

Gender equality in the classroom



**ASSIGN
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“ Both males and females encounter gender expectations and pressures in schools from kindergarten through graduate and professional school. ”

(Wood, 2013) We know how gender stereotyping can begin the moment parents find out the sex of their child. It is basically a cultural habit to give a boy a toy car and a girl a doll. This kick starts the gender stereotypes into gear and thus begins the thought process of what is deemed normal for girls and boys, both in their social and educational lives. Inequality, of gender, in the classroom is believed to be slowly decreasing but this is still an issue in our culture.

Our laws, which were enacted many years ago, were put in place to prevent inequality in our schools, but this cannot remold culture's views on what is right for a boy or a girl. Research shows there have been changes put in place for equality, but our teachers, parents and schools need to work harder in providing an unbiased education to our children. Teacher's attitudes can affect gender differences in the way they communicate to a girl or a boy in their classroom. “ Researchers have found that teachers interact differently with students of similar gender than they do with students of opposite gender.

This includes evidence suggesting disciplinary procedures and proclivity to discipline vary by both student and teacher gender. Likewise, a teacher's perception of student characteristics and abilities appear to systematically vary by gender. ” (Krieg, 2005) Rationale When looking at equality in our schools, this type of equality is based on each individual's understanding in what the differences are in a boy and girl's experiences in education and the influence on expectations and behaviors of both genders.

Teachers feel they are providing a quality education, but may not realize they are transferring their thoughts of what they students should be accomplishing based on gender. Great differences can be found in gender communication in our personal, social, academic and family lives on regular basis. Every culture has its rules and norms for each gender in communicating their message, such as males are considered reserved and female are considered outspoken because of their feminist quality. In academics it is believed the male has the right to receive a higher education and top positions in their field compared to females.

In academics a woman and man chose the profession as per their qualities. Gender stereotypes in education would be, a woman prefers to be a teacher, beautician or social worker where they can get the opportunity to discuss and show their feminine qualities while a male prefers an engineer or scientist degree where they do not need to interact as much and can show their potential abilities for performing the task. Our Country has come a long ways in ensuring women have the same equal rights as men.

Women have the ability to vote, make independent decisions and work at a job in the field of their choosing, but their wages still are not equal to their male counterparts with the same job description. When looking at our Educational System you can see how gender differences and stereotyping can begin in our children's classes. Girls are offered courses such as Home Economics and boys are offered Shop classes. If a boy decides he wants to take Home Economics he is made fun of as being a "sissy" boy or if a girl wants to take shop she is called a "she-man".

A girl could be good at Math, but because of the typical stereotyping of boys are good at math and science this may have created under-achievement in girls at school or changed the course of their chosen work field and made them direct their attention toward a field, which is considered more gender acceptable. Research Gender equality in schools is determined by the different experiences in education by boys and girls and the impact of these differences is “ on the expectations, interests, and behaviors of boys and girls.”(mceecdya. edu. au)

The thought is girls and boys are opposites and have been assigned their status in life, but this can reduce their ability to participate in an effective educational outcome and can “ affect their perception of gender when it comes to other factors. School can have either a positive or a negative effect on the building stages of their gender, especially when boys and girls are younger and their learning is starting to grow.

Some researchers believe that gender inequality occurs in the classrooms, the way the teachers teach, and the routines, which separate the girls from the boys. Teachers still persist in the practice of forming lines, determining groups, and award winning prizes by gender and the way problems, schoolwork, and exercise are often understood or related to boys' lives rather than girls' lives. ” (Knupfer, 1997) Girls were not inclined to take math and science courses or to engage in gifted programs in math or science, even if they were qualified to take these classes.

Instead, the girls believed they were not smart enough and avoided taking these subjects in high school and college. It is important to give positive

guidance to girls and boys in order for them to engage in activities, which would not stereotypically be a part of their gender. Encourage girls to pursue sports, science and math and boys to engage in cooking, art, and music. " It is important that early childhood educators know that young children are especially susceptible to forming stereotypes.

Helping children get along with one another and combating discrimination and name-calling can become a regular part of classroom experiences. " (Levitch and Gable, 2005) According to this article, they are trying to reduce stereotyping through observation and awareness. They know kids can learn by observing people they look up to and if the teachers are setting good examples of how to speak to someone, no matter their gender or race, they will try to model themselves after them and imitate their actions.

They also focused on the fact that, " Between 4 and 7 years of age, children realize that gender is stable, regardless of changing clothes or actions. Children also notice teachers' behaviors and further learn about what boys and girls can do. " (Levitch and Gable, 2005) The teachers had to monitor their behavior on how they handled the emotional behavior of boys and girls and if they treated each differently. They looked at the abilities of the boys and girls without considering their gender.

Equality was encouraged through activities for both the boys and girls. They also " exposed the children to models of people in non-traditional gender roles. " (Levitch and Gable, 2005) Another concept they used and one that I really liked was Avoid language that limits one gender or another from participating. Children learn what is expected of them from the language

used by their role models. (Use gender-neutral labels, such as congressperson, mail carrier, flight attendant and firefighter.)” (Levitch and Gable, 2005).

The teachers also chose books, which had the same amount of female and male characters. This made me wonder how long it took them to find a book that did not have typical gender roles portrayed. According to the teachers, most stores have characters that are male and their roles are stereotyped. Younger kids are so impressionable, these teachers are on the right track to help make a change in the gender stereotyping done at this age, considering boys, and girls are firmly rooted in a gender identity by the time they reach the age to go to school.

“ Gender stereotypes exist in society at large and in education. These stereotypes portray males as dominant and females as subordinate. Moreover, these stereotypes may account for the finding that females traditionally have chosen predominantly humanistic fields, while males have chosen science and technology. ” (Ilatov, Shamai, Hertz and Mayer, 1998) In their study, they monitored two 7th grade Israeli classes. One class had more females and the other class had a balance of boys and girls.

Both teachers used different communications styles. One communicated with more control while the students influenced the other teacher. Another factor in this study was the fact that the teachers were not biased against females. Their study “ indicated that gender, academic composition, and teacher communication style are important factors in teacher-student interactions and an important factor influencing classroom interaction, in

addition to student gender and academic standing, is the style of communication of the teacher.” (Ilatov, Shamai, Hertz and Mayer, 1998)

When looking at gender differences for effective education, Rhoades stated, “ In the first years of school, 95 percent of the time boys and girls have women as teachers. Many of these well-meaning female teachers believe that there is too much violence and competition in the world and not enough cooperation and communication. They often assign reading books meant to induce sympathy for the feelings of characters with problems.” (Rhoads, 2004)

The problem is the boys became bored with these types of books, where the girls enjoyed them. The boys then fell behind in their reading assignments, because they did not appeal to what they liked which was stories about heroes, combat and adventure. Rhodes also pointed out there wasn't any type of competition, such as dividing the class into groups and finding out which group understood the story the best out of the groups. Some researchers have looked at the girl's side only.

“ Sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different educations. ” (Reay, 2001) From Reay's viewpoint, when girls enter school they tend to do the same level of school work as boys in “ nearly every measure of achievement, but by the time they graduate high school or college they have fallen behind. ” (Reay, 2001) Reay went on to say that the “ socialization of gender within our schools assures that girls are made aware that they are unequal to boys. ”