



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS PROJECT

GENDER MINI-GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

TOPIC:

GENDER SOCIALISATION

Prepared by: Grace Christie, Gender Specialist

In collaboration with: Professor Barbara Bailey, Gender Consultant



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
Introduction	3
Definition of Terms: Sex, Gender and Stereotypes	4
Sex and Gender	4
Stereotypes	5
Gender Socialization	6
The Role of the School in Gender Socialization	7
Gender Regime of the School	7
Curriculum Content	8
Pedagogical Practices	9
Teacher-student interaction	9
Classroom organization	12
Discipline	12
Student performance	13
Sexual division of labour	14
Summary	15



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the gender component in the Expanding Educational Horizons Project is to enhance performance in literacy and numeracy in targeted project schools by:

- Providing project staff, principals, teachers and parents with a conceptual understanding of gender, gender identity acquisition and ways in which gender influences classroom practices and learning outcomes; and
- Supporting specialist project staff in assisting classroom teachers to utilize gender-sensitive approaches to selection and use of support materials, lesson planning, teaching methodologies and assessment of learning outcomes

The gender component therefore considers it vital for teachers in all project schools to understand the concept of gender and in particular, the gender implications relating to the school environment in order to optimally impact teaching strategies and learning outcomes in their schools.

The material contained in this mini-guide is adapted primarily from the publication “Gender Issues in Caribbean Education – A module for teacher education” which was authored by Monica Brown et.al. and edited by Barbara Bailey in 2000. This publication was prepared for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat by the Regional Coordinating Unit of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies of the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. The Centre had been commissioned to prepare this module for use in the training of teachers at Teacher Training Colleges throughout the CARICOM region.

Recognizing that not all project teachers have been exposed to gender training, we will use this first mini-guide to focus on the basic areas of gender sensitization, with special emphasis on gender socialization as it relates to the gender regime of the school. The broad areas to be addressed are:

- Gender Socialization / Gender Identity Acquisition
- Role of School/Teachers in Gender Socialization
- Characteristics of the Gender Regime in Schools

It is important to ask yourself questions about what you do in your classroom and how your behaviour could contribute to reinforcing or constructing gender stereotypical roles and attitudes in your students. All your own behaviours and attitudes hold important implications for your students’ gender socialization, their response to schooling and ultimately could influence their school performance. With this in mind, we have interspersed in the text of this mini-guide a series of five activities (boxed and in blue) that will assist you in understanding gender socialization processes and how these influence the school experience. Please complete the activities as you read.

We also recommend that you record your responses in a Gender Journal, which can be in the form of a notebook or computer file. This Gender Journal will be used over time to observe your own classroom behaviours and the extent to which you are using



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

approaches that are appropriate for boys and girls. Use the Gender Journal to write down any issues related to sex or gender that come to your attention. At one-month intervals, go back to each area identified and note any interventions that you have used to address these issues, as well as changes noted following these interventions. You will be required to bring your journal to the gender workshops you attend so as to share your experiences with other teachers.

DEFINITION OF TERMS: SEX, GENDER AND STEREOTYPES

We will start this section by differentiating between the words “sex” and “gender”, which are sometimes used interchangeably. Although the two concepts are inter-related, there are clear distinctions that you need to understand. We will also explore the concept of “stereotype.”

Sex and Gender

What is *sex*?

The term ‘*sex*’ refers to biological differences between women and men. Biological differences are fixed and mostly unchangeable and vary little across cultures and over time. Individuals are born male or female, with certain associated biological characteristics and therefore sexual differences (e.g. Anatomy and Physiology)

What is *gender*?

The term ‘*gender*’ refers to socially constructed differences between the sexes and to the social, economic and political relations between women and men. Gender identity depends on the circumstances in which women and men live and includes economic, cultural, historical, ideological and religious factors. The biological body becomes a scaffold on which society (individuals and institutions) constructs social meanings related to ‘appropriate’ sex-linked behaviours, referred to as masculine and feminine traits.

Gender, therefore, does not necessarily refer to differences or concerns linked to biological characteristics of women and men, although gender-based differences and sex-based differences are often interrelated. Whereas sex-based differences are unchangeable, gender-based differences and gender relations are affected by policies, regulations and legislations, and can be changed. Please note Table 1 below:

Table 1: Sex and Gender

SEX	GENDER
Fixed and unchangeable	Dynamic and fluid
Determined at birth	Constructed over lifetime
Universal (with variations determined by genes)	Can be culture-specific
Biologically defined	Socially constructed
Usually two distinct categories	Multiple manifestations

Over time, in most cultures, certain behaviours are considered to be more closely associated with one sex than with the other. Those associated with females are referred to as feminine traits and those with males as masculine traits.

Activity #1 – Masculine and Feminine Traits

Most cultures consider certain behaviours to be typical for each sex. Examine the trait/behaviour below and identify the sex with which it is predominantly associated.

Trait / Behaviour	Sex
Aggressiveness	
Submissiveness	
Nurturance	
Powerfulness	
Sexual initiative	
Dominance/decision-making	
Chastity	
Demonstration of emotion	
Conformity	

Look back at your choices. Is the behaviour always exclusively associated with the sex you chose? We hope you recognized that these traits/behaviors can never exclusively be associated with one sex.

Stereotypes

The behaviours that become linked with a particular sex over time and are widely accepted by members of that society are described as stereotypical behaviours. A definition of stereotype is provided in the box below:



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

Stereotype: A standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group. It represents an over-simplified opinion, accustomed attitude or uncritical judgement.

Activity One helped you to identify your own mental picture of gender-based differences between males and females. Your mental picture was most likely determined by societal norms of gender based differences which govern the way men and women relate to each other in your culture/society. Of importance is the fact that many societies tend to attribute greater importance and value to activities that are considered masculine, thereby resulting in unequal status for both sexes.

GENDER SOCIALISATION

The different behaviours you identified in Activity One are acquired through a process of gender socialization that starts from, or even before, birth. See the definition of socialization in the box below.

Socialization: The means or process by which all members of society acquire knowledge of the behavioural ideals appropriate to and valued by the society for each sex.

There are several agents that influence the gender socialization of individuals. The primary agent is the family and secondary agents include the church, the school, the community, the media and peers. Here are some examples of how boys and girls are socialized differently. Girls frequently grow up believing that they are physically weaker than boys and are not as good at things mechanical. Girls are therefore likely to see themselves as less competent than boys in these respects. On the other hand, they may see themselves as superior to boys in housekeeping matters, as they are usually expected to help with domestic chores in the house on a daily basis.

This differential socialization may have implications for learning and performance in school, for career paths and for various societal roles. It is suggested that the ways in which girls are socialized cause them to develop a sense of responsibility, discipline and a sense of process in getting things done, while boys' socialization encourages more outdoor activities and less attention to process. These differences it is argued, make girls more disposed to adjusting to institutional requirements, such as those of the school.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN GENDER SOCIALISATION

The school is therefore an important source of messages that contribute to gender socialization and stereotyping.

In the Caribbean, research suggests that in practice, the education received by male and female students at comparable levels of the education system has been far from equitable. Some of these inequalities are reflected in areas of teaching and learning in the forms of stereotyping and the pedagogical and assessment strategies used – resulting in differential treatment of boys and girls, differential experiments and therefore differences in curriculum participation and performance.

In order to effectively bring about the type of change that will facilitate gender equity in schools, the school curriculum has to be the primary agent of this change. In practice, the school is a smaller version of the society, hence the school's curriculum usually replicates the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that individuals are expected to acquire to prepare them to take their places in society. The teachers who have to implement the curriculum are themselves products of the society. Schools, through their curricular practices, continue to reproduce the inequality between the sexes found in the wider society in areas that determine career choice, employment and power.

The school should, therefore, through its curricular practices, take an active rather than a passive role in socializing students. Teachers need to be cognizant of the differential gender socialization that occurs in the home, in order to use strategic methods in the teaching of boys and girls.

We realize that the school alone will not create equity in the education system even if the education received is completely equitable; however we are also cognizant that when teachers change, so does everything in their classrooms. **A change in attitude as it relates to gender stereotyping must therefore begin with you, the teacher.**

Gender Regime of the School

Kessler (1998) has termed this pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity and femininity among school staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labour the school's "gender regime." The primary role of the school and teachers with regard to gender socialization in the school is to ensure that its gender regime is not gender biased in any way.

The gender regime of a school is reflected in five main areas:

- curriculum content;
- pedagogical practices, which include teachers' expectations and classroom organization;
- discipline;
- student performance;

- sexual division of labour in schools.

In this section we will examine how gender is manifested in each of these areas.

Curriculum content

Textual materials are projected as a potentially powerful source of gender socialization. Gender stereotypes in such materials not only influence the development of gender identity during the formative years of a child's life but also affect the child's cognitive and affective development.

It is suggested by Peterson and Lack (1990) that illustrated books play a significant and pervasive part in early gender development because books are a primary vehicle for presenting societal values to young children. These stories are not only written for entertainment, but also to articulate prevailing cultural values and social norms. Children's books, including textbooks, therefore, define society's prevailing standards of masculine and feminine role development and are, therefore, important to the culture of a typical primary-level classroom.

Research has shown that primary level textbooks reflect gender bias and stereotyping in the following areas:

- pictorial content;
- word content;
- central characters and number of times males/females speak; and
- roles carried out by males/females in the pictorial and word content of the text.

It is therefore important to assess the extent to which books used in primary level classrooms portray these types of gender bias and take corrective measures where possible

Learning materials used in the classroom, inclusive of the content and media used in teaching, should appeal to both sexes. This means selecting and editing these materials carefully, as they often reflect gender stereotypes. ***Use of sexist clichés and demeaning images associated with either sex should always be avoided.***

Teachers can deliberately select resources that raise students' awareness of sexist concerns and challenge sexism by using books, work cards and media that:

- are written by women;
- portray women in powerful and strong roles;
- portray men in gentler roles;
- present women and men in non-traditional roles; and
- raise awareness of gender issues with the students.

Activity #2: Awareness of gender bias and stereotyping in curriculum materials

1. Choose a reader used in your class.
2. Count the number of times a male/female is represented in the pictures in the book.
3. Count the number of times a male/female speaks.
4. Make a note of the roles carried out by the main characters.
5. Make a note of your findings in your Gender Journal.

Pedagogical practices in the classroom

Teacher/Student interactions

Research findings suggest that many teachers treat girls differently than boys in the classroom, without even being consciously aware of this practice. It is further suggested that teachers react differently with boys and girls, particularly in mixed-sex classrooms and further, that these patterns also depend on the subject matter and the sex of the teacher. Studies in teacher/student interactions show that in co-educational classrooms, teachers, regardless of sex, interact more with boys and give boys more attention.

Activity #3 – How do you interact with male/female students in the classroom?

- *When hands are raised in response to a question, who do you usually call upon to answer the question – a boy or a girl?*
- *Which sex do you usually asked to go to the board to solve a mathematical problem?*
- *Do you find yourself calling on girls more frequently in language/reading class and boys more frequently in math class?*
- *Who gets more praise for work well done?*
- *In each case, can you account for your choices? Are they based on the expectations you hold for girls and boys?*
- *Do you experience more behaviour problems with boys or girls? Do you respond to these problems with boys and girls in the same way?*
- *How can you improve equity in your class?*

Write your responses to these questions in your Gender Journal. They should reveal something to you about the different gender expectations you hold.

Often, stereotypical gender beliefs held by teachers are unfounded, as no two students or group of students are alike or display the same masculine and feminine traits and



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

behaviours. When teachers refer to “the needs of our class,” whose interest is being served in these classes? Students are not “faceless” or “genderless,” so teachers cannot effectively teach a class consisting of boys and girls without knowledge of their individuality (Cruickshank & Callahan, 1983). The needs of some students are not representative of the “class,” and, unfortunately, some students are excluded from the education process because of ascribed stereotypical roles.

The uniqueness of the individual, boy or girl, should not be ignored. Neither should either be labeled based on traditional gender roles and behaviours associated with the sexes. Students, therefore, need to be considered as individuals with unique attributes, if equal educational opportunity is to be provided and equity achieved for both girls and boys in school.

Teacher/student interactions usually result from the expectations teachers have of their students. It is therefore extremely important that as teachers, you ensure that you reflect positive expectations for all of your students and that these expectations do not reflect biases along lines of sex, class, culture, or disability. Teachers convey different expectations in the following ways:

- what is said as well as what is implied;
- how we speak to male and female students;
- the types of reinforcement we use with boys and girls;
- the different ways in which we respond to boys and girls;
- the sanctions/punishments we use with boys compared with girls.

It is natural that as teachers, you may have different expectations of students in terms of behaviour and performance. However, you should note that as a result of the expectations you hold, students can be affected positively and negatively. Your interaction with your students reveals what behaviours and achievements you expect and this, in turn, affects the child’s self-concept, achievement motivation and level of aspiration.

Activity #4 – Teachers’ Expectations/Responses

What expectations do you have of boys/girls in your class? The checklist below should help you identify your own expectations. Record your responses in your Gender Journal.

CHECKLIST

Expectation	Response
Do you expect: <input type="checkbox"/> Girls to be quieter and better behaved than boys?	Are you: <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking differently to girls and boys? (e.g. using softer tones with girls and harsher tones with boys)
<input type="checkbox"/> Boys to be more aggressive and more involved in disruptive behaviour than girls?	<input type="checkbox"/> Giving more attention to the boys in class?
<input type="checkbox"/> Girls to be better at language work and boys to be better at math and science?	<input type="checkbox"/> Calling on girls to read aloud in language class and directing more questions to boys in math and science class?
<input type="checkbox"/> Boys to be physically stronger than girls; and girls to be more domestic than boys?	<input type="checkbox"/> Assigning “sex appropriate” duties to boys/girls; e.g. instructing boys to lift/move desks or heavy objects, empty the garbage etc. while instructing girls to sweep the classrooms, help in the canteen etc.?

During teaching, you will need to pay attention to how you communicate and interact with students of both sexes. Students are very aware of the opinions you hold of them and the comparisons you make between them.

Activity #5

Can you think of any school-related factor other than attendance where distinct sex-based differences are apparent? What are these factors and what differences are you aware of? Record your ideas in your Gender Journal.



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

There are occasions when your expectations are justified and should be used in a professional way to promote positive gains for boys and girls. Such expectations should be based on facts that are verifiable through research. For example, the attendance patterns of students hold very important implications for student learning and academic achievement in schools. Students' infrequent attendance in class will affect sequencing and understanding of concepts being taught, level of motivation and ultimately their ability to perform academically.

In Jamaica, research indicates that school attendance at the primary level is lower for boys, particularly boys in the rural areas. This finding may reflect how Jamaicans have been socialized to think that boys, more so than girls, can fend for themselves later in adulthood and, therefore, can afford to miss out on schooling with less negative consequences. Regardless of the reason for such an attendance pattern, this affects the school performance of boy, particularly those in the rural areas.

There are other patterns in schools that appear to affect one sex more than the other. It is important to consider how you might even have taken some of the patterns for granted, assuming that it is "naturally" so for that particular sex.

Classroom Organization

The arrangement of the classroom usually gives an indication of the teacher's philosophy of teaching and learning. It also influences the methodology teachers use to teach. If your goal is to eliminate gender bias and discourage stereotype behaviours, seating students to work alone or to compete against each other in an environment that pits one sex against the other is counterproductive.

Teachers will therefore need to pay attention to:

- seating
- the nature of the learning activity to be done
- the responsibilities to be undertaken by both boys and girls
- the size and composition of the groups
- the motivational strategies you will employ



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

Activity #6 – How is your classroom organized?

How are boys and girls organized in your classroom for instruction?
Do you use grouping for activities? If so, how are your groups organized?
Do you develop different activities for girls/boys? If “yes,” why? If “no,” why not?
Are boys mixed with girls in seating, forming lines etc?
Does your classroom organization send messages that reinforce gender stereotypic roles?

Discipline

Discipline is another area in which stereotypic gender roles are an issue. It is important that teachers give consideration to the range of incidents related to classroom discipline that can manifest differential treatment of boys and girls. Males, for example, may generally be more involved in fighting, bullying and loud behaviour. Girls, on the other hand, may resort to teasing, name calling and talking back to teachers.

Similarly, gender expectations are revealed in students’ language. A boy wanting to engage in what are considered “feminine” activities is often called a “sissy.” A girl more involved in the ‘masculine’ domain is labeled a “tomboy.”

Physical aggression should be noted and addressed in both sexes. Boys, as well as girls, need to express their feelings in ways that allow them to solve problems without physical violence. Researchers suggest that aggressive acts are especially frequent among boys with each other. Girls, on the other hand, because of their socialization which stresses cooperation and agreement, rarely engage in aggressive acts in girls’ play with other girls. To facilitate more cooperative behaviour in boys, teachers can structure classroom seating and interaction to allow both sexes to work together in groups so as to develop social skills that are devoid of gender stereotypical practices.

Physical punishment and coercive practices by the teacher that might promote aggressive behaviour should be avoided. Literature in the field suggests that such practices only encourage children to adopt the same tactics in their relationship with others. Your objective should be to facilitate disciplinary methods which promote self-control and empathy.

It is also important to educate parents with respect to appropriate disciplinary measures that they can use with their children. Parents may tend to interpret physical aggression among boys as being acceptable and characteristic of a boy – that is the “boys will be boys” approach to the problem.



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

Student Performance

In recent times, the overall performance of girls at all stages of the primary level has been better than boys in relation to the three assessments done at the primary level of education in Jamaica: the Grade Three Diagnostic Test; the Grade Four Literacy Test; and the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT).

Activity #7 – How do you interpret the results of these various assessments?

Based on results in your school, use the questions below to help you determine what the findings imply in terms of performance of male/female students and implications for teaching and learning. Write your answers in your Gender Journal and then later compare them to the explanation which follows this activity.

- Are all girls doing better than all boys?
- Are all boys doing worse than all girls?
- Are all girls performing at the same level?
- Are all boys performing at the same level?
- What patterns do you think account for the performance?
- Should we speak about males (under-achieving) as if the only reason for their underachievement is exclusively the fact that they are male?

The most accurate inference would be that there are differences in performance between boys and girls, but also among boys and among girls. Sex is, therefore, a contributory factor accounting for differences in performance, but it is not the only factor. One explanation as to why sex is one of the important factors is that boys and girls are socialized differently in the home. Because of this, according to Figueroa (2003), girls are better prepared for the demands that schools make.

Research has shown that the following factors can contribute to performance and also influence learning outcomes in early childhood education up to Grade 3 (Samms-Vaughn, 2004):

- Quality of the home environment, identified as the single best predictor of intelligence;
- Poverty, low birth weight, poor health;
- The caring relationship between children and care-givers;
- Parental involvement in education;
- Access to nutrition, medical, dental and mental health services.

Teachers, therefore, need to look beyond the *sex* of a student to determine reasons accounting for performance or non-performance of that child. Please note the importance of a teacher being knowledgeable about the environmental circumstances outside of



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

school under which their students live. This can help teachers determine specific interventions needed to improve the performance of a particular student.

Sexual Division of Labour

The term “sexual division of labour” refers to the assignment of tasks that are considered by society to be sex appropriate. A close examination of the ways in which society is organized reveals that a sexual division of labour exists in every segment of society: the home; the school; the commercial work environment; the church; and the political arena. As the school is one of the main agents of socialization institutions in society, it is therefore not surprising that a sexual division of labour would also be reflected in the school community. This division is evident primarily in terms of the duties assigned to both staff and students in the school. It should be the duty of the school’s management team to demonstrate a consciousness of gender issues and to avoid assigning stereotypical roles to either sex. In this way, students will not receive undesirable messages regarding gender.

You may be able to observe gender stereotypical roles ascribed to both staff and students in your school. Let us consider the following questions *in relation to your school*:

- What is the sex of your Principal/Vice Principal/Senior Teachers?
- What is the ratio in terms of sex of the teachers of Grades 1-4?
- Is the proportion of male: female students in the school population represented at the administrative level?
- Which students in your class are asked to move desks; empty garbage bins; sweep the classroom; help in the canteen; run errands for the teacher?
- Can you observe any other areas of gender bias in your school that could be regarded as a sexual division of labour?

Activity #8 – Sexual division of labour in the school

Examine carefully the questions asked above and write your responses in your Gender Journal.

SUMMARY

This mini-guide is intended to be a gender-awareness training tool for all teachers at the primary level. As such, training and the resulting gender strategies can be sustainable far beyond the life of the project and can be extended to include non-project schools. The mini-guide places emphasis on the ways in which gender socialization can impact teaching practices in the classroom, which in turn can impact learning outcomes of students.



Expanding Educational Horizons

Caenwood Centre, Grant Hall, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5

Tel: (876) 967-5192 or 922-0783

After working with this guide, we hope teachers are better equipped:

- i) to recognize the gender biases that exist in the school community as a whole;
- ii) to be aware of ways in which they themselves may be inadvertently perpetuating stereotypical beliefs and practices in their own classrooms, thus exhibiting gender bias; and
- iii) to be able to employ appropriate, corrective measures/strategies that will eliminate gender bias in their classrooms so as to positively impact teaching practices and learning outcomes.