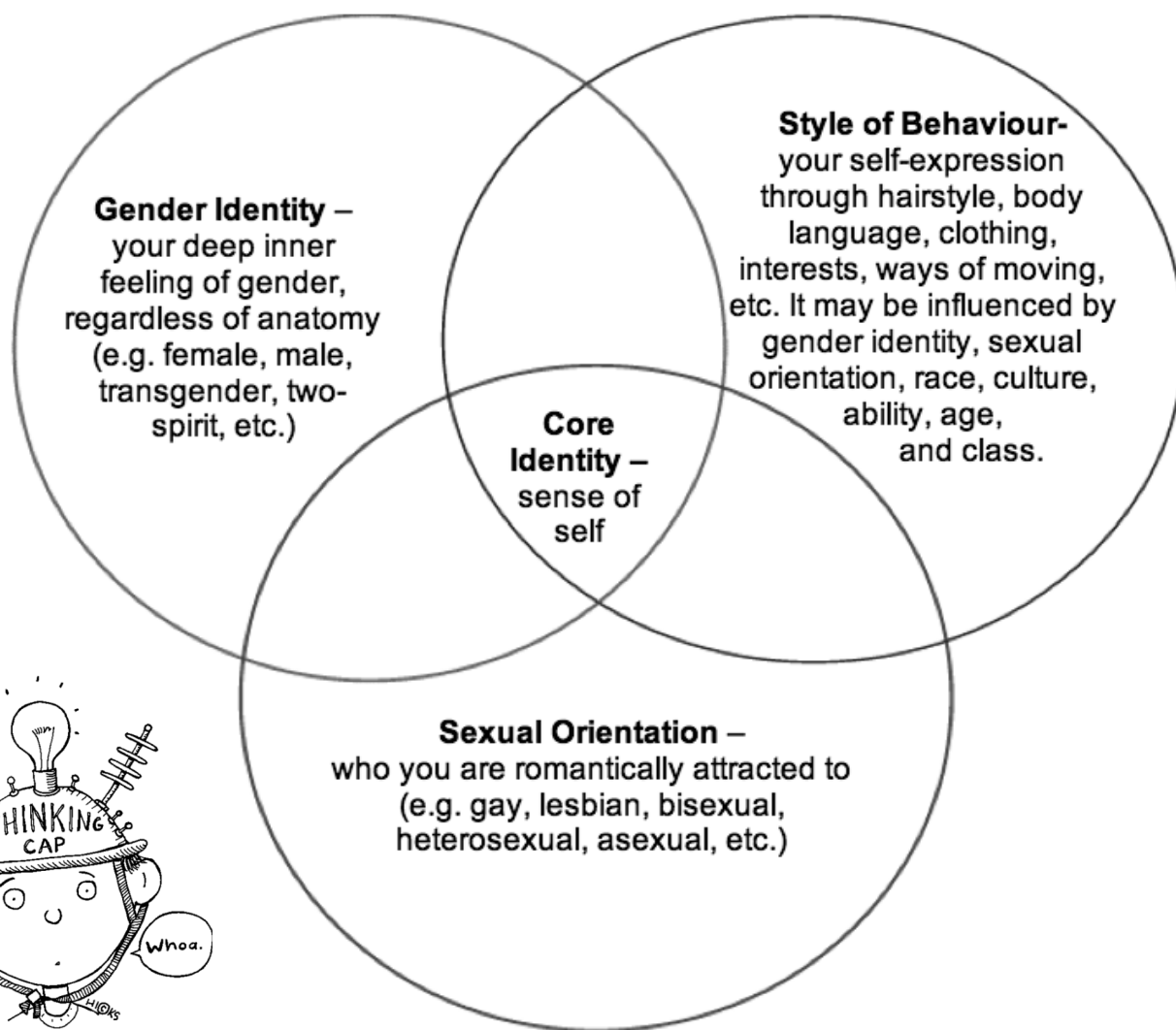
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## Gender, Self, and Society

Psychologists believe that a person's core identity, or sense of self, is based on three major components: gender identity, style of behaviour, and sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup>



Take a moment to reflect on your own gender identity, style of behaviour, and sexual orientation.

- What are the traditional expectations in your culture(s) for each aspect of your identity?
- In what ways are the traditional expectations in your culture based on gender?
- In what ways do you conform to gender expectations? In what ways are you different?
- What are the consequences of not conforming to gender expectations?

## Common Beliefs about Gender

Without a doubt, gender has an enormous impact on who we are as people. As the previous diagram illustrates, gender identity overlaps with all other aspects of our core identity. Over the past few decades, society's ideas about the equality of women and men have progressed significantly. However, outdated and oppressive views of gender continue to circulate in our everyday understandings of what it means to be human. In order to resist reinforcing these harmful beliefs, it is important to be conscious of the assumptions and values we have about gender.

Consider this list of dominant cultural assumptions about gender:

Which of these beliefs do you hold to be true?

How are people pressured to conform to these beliefs?

Whose identities are marginalized by these beliefs?

What are the impacts of these beliefs on people who do not conform to them?

### Common Beliefs

1. Gender exists in a binary: everyone is either male or female.
2. Gender identity is realized by age two and does not change.
3. Gender is determined by one's anatomy.
4. Males should have a masculine style of behaviour and females should have a feminine style of behaviour.
5. Feminine males and masculine females are abnormal or disordered.

There are two groups of people who are especially marginalized by these common beliefs about gender: those whose style of behaviour is gender non-conforming and those that are transgender.

A child's style of behaviour is considered **gender non-conforming** when it consistently falls outside of what is considered 'normal' for their assigned biological sex. This may be indicated by choices in games, clothing, and playmates. For example, a boy who wants to take ballet, wear pink, and play primarily with girls is gender non-conforming. Gender non-conforming children may become gender normative over time or their style of behaviour may continue to defy gender expectations as adults. Some of these children grow up to be gay, lesbian or bisexual and some grow up to be heterosexual. Some of these children are or will become transgender.

A **transgender** person is someone whose felt gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth based on their biological anatomy. For example, a transgender child self-identifies as a girl but was born with the anatomy of a boy (or vice versa). Some children and adults self-identify as both male and female or neither male nor female. These people fit under the term 'transgender' as well. Transgender people have existed throughout history in cultures all over the globe.<sup>1</sup>

## Inclusive Beliefs About Gender

This book will help you explore how the common beliefs about gender previously mentioned create a hostile school climate for gender non-conforming and transgender students. It is based on the following set of beliefs, which are more inclusive of the transgender and gender non-conforming students, staff, and families in our school communities.

### Inclusive Beliefs

1. Gender is a spectrum; there is a range of gender identities between and outside of the categories of male and female.
2. Gender identity development happens from 0 until death.
3. Gender is a product of the mind. It is influenced by nature, nurture and context.
4. There is no correct style of expression for males or females. It is healthy for people to express who they feel they are.
5. Being transgender or gender non-conforming is normal and healthy. Historically, gender non-conforming children have been given a psychiatric diagnosis. However, the manual used by psychiatrists is under revision and the updated version to be released in 2012 will not consider transgender or gender non-conforming children to have a disorder.<sup>ii</sup>

Compare the list of common beliefs with this list of inclusive beliefs.

Which ideas do you hold to be true?

Which ideas do you have difficulty with? Spend some time reflecting on the ideas you have difficulty with and what the root of this difficulty might be.

What might you personally stand to lose and gain by holding these beliefs?

What might others stand to lose or gain if you held these beliefs?

**“The Gender Spectrum”** refers to the idea that there are many gender identities (female, male, transgender, two-spirit, etc.). It also acknowledges that there is a range of **gender expressions**, or ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behaviour, clothing, haircut, voice, and other forms of presentation. Gender expression may or may not conform to common expectations around one’s gender identity.



## The Top Five Reasons to Create Gender Inclusive Schools

1. **Messages that expand understandings of gender empower students rather than limit them.** Stereotypical ideas of what boys and girls should and should not do limits students, while encouraging students to develop the interests and skills that matter to them is self-affirming and motivating.
2. **It is important to dispel harmful stereotypes and prejudices about women and men, as well as masculinity and femininity.** This helps students understand the impacts of stereotyping and discrimination, enables them to celebrate differences, and encourages them to work towards creating a peaceful pluralistic society.
3. **All children, including gender non-conforming and transgender students, need to see themselves and their lived realities reflected in the curriculum** in order to affirm their identities and to enable them to imagine a satisfying future.
4. **School should be a place where all students feel safe and secure.** Students who are bullied, excluded, or assaulted because they do not conform to others' beliefs about gender do not have an equal opportunity to succeed academically or fully participate in school life.
5. **Schools are required by the BC Ministry of Education to be inclusive of transgender and gender nonconforming students.** The Ministry Policy entitled "Diversity in BC Schools" states, "The school system strives to create and maintain conditions that foster success for all students and that promote fair and equitable treatment for all." These conditions include: a) school cultures that value diversity; b) school cultures that promote understanding of others and respect for all; c) learning and working environments that are safe and welcoming, free from discrimination, harassment and violence; and d) policies and practices that promote fair and equitable treatment.

In their in depth 2001 study, Bochenek & Brown found that much of the violence and discrimination in schools "is predicated on the belief that girls and boys must strictly adhere to rigid rules of conduct, dress, and appearances based on their sex. For boys, that means they must be athletic, strong, sexist, and hide their emotions. For girls, that means they must be attentive to and flirtatious with boys and must accept a subordinate status to boys. Regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, youth who violate these rules are punished by their peers and too often by adults" (p. 49).<sup>iii</sup>



## Gender Inclusive Schools Benefit All Students

We are surrounded by overt and covert messages to girls and boys about what they should do and who they should be. It begins at birth, or sooner. Just walk down the aisle of a toy or baby clothing store and you'll see a wide variety of products sold in specific colours, designs or styles that are directly marketed with gender stereotypes in mind.

Gender is a fundamental aspect of identity for all kids. Children are typically aware of gender, their own and others', by about age two.<sup>iv</sup> As this awareness forms, they learn what personality traits, behaviours, and attitudes are deemed appropriate for their gender, based on messages from many sources (family, friends, school, media). Pressure to conform to these gender expectations affects all aspects of a child's life, personality, appearance, everyday socializing, career choices and interests.

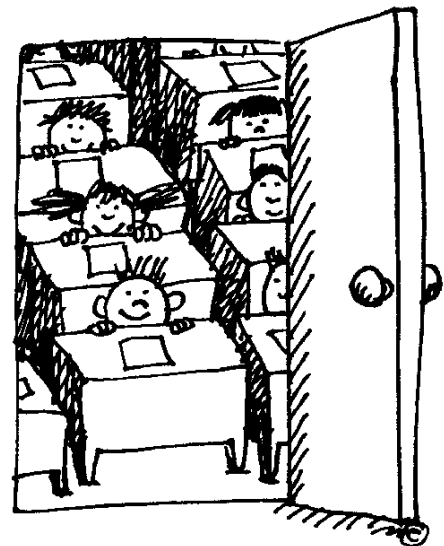
Sometimes, without even knowing it, teachers impose rigid gender roles and norms upon their students. How? In our verbal and non-verbal comments and reactions to students about how boys or girls "should" be.

Ask yourself some of these questions:

- Do I let boys be more outspoken, rambunctious, and energetic than girls?
- How do I respond to the girl who is loud, impulsive, or non-conforming?
- How do I view the boy who is non-athletic, emotional, or a "performer"?
- How do I treat girls and boys when they challenge the system or my set of rules? Are my boundaries the same for boys and girls?

By expecting girls to behave certain ways (be complacent, academic, etc.) or boys to have certain characteristics (be athletic, outgoing, energetic, etc.) we limit the possibilities for all students and create ideals of the "perfect" man or woman that are impossible to achieve.

We often encourage girls to take courses that are on the university track rather than in specific trades. Likewise, some of us may dissuade boys from being professional dancers or artists. These forms of guidance are useful for some students, but harmful to others. For those who do not conform, it sends the message: "You don't fit in." As teachers, we try to encourage and teach our students to develop their critical thinking skills. How often do we, as professionals, reflect upon what we "know" about gender or how we act and react to the students that we teach? Sometimes we "box students in" well before they are able to establish their own identities and figure out where their interests and talents lie.



## Student Safety and Acceptance: Everyone's Shared Responsibility

When students don't conform to traditional gender expectations they are often subject to exclusion, bullying, harassment, and assault. Ongoing discriminatory treatment impedes academic success and the ability to fully participate in school life. Significantly, the taunts faced by gender non-conforming youth often take the form of homophobic name-calling, regardless of the victim's actual sexual orientation.

Anti-gay bullying often begins in elementary schools and continues through to secondary for many students who do not conform to the rigid gender role expectations of their peers or teachers. Society at large also reinforces those "norms" by the way in which girls and boys are socialized and expected to dress, act, talk, play, behave or simply be.

Schools and teachers have a legal and moral responsibility to keep every child safe. Students who don't feel safe at (or on the way to and from) school cannot learn to their full academic potential. Educators at every grade level also have an ethical responsibility to create a school culture where diversity is valued and difference is celebrated. This cannot be done by maintaining the status quo and using only teachable moments to educate students when anti-gay bullying occurs.

All educators (at any grade level or subject area) can teach in a gender inclusive manner to reduce the occurrence of homophobia and transphobia. What we say and do every day has a huge impact on the school culture. Individually and collectively, we have the power to shift school cultures to be accepting of every student.

*"At school, I keep hearing students say 'That's so gay' or 'You're such a girl' or 'Stop acting like a girl' towards males. And I know that they don't mean it in a homophobic way, but they still shouldn't say that because it might make others upset." vi*



*"I was teased because I was a very slight, effeminate boy. You know, there was the name calling and that kind of stuff... I dropped out in grade ten [and it was] definitely due to the gender issues." Jamie-Lee, former student in British Columbia who identifies as transgender v*



## **Students' Everyday Experiences**

### **Negative Comments about Femininity or Masculinity**

- 47% of female LGBTQ students, 55.8% of male LGBTQ students and 62% of trans students hear negative comments at school about “girls not acting feminine enough” on a daily or weekly basis.
- Negative comments about “boys not acting masculine enough” were even more common with 73.2% of female LGBTQ students, 66.7% of male LGBTQ students and 79.1% of trans students reported hearing them on a daily or weekly basis.

### **General Negative Comments About Girls and Boys**

- Almost two-thirds (62.7%) of LGBTQ girls and 72.1% of LGBTQ boys and 72.7% of trans students heard negative remarks about girls used at school in a general way on a daily or weekly basis.
- Negative comments about males were heard by 55.1% of LGBTQ females, 52.3% of LGBTQ males and 65.5% of trans students on a daily or weekly basis.

### **Negative Gender Related or Transphobic Comments**

- Almost nine out of ten (89.8%) trans students heard negative gender-related comments about trans people at schools, compared to 79.3% of LGBTQ males and 81.1% of LGBTQ females.

### **Verbal Harassment re: Gender Identity**

- LGBTQ students are twice as likely to face verbal harassment due to their gender identity as non-LGBTQ students (36.2% vs. 17.3%).

### **Verbal Harassment re: Gender Expression**

- Twice as many LGBTQ students are harassed about their gender expression as are their non-LGBTQ peers (57.0% vs. 25.5%).

*Source:* Taylor, C., Peter, T., Schachter, K., Paquin, S., Beldom, S., Gross, Z., & McMinn, TL. (2010). Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools. Toronto ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.



## Myths & Facts about Gender

### Myths about Gender Identity

**MYTH:** Children and teens are too young to know their gender identity.

**FACT:** Most people become aware of their gender identity between the ages of 18 months and 3 years.<sup>vii</sup> Many youth whose gender identities do not conform to the expectations of their families, peers, and schools are invisible out of fear for their safety.<sup>viii</sup>

**MYTH:** Being transgender is just a phase.

**FACT:** Some children go through phases of gender non-conformity. The longer a child has identified as cross-gender, the easier it becomes to predict whether it is a phase. Regardless of the outcome, the self-esteem, mental well-being, and overall health of the child relies heavily on receiving love, support, and compassion from family and school.

**MYTH:** Hormone blockers, used to delay puberty in transgender teens, are detrimental to one's health.

**FACT:** Hormone blockers are a safe way to “buy time” as the transgender teen decides whether to go on cross-hormones. This treatment prevents the (often traumatic) development of secondary sex characteristics that do not match the person's gender identity. It also prevents the need for painful and expensive surgeries to undo these changes later in life. This treatment is widely endorsed by family doctors, endocrinologists, psychologists, and other specialists involved in transgender health programs.<sup>ix</sup>

**MYTH:** Being transgender is a sexual orientation.

**FACT:** Sexual orientation and gender identity are different. A person's sexual orientation is related to whether the person is romantically attracted to men, women, or both. Gender identity, on the other hand, is about the person's own internal identification as male, female, or a gender in between male and female. Just like non-transgender people, transgender people can be of any sexual orientation.

**MYTH:** All transgender people will eventually take hormones and get sex reassignment surgery.

**FACT:** Some transgender people take hormones and/or have surgery. However, for a number of reasons, many transgender people do not take either of these steps. Some feel comfortable with their bodies the way they are. For others, hormones and surgery are inaccessible because they may be too expensive and/or require parental permission.



## **Gender Stereotypes in Schools**

**MYTH:** Boys are naturally more interested in sports than girls.

**FACT:** There is no research that shows that boys are more interested in sports than girls. We do know that girls are just as interested in sports as boys when they are young. A combination of lack of opportunity, lack of peer group support when they do play sports and lack of encouragement causes them to drop out of sports at a rate that is six times greater than for boys.<sup>x</sup>

**MYTH:** Boys benefit more from male teachers and girls benefit more from female teachers.

**FACT:** Research shows that the vast majority of students prioritize a teacher's individual abilities and the level of care they show for students, rather than a teacher's gender. Many studies have been conducted on the correlation between matching teacher/student gender and student achievement, with the majority of studies finding no relationship between the two. Therefore, it's the quality of teaching, not the gender of the teacher that matters.<sup>xi</sup>

**MYTH:** Boys are naturally better at mathematics than girls.

**FACT:** Current research shows that, at both the elementary and secondary levels, girls and boys are now achieving equal scores in math. Yet, girls tend to exhibit lower confidence in their mathematical abilities compared to boys. The belief that math is a male domain is so deeply embedded in society that, without even recognizing it, teachers tend to call on boys more often, give more praise to boys for correct answers, and encourage boys to pursue higher level math courses. Gender inequality, rather than innate ability, is the primary reason fewer females pursue math-oriented professions.

**MYTH:** Girls are naturally collaborative and boys are naturally competitive.

**FACT:** Social constructions of gender encourage girls to be caring and to avoid confrontation. It is considered unfeminine to be competitive. Research shows that both men and women are competitive, though women are socially trained to be more covert in the ways these traits are expressed. Conversely, in order to live up to dominant notions of masculinity, boys are encouraged to be competitive.<sup>xii</sup>

**MYTH:** Girls and boys have different learning styles.

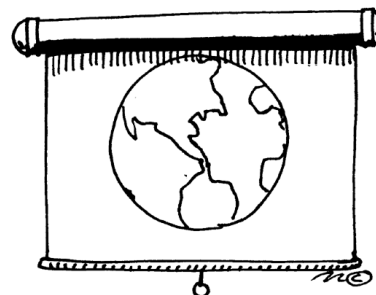
**FACT:** Studies have failed to find conclusive links between gender and learning styles. However, teaching strategies that are effective for girls tend to be effective for boys, and vice-versa. The use of varied and effective teaching strategies benefits all learners.<sup>xiii</sup>

**MYTH:** Today's schools are so focused on helping girls succeed that boys are now underachieving compared to girls.

**FACT:** Many of the characteristics associated with academic success do not meet the cultural expectations of masculinity. Boys are often afraid to ask questions or seek help for fear of appearing weak. Boys who enjoy reading or take time to study risk being seen as 'nerds' or 'geeks.' The problem is not that helping girls hurts boys, but that common ideas of masculinity are too narrow. Additional research also shows that factors such as ethnicity and social class have greater bearing on educational achievement than gender on its own.<sup>xiv</sup>

## Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Gender

Most babies are labeled as being biologically male or female at birth, but the process of becoming a man or a woman is heavily shaped by our culture and society. As such, the definition of what is appropriate for a man or a woman varies widely among countries, among religious faiths, and among different eras. In addition to differences between men and women's roles, looking back in time and across cultures, one finds that not all societies rely on only two gender categories. No less than seven gender categories existed amongst the Chukchi people of Siberia in the 1800s. Many First Nation tribes include a third gender category now called "two-spirit." In Oman, there is a third gender called the xanith. It is apparent from written historical records that there have been differently gendered people in virtually every society in every time period (Blanchard & Steiner, 1990). In schools that are increasingly multicultural, it is important for teachers to prepare students to be global citizens by teaching them to understand cultural influences on gender identity.



## Two Spirit: Past, Present & Future

*By Harlan Pruden, Co-founder and Council Member for the NorthEast Two-Spirit Society*

On the land we know as North America, there were approximately 400 distinct indigenous Nations. Of that number, 155 have documented multiple gender traditions. Two-spirit is a contemporary term that refers to those traditions where some individuals' spirits are a blending of male and female spirit.

The existence of two-spirit people challenges the rigid binary worldview of the North American colonizers and missionaries, not just of the binary gender system, but a generalized system where binaries are the norm. The two-spirits' mere existence threatened the colonizers' core beliefs; the backlash was violent. Historical sketches, housed at the New York City public library, depict two-spirit people being attacked by colonizers' dogs. Word of this brutal treatment spread quickly from nation to nation. Many nations decided to take action to protect their honored and valued two-spirit people. Some nations hid them by asking them to replace their dress, a mixture of men and women's clothing, with the attire of their biological sex. After years of colonization, some of those very same nations denied ever having a tradition that celebrated and honored their two-spirit people.

The two-spirit tradition is primarily a question of gender, not sexual orientation. Sexual orientation describes the relationship a person of one gender has with an other-gendered person. Gender describes an individual's expected role within a community.

Within traditional Native communities, there was an expectation that women farmed/gathered food and cooked while men hunted big game. Although there was division of labour along gender lines, there was no gender-role hierarchy. Within the

Native social construct of gender, a community could not survive without both of the equal halves of a whole. The Native commitment to gender equality opened the door for the possibility of multiple genders, without the idea that a man was taking on a lesser gender by placing himself in a woman's role or vice versa for women assuming men's roles.

### **Gender Roles of Two-Spirit People**

People of two-spirit gender functioned as craftspeople, shamans, medicine-givers, mediators, and/or social workers. In many Native communities, men's and women's styles of speech were distinct; sometimes even different dialects were spoken. The two-spirit people knew how to speak both in the men's and women's ways. They were the only ones allowed to go between the men's and the women's camps. They brokered marriages, divorces, settled arguments, and fostered open lines of communication between the sexes.

Their proficiency in mediation often included their work as communicators between the seen (physical) and unseen (spiritual) worlds. Many of the great visionaries, dreamers, shamans, or medicine givers were two-spirit people. In some traditions, a war party could not be dispatched until their two-spirit person consulted the spirits of the unseen world and then gave their blessings.

When a family was not properly raising their children, it has been documented that two-spirit people would intervene and assume responsibility as the primary caretaker. Sometimes, families would ask a two-spirit person for assistance in rearing their children. In this respect, two-spirit people were similar to modern day social workers.

It is traditional to present gifts at gatherings to those who exemplify the "spirit" of the community or who have done the most for the community. Two-spirit people were respected and honoured with gifts when they attended gatherings. They did not keep the gifts, but passed them on to spread the wealth.

### **Remembering Our Traditions**



Since the time of colonization many Natives have forgotten the "old" way. Many converted to non-Native religions, which did not accept traditional spirituality and community structures. However, there are groups of elders and activists that have quietly kept the two-spirit tradition alive. In some nations that have revived this tradition, or brought it once again into the light, two-spirit people are again fulfilling some of the roles and regaining the honour and respect of their communities.

The two-spirit tradition is a very rich one that deserves a closer examination. The LGBT activists engaged in achieving equality for all should remember that there was a time when people with a blend of male and female spirits were accepted and honored for their special qualities. Two-spirit people are a part of the fabric of this land and stand here today as a testament of their collective strength and fortitude.

## The Legal Obligations of Educational Administrators

The bullying and harassment that gender non-conforming and transgender youth face in schools is usually accompanied by homophobic harassment. This is even the case when the youth identify as straight. Educational leaders in British Columbia (i.e. school boards, superintendents, and principals) have a legal obligation to provide students with an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory harassment. This was the finding of a significant court case in the history of educational law: *Jubran v. North Vancouver School District No. 44*.



During the five years that Azmi Jubran attended Handsworth Secondary School in North Vancouver, he was repeatedly harassed by other students who perceived him to be gay. Jubran, who identifies as heterosexual, took the North Vancouver School District to court for failing to stop the homophobic harassment – and ultimately in 2005 he won.

**The school board was held liable because it failed to intervene and actively work to prevent homophobic harassment on many levels:**

**Policy:** The district and school failed to write, communicate to students, and enforce a clear Code of Conduct Policy that prohibits discrimination based upon “one’s real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.” Irrespective of one’s real or perceived sexual orientation, all students deserve the right to a learning environment that is homophobia free in which they can reach their full learning potential.

**Professional Development:** The school board lacked specific policies and protocols for changing the school culture to make it less homophobic. They had no in-service training for administrators or teachers in the area of anti-homophobia education.

**Curricular Content:** The board and school made no attempts to infuse existing curriculum with integrated lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) friendly resources or units for students on the positive contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in society. There was no effort made to combat harmful myths and stereotypes perpetuated against LGBT people. The effect was that a homophobic environment was allowed to thrive.

The following section on “Educational Leadership” will help school administrators fulfill their legal obligations to provide gender non-conforming and transgender youth with an educational environment that is free from discriminatory harassment.

*“Snow days were the worst though, because I’d have to walk home, and on a snow day, everyone decides to throw snowballs, and, oh, choose the one wearing the pink t-shirt... ‘Get that freak!’” Nadeem, a gay male and recent graduate from a BC high school<sup>iv</sup>*

## School Climate Assessment

Is your school culture gender inclusive? Answer the following questions and find out. Indicate “yes” with a checkmark and “no” with an X.

- Does our school have a core values or mission statement that includes respect for diversity?
- Does our school have a written policy protecting students from bullying, harassment, violence and discrimination with regard to actual or perceived sexual orientation **and** actual or perceived gender identity?
- In the last three years, has our school held workshops for educators on gender identity, gender roles and stereotypes, or families with same-gender parents?
- In the last two weeks, have I heard students engage in name-calling related to gender non-conformity (sissy, wimp, wuss, pansy, fairy, he-she etc.) or sexual orientation (gay, fag, dyke, queer, etc.)?
- Does our school staff always intervene in name-calling related to gender non-conformity or sexual orientation?
- Do our school and classroom libraries have books that depict a range of gender identities and expressions, including diverse families?
- Does our school staff feel comfortable teaching and answering questions about gender identity and sexual orientation?
- Does our school organize events, assemblies, and guest speakers that celebrate gender diversity and/or prevent gender-based bullying (e.g. Do you celebrate the Day of Pink)?
- Does the curriculum include lessons and resources that reflect a range of gender identities and expressions?
- Do students have equal opportunities to participate (and feel welcomed) in extra-curricular activities and sports, regardless of gender identity?



### What are our school's strengths? What are our school's weaknesses?

(This tool is only as effective as the follow-up strategies it generates. Its purpose is to lead to action. Read on for strategies to build on your strengths and address your weaknesses!)



## Creating a Gender Inclusive School Culture

These strategies will help educational administrators successfully meet their ethical and legal responsibility to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of gender identity and expression.

### School Policies

- ✓ Ensure your school's equity statements, anti-violence policies, and code of conduct prohibit discrimination based on "one's real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression." Communicate these policies to students and staff and enforce them.
- ✓ Create a flexible or gender-neutral dress code to enable a student's right to dress in accordance with their gender identity. The same rules for clothing, hair, and make up should apply to all genders.
- ✓ Adopt a school policy that protects transgender students' rights. These include the right to be addressed by one's preferred name and pronoun, to participate in gender segregated activities and sports in accordance with one's gender identity, and to have access to safe restroom and locker room facilities that correspond to one's gender identity. (See the Model School Policy Regarding Transgender and Gender Non Conforming Students on pages 18-20).

Don't wait until you "get" a trans student to create supportive policies and a welcoming environment. You already have trans students. They simply may not be "out" because they perceive the environment to be unsafe and unwelcoming or are questioning.

### School Programs and Resources

- ✓ Create a preventative anti-bullying strategy that specifically strives to eliminate gender-based bullying.
- ✓ Observe and celebrate events that raise awareness about gender-related oppression (sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia). Examples include: the Day of Pink and the Trans Day of Remembrance (see pg. 30 for more ideas).
- ✓ Support the creation of a transgender-inclusive Gay-Straight Alliance in your school.
- ✓ Provide funding for fiction and non-fiction library resources that contain positive messages about gender diversity (see pg. 55 for a list of recommended titles).
- ✓ Evaluate school curriculum for LGBTQ inclusive units and language. Integrate content about transgender and gender non-conforming people into the school curriculum, including family life and sexual health education programs.

*"Part of why they [staff] were not supportive is because I didn't tell them in the first place. So it's partially my fault too, but I just found I didn't really trust them."*<sup>xvi</sup>



## School Staff

- ✓ Hire staff with diverse gender identities and expressions, as well as positive attitudes toward gender non-conformity.
- ✓ Allow staff to be open about their gender identity. This models a valuing of diversity and provides exposure to adult role models.
- ✓ Provide staff training about creating safety and support for all gender identities and expressions. This should include an explanation of pertinent vocabulary, an identification of the unique issues and challenges faced by transgender and gender non-conforming students, and strategies for supporting these students. It should also emphasize age-appropriate ways to make the curriculum inclusive of gender diversity. Contact the BC Teachers' Federation or the Pride Education Network for information on such professional development opportunities.
- ✓ Designate a staff person within the school, or school district, who can act in an extended advocacy role for all students who may be targeted or harassed due to their real or perceived gender identity or expression.

## School Grounds

- ✓ Challenge and counteract binary and stereotypical messages about gender (both implicit and explicit) found on school grounds, including murals, posters, bulletin board displays, trophy cases, the school website, etc.
- ✓ Ensure that harmful (i.e. sexist, homophobic, transphobic) graffiti on walls, desks, and washroom stalls etc. are removed and dealt with seriously.
- ✓ Provide the option of a gender-neutral washroom and change room. (Bear in mind that gender non-conforming and transgender people are, just like everyone else, entitled to use the facilities that match their gender identity.)



## Model School Policy Regarding Transgender and Gender Non Conforming Students

This policy is intended to advise school administration and staff regarding issues related to transgender and gender-nonconforming students in order to provide equal educational opportunities to all students and ensure that schools maintain environments free from unlawful discrimination or discriminatory harassment.

### Definitions for the purposes of this policy:

**Transgender Students** refers to students whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender Identity** refers to one's understanding of oneself as a girl (or woman), boy (or man), or both, or neither, regardless of one's sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Expression** refers to the way a person expresses her or his gender, through dress, grooming habits, choice of name and pronoun, mannerisms, activities, etc.

**Gender-Nonconforming Students** refers to students who have a gender identity or expression that does not conform to stereotypical expectations, such as feminine boys, masculine girls and androgynous students. Examples of gender-nonconforming students include boys who come to school wearing what is commonly considered to be girls' clothing (such as a skirt or dress), or girls who play games on the playground that might be perceived as "boys' games" (like football).

### Student Self-Identification

Students, including transgender and gender-nonconforming students, may use a variety of terms to describe their gender, gender expression and gender identity. Not all students who fall within the broad definitions of "transgender" and "gender-nonconforming" set forth above will use these terms to self-identify. School personnel should not label students unnecessarily, and should respect the terms students adopt to identify themselves. Whenever possible, school forms to be filled out by students should allow students to fill in their gender (or to decline to answer) rather than require them to choose between male and female.

### Privacy and Confidentiality

All persons, including students, have a right to privacy; this includes the right to keep one's transgender status private. Without consent from the student, school personnel should not disclose a student's transgender status to others, such as students, parents or other school personnel, unless there is a specific "need to know" (for example, a health emergency). A student's transgender status may also be disclosed to others to the limited extent necessary to investigate and/or resolve a claim of discrimination or harassment brought by that student.

### Names and Pronouns

Students may request to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity without changing the legal name designated in their official records and school-wide informational systems. All school staff need to honour such requests. If the student consents, such requests need to be noted in any materials that are shared with or

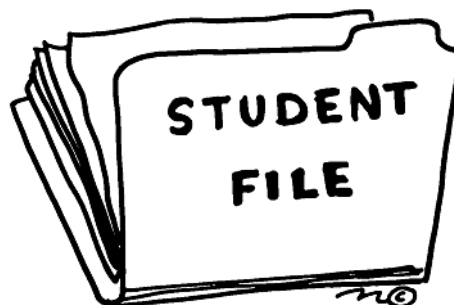
accessible to staff, in order to inform staff of the name and pronoun to use when addressing the student.

Teachers should privately ask all students at the beginning of the school year how they prefer to be addressed at school and how they prefer to be addressed in correspondence to the home or at conferences with their parents.

In cases where students and parents disagree about the name and pronoun to be used at school, school officials may refer families to appropriate internal and/or external counseling or support services.

### **Official Records**

A school can change the legal name designated in a student's official records upon receipt of a court order documenting a legal change in name. However, upon the request of the student, the student's official record can include a notation indicating the preferred name even in the absence of such documentation. Any school records indicating a student's gender should do so in accordance with the student's gender identity.



### **Dress Codes**

Students have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity. A student's clothing shall not be deemed to violate any applicable dress code on the ground that it does not conform in whole or in part to stereotypes or gender norms associated with the sex assigned to that student at birth.

### **Restroom Accessibility**

Students shall have access to restroom facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Where available, a single-stall restroom or other alternate restroom, such as one in a health or nurse's office, shall be used by any student with a need for increased privacy (for example, because of his or her gender identity, a permanent or temporary disability, etc.) regardless of the underlying reason. The use of such a single-stall bathroom shall be a matter of the student's choice; no student should be compelled to use such a bathroom. If it is kept locked, it is appropriate to issue a key to the single-stall to a student who needs to use it. Forcing a student to ask for the key to the bathroom (particularly if they need to ask in a public setting such as an office, or ask someone who may question why this is necessary) can present a significant barrier.

### **Locker Room Accessibility**

Students shall have access to locker room facilities that correspond to their gender identity. In locker rooms that require undressing in front of others, students who desire increased privacy for any reason (for example, because of their gender identity, a permanent or temporary disability, faith, etc.), shall be provided with accommodations that best meet their needs and privacy concerns. Based on availability and the nature of the privacy concerns, such accommodations could include, but are not limited to: Use of a private area in or near the locker room (e.g., an area separated by a curtain, the physical education instructor's office, a nearby restroom or medical room, etc.), or a separate changing schedule (using the locker room before or after other students).

## Physical Education Classes and Sports

Transgender and gender-nonconforming students are to be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as all other students, shall not be forced to have physical education outside of the assigned class time, and shall be permitted to participate in any gender-segregated activities in accordance with their gender identity. Generally, students shall also be permitted to participate in any gender-segregated recreational and competitive athletic activities, including extracurricular activities, in accordance with their gender identity. If a dispute arises with regard to a transgender student's participation in competitive athletics or contact sports, such disputes shall be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

## Other Instances of Gender Segregation

Generally, in any circumstance where students are separated by gender in the course of a school activity, students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity. If such an activity raises privacy concerns for any transgender or gender nonconforming student, for any reason, staff shall make a reasonable effort to provide an accommodation to address such concerns. If no such accommodation is available, concerns shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

## Access to Information

Schools should endeavor to include in their libraries or counselor offices (or other appropriate locations) books, pamphlets and/or other materials that provide accurate information about gender identity issues and related matters. Students should be permitted to access these materials confidentially and, if possible, anonymously.

## Discrimination/Harassment

Schools must take effective steps to provide transgender and gender-nonconforming students with a safe school environment. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment or violence is promptly investigated and all appropriate corrective actions are taken. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on someone's actual or perceived sex, gender identity and/or gender expression are to be handled in the same manner as other discrimination or harassment complaints. School authorities may not discipline students or pressure them to alter their gender expression because other students react to that expression in a disruptive manner.

## Safety Transfers

Generally, schools should endeavor to keep transgender and gender-nonconforming students at their school site. Incidents of harassment or discrimination against a transgender or gender-nonconforming student should not result in an automatic transfer to another school. However, transfers should be considered and/or granted when it would be in the student's best interest to be in a different social environment or when a transfer is necessary for the protection or personal welfare of the student. In such cases, the decision to transfer a student should be made in close consultation with the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in order to determine whether a transfer is in the best interest of the student.<sup>xviii</sup>

*"I don't tell people I'm transgender because I am worried what most people will think or say to me, I already get teased enough and I don't want to lose friends for being trans. I am afraid to admit it." <sup>xvii</sup>*

# Responding to Concerns about Gender Inclusive Schools

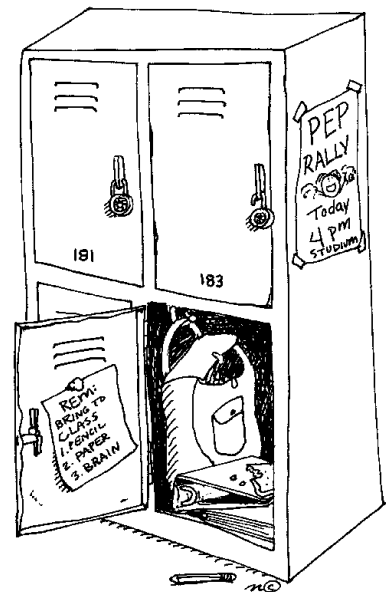
This section contains ideas about how to address questions or concerns about gender inclusivity that may arise from parents, guardians, administrators, or school boards.

## Strategies:

- ◆ Communicate regularly with families of students to build trust between school and home. Let families know what is being discussed at school and how it is being discussed. Provide information about how parents and guardians can approach gender-related topics with their children.
- ◆ Move the conversation away from myths, fears, and stereotypes about gender non-conforming and transgender people and focus on the purpose of this work – supporting all students.
- ◆ Listen carefully to the concerns that are expressed, as this will help you find points of agreement. For instance, most people share the value of respect.

## Main Points:

- ◆ Emphasize that you are teaching respect. Respect is built by acknowledging the diversity in the community, promoting opportunities for community dialogue, and allowing the diversity of students and families to be visible within the school.
- ◆ Schools strive to increase understanding and connections across diversity or difference. With our communities becoming increasingly diverse, students benefit from developing the skills to live and work with many different people and populations.
- ◆ Schools are a place for informed and open discussions. Information and discussion about gender diversity will not make anyone gender non-conforming or transgender. But learning about gender diversity may very well reduce bullying against gender non-conforming or transgender children.<sup>xix</sup>
- ◆ Messages that expand understandings of gender empower every child to be themselves and pursue the goals and interests that inspire them.
- ◆ All children are entitled to a safe and supportive school environment.
- ◆ When talking to administrators and school boards, discuss schools' legal responsibility to provide students with an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory harassment. School boards and principals in BC can be (and have been) held liable for not preventing gender and sexual orientation-based harassment through policy, professional development, and curricular content (see page 14).



# The Role of the Classroom Teacher

## Professionalism

- ✓ **Model respect for gender diversity.** Treat gender non-conforming and transgender students, staff, parents, and community members with dignity and respect. Be wary of the assumptions you make about another person's gender.
- ✓ **Parent communication.** Build trust with parents by informing them of your educational philosophy and curriculum plans. Listen to and respectfully address their concerns in a manner that does not compromise the safety and inclusion of gender non-conforming and transgender students (see pg. 21).
- ✓ **Professional development.** Reflect on your practice. Be aware of your strengths and areas for improvement as a gender-inclusive teacher. Continue to educate yourself about gender issues. Request workshops on the issue.
- ✓ **Be a sponsor teacher for the Gay-Straight Alliance.** Make sure the GSA is trans-friendly and that transgender students are explicitly welcome as well.
- ✓ **Advocate for transgender and gender non-conforming students.** Work to have your school board or school adopt the model policy on pages 18-20.

## Curriculum

- ✓ **Use resources that reflect gender diversity on a regular basis.** Select textbooks, storybooks, novels, worksheets, videos, music and websites that show females and males with non-stereotypical appearances, behaviours and/or interests.
- ✓ **Celebrate** national and international days and events that raise awareness about gender issues (see pg. 30)
- ✓ **Teach students how to be allies** to gender non-conforming and transgender students.
- ✓ **Teach students how to protect themselves** from gender-based bullying and harassment. Ensure students know how to identify and respond to sexism, homophobia, and heterosexism. Teach students the skills of resiliency.
- ✓ **Don't make assumptions** about the gender of students' parents or the gender that students will be romantically attracted to, particularly in family life education classes.



## Classroom Management/Environment

- ✓ **At the beginning of the year**, share your commitment to creating a safe, bullying-free environment for all students. Show students they can count on you to follow through on your commitment to them.
- ✓ **Address the class in non-gendered ways** (i.e. avoid “boys and girls”). For inclusive language ideas, see pg. 26.
- ✓ **Seating arrangements**. Seat students in non-gendered ways. Question students who seat themselves with only same-gendered people.
- ✓ **Line ups**. Line students up randomly, not by gender.
- ✓ **Groups and teams**. Create mixed-gender groups and teams.
- ✓ **Calling on students**. Encourage girls to be vocal and active participants in the classroom. Track how often you take comments and answers from boys. Make sure girls get equal airtime.
- ✓ **Display** signs, posters, safe space stickers, class books, and library books that depict a range of gender presentations.

### What's wrong with dividing students by gender?

- It reinforces the idea that there are only two genders: male and female.
- Transgender students may be forced into the wrong group.
- Would you line up or group students based on race, class, or sexual orientation? Then why do we do it based on gender identity?



*“Though I really wanted to sign up for the rugby team in high school, I didn’t because I thought people would think that was too masculine and call me a lesbian.” Sam, a recent graduate from a BC high school who identifies as queer.<sup>xx</sup>*



## Ideas for Thinking Outside the Gender Binary!

**Check your baggage.** Reflect on your preconceived attitudes and fears regarding gender norms, gender conformity and transgender people.

**Educate yourself.** Stay on top of current social, political and cultural events related to gender issues – are gender roles being reinforced or deconstructed?

**Challenge yourself.** Challenge your own stereotypes, beliefs and expectations around gender. Challenge your judgments about people who don't conform to rigid gender stereotypes either by their clothes, hair, mannerisms, interests or sexual attractions/sexual orientation.

**Challenge others.** Confront sexist/ homophobic attitudes and actions of others. Share what you have learned and encourage others to take a stand.

**Make no assumptions.** Don't assume that all boys or all girls will have the same interests or learn the same way, or that there is only one right way to be male or female or trans. Consider the idea that gender is not a binary but rather exists along a continuum.

**Practice, practice, practice!** Seize opportunities to use non-gender specific language (i.e. Not "boys and girls"), and practice challenging the gender stereotypes that children are taught.

**Show your support.** Continue to attend events, workshops and training related to trans, gender and LGBTQ issues.

**Don't worry about making mistakes.** We all make mistakes sometimes! Learn from them and keep on growing.

**Be brave.** It takes courage to create change, but we owe it to our students.

*"I stayed out of the cafeteria and gym classes because of extreme homophobia that occurred during those times. As well, I stayed out of Drama classes because it seemed like the obvious thing for a gay boy like me to do."*<sup>xxi</sup>





## Gender Roles and Play in the Primary Classroom

Students sometimes have rigid ideas about gender roles and what it means to be a boy or girl. As primary teachers, we have often found that we need to have conversations that encourage acceptance of everyone. This includes the way in which students express themselves, particularly during play-based activities. During these times, students may impose rigid gender roles on one another. It is important not to make assumptions about gender or how a particular student should act. As long as they are being imaginative, enjoying themselves and being respectful of one another....let them play!

Here are some quick tips on how to model an environment of acceptance:

- 1) Let all children play in any centre. Don't limit the number of boys or girls in a centre, rather limit the number of children based on space and safety issues.
- 2) Encourage students to play in all centres over time. They will initially have their favourites, but make sure they get opportunities to dig, build, bake, explore, etc.
- 3) Encourage students to mix up their play groups and get to know one another. Allow them to pretend to be male, female or an animal or inanimate object when they play. Don't allow other students to "box students in" based upon their gender.
- 4) Avoid putting girls and boys in separate lines or asking girls to stand up or boys to stand up at different times during activities in circle time. This puts students who do not conform to rigid gender roles in an awkward situation. Gender variant children may not see themselves the way we see them.
- 5) Students may believe themselves to be different from the gender they physically present. If a girl is referring to herself as a boy, let it go. Don't say "No, you are a girl!"
- 6) Model respect and acceptance for every child. Have courageous conversations to help students and parents accept others' differences. Let students be whoever they want to be.
- 7) There can be more than one Mom or Dad in the house centre...just like there can be more than one sister or brother. Sometimes, students argue over this and want to impose rigid rules on others. Challenge these rules.
- 8) In the Dress Up Centre, encourage students to pretend to be whomever they want to, irrespective of gender. Talk with your students about the importance of being imaginative, having fun, and trying new activities.



## Language Dos and Don'ts

A crucial part of modeling respect for all gender identities and expressions is using respectful language. The following tips are intended to assist educators with that ongoing task as you engage with students:

### Recognize that not everyone identifies as either male or female.

- Don't refer to students as "boys and girls" or "ladies and gentlemen," as not everyone fits into this binary view of gender.
- Do address your class in gender-neutral ways. You might say Division 6, folks, gang, friends, class, everyone, people, etc.
- Don't force people to declare their gender on forms, but if it is necessary...
- Do provide a blank line for people to fill in - and make the question optional.

### Use sex and gender-related terminology accurately.

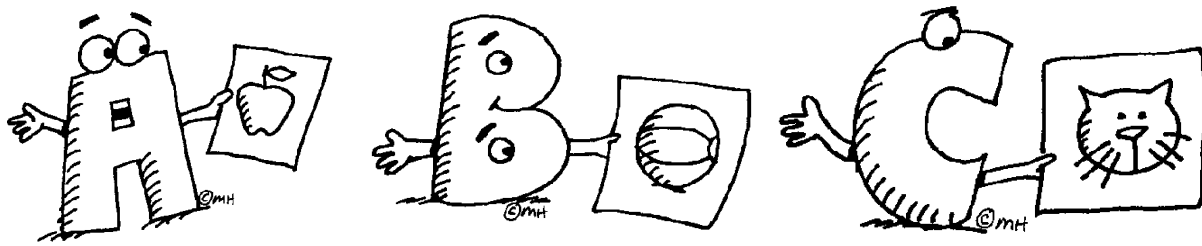
- Don't reinforce the wall of silence that hides the reality of gender diversity.
- Do use "gender identity" to refer to one's internal sense of themselves as female, male, both, neither, two spirit, or possibly some other terms.
- Don't say 'transvestite' or 'tranny.' These are offensive terms.
- Do use the same language the person you are speaking about uses to describe themselves. (Some people who are transgender have reclaimed the word 'tranny.' Because of the sensitive nature of this term, it is still advisable for non-transgender people to use 'transgender' instead).
- Don't use the word 'hermaphrodite' for a person born with genitals that do not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. This is an offensive term.
- Do say 'person with an intersex condition' and model respect and sensitivity.

### Honour the expressed gender identity of others.

- Don't put quotation marks on another person's name or gender identity, as doing so implies that it lacks validity.
- Do recognize that a transgender person's name and gender identity is just as real as anyone else's.
- Don't guess which pronoun to use for another person when you aren't sure.
- Do ask them (in a manner that is respectful of their privacy).

### Use gender-neutral language when gender is irrelevant.

- Don't use terms such as businessman, housewife, male nurse, woman pilot, woman doctor, postman, fireman, etc. Gender is irrelevant when discussing careers.
- Do use terms like businessperson, homemaker, nurse, pilot, doctor, mail carrier, firefighter.



### **Do not harass or discriminate against others based on gender.**

- Don't tolerate or make sexist, homophobic, or transphobic remarks.
- Do label the form of harassment: "You just made a sexist/homophobic/ transphobic remark;" point out the impact of the behaviour on others: "This is offensive to me and others in the classroom;" and insist on a change in future behaviour: "At this school, we do not harass people. How do you plan to make amends?"

### **Avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes.**

- Don't say phrases like "boys will be boys" or he's "all boy."
- Do question what these phrases assume about what it means to be male or female. Ask how they marginalize students who don't fit traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity.
- Don't shame boys by questioning their gender (i.e. sports coaches should not tell a boys' team that they are "running like a bunch of girls").
- Do motivate students by affirming their identities and capabilities.

### **Avoid making heterosexual statements.**

- Don't assume that all families contain a mom and a dad.
- Do acknowledge that families come in many forms: a family might have same gender parents, a single parent, step parents, adoptive or foster parents, and inter-racial parents.
- Don't state, during sexual health education, that it is normal to develop romantic feelings for the opposite sex.
- Do state that it is common to develop romantic feelings for other people.
- Don't assert that all sexually active women need to use birth control to prevent pregnancy.
- Do assert that all people who are sexually active and do not want to get pregnant or cause pregnancy need to learn about their birth control options.

### **Pay attention to your body language.**

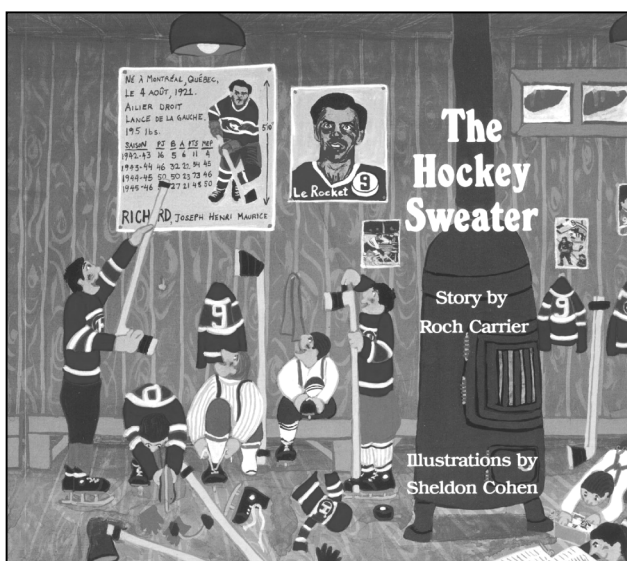
- Don't model discomfort or a disapproving attitude when discussing gender and sexuality.
- Do consider what your tone of voice, talking speed, volume, eye contact, gestures and stance communicate about your attitude and comfort level when you discuss gender and sexuality.

## Use of Story to Challenge Gender Stereotypes

Stories are powerful tools for both building and challenging dominant cultural beliefs, including beliefs about gender. The books available to your students carry a variety of explicit and implicit messages through content, language and illustrations about what it means to be male or female.

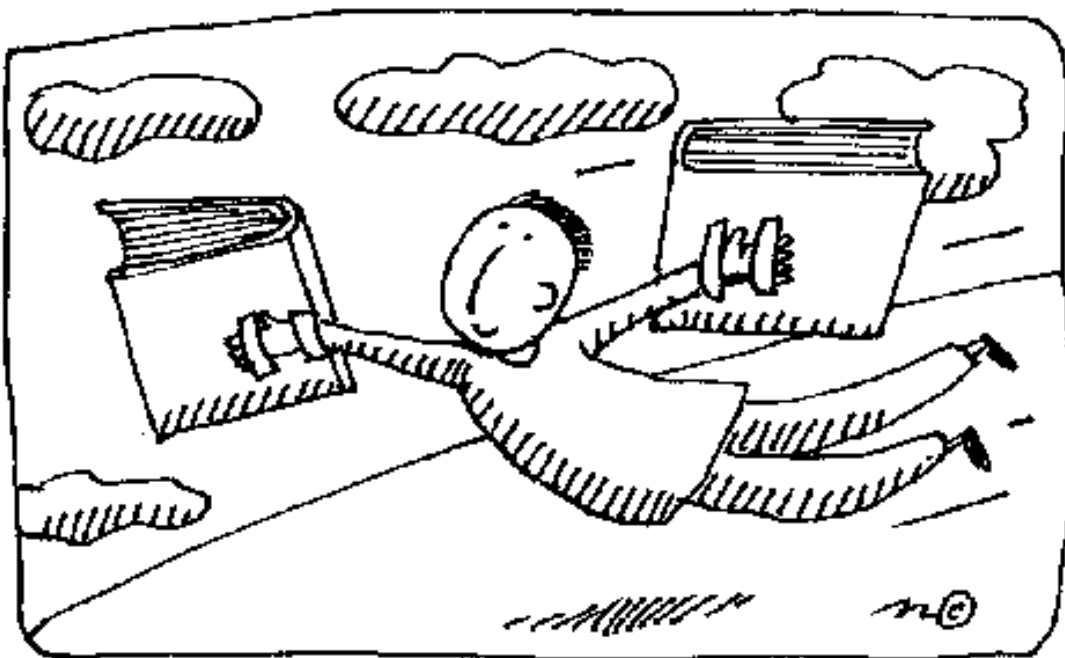
Research shows, for instance, that books for children and young adults frequently portray girls and boys in stereotypical ways:

Male characters are often portrayed as...	Female characters are often portrayed as...
Strong	Sweet
Capable	Naïve
Adventurous	Conforming
Independent	Dependent
Active	Caretakers
Fighters	Mothers
Adventurers	Princesses
Rescuers	In need of rescuing
Successful because they demonstrate ingenuity and perseverance	Characters that support the male figure
	Successful because others help them <sup>xxii</sup>



These stereotypes are harmful because they offer very limited views of a student's potential. These messages are so pervasive that it would be unrealistic and ineffective to remove books that reinforce stereotypes from school bookshelves. Instead, students need to be taught critical thinking skills to question the hidden assumptions in what they read.

Teachers can model these critical thinking skills during read-alouds with the class by asking questions about the kinds of characteristics and activities associated with males versus females in the stories they read. For example,



when reading the story, *The Hockey Sweater* by Roch Carrier, you might ask why the illustrations only show boys playing hockey, and no girls. You can write your question on a sticky note, place it on the page, and come back to it for discussion when the story is over. In the discussion, invite students to make connections to their own lives that challenge the implicit message in the book that playing hockey is only for boys. This modeling exercise can easily be done anytime you read a story that contains harmful messages about gender, even if this is not the primary focus of your lesson.

Another effective technique is to ask students to rewrite fairytales by changing the gender of the main character. For example, “What if Sleeping Beauty was a boy?” Re-imagining the story in this way will raise consciousness of their own limited views of gender, views which are deserving of critical thought. If students cling to traditional beliefs about gender, follow-up questions could include: “Where does your belief come from?” and “What are the real-life consequences of your opinion for people who cannot conform to your beliefs about gender?” Ultimately, students are entitled to their opinions as long as they have subjected their beliefs to rigorous critique.

While it is crucial to help students question the messages they receive about gender, it is just as important to read and provide access to stories that challenge dominant assumptions about what it means to be a boy or a girl. These stories help students to expand their understanding of acceptable expressions of gender and affirm the identities of those students who do not conform to gender stereotypes. Lessons plans designed to achieve these goals are included at the end of this book, along with a list of recommended resources.

“I got ‘(my name) is a dyke’ written on a street post after I got my hair cut short.” xxiii

## Discussions about Gender with Primary Students

### HAIR

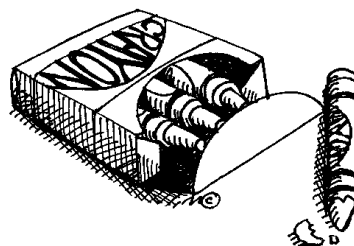
Do you know a girl or a woman with short hair? Do you know a boy or a man with long hair? Is that okay? (Yes!) Also show pictures of different people with different lengths of hair - people from our school community, people in books, or other photos/ posters. Can people decide what kind of hairstyle they want to have? (Yes!) Would they want to be teased for their hair? (No.) Why not? (It might make them feel sad.) Let's not tease people about their hair. Okay?

### FREE PLAY

Appeal to young children's sense of fairness: "Would it be fair if certain toys or games were only for some kids, like only the girls, and certain toys or games were only for the boys?" How would the other kids feel if they couldn't play with those things and they wanted to? (Sad, left out, excluded). That would not be fair! In this class, every toy, every game, and every dress up costume is for every child!

### GROUPINGS

Boy table/ girl table: some students will feel left out if there is a table just for girls or boys when they want to sit there too, and join in - so let's not have those kinds of groups here - any table or group is for anyone!



### COLOURS

Ask your students, "Would it be fair to let kids only use certain colours for their artwork?" No! All the coloured pens and pencils in this class are for all the students - they can choose which colours they want to use. Focus on making beautiful pictures!

## Discussions about Gender with Intermediate Students

### SPORTS

Ask the students who should get to play sports on the big field at recess. Ask them for reasons behind their ideas. Would it be fair if only girls could play soccer on the field? Why not? What about only boys? Why? (Often students will refer to boys having the skill to play and say that girls don't). What can we do to teach those who want to play but aren't as skilled as us? How can we ensure the teams are fair? Focus on having fun, not winning.

### ART

Who should get to do art in our class? Would it be fair to say only the expert artists get to attend art club? Would there be more boys or girls in art club? Why? How can we ensure any kid who likes art gets to go to art club and use a variety of art materials? If there is a limited number that can attend, what system can we devise to include everyone? What part of the brain do we develop doing art? Why is that important?

### PERSONAL PLANNING

Who should get to do jobs around the classroom or take attendance? Is that the job of boys or girls? Is it given to students who are always finished their work first? Should it be random? Should boys get the A/V equipment and girls do attendance? Should the boys set up the stage in the gym, while the girls plan the song to sing? Why or why not?

## Discussions about Gender with Secondary Students

**ENGLISH:** Provide students with materials that depict characters in non-gender stereotypical ways. When studying classical literature that may contain gender stereotypes, discuss this with students, including the connection to social norms and change.

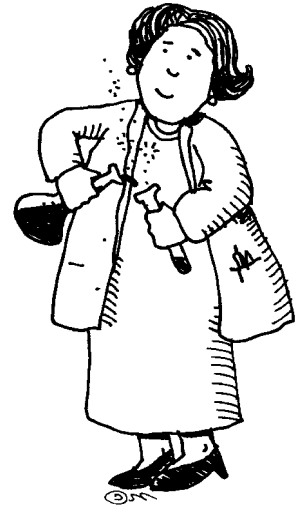
**SOCIAL STUDIES:** Discuss how gender roles differ through time and by region. Provide students with a context for how changes come about through shifts in attitude, understanding, laws, scientific discovery, etc.

**SCIENCE:** Have students consider the biological and genetic differences between genders and the scientific definition of male and female. Introduce the notion of intersexuality (see lesson on this topic). Discuss varieties in gender roles through the animal kingdom in terms of reproduction, mating rituals, care giving, and nurturing roles.

**MATH:** Have a class discussion on famous mathematicians of the past and present. Discuss the dominance of men in the field and possible reasons for that. Have students consider the long-held notion that girls aren't good at math and challenge this belief (e.g. Is it true? Can we find evidence to the contrary? If it's not true, where did the belief come from?)

**LANGUAGES:** How does gender connect to language? For example, how are we limited by the lack of a singular, gender-neutral pronoun in English? Do other languages have such a pronoun? What is happening to gender-laden words in every language such as policeman? In a language like French, objects have gender. Does that make sense? How was each gender decided? Do they follow stereotypical lines or are there unusual examples?

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION:** Ask students what they think of the fact that their school either does or does not separate PE classes by gender for grades 8-10. Is there a good reason for separation? Is there a good reason not to separate? How might a transgender student cope with the current system?



### Every day is a good day to talk about gender, but these days are especially noteworthy:

No Name Calling Week.....	January
Day of Pink.....	February or April (date varies)
International Women's Day.....	March 8
Day of Silence.....	April (date varies)
International Day Against Homophobia.....	May 17
National Coming Out Day.....	October 11
Trans Day of Remembrance.....	November 20
Human Rights Day.....	December 10

## What is a Family?

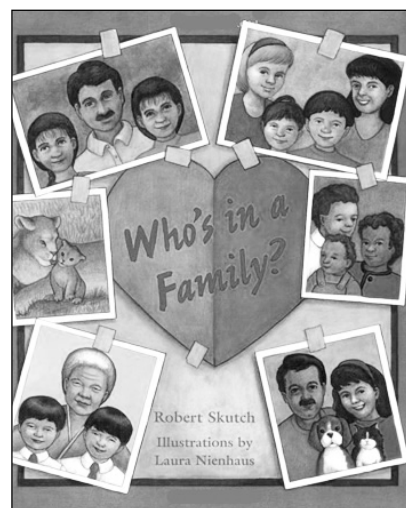
### Kindergarten and Grade One

#### Learning Outcomes:

- To teach students that a variety of family models exist
- To teach students that all families are equally important
- To encourage students to be proud of their families

#### Preparation & Context:

Work with your Teacher-Librarian to collect a variety of pictures and picture books about all kinds of families. Have these displayed within your room or easily accessible for students to look at during your “book time”. Make sure that you have a variety of resources that you can use to read aloud to students about families. Be well aware of the socio-economic status of families in your classroom. Be careful not to stigmatize families living in poverty or different family models in your comments and actions. Celebrate all forms of family!



#### Lesson Plan:

Begin by asking students “Who’s in a family?” Record their ideas on chart paper along with key words and picture symbols (i.e. people’s heads) so that non-readers can tell who is who. Be careful not to draw girls and boys in gender stereotypical ways (i.e. stick figures with skirts or pants) or using gendered colours (i.e. pink and blue)

Prior to reading stories about families, ask students to listen and watch for the different kinds of families they see within the books. Read the story “Who’s in A Family?” by Robert Skutch or “All Families are Special” by Norma Simon.

After reading, show students a chart with different kinds of families on it. Write the name of each form of family in a different colour so that non-readers can tell them apart. You will need to design this in advance using the following words and picture symbols of people’s heads:

Adoptive or Foster Parents  
Blended Families  
Couples without Children  
Extended Families

Inter-Racial Families  
Opposite Gender Parents  
Same Gender Parents  
Single Parent

All of these forms of family are shown in the book by Robert Skutch.

Ask students to take turns using a pointer and being “the teacher” to point out their own family. Help those who might be confused to identify their own family. (Make sure you know the families of all students well before you teach this lesson).



Read stories about all kinds of families throughout your unit on families. Make sure students see positive representations of all forms of family. Be explicit in your teaching in that all families are equal and important. Gently debunk the myth that all families must have a Mom and a Dad. For some titles that show same gender families in a positive light go to:

<http://www.galebc.org/books.pdf>

Return to your chart throughout the unit to re-teach the names of the different kinds of families.

### **Assessment:**

Use the final page of “Who’s in a Family?” which depicts all the families (without words) and ask students individually to point to different kinds of families as you verbally prompt them with questions.

- i.e.     Can you find the single parent family?  
          Can you point to the same gender family?  
          Where is the opposite gender family?

If students can correctly identify most forms of family then you can mark that they meet the Prescribed Learning Outcome in the Kindergarten/Grade One IRP which pertains to student awareness of a variety of family models.

### **Extension:**

If you would like to teach acceptance of same gender families use the following book: “ABC-A Family Alphabet Book” by Bobbie Combs.

Prior to reading, brainstorm all the activities your students do with their own parents and guardians on a T-chart. Add picture symbols to the words you scribe on the chart.

Read the story and ask students to watch for other activities that families do together.

After reading, add additional ideas to the chart from the story based upon student responses.

Ask students to imagine/pretend they had two moms or two dads. If that were so, what would they get double of? (positive/fun things).

Create a class book modelled after “The Mommy Book” or “The Daddy Book” by Todd Parr. Each student makes one page using the following frame:

“Two Moms means double the \_\_\_\_\_.”

“Two Dads means double the \_\_\_\_\_.”

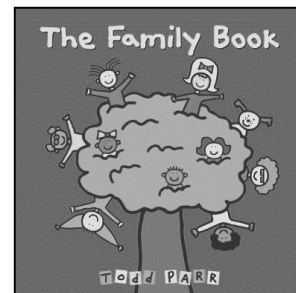
They may pick their ideas from the chart you created together. You may need to scribe words in the blanks for Kindergarten students. Grade Ones can scribe from your ideas on the chart. All students can draw the picture themselves. Ask them to have two moms or dads in their picture. Reinforce that we are using our imaginations to pretend what it would be like to have two Moms or Dads. Keep these books in your classroom library for students to enjoy throughout the year.

## Jobs in the Home

Kindergarten to Grade Three

### Learning Outcomes:

- To teach students about the jobs that women and men can do
- To teach students about women's equality and their careers in the home and the workplace
- To encourage students to follow their future dreams without rigid gender roles



### Preparation & Context:

Work with your Teacher-Librarian to collect a variety of pictures of women and men in traditional and non-traditional occupations. Have these posted within your room. Have a variety of resources that you can use to read aloud to students about adults in the workforce. Make sure that you are well aware of the socio-economic status of families in your classroom. Be careful not to stigmatize families living in poverty or families with stay at home parents or guardians in your comments and actions.

### Lesson Plan:

Begin by asking students about the jobs that girls and women and boys and men do within their families. Record these on a Venn Diagram using words and pictures or symbols for students who cannot read. Ask students if there are any jobs that only a woman or a man can do? Encourage dialogue and debate.

Prior to reading the story, ask students to listen and watch for the kinds of jobs that Moms and Dads do within the book. Read *The Family Book* by Todd Parr. After reading, encourage students talk about the jobs they saw people doing within the story. Add these to your Venn Diagram in a different colour.

Ask students:

- “Did any of the added jobs you saw people doing in this story surprise you?”
- “Were there any jobs that you thought could only be done by a woman or a man?”
- “Where do your ideas about what Moms or Dads can do come from?”

Encourage students to question their thinking and beliefs around what society perceives as gendered work. Use your own language to get this concept across depending upon the age of your students and their cognitive abilities.

Read other stories about women and men working in traditional and non-traditional occupations over the next week or two.

Ask students to expand upon their original list by thinking about some of the jobs they've seen women and men doing within their communities as well. Teach students about the equality of women and men. Teach about what the word equality means as it pertains to

their lives as children. Encourage students to believe in themselves and dream about what they want to be when they grow up.

### Extensions for Grade 2 and 3:

- 1) Work with a buddy class (older students) to help draw and scribe young learner's dreams about their future jobs when they grow up. Prepare the buddy class in advance and ask them to be supportive (verbally and non-verbally) of any ideas that the young learners come up with. Work with your colleague who teaches the buddy class to talk with older students about gender role stereotyping of women and men in the workforce. Have them talk to their class about how sometimes the non-verbal reactions they may have to younger students' ideas can also limit their dreams and imaginations.
- 2) Use your own childhood reality (or that of someone you know) as an example of how rigid gender roles were enforced in the past, regarding the jobs girls could do in the home and their potential career choices in society (i.e. cleaning, cooking, caring for children, etc.) Draw analogies to the children's initial thinking if it was stereotypical in nature. If it was not stereotypical, you might want to use a traditional Fairy Tale to show how princesses are often portrayed (i.e. Cinderella)

Write the word "Sexism" on the chart and explain how sometimes people's thinking knowingly or unknowingly reinforces the idea that girls are not equal or equally capable of the jobs and responsibilities that boys can do. Write the word "Equality" on the opposite side of the chart and ask students to give you some ideas as to what it means. Elaborate if needed, to explain it within a context that they can understand.



**Note:** Students may initially giggle or verbally and non-verbally express discomfort over your use of the word sexism. Acknowledge their discomfort in a positive way, but make sure that you continue discussing the topic. The more comfortable and relaxed you are in doing this, the calmer they will become over time.

It is important that young learners learn the correct names for all forms of oppression and how they manifest themselves. (i.e. Racism, Sexism, Homophobia, Ableism, etc.) This is a student safety issue. Only when they know about these forms of bullying and how to protect themselves or stop being bystanders to incidents will systemic change occur within the classroom or school culture.

## Fairy Tales and Gender Roles

Grade 2 and 3

Fairy Tales are a wonderful genre to explore how gender has been portrayed historically and in current times. Traditional fairy tales and fractured ones (modern day ones with a twist) allow primary students to think critically about how men and women are portrayed and compare these portrayals to their own families and communities.

### Teaching Strategies and Questions:

A familiar starting point for students is to read common fairy tales and identify the elements that make it different from a non-fiction story. Once you have identified the elements of a fairy tale, you can begin to ask students what they notice about how the princesses and princes are being portrayed in the story. You might ask some open-ended questions like the following:

- 1) How are princesses usually portrayed at the start of a story? (i.e. Cinderella, Rapunzel)
- 2) Is she waiting around for something or someone to come to her rescue or make her happy? If so, whom?
- 3) Towards the end of a story what makes Cinderella and Snow White happy? Why do you think that might be?



After reading a variety of traditional and fractured fairy tales and analyzing the components of each style of fairy tale ask students:

- 4) In your world (i.e. modern times), who is a more realistic character? (Princess Smartypants or Rapunzel) Why do you think that? Who does each princess remind you of in real life?
- 5) Can a prince or princess be single and live happily ever after? Why or why not? Do you know anyone who is single and happy?

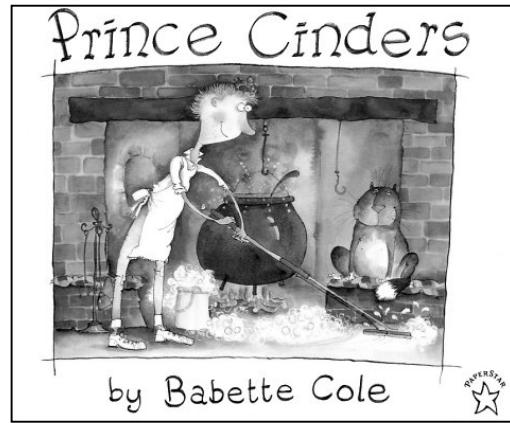
You might hold a secret ballot on a particular question to have students record their thoughts without being influenced by peer pressure or gender bias. You can then discuss the results of the ballot and why someone might believe that one fairy tale character may be more representative of girls in today's times. Here are some stories you might want to compare and contrast with students.

Traditional Fairy Tales (Gendered)	Fractured Fairy Tales (Role Reversal)
Cinderella	Prince Cinders
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	Snow White in New York
The Ugly Ducking	The Sissy Duckling
Rapunzel	Princess Smarty Pants
The Princess and the Pea	The Paper Bag Princess

### Possible Extensions:

If you have already done some direct teaching about sexism with students and they have familiarity with the term and its meaning, you might read stories together and use any of the following strategies with students:

- 1) Pick a traditional fairy tale and read it aloud. Ask students to stop you when they see or hear a sexist incident in the story. Students call out “Stop!” when they want you to cease reading. They must then identify the sexist incident before you can proceed with the story.
- 2) Have students take a traditional fairy tale and work together in small groups to write a new ending for it. Ask them to create one where the princess and prince live in a more realistic, independent manner.
- 3) Use the Social Responsibility Performance Standards (SRPS for Kindergarten to Grade 3) and ask students to work in small groups to analyze a character’s behaviour within the story. Use the “defending human rights” strand of the SRPS. Ask groups of students to rate a specific character in terms of how they treat the female characters in the story. Does the character meet expectations of the SRPS? Why or why not? Have students orally report out their observations to the class.
- 4) Use the book, *King and King*, to prompt student thinking about marriage equality. Ask students if two princes or princesses can get married or not. Read the story and then debrief student reactions to the book. Ask students: What did you notice in this fairy tale that was unexpected? How did you react to the part of the story where the two princes got married? Why? What messages have you heard about who can or cannot marry?
- 5) Ask students to write their own fractured/non-traditional fairy tale where the prince or princess is portrayed in a non gender specific role. Tell them you are looking for non-sexist behaviour in at least one character.



### Assessment:



- 1) Can students define sexism in their own words?
- 2) Can students describe some simple negative effects of sexism? (Social Responsibility IRP p. 22)
- 3) Are students able to identify one way in which sexism is portrayed in traditional fairy tales?

## **“The Boy Who Wanted To Be A Dancer”**

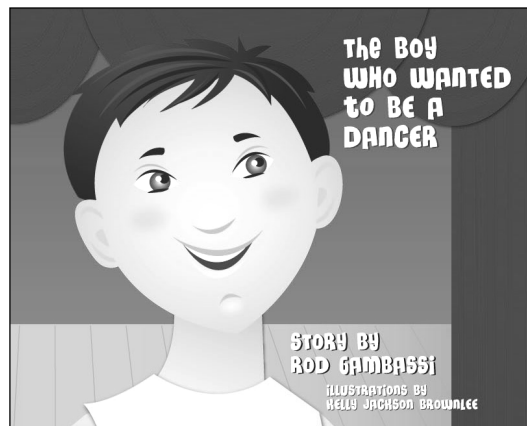
**Grades 3 and 4**

Story by Rod Gambassi

ISBN # 978-1-889829-18-0  
([www.windowbooksonline.com](http://www.windowbooksonline.com))

### **Learning Outcomes**

- to gain awareness of how rigid gender role expectations limit children’s ability to express themselves
- to understand how and why boys are teased if they want to be dancers, singers, artists, etc.
- to become more aware of how “boy culture” limits the artistic expression of boys



### **Context**

The intent of this lesson is to teach students that boys can be whoever they want to be and can choose to be involved in whatever interests they wish to be involved in. This lesson provides an excellent opportunity to segue into the topics of sexism and homophobia and how these forms of oppression negatively impact boy’s lives. Students will gain an understanding of how boys are sometimes pressured by their peers not to be involved in school based or extra-curricular activities which may typically be the domain of “girl culture”.

### **Lesson**

Read part of the story, The Boy Who Wanted to be a Dancer to your class. At an appropriate place, stop reading and ask students to work in small groups. Have them brainstorm some of the ways that a boy who is artistic might be treated by his peers if he wanted to be a dancer, singer or performer. Encourage students to talk about this with each other as part of a class discussion.

- Ask students to talk about their experiences when they do activities that others perceive as “girl activities” or “boy activities”. How are they similar to the main character in the story?
- Ask students to work in small groups to make a list of the kinds of hobbies or extra-curricular activities they participate in. Once they have created a list, ask them to make a T-chart and begin to divide the activities into categories which would fall under the headings of “Boy Culture” or “Girl Culture”. Encourage discussion and respectful debate. Have each group report their decisions to the whole class.
- Ask students if all of the activities they listed always fall into these two distinct categories. “Is every hobby or activity unique to boy culture or girl culture?” Introduce the concept of sexism to the class. For example, girls are sometimes excluded from activities perceived to be the domain of boy culture (i.e. hockey, soccer, etc.). Also,

boys are sometimes teased and girls sometimes are targeted with sexist language....  
“You throw like a girl!”

### **Possible Extensions:**

- Ask students “What would be some of the names a boy would be called if he was passionate about dancing and wanted to be a dancer?” Depending on the responses of the students, this might be a good segue into discussion of the topic of homophobia. Talk with students about how boys are sometimes targeted by homophobic slurs since they are perceived to be gay because of the types of activities they participate in. Ask students a) if they can tell who might be gay simply by the activities they enjoy; and b) how someone who calls himself gay might be treated by his classmates.
- Discuss with students how homophobia and sexism sometimes limit girls and boys’ choices because of the pressure their family and friends sometimes place upon them. Ask if this is fair or not.
- Talk about equality with your students and have them discuss how boys and girls should be treated fairly, irrespective of the activities they enjoy and want to be involved in.
- Show a short You Tube clip to your class from the TV series “Glee”. Ask students to comment on the young men’s ability to dance.
- Teach your students how to dance.
- Go on a fieldtrip to a local dance or ballet performance.

### **Assessment:**

Have students write paragraphs on sexism, homophobia and/ fairness or equality. Ask them to include a definition of the term in their own words as well as an example of what it looks or sounds like. Have them include what they would do to protect themselves from this harm and whom they would seek help from if they were targeted or teased because of their hobbies.

Ask students to write a letter to the main character of the story. Tell him what they think about his decision to be a dancer and his bravery in ignoring the negative comments of other students at school.

Assess their knowledge of different forms of oppression, based upon their writing and discussions in class.

**Note:** The possible conversations arising from this lesson may be extended over a number of days or weeks. You can easily use this book (and others – see the Recommended Resources section) as a springboard into topics of sexism and homophobia. If students or parents question why you are talking about these topics, explain the importance of treating everyone fairly (equality) and how it is important that students know the terms racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. By knowing about different forms of oppression, they are better able to keep themselves safe and to seek help from adults when it is required.



## Building Allies for Gender Non-Conforming Students

Grades 4 - 6

### Curriculum Connections

This lesson fits well with the Social Responsibility Performance Standards, including aspects like 'Solving Problems in Peaceful Ways' and 'Valuing Diversity and Defending Human Rights').

### Context

The goal of this lesson is to teach students how to be allies when they witness gender-related bullying.

### Lesson

1. Sitting in a circle, brainstorm and discuss different types of oppression. It might be helpful to phrase these as "isms" (racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, classism, heterosexism), but don't forget homophobia and transphobia. Kids might give examples and you can help them label oppression they are talking about.

2. Ask students to think of times when they witnessed some kind of oppression.

3. Ask students to think of a time they took action or did not take action and ask them to share the story with a partner. Ask them to consider why they did or didn't feel comfortable speaking up. Common responses include differences in power (teacher vs. student or older kid vs. younger kid), relationships ("it was my good friend, so I knew they would still like me if I spoke up"), or knowledge ("I knew it was wrong but I didn't know what to say").

4. Engage students in the role plays described on the next page. Ask them to dramatize the situation and a response that interrupts the oppressive behaviours.

5. Generate a list of things students can say when they see gender-related bullying.

6. Introduce the term "ally" as someone who supports the human rights of people who are different from themselves. Encourage students to be allies in their everyday lives.

### Assessment

- Can the student generate level-headed and meaningful ways to respond to gender-related bullying?
- Does the student show an interest in the fair treatment of everyone (i.e. do they take the problem of gender-related bullying seriously, are they actively participating in the lesson?)?

### Extensions

Students can journal about a time they witnessed gender-related bullying and either spoke up or didn't speak up.

Repeat this lesson using role plays that focus on other types of oppression.

## Role Play Scenarios

<p><b>Scenario A:</b></p> <p>A younger boy comes to school wearing a pink shirt. A kid in your class asks him, "Are you gay or something?"</p>	<p><b>Sample Response</b></p> <p>You know, the comment you just made was homophobic. Wearing pink does not make someone gay, and even if they are gay, I don't see what's wrong with that. I really think you should apologize, or at least stop making homophobic comments.</p>
<p><b>Scenario B:</b></p> <p>A girl in your class teases another girl for always playing sports with the boys at recess.</p>	<p><b>Sample Response</b></p> <p>Why can't boys and girls play together? It's sexist to assume that only boys can play sports. I think she should be able to play whatever she wants with whomever she wants.</p>
<p><b>Scenario C:</b></p> <p>A friend of yours keeps saying things to other boys like, "You throw like a girl."</p>	<p><b>Sample Response</b></p> <p>It's not fair to assume that girls can't throw. I know a lot of girls who can throw the ball pretty far. Besides, it's not nice to make fun of people for how far they can throw. Different people are good at different things.</p>
<p><b>Scenario D:</b></p> <p>Your friend, who is female, comes to school with a new, short haircut. Other kids in the class try to put her down by saying she looks like a boy.</p>	<p><b>Sample Response</b></p> <p>I know lots of guys with long hair and lots of girls with short hair. It's good to be different. And I think her hair looks great.</p>



# The Gender Pyramid

Grades 6 - 10

## Curriculum Connections

This lesson fits well with the Social Responsibility Performance Standards, especially 'Valuing Diversity and Defending Human Rights'.

## Context

The goal of this lesson is to engage students in group discussions about what interests, activities, jobs, habits, and aspirations are seen as appropriate for males and females, and to understand how these beliefs are connected to sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

## Lesson

**Step 1:** Hand out a set of cards (on page 43) to each group and ask the students to cut them out. Provide outlines of a male and female body (like on washroom doors).

**Step 2:** Students collaborate to give each card a "gender rating" from 1 to 5. Number 5 means it is very strongly associated with a particular gender, and number 1 means it's very loosely associated with a gender. If students think the sentence is completely neutral, they can give it a "0." A sentence such as "This person likes vanilla ice cream" might elicit such a response.

**Step 3:** Students put the cards in the outline of the corresponding male or female body, or outside if the card was given a "0."

**Step 4:** When most table groups are almost finished placing cards, bring everyone's attention to the board. Ask the class what kinds of statements garnered a "0". Then what kind of statements got a 1, 2, 3, 4 and finally, 5.

**Step 5:** Ask students to consider the cards associated with a gender as "Gender Laws". Ask what might happen to a person who breaks a number 1 gender law versus a 2, 3, 4, or 5. Draw attention to how the consequences get increasingly severe for any "gender offender" (for example, being bullied, excluded, or a target for violence and discrimination).

**Step 6:** Ask students to look for patterns in the results: What kind of laws received a 4 or 5 (and thus have the most severe punishment when broken)? Sentences around items of clothing like dresses, skirts, tuxedos or suits are often given a number 5. Also, sentences around romantic desire are usually given a 5 (for example, "This person wants to kiss a woman romantically").

**Step 7:** Elicit the following terms and write them on the board: What is it called when a girl is told she cannot do the same jobs or activities that boys get to do? (Sexism.) What is it called when a boy is told he cannot wear girls' clothing? (Transphobia.) What is it called when a man is disliked because he has romantic feelings for another man? (Homophobia.) Ask the students to discuss in their groups how the "gender laws" they identified earlier are sexist, homophobic or transphobic.

## Assessment

If we lived in a society without homophobia, sexism, and transphobia the "Gender Laws" would fall away and those who "break" them would not face negative consequences. Ask students to journal about what the world would look like if the "Gender Laws" did not exist. Do students' responses demonstrate critical thinking (i.e. an understanding of sexism, homophobia and transphobia)? Do students demonstrate a respectful attitude toward diversity?

This person likes vanilla ice cream.	This person has long hair.	This person wears dresses.
This person has a tattoo.	This person plays the piano.	This person plays the harp.
This person plays drums.	This person loves hockey.	This person wants to kiss a man romantically.
This person wants to kiss a woman romantically.	This person wears make up.	This person has short hair.
This person jogs.	This person wants to be an engineer.	This person is a mechanic.
This person stays home and raises the children.	This person cries when upset.	This person has a violent streak.
This person enjoys listening to music.	This person enjoys watching sports.	This person enjoys shopping.
This person exercises regularly.	This person wants children.	This person wears a tuxedo on formal occasions.
This person enjoys gossiping.	This person likes painting.	This person is easily scared.
This person believes in God.	This person enjoys physics.	This person wants to be a politician.
This person is a leader.	This person likes red.	This person likes pink.
This person enjoys physical activity.	This person is kind.	This person likes horror movies.

## Reader Response Reflection Journals

Grades 5 - 7

### Learning Outcomes:

- To analyze and compare the representation of males and females in novels.
- To read novels with strong, intelligent and active female characters and that portray boys as sensitive and caring.
- To make students aware of how novels can portray boys and girls equally and non-stereotypically.

### Context:

There are many novels with strong active female protagonists involved in exciting adventurous stories. Likewise there are novels which show boys displaying emotions other than anger. Novels that show girls and boys equally and non-stereotypically need to be used in novel studies. Teachers can pick a wide range of literature to share with their students that provide powerful role models. When reading novels assigned to grades by the Ministry of Education prescribed learning outcomes (PLO's), challenge the status quo in the novels and challenge students to do a gender analysis of the characters.

### Lesson:

During novel study, assign some journal novel responses that address gender as a part of regular discussion and/or reader response. Have students observe the number of male and female characters in the novel and their position in the story. Have the students identify the qualities of both female and male characters, looking for characters that are portrayed as intelligent, independent, active, adventurous, resourceful, compassionate, empathetic, courageous, caring, and nurturing. Is there a difference in how male and female characters are depicted? When teaching historical fiction, have the students compare current roles and expectations with historical roles shown in the novel.

In the teacher's guide, *Bringing It All Together* (p.231-234), Terry Johnson includes an evaluation of the author's attitude towards gender in the fantasy novel, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh*. The questions can be adapted to evaluate any novel for bias, including the intersection of gender, race, class, etc.

### Sample Reader Response Questions:

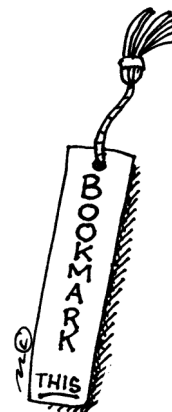
1. What role does each of the characters play? How are these characters portrayed?
2. Who is the lead character in the novel? Why do you think the author picked that character?
3. How are the lead characters treated by other characters in the story? How are the other characters treated?
4. Whose point of view is reflected in the story? If the story was being written by another gender character in the story, what would the story be like?
5. Which novels have they read which depict strong, female historical characters? What role did they play in the story?
6. Which novels have they read in which a male character was in a non-traditional role? What role did he play and was it effective?
7. When there is a division of labour between genders in a novel, how do either gender overcome these expectations and step outside the gender expectations?

## Examining Novels for Gender Bias

Grades 8 - 12

This is a checklist that can be used by students during novel studies or literature circles. It will help students examine the novel for gender bias and stereotyping. Note: This checklist is written at a high school level, but it can be easily adapted for intermediate students by modifying a few of the items and simplifying the language.

1. If there are illustrations either on the cover or throughout the book, are the illustrations of the characters stereotypical or over-generalized for either traditional male or female characteristics and activities? In other words, is the female shown as demure, domesticated, or social? Is a male shown as adventurous, rugged, or athletic?
2. Within the novel, how are characters described? Is everyone white, slim, middle class and able-bodied or is there diversity with respect to race, body type, class, and ability?
3. In the novel, is it mostly the males who are participating in the action of the novel while the females are observers or supports? Who solves the main conflict and how? Is it solved by a female through social maneuvering? Or is it solved by a male through courage and action?
4. How important are the gender roles of the characters in the development of the novel? What would happen to the novel if the gender of each character was changed?
5. Examine the relationships among the characters in the story. Who is dominant? Who is subservient?
6. Are all the romantic relationships in the novel heterosexual?
7. Examining all the characters and considering the variety of people who make up a community, city, country, etc., what groups of people are not represented in this novel?
8. What kind of role models are the characters in this story? Are there a variety of role models with whom students of either gender could identify? Are there characters with both traditional and non-traditional gender roles?
9. Stories and novels can be a way for society to reinforce societal norms. What societal norms are being reinforced by this novel? Examples of societal norms might include ideas such as: work hard at school, be loyal to your friends, or men should not cry. To what extent do you agree with the social norms reinforced by your novel?
10. Check the author's background and perspective. Most authors write from their perspective or cultural background. Is the perspective patriarchal or feminist? What can you conclude about the author's perspective in terms of race, class, age, ability, sexuality, religion, etc.



## No Bikini: A Short Story

Grades 8 – 10

### Curriculum Connections

This lesson fits well in English 8 -10 or Planning 10.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will consider how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations. They will also explain and support personal responses to a text.

### Context

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an opportunity to consider how gender roles and identity can be shaped by culture.

### Preparation

- Photocopy short story, “No Bikini” by Ivan Coyote (pg 47-50)

### Lesson

Have students discuss the following pre-reading questions:

- How important is gender to children?
- Does it become more or less important as children grow up?
- What comes to mind when you hear the words “sex change”?
- Are some kinds of spaces more gendered than others? For example, a swimming pool compared to a grocery store?

Hand out the story and have the class read it out loud.

### Discussion Questions

1. In what ways is this story funny? In what ways is it serious?
2. How did the main character feel when she was thought to be a boy during the swimming lessons?
3. How difficult was it for the main character to be thought of as a boy by the swimming teacher? What does this imply about gender?

### Assessment

In the story, the main character had more confidence while being thought of as a boy. This comes from societal stereotypes that expect boys to be brave and strong and girls to be timid and in need of protection.

Have students work with a partner to create two columns on a sheet of paper. On one column, they will make point form notes on how this hinders girls from reaching their potential. On the other column, they will make point-form notes on how this is also limiting to boys.

Assess students’ discussions and work for understanding of how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations. Also assess students’ ability to explain and support personal responses to the text by: making connections with prior knowledge and experiences, describing reactions and emotions, and developing opinions using evidence.



## No Bikini

By Ivan E. Coyote

I had a sex change once, when I was six years old.

The Lions pool where I grew up smelled like every other swimming pool everywhere. That's the thing about pools. Same smell. Doesn't matter where you are.

It was summer swimming lessons, it was a little red badge with white trim we were all after: beginners, age five to seven. My mom had bought me a bikini.



It was one of those little girl bikinis, a two-piece, I guess you would call it. The top part fit like a tight cut-off t-shirt, red with blue squares on it, the bottoms were longer than panties but shorter than shorts, blue with red squares. I had tried it on the night before when my mom got home from work and found that if I raised both my arms completely above my head too quickly, the top would slide over my flat chest and people could see my . . . you-know-whats.

*You'll have to watch out for that*, my mother had stated, her concern making lines in her forehead, *maybe I should have got the one-piece, but all they had was yellow and pink left. You don't like yellow either, do you?*

Pink was out of the question. We had already established this.

So the blue and red two-piece it was going to have to be. I was an accomplished tomboy by this time, so I was used to hating my clothes.

It was so easy, the first time, that it didn't even feel like a crime. I just didn't wear the top part. There were lots of little boys still getting changed with their mothers, and nobody noticed me slipping out of my brown cords and striped t-shirt, and padding, bare-chested, out to the poolside alone.

Our swimming instructor was broad-shouldered and walked with her toes pointing out. She was a human bullhorn, bellowing instructions to us and punctuating each sentence with sharp blasts on a silver whistle which hung about her bulging neck on a leather bootlace.

"Alright, beginners, everyone line up at the shallow end, boys here, girls here, come on come on come on, boys on the left, girls on the right."

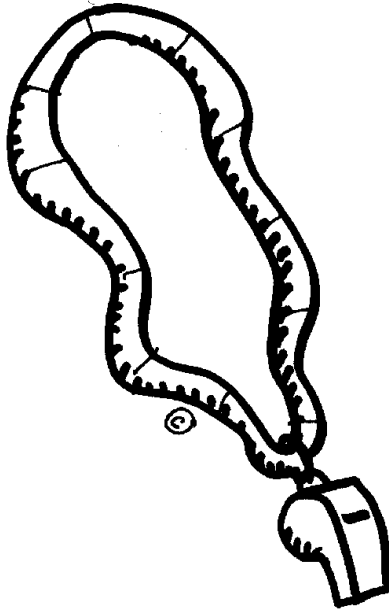
It was that simple, and it only got easier after that.

I wore my trunks under my pants and changed in the boys' room after the first day. The short form of the birth name my parents' bestowed me with was androgynous enough to allow my charade to proceed through the entire six weeks of swimming lessons, six weeks of boyhood, six weeks of bliss.

It was easier not to be afraid of things, like diving boards and cannonballs and backstrokes, when nobody expected you to be afraid.

It was easier to jump into the deep end when you didn't have to worry about your top sliding up over your ears. I didn't have to be ashamed of my naked nipples, because I had not covered them up in the first place.

The water running over my shoulders and back felt simple, and natural, and good.



Six weeks lasts a long time when you are six years old, so in the beginning I guess I thought the summer would never really end, that grade two was still an age away. I guess I thought that swimming lessons would continue far enough into the future that I didn't need to worry about report card day.

Or maybe I didn't think at all.

"He is not afraid of water over his head?" my mom read aloud in the car on the way home. My dad was driving, eyes straight ahead on the road. "He can tread water without a flotation device?" Her eyes were narrow, and hard, and kept trying to catch mine in the rearview mirror. "Your *son* has successfully completed *his* beginner's and intermediate badges and is ready for *his* level one?"

I stared at the toes of my sneakers and said nothing.

"Now excuse me, young lady, but would you like to explain to me just exactly what you have done here? How many people you have lied to? Have you been parading about all summer half naked?"

How could I explain to her that it wasn't what I had done, but what I didn't do? That I hadn't lied, because no one had asked? And that I had never, not once, felt naked.

"I can't believe you. You can't be trusted with a two-piece."

I said nothing all the way home. There was nothing to say. She was right. I couldn't be trusted with a two-piece. Not then, and not now.

*This story is reprinted with permission from "Close to Spider Man," published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2005. A short film version can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtpWwI9V-UU>*

## Vocabulary for Thinking Critically About Gender

Grades 10 – 12

**Context:** The goal of this lesson is to familiarize students with language for understanding and analyzing the relationships between gender and inequality.

**Preparation:** Photocopy one memory game (pg. 50) for every two students. Have a good supply of scissors on hand.

**Lesson:** Suggest that one of the main ways society is organized is through gender. We often don't question the common beliefs we have about gender and this leads to inequality for many people. Today students will learn some concepts for thinking critically about gender and imagining a more equitable world.

Distribute one memory game to each pair of students. Have students match the words and definitions, then elicit the correct answers (check Glossary, as needed). Ask students to follow the instructions at the top of the page to play the memory game. While they do this, write these questions for discussion on the board:

1. What are some examples of gender non-conforming characteristics or interests for men? What are some examples of gender non-conforming characteristics or interests for women?
2. What is the difference between 'transgender' and 'gender non-conforming'?
3. What is the difference between heterosexism and homophobia?
4. Can you be oppressed in some ways and privileged in others? Why or why not?
5. Did you have a strong reaction to any of these words? If so,
  - ...Which ones?
  - ...Why do you think you reacted that way?
  - ...How might your reaction help or harm other people?
6. What questions do you have about any of these concepts?

After students have a chance to play a couple of rounds, have them talk about the above "questions for discussion" with their partner. Then elicit responses for each question from the class. Record students' questions and use them as the basis for a lesson or future research assignment.

Wrap up the lesson by encouraging students to identify forms of sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, privilege and oppression in their everyday lives. (You might even make this a homework assignment.)

### Assessment

- Are students able to correctly match the words and definitions during the memory game?
- Are students able to use the words in a meaningful way during the class discussion?
- Do students exhibit a respectful attitude towards difference during the lesson?

## Vocabulary for Thinking Critically About Gender: A Memory Game

First, cut out the cards with a partner. Then try to match the words with the correct definitions. After your teacher elicits the correct answers, mix up the cards and flip them over. Take turns flipping over two cards at a time and try to get a match. The player with the most matches wins.

<b>Sexism</b>	Used to describe any level of discomfort or disapproval for people who are perceived to be transgender.
<b>Heterosexism</b>	Refers to a person who has or is perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to social expectations.
<b>Homophobia</b>	The acts and effects of domination of certain groups in society over others, caused by the combination of prejudice and power. Eg. racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia.
<b>Transphobia</b>	Advantages that dominant groups receive and others do not. It is often invisible to those who have it.
<b>Gender Non-Conforming</b>	Refers to a person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being either male, female, something other, or in between.
<b>Gender Identity</b>	A system of common practices and individual actions that benefits men over women.
<b>Oppression</b>	Used to describe any level of discomfort or disapproval for people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
<b>Privilege</b>	The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, or that heterosexuality is preferable.

# When I Was A Boy

Grades 10 – 12

## Curriculum Connections

This lesson fits well in English 10-12, Planning 10, or Social Justice 12. It can also be linked to the short story, “Boys and Girls” by Alice Munro for Jr. English classes.

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will consider how gender is influenced by both biological and social influences
- Students will respond to ideas on gender presented in song lyric format
- Students will analyze content for explicit and implicit meaning

## Context

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an opportunity to consider how gender roles and identity can be shaped by culture.

## Preparation

- Photocopy lyrics “When I Was a Boy” and “Understanding the Difference Between Sex and Gender” (pg. 51-52)
- Obtain a copy of the song, “When I Was a Boy” by Dar Williams (or play from YouTube)
- Have CD and CD player for class

## Lesson

1. Handout sheet, “Understanding the Difference Between Sex and Gender” and have students complete it. Discuss as a class.
2. Handout the lyrics; play the song, “When I Was a Boy.”
3. Discuss student reactions to the song. Sample prompts might include:
  - What did the singer mean when she talks about having been a boy?
  - What changed for her? Why?
  - What are the dominant emotions in the early part of the song when she’s describing herself as a “boy”? What is the dominant emotion at the end of the song? What message does this send?
  - What does the line that starts, “They got pills to sell” combined with the line about the clothing store imply about what helps drive the construction of gender roles in society?

## Extensions

- Have students write a story from their childhood when they can remember being like the children in the song
- Students create a split half gender collage of what society believes is acceptable for men and women
- Students compose a fictional story about someone with a non-traditional gender role (e.g. a male daycare teacher or a female truck driver).
- Students write a persuasive speech on a gender-related topic such as whether high school sports teams should be divided by ability rather than gender or whether clothing stores should end the practice of dividing clothes into sections by gender.

## Understanding the Difference Between Sex and Gender

**Sex:** The way in which organisms are divided into classifications of male or female, usually based on chromosomes, hormonal profiles, and/or reproductive organs; usually classified as male or female.

**Gender:** Cultural rules, ideologies, and expected behaviours for individuals of certain biological sexes; sometimes classified as masculine or feminine.

Even though there are men in every country in the world, there are striking differences between cultures on what constitutes masculine behaviour. The same is true for women. Use the space below to list personal characteristics, behaviours, occupations, physical appearances, etc. that are generally expected of each gender in *your* culture.

Men

Women

## When I Was A Boy

By Dar Williams

I won't forget when Peter Pan came to my house, took my hand  
I said I was a boy; I'm glad he didn't check.  
I learned to fly, I learned to fight  
I lived a whole life in one night  
We saved each other's lives out on the pirate's deck.  
And I remember that night  
When I'm leaving a late night with some friends  
And I hear somebody tell me it's not safe, someone should help me  
I need to find a nice man to walk me home.  
When I was a boy, I scared the pants off of my mom,  
Climbed what I could climb upon  
And I don't know how I survived,  
I guess I knew the tricks that all boys knew.  
And you can walk me home, but I was a boy, too.

I was a kid that you would like, just a small boy on her bike  
Riding topless, yeah, I never cared who saw.  
My neighbour come outside to say, "Get your shirt,"  
I said "No way, it's the last time I'm not breaking any law."  
And now I'm in a clothing store, and the sign says less is more  
More that's tight means more to see, more for them, not more for me  
That can't help me climb a tree in ten seconds flat

When I was a boy, see that picture? That was me  
Grass-stained shirt and dusty knees  
And I know things have gotta change,  
They got pills to sell, they've got implants to put in, they've got implants to remove  
But I am not forgetting  
That I was a boy too

And like the woods where I would creep, it's a secret I can keep  
Except when I'm tired, except when I'm being caught off guard  
I've had a lonesome awful day, the conversation finds its way  
To catching fire-flies out in the backyard.  
And I tell the man I'm with about the other life I lived  
And I say now you're top gun, I have lost and you have won  
And he says, "Oh no, no, can't you see  
When I was a girl, my mom and I we always talked  
And I picked flowers everywhere that I walked.  
And I could always cry, now even when I'm alone I seldom do  
And I have lost some kindness  
But I was a girl too.  
And you were just like me, and I was just like you.

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# First Nations' Perspectives of Gender

Grades 10-12

## Curriculum Connections

This lesson fits well with the curriculum for Social Justice 12, Social Studies, English 12: First Peoples, and BC First Nations 12.

## Learning Outcomes

- to develop an understanding of and respect for two spirit identities.
- to compare indigenous and 'Western' beliefs about gender.
- to assess the impact of contact with Europeans on First Nations' beliefs about gender

## Context

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an introduction to how some First Nations groups in North America traditionally viewed gender roles prior to European influences.

## Preparation

- Make an overhead of the picture below ("Balboa's Dogs Attacking a Group of Panamanian Sodomites" etched by Theodor de Bry in the 16<sup>th</sup> century).
- Photocopy the article on pages 12 & 13 and the worksheet on page 55.

## Lesson

1. Show students the picture (below) on an overhead. Ask them to interpret what they see in pairs and then discuss as a class.
2. Hand out the article, "Two Spirit: Past, Present & Future." Read through as a class.
3. Have students complete the worksheet (page 55).
4. Discuss students' responses as a class.
5. Ask students to imagine they work at the museum where the picture from the beginning of class is housed. Ask them to write a script of what they would tell visitors of the museum about the picture. You might allow students to conduct research about the picture before writing.

## Assessment

Collect students' scripts for evaluation. Does the student apply critical thinking skills (questioning, comparing, summarizing, making judgments)? Does the student demonstrate an understanding of two spirit identities, both pre-contact and post-contact? Does the student demonstrate open-mindedness and respect for diversity?





## **First Nations' Perspectives of Gender**

1. After reading the article about two-spirit identities, compare and contrast the beliefs about gender traditionally held by some First Nations groups with those traditionally held in 'Western' cultures.

First Nations perspectives

'Western' perspectives

2. Summarize the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation as it's presented in the article.

3. The author writes, "The existence of two-spirit people challenges the rigid binary worldview of the North American colonizers and missionaries, not just of the binary gender system, but of a binary system of this or that, all together." What do you think this means?

## Intersex Conditions<sup>xxiv</sup>

Grade 12

### Curriculum Connections

This lesson fits well with the curriculum in Biology 12 (and may be adapted for Science 9).

### Context

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an understanding of sexual diversity from a genetic and hormonal perspective.

### Preparation

- Photocopy the handout from pages 57-58
- Know the size of the school population and town population

### Lesson

1. Prepare the class by describing the lesson content and setting expectations for mature behaviour. Set the tone that we are talking about an us (perhaps our peers and teachers) not a them (some mystical distant other), so we must be sensitive.
2. Handout the information sheet on Intersex Conditions.
3. Read through with the class, answering any questions they may have.

### Extension

If time permits, show students the documentary “Intersex” from the Discovery channel (currently available on YouTube).

### Discussion questions

1. Considering the ratios given for some of these conditions, how many people in your school might have intersex conditions? How many people in your city might have intersex conditions?
2. Many people believe there are two clear-cut categories for sex: male and female. Others believe it's a fluid line between two end points. Still others believe there are many sex categories. What do you think?

### Assessment

With a partner, answer the following questions:

- A: How has your understanding of intersex conditions changed as a result of this lesson?  
B: Has your attitude about people with intersex conditions changed?  
C: Work to develop a scientific definition of male and of female, bearing in mind what you have learned about the many sexual variations that exist in humans.

*“I always felt excluded because nobody understood what being trans meant. My teacher was talking about transsexual or transgender people in social science class and then he told us that it was the same thing as hermaphrodite [sic]...If you're gonna give the class information, then at least give them the right information.”<sup>xxv</sup>*

## Information Sheet: Intersex Conditions

Q: What does intersex mean?

A: Someone who has an intersex condition has sexual or reproductive anatomy that someone has decided does not fit the standard definitions of male or female.

Q: Are intersex and hermaphrodite the same thing?

A: Hermaphrodite is an older term generally intended to refer to the idea of someone who has full male and full female sexual organs- a biological impossibility. The term hermaphrodite is now considered to be out of date and offensive to intersex people.

Q: Are people diagnosed as having intersex conditions at birth?

A: Sometimes, but other times people don't know they have intersex conditions until later in life. Their condition can be discovered at puberty, in adulthood when fertility difficulties are examined, or during an autopsy after someone dies in old age. Sometimes people live their whole lives never knowing they have an intersex condition.

Q: How many people count as having intersex conditions?

A: That's hard to answer, since there's a lot of grey area in what counts as an intersex condition. For instance, how small does a penis have to be before it meets the criteria of an intersex condition? This is a social decision and may change from culture to culture. However, the rate of people whose bodies differ from the standard male or female is 1 in 100 births, while the number of people receiving surgery to 'normalize' genital appearance is 1 or 2 in 1000 births. The number of people born without a XX or XY chromosome pairing is 1 in 1666 births.

### **Types of Intersex Conditions (Not a complete list)**

**Androgen insensitivity syndrome** (1 in 13 000): This is an inherited genetic condition, where a child will have an XY karyotype but the body's cells are not able to respond to androgen. This results in a baby with genitals of a normal female appearance. There are also undescended or partially descended testes, but no uterus, cervix, fallopian tubes, or upper part of the vagina. At puberty, the testes begin producing testosterone, and because testosterone is chemically very similar to estrogen, this results in breast development. Women with AIS will not menstruate or be fertile. They are often pressured by doctors to have surgery to lengthen the vagina, based on the heterosexist assumption that the vagina should be able to accommodate a penis.

**Partial androgen insensitivity syndrome** (1 in 130 000): This occurs when the body's cells respond only partially to androgen, often resulting in ambiguous genitalia where the baby is considered to have either a large clitoris or a small penis (two ways of describing the same structure). In the past, surgery was often performed to 'normalize' the genital appearance, but more commonly now, the recommendation is to offer but not impose the surgery when the person is older and can decide for him or herself.

**Klinefelter syndrome** (1 or 2 in 1000): Men with Klinefelter syndrome inherit an X chromosome from their mother, a Y chromosome from their father, and an extra X chromosome from either parent, resulting in an XXY karyotype. Infants usually appear to have normal male genitals, though the testes may be small and firm. At puberty, boys

with Klinefelter might not develop much body hair and they may develop breasts. Testosterone injections can help men with Klinefelter syndrome virilize more strongly.

**Congenital adrenal hyperplasia** (1 in 15 000): This condition impacts people with either XX or XY karyotypes, but it only results in an intersex condition for people with an XX karyotype. Adrenal hyperplasia happens when the adrenal glands have an incorrect genetic 'recipe' for making the hormone cortisone. While trying to make the cortisone, the adrenal glands also make virilising hormones, causing the XX embryo to have a large clitoris to the extent that it may look like a penis, or labia that may look like a scrotum. After birth, the CAH hormones can have a masculinising effect, causing body hair, a deep voice, or prominent muscles. These effects can be counteracted by administering cortisone. In XY births, the genitals will have a normal male appearance, but untreated CAH can cause boys to enter puberty early causing social and behavioural challenges as well as causing them to stop growing earlier, resulting in short stature.

**Vaginal agenesis/ MKRS** (1 in 5000): This condition impacts girls with an XX karyotype, and it occurs when the foetal development of sex organs does not complete, resulting in an absent or incomplete vagina. Ovaries are present but the uterus is absent, misshapen, or small. Genitals will have a normal appearance, so vaginal agenesis is not usually diagnosed until the late teens when menstruation has not started. Secondary sex characteristics (breasts, pubic hair, etc) usually develop normally.

**Ovotestes** (1 in 83 000): Formerly known as "true hermaphroditism", ovotestes is a condition where gonads contain both ovarian and testicular tissue and can be present in the ovaries and/or testes. Some people at birth will look typically female, some typically male, and some will have ambiguous genitalia.

**5 alpha reductase deficiency** (no estimate): This condition affects only people with an XY karyotype. It results from an autosomal anomaly (on a chromosome other than the X and/or Y chromosome) and requires the altered gene from both the mother and the father. 5- alpha reductase is an enzyme that converts weaker testosterone into the more potent hormone, DHT. The lack of this enzyme means the foetus will develop as a girl with internal testes. Although the baby at birth will be identified as female, at puberty the testosterone production is generally sufficient to produce masculinisation. Sometimes, the child will migrate into a male role.

**Gonadal dysgenesis** (1 in 150 000): This condition can affect people of either XX or XY karyotypes, and it occurs when there is an absence of both Mullerian inhibiting factor and testosterone. The lack of testosterone results in the regression of the Wolffian ducts, prohibiting the development of male internal reproductive organs, while the lack of Mullerian inhibiting factor results in the creation of oviducts and uterus. The result is a baby who appears to have a normal female appearance and reproductive system, though who may have an XY karyotype. Secondary sex characteristics will not develop.

**Hypospadias** (1 in 770): This relatively common condition occurs when the urethral meatus (pee hole) is located along the underside, rather than at the tip, of the penis. In some cases, the urethra may be open mid-shaft out to the glands or may even be entirely absent, with urine exiting behind the penis.

## Recommended Resources Featuring Gender Diversity

### PICTURE BOOKS

**10,000 Dresses** (2008) Ewert, Marcus. Bailey dreams of wearing beautiful dresses, but her family disapproves of her understanding of her true self.

**Are You a Boy or a Girl?** (2000) Jimenez, Karleen Pendleton. When Kathleen was a girl other children would ask her “are you a boy or a girl?”. In this book she uses pictures from her childhood, and her mother’s words of acceptance to bring home the message that girls can like ‘boy things,’ and boys can like ‘girl things,’ and that being who you are is what matters.

**Ballerino Nate** (2006) Bradley, Kimberly. Nate decides he wants to dance after attending a recital. Although his parents disagree, his brother’s words telling him that boys can’t be ballerinas, worry Nate. While he loves his ballet class, he wonders why he is the only boy. His troubles disappear when he attends a professional performance and meets one of the male dancers.



**Be Who You Are** (2010) Carr, Jennifer. Nick has always known he is a girl inside. His parents support him, but other people are discouraging. Through this book he journeys towards becoming a girl.

**Boy Who Cried Fabulous, The** (2007) Newman, Leslea. A rhyming tale endorsing exuberance, this book offers a refreshing, optimistic message about appreciating the little things in life.

**Different Dragon, The** (2006) Bryan, Jennifer. Boy with two moms befriends dragon who is also different and convinces him that there are lots of ways to be a dragon besides being fierce.

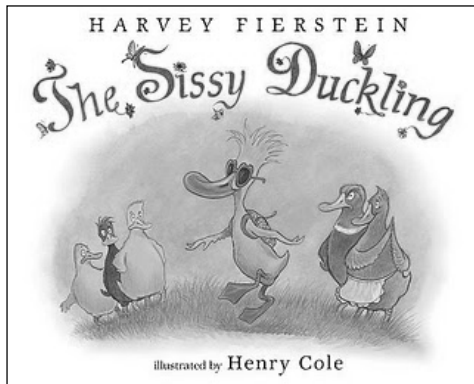
**A Fire Engine for Ruthie** (2004) Newman, Leslea. Ruthie loves to visit Nana, but they don’t always like to play with the same things. Nana loves dolls and dress-up, while Ruthie likes fire engines, motorcycles and trains. Nana’s neighbour Brian gets to play with them, so why not Ruthie?

**Oliver Button Is a Sissy** (1999) dePaola, Tomie. His classmates’ taunts don’t stop Oliver from doing what he likes best. DePaola identifies this story as being his own. It’s a subtle, moving book about a child who is seen as being different.

**Pink!** (2009) Rickards, Lynne, III. Margaret Chamberlain. Tired of rejection, Patrick the pink penguin tries unsuccessfully to live with the flamingos before he returns home to acceptance.

**The Princess Knight** (2004) Funke, Cornelia. King Wilfred teaches Violetta how to be a knight along with her brothers, but when she comes of age, he holds a tournament and announces that the winner can marry her. Violetta secretly enters the contest, and by winning it wins her own independence.

**Pugdog** (2001) U'Ren, Andrea. Mike believes his Pugdog is a boy until the vet tells him Pugdog is a girl. Mike then treats Pugdog in more feminine ways, until he discovers that he knows far less about sex and gender than he assumed.



**Rough, Tough Charley** (2007) Kay, Verla. Stunning illustrations and poetic verse document the exciting true story of Charley Parkhurst, an orphan living in California in the mid-1800s who became a famous stagecoach driver, joined the Odd Fellow's Club, voted in Presidential elections and was revealed, after death, to be a woman.

**Sissy Duckling, The** (2002) Fierstein, Harvey. Elmer tries to do typical boy duck activities but just doesn't fit in. Elmer is rejected and harassed by the other ducks, including his father. Elmer runs away but his ingenuity, bravery and loyalty

earn him the respect and admiration of the rest of the community.

**Sometimes the Spoon Runs Away with Another Spoon Coloring Book** (2010) Bunnell, Jacinta. Nat Kusinitz. This radical activity book takes anecdotes from the lives of real kids and mixes them with classic tales to create true-to-life characters, situations, and resolutions. Featuring massive beasts who enjoy dainty, pretty jewellery and princesses who build rocket ships, this colouring book celebrates those who do not fit into disempowering gender categorizations, from sensitive boys to tough girls.

**Tough Boris** (2001) Fox, Mem. Tough Boris is a pirate, and like all pirates is fierce, and tough and mean, but when his parrot dies, he cries and cries. This is a book that celebrates the men can be tough, and strong and tender all at the same time.

**White Dynamite and Curly Kidd**, Bill Martin Jr. White Dynamite is a rodeo rider, and we follow him and his kid, Curly Kidd on rodeo day as they prep for the ride and White Dynamite bucks his way into winning. Curly Kidd is not identified as either a boy or a girl through most of the book, but at the end is revealed to be a girl – who dreams of growing up to be a rodeo champion like her dad.

**William's Doll** (1972) Zolotow, Charlotte. William wants a doll but is told that makes him a creep and a sissy. His Dad buys him a basketball and a train set, but he still wants the doll. Finally his grandma buys him a doll which he can feed, care for and love.

### **INTERMEDIATE AND ABOVE**

**The Boy in the Dress** (2009) Walliams, David. Dennis finds his family, friends, and townspeople initially resistant to his desire to wear dresses, but they become his biggest fans on and off the soccer field. Gr 4+

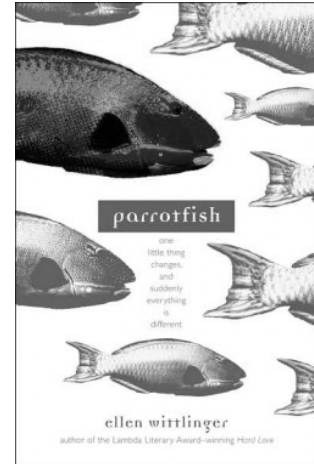
**Luna** (2006) Peters, Julie Ann. Regan is fiercely protective of her brother Liam and his secret desire to be Luna. She fears the family's reaction, and she fears that her brother may someday give in to despair. While Regan wonders if she will ever be able to have a life separate from the needs of her sibling, Liam seriously begins to consider a permanent change. Gr 6 +

***The Manny Files*** (2006). Burch, Christian. Gr. 5-8. Shy Keats Dalinger learns from his unconventional male “nanny” to be more self-confident and out-going while the “manny” becomes more and more a part of the family. Gr 5+

***Misfits, The*** (2001) Howe, James. Being different, name-calling, empowerment. Excluded students band together to challenge cliques and bullying. Gr 6+

***Newsgirl*** (2009) Ketchum, Liza. When ambitious and strong-willed Amelia moves to San Francisco in 1851 with her two mothers, she must masquerade as a boy to realize her dream of first hawking newspapers and then working as a reporter. Gr 5+

***Parrotfish*** (2007) Wittlinger, Ellen. This fast read follows Grady through the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas as he comes out as transgender, faces issues of acceptance and rejection at school and at home. Grady turns out to be a very normal boy who, like every teen, must deal with vexing issues of self-identity. To his credit, he does this with courage and grace. The book is an excellent resource for building awareness about, and serving the increasing number of, transgender teens. Gr 6 +



## **SECONDARY**

***Annabel*** (2010) Winter, Kathleen. In Labrador, a child is born: a baby who appears to be neither fully boy or fully girl, but both at once. Though the child is raised as male within the hyper-masculine hunting society of his father, his shadow-self, a girl he thinks of as “Annabel,” is never entirely extinguished.

***Almost Perfect*** (2009) Katcher, Brian. Beautiful newcomer Sage is perfect for Logan until he discovers that she is transgender.

***Blue Boy*** (2009) Satyal, Rakesh. Can Kiran Sharma, a twelve-year-old Indian American boy who secretly puts on his mother’s make-up, plays with dolls, and practices ballet, really be the reincarnation of the gender-bending Hindu god Krishna?

***Close to Spiderman*** (2000) Coyote, Ivan E. Short stories by Ivan who has a clear feminist voice that powerfully details what it means to experience life as a girl when your imagination is hungry enough to identify and crave the different sorts of freedoms that boys have.

***Debbie Harry Sings in French*** (2008) Brothers, Meagan. Johnny is pretty sure he isn’t gay, but he’s not quite sure what it means that he wants to be Debbie Harry—to dress like her, have hair like hers, and to hang out with drag queens.

***Drag King Dreams*** (2006) Feinberg, Leslie. The story of Max, a butch lesbian bartender at an East Village club where drag kings perform. A veteran of the women’s and gay movement of the past 30 years, Max’s mid-life crisis hits in the midst of the post-9/11.

***Far from Xanadu*** (2005) Peters, Julie Anne. Mike Szabo—ace softball player, weightlifter, a.k.a. Mary Elizabeth—has enough trouble surviving in her small town before a new girl, Xanadu, turns Mike’s life upside down.

**Freak Show** (2007) St. James, James. Outrageously over-the-top teen drag queen Billy Bloom, a new student at the very conservative Dwight D. Eisenhower Academy, finds that life is not easy for him among the rich white students with their brutal homophobia.

**How Beautiful the Ordinary: Twelve Stories of Identity.** Ed. Michael Cart. (2009) The tales in this collection present not only the variety of identities in the LGBTQ community—transgender, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, and gay—but also the variety of experiences of being human—love, regret, betrayal, discovery.

**Loose End** (2005) Coyote, Ivan E. Some of the most touching and funniest stories deal with the complications of living, as the author does, on the borders of established gender roles. Others simply observe the world, reminding us that the wonderful, the magical, can be found in small things.



**The Nearest Exit May be Behind You**, (2009) Bergman, Bear. A collection of personal essays from a transmasculine perspective, featuring topics such as coming out, family, identity and religion. Bear is funny and wry and celebrates what it means to live visibly queer and visibly trans.

**Two Truths and a Lie: A Memoir.** (2008) Schofield, Scott Turner. The fluidity of gender shines in these three performance scripts by a transgender man from the Deep South who describes growing up in a world of debutante balls and homecoming proms.

**A Tale of Two Wives.** (2004) Castle, Stephanie. This book paints a picture of two families with one commonality: a husband who wishes to 'come out' as the female he always felt himself to be. The completely different reactions of the wives lead to very different results.

## **FILM** (GR 6+)

**100% Woman** (2005) The exciting story of BC mountain biker Michelle Dumaresq, the first transgender woman to be named to a national sports team. (58min)

**I'm Just Anneke** (2010). Directed by Jonathan Skurnik. With the support of family and friends, a 12-year-old from Vancouver experiences the onset of puberty in the fluid space between genders. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsI3dV71lcs> (11 min)

**Just Call Me Kade** (2002) Zolten, Sam. The inspiring true story of Kade Farlow Collins 14, FTM (female to male) transgender, and living with an incredibly understanding family in Tucson Arizona. (26 min)

**Ma Vie En Rose** (1997) This is the story of Ludovic, a little girl born in a little boy's body. His belief that he will one day become a girl is initially a source of amusement, and then outrage, in the suburb where he lives. The situation turns into a real-life drama of intense reactions from neighbors, friends, and teachers, resulting in a profoundly optimistic ending. (88 min)

**No Dumb Questions** (2001) Regan, Melissa. Three young girls love their Uncle Bill, but how will they react when he becomes Aunt Barbara. (24 min)



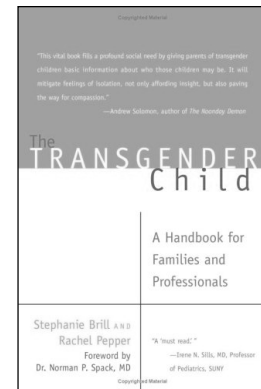
***Straightlaced*** (2008) This DVD unearths how popular pressures around gender and sexuality are confining teens. Their stories demonstrate how gender role expectations and homophobia are interwoven, illustrating the different ways that these expectations connect with culture, race and class. (67min)

## **PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES**

***Public Health Agency of Canada Q&A Booklet on Gender Identity in Schools***

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/qagis-qrise/qagis-qrise-eng.php>

***The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*** (2008) Brill, Stephanie and Pepper, Rachel. The Transgender Child is a must read for every parent, family member, doctor, teacher of a transgender child.



***Welcoming Schools.*** (2010) Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Welcoming Schools is an LGBT-inclusive approach to addressing family diversity, gender stereotyping and name-calling in K-5 learning environments. <http://www.welcomingschools.org/>

## **RESOURCES FOR GENDER NON-CONFORMING STUDENTS & ALLIES**

***Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Students.*** (2008). Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Committee. Contains ideas and information to create change, and numerous resources to connect with the broader transgender community. Download at [http://www.nyacyouth.org/docs/uploads/LL\\_TransKit\\_FINAL\\_Lores.pdf](http://www.nyacyouth.org/docs/uploads/LL_TransKit_FINAL_Lores.pdf)

***Beyond the Binary: A Toolkit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools.*** (2004). Gay Straight Alliance Network. This resource provides transgender students, gender non-conforming students and their allies with the guidance to change school policies and climate to be more inclusive. [http://transgenderlawcenter.org/pdf/beyond\\_the\\_binary.pdf](http://transgenderlawcenter.org/pdf/beyond_the_binary.pdf)

For information on **Transgender Support Groups in British Columbia**, refer to <http://transhealth.vch.ca/resources/transgroups.html>.

## **RESOURCES FOR PARENTS**

***Transparent*** is a Canadian group, started by a woman in St. Catherine's who's child came out as trans, and aims to provide peer support to and connect other parents of trans youth. They can be found on line at [www.transparentcanada.ca](http://www.transparentcanada.ca).

PFLAG USA's brochure ***Our Trans Children*** and book, ***Trans Forming Families***, Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones are supportive, and answer questions. Tends to focus on teens and older. The brochure can be downloaded for free and copies of the brochure or the book can be ordered from their site <http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=413>.

***TransActive.*** A Portland Oregon resource for the parents of trans children and youth has some useful resources and simple clear language, [www.transactiveonline.org](http://www.transactiveonline.org).

## Glossary

**Ally** refers to a person, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, who supports the human rights of LGBTQ and gender non-conforming people.

**Gender expression** refers to an individual's characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine.

**Gender identity** refers to a person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being either male, female, something other, or in between. Everyone has a gender identity.

**Gender non-conforming** refers to a person who has or is perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. Gender non-conforming people may or may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer.

**Genderqueer** refers to people who do not identify as, or who do not express themselves as completely male or female. Genderqueer people may or may not identify as transgender.

**Gender role** refers to the set of socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to females and males. These roles can vary from culture to culture.

**Heterosexism** is the usually implicit assumption that heterosexuality is ideal or preferable to other sexual orientations and/or the only valid option.

**Homophobia** was originally used to describe fear of people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. More often today it is used to describe any level of discomfort or disapproval for people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. This often leads to bias, hatred and harassment of LGBTQ people.

**Intersex Condition** is a diagnosis given to people who have sexual or reproductive anatomy that someone has decided does not fit the standard definitions of male or female.

**LGBTQ** is an umbrella term that stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/two-spirit, and queer/questioning." The category "questioning" is included to incorporate those that are not yet certain of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**Oppression** refers to the acts and effects of domination of certain groups in society over others, caused by the combination of prejudice and power. Systems of oppression include racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and ableism.

**Privilege** refers to the social and economic advantages that dominant groups (people who are white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle class, or male) receive and others do

not. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it.

**Queer** is a term for minority sexual orientations and gender identities that are not heterosexual, heteronormative or gender binary. When used as an insult it is hurtful. More recently, some people use it in a positive light, to reclaim the word.

**Sexism** refers to the systemic practices and individual actions that benefit men over women.

**Sexual orientation** refers to a person's emotional and sexual attraction to other people based on the gender of the other person. A person may identify as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. It is important to understand that sexual orientation and gender identity are two different things. Not all transgender youth identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. And not all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer youth display gender non-conforming characteristics.

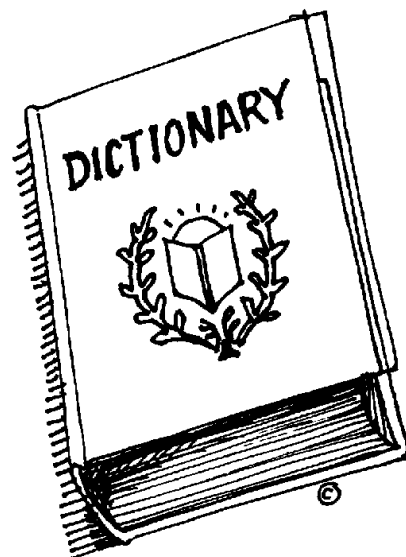
**Stereotype** refers to an idea that all the people in one group behave the same way or have the same characteristics.

**Transgender** is an umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity (sense of being male, female, both or neither) is different from their birth assigned gender.

**Transphobia** refers to a negative attitude or aversion towards people whose gender identity (sense of being male, female, both or neither) is different from the one they were assigned at birth.

**Transsexual** is a term most commonly used to refer to someone who transitions from one gender to another. It includes people who were identified as male at birth but whose gender identity is female, people who were identified as female at birth but whose gender identity is male, and people whose gender identity is neither male nor female. Transition often consists of a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, and a request that people use the correct pronoun when describing them. Transition may, but does not always, include medical care like hormone therapy, counseling, and/or surgery.

**Two Spirit** is the word some Aboriginal people use to identify themselves rather than lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Historically, in many Aboriginal cultures two-spirit persons were respected leaders and medicine people. Two-spirit persons were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives.



# Endnotes

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- ix Stephanie Brill & Rachel Pepper. (2008).
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- xiii Gender and Education Mythbusters: Addressing Gender and Achievement Myths and Realities. (2009).
- xiv Department for Children, Schools, and Families, United Kingdom. (2009). *Gender and Education Mythbusters: Addressing Gender and Achievement Myths and Realities*. <http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00599-2009BKT-EN.pdf>
- xv Rebecca Haskell & Brian Burtch. (2010). *Get that Freak: Homophobia and Transphobia in High Schools*. Winnipeg: Fernwood.
- xvi Youth Gender Action Project: [http://www.ctys.org/documents/YGAP\\_School.pdf](http://www.ctys.org/documents/YGAP_School.pdf)
- xvii Ibid.
- xviii Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition. (2008). *Bending the Mold: An Action Toolkit for Transgender Students*. <http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/bending-the-mold/order-bending-the-mold.html>
- xix Human Rights Campaign Foundation. (2010). *Welcoming Schools*. <http://www.welcomingschools.org>.
- xx Rebecca Haskell & Brian Burtch. (2010).
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- xxii Singh, Manjari. (1998). *Gender Issues in Children's Literature*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication Digest #135. <http://www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/digests/d135.html>
- xxiii Taylor, C., Peter, T., Schachter, K., Paquin, S., Beldom, S., Gross, Z., & McMinn, TL. (2010).
- xxiv Special thanks to April Michelle Herndon, Past President of the North American Intersex Society, for her insightful feedback on this lesson plan.
- xxv Youth Gender Action Project: [http://www.ctys.org/documents/YGAP\\_School.pdf](http://www.ctys.org/documents/YGAP_School.pdf)

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## Notes

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## Become a Member of the Pride Education Network!

Pride Education Network advocates for respectful, inclusive educational environments for all students, staff and families, regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, through the development of concrete supports, policies, resources and actions.

To become a member of PEN, fill out this application and mail it with payment to:

**Pride Education Network  
Box 93678 Nelson Park PO  
Vancouver, BC  
V6E 4L7**

### Contact Information

Name:

Email:

Mailing Address:

### Type of Membership:

- ☐ Regular Member (\$20)
- ☐ Student, Retired Teacher, Low-Income (\$10)

### Please Indicate the Following:

- ☐ New Member
- ☐ Renewal

### Please indicate how you would like to receive your periodic newsletter:

- ☐ Regular Mail
- ☐ Email

Cheques are payable to *Pride Education Network*. For further information, please visit our website at [www.pridenet.ca](http://www.pridenet.ca) or email us at [info@pridenet.ca](mailto:info@pridenet.ca).