

SIYALINGANA

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND PRACTITIONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

THIS GUIDE SUPPORTS TEACHERS AND PRACTITIONERS WORKING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND PREVENT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON GENDER.

The guide offers practical tips to equip teachers and practitioners with the skills required to:

- become aware of gender biases in early learning environments and how they affect children's learning
- use early learning environments, activities and interactions to help children break free from gender stereotypes that limit their growth and development

A black and white line drawing of a man and a woman standing and talking. The man is on the left, wearing a collared shirt and trousers, holding a folder. The woman is on the right, wearing a button-down shirt and a patterned skirt. They are both smiling and looking at each other.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

THE GUIDE PRIMARILY TARGETS TEACHERS AND PRACTITIONERS.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS AND PRACTITIONERS:

ANY PERSON WHO IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE EMOTIONAL, COGNITIVE, SENSORY, SPIRITUAL, MORAL, PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AGED 0-9 YEARS.

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INTRODUCTION

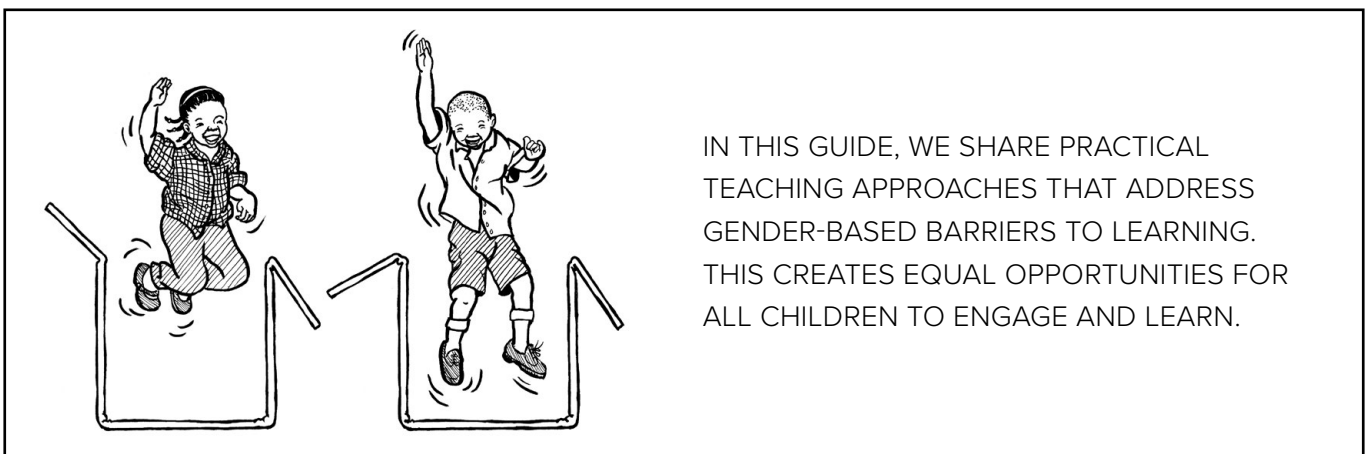
IN SOUTH AFRICA, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TO SHAPE OUR SOCIETY.

To build a better future for everyone, it is important that all people enjoy equal opportunities. Promoting equal opportunities needs to happen in broader society and communities, including learning environments such as schools and early childhood centres. Children have a right to quality education. Schools and ECD centres should be safe places where all children can feel included, respected and protected from all forms of abuse and discrimination. Learning environments should ensure children thrive and reach their highest potential. From a very young age, children's holistic development, well-being and belonging are important because they impact the choices children make in their lives, how they feel about themselves and how they treat others. You can instil values that embrace diversity, and respect for others. Educators and children are active participants in contributing to a learning environment that is free of discrimination and inequalities.

Gender is an important factor that shapes the way children are treated and what is expected of them. Stereotypes or 'rules' about how children of a certain sex should look, speak and behave (for instance, girls should be kind and obedient; boys shouldn't wear dresses or cry) affect how children come to see themselves, their value and their own abilities. Access to opportunities and resources may also differ for children based on their sex. As a result, their development and learning can be negatively affected.

All children, regardless of their sex and associated gender should have equal access to opportunities to live a healthy and fulfilled life, accepted for who they are.

Early learning environments are important places to help children feel safe and accepted, where they can be encouraged to reach their full potential.



IN THIS GUIDE, WE SHARE PRACTICAL TEACHING APPROACHES THAT ADDRESS GENDER-BASED BARRIERS TO LEARNING. THIS CREATES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN TO ENGAGE AND LEARN.

WHY GENDER MATTERS

Post-apartheid, the South African Government legislated many laws that promote equality and respect for diversity. Supporting diversity in all its forms is embraced in the Bill of Rights and is enshrined in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

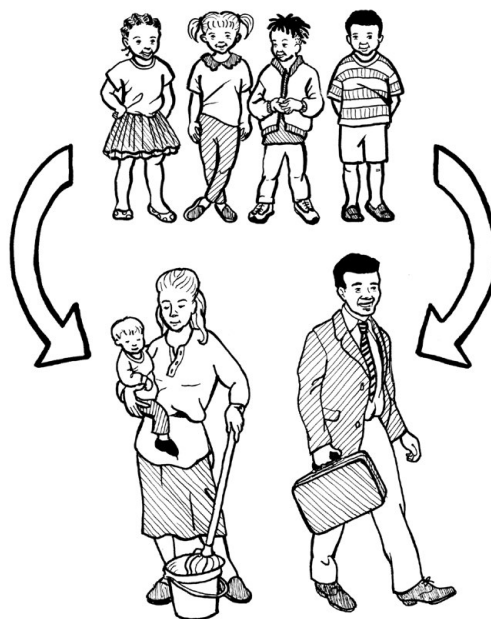
Diversity and inclusion are essential in promoting a learning environment where all children can thrive irrespective of their backgrounds, abilities and/ or identities. Children could belong to different groups based on the colour of their skin, the language they speak, their religious practices, their mental and physical abilities, and their gender. They could also feel advantaged or disadvantaged by being part of that group.

Gender is an important factor that shapes the way children are treated and what is expected of them. This is because society has traditionally taught us that there are two sexes (MALE/FEMALE), and that there are different gender rules and expectations for people based on these two sexes.

GENDER STEREOTYPES OR 'RULES' BEGIN IN CHILDHOOD AND CAN AFFECT CHILDREN'S SENSE OF SELF FROM A YOUNG AGE. THROUGH THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT, YOUNG CHILDREN RECEIVE MESSAGES ABOUT WHAT SOCIETY EXPECTS FROM THEM AND WHAT THEY CAN AND CANNOT DO.

GIRLS

Girls are often given toys that encourage caring for others, like dolls. They are valued for being cooperative, kind and obedient. Girls are often socialised to become home keepers, responsible for the well-being, feeding and care of the family, placing less value on their educational attainment.



BOYS

Boys are often given toys that encourage critical thinking, such as building blocks and are discouraged from playing with toys like cooking utensils or dolls. Boys are often prepared for their future role as provider and protector. Right from the earliest age boys are encouraged to lead and show authority, to be physically and emotionally strong.

Often children who do not conform to these traditional ideas about gender (for instance, girls thought to be too masculine and boys seen as feminine) face pressures to conform or experience mistreatment by peers in school, and condemnation by the broader society.

THESE RULES AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT BEHAVIOR AND ROLES CAN BE LIMITING FOR ALL CHILDREN.

Gender equality – where all children regardless of their sex and associated gender have equal opportunities to live a healthy life – are important for all children to realise their full identity and potential.

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT GENDER?

When a baby is born, we assign them a **sex** based on their biological makeup, such as genitals. For example, a male baby has a penis, a female baby has a vagina.

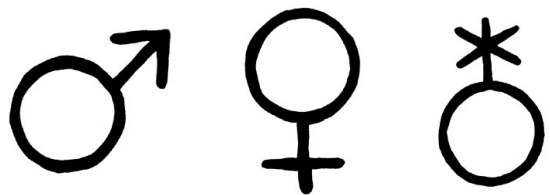
Gender refers to the personal and social characteristics that are associated with a specific sex. Gender is socially constructed. For example, caring for children is considered a role for women. Ideas about gender can change over time.

KEY GENDER CONCEPTS

SEX

The assignment and classification of people as male, female or intersex, based on biological differences at birth.

INTERSEX: a variety of conditions where a person's anatomy does not fit the typical definition of male and female.



GENDER

THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING MALE, FEMALE, A COMBINATION OR NEITHER.

GENDER IDENTITY

A person's internal sense of being male, female, a combination or neither.

GENDER ROLES

Activities, tasks and responsibilities ascribed to a group of people based on their sex.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING: When someone does not conform to typical gender roles.

HARMFUL GENDER PRACTICES:

Harmful practices such as ‘gender bias’, ‘gender stereotypes’ and ‘gender discrimination’, negatively affect a person’s sense of identity and ability.

GENDER BIAS

A tendency to treat people differently based on their gender. Gender bias can be unconscious, meaning it’s based on personal or learned experiences.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Generalised beliefs about the personal attributes, behaviours and roles of a specific social group (for example women should take care of babies while men need to provide for the family).

GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION

Exclusion of a person from educational opportunities, meaningful careers, political influence or opportunities for economic advancement based on their sex.

HELPFUL GENDER PRACTICES:

These are helpful gender practices that promote a person’s sense of ability and worth.

GENDER EQUALITY

The absence of discrimination based on a person’s sex and associated gender. It implies that society sees everyone as equal, regardless of their sex.

GENDER RESPONSIVENESS

Plans and actions that address the different needs and aspirations of people of different sexes and associated genders or taking actions to correct or prevent gender bias and discrimination to ensure gender equality and equity.

GENDER RESPONSIVE TEACHING APPROACHES

Gender responsive teaching approaches address gender-based barriers to learning, for all children.

GENDER AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

South African society is to a large extent patriarchal. This means that men are seen to have the authority in society, and that women are seen as subordinate to men. The high levels of gender-based violence and the higher HIV infection rates among girls and women in South Africa are tragic consequences of sustained gender inequalities, related to prevailing harmful gender norms in our society such as female disempowerment and harmful ideas about masculinity.

THESE HARMFUL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER ROLES ARE INTRODUCED TO CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE STILL SMALL.

Boys may be expected to be tough and there may be less room for their emotions. Often, girls are brought up to believe that they should be submissive and that they cannot lead and speak out. Children who do not conform to these typical gender expectations often face ridicule, exclusion or violence.

Violence of any kind to anybody represents a violation of human dignity and human rights and has lasting consequences for the victim, perpetrator as well as society.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence directed at a person based on their gender. GBV does not only happen to women and girls, it also happens to men and boys and people with different gender identities. GBV occurs because of unequal power relationships between genders in a society. It includes verbal, emotional, sexual, physical, financial, structural and psychological abuse.

GBV REMAINS A DEEP-ROOTED PROBLEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has one of the highest rates of GBV in the world. Reports of femicide, rape, and domestic violence are alarmingly high.

The impact of GBV in South Africa is devastating, not only for survivors but for the perpetrators and for society as a whole. Victims often experience long-term psychological trauma, physical injury, and economic hardship. Children who witness violence in the home may also suffer emotional distress, which can affect their development and perpetuate cycles of violence in the future:

Experiencing violence is especially damaging during the first 1,000 days of a child's life. Such experiences can disrupt the development of the brain, especially in the absence of a nurturing caregiver to buffer the negative effects.

Children growing up with violence, i.e. experienced violence themselves or being exposed to parental violence, are more likely to become perpetrators of violence in the future.

Being a victim of violence in childhood or growing up in a family in which violence is experienced, has lifelong impacts on education, health, and well-being, leading to cognitive, emotional, and social problems.

PREVENTING GBV IN EARLY LEARNING SETTINGS

Educational settings can play an important role in preventing GBV in the future. As a practitioner or teacher, you can contribute by:

- fostering equitable and non-violent attitudes in young children.
- being a positive role model and advocate for gender equality.

Using school events such as parent meetings to create awareness about GBV, its impact on young children, and encouraging parents, other caregivers and community members to promote gender equality at home and in the wider community.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Violence against children includes any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child. It includes:

- assaulting or deliberately injuring a child;
- sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused;
- emotional abuse (name calling);
- bullying by another child;
- labour practice that exploits a child (cultural expectations of shared work need to be acknowledged);

- exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

In case of suspected violence against one of your learners, you should report this to your school principal or ECD-centre leader, who will take the necessary steps e.g., report this to the school social worker or local police station.

THERE IS NO WINNER FROM GENDER STEREOTYPES AND INEQUALITY. THE NEGATIVE RAMIFICATIONS AFFECT EVERYONE IN SOUTH AFRICA:

GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL AND HAVE LOWER PASS RATES FOR MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE SUBJECTS ^{1,2}

BOYS HAVE HIGHER EXPULSION RATES AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPEAT PRIMARY SCHOOL GRADES ³

MORE THAN HALF OF LGBTI* PEOPLE REPORT THAT THEY EXPERIENCED VICTIMISATION AT SCHOOL BASED ON THEIR LGBTI STATUS ⁴

*LGBTI: LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX

TRADITIONAL STEREOTYPES – ESPECIALLY PRESSURE TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILIES – ARE DIFFICULT FOR MANY SOUTH AFRICAN MEN TO LIVE UP TO ⁵

BECAUSE OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY (A LEGACY OF THE APARTHEID ERA), MANY MEN STRUGGLE TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES FINANCIALLY, CAUSING FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS AND SHAME.

ONLY 10% OF CEOs IN SOUTH AFRICA ARE WOMEN

WOMEN AND LGBTI PERSONS ARE AT HIGHER RISK OF SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE ^{7,8}

INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT FIT COMMON GENDER EXPECTATIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO FACE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT. ⁹

MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO DRINK ALCOHOL, TAKE UNHEALTHY RISKS AND ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE ¹⁰. THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP OR TALK ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY ¹¹

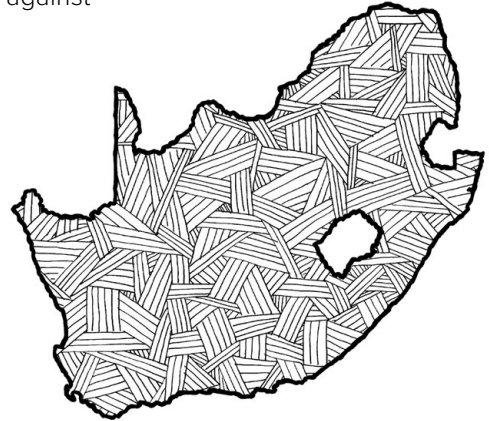
FOR EACH HOUR THAT A MAN SPENDS ON UNPAID CARE WORK, WOMEN SPEND EIGHT HOURS OF EQUIVALENT WORK ¹²

NATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY

South Africa is the only African country to offer constitutional protection against discrimination based on sex, gender and sexual orientation.

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights supports all people's right to:

- a name and identity
- life
- equality
- a healthy environment
- social assistance
- food
- clean water
- shelter
- health care
- schooling



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES AND LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY:

SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION (1996)

- Guarantees equality and prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including gender.
- Addresses the rights of children, including the right to protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation.

SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT (1996)

- Stresses the right to education for all.
- Promotes gender equality and learners indiscriminately receiving quality basic education.

CHILDREN'S ACT (2005)

- Aims to protect the rights of children, promote their well-being, ensuring their best interests.
- Includes provisions against gender discrimination and emphasises the need for special protection for children from vulnerable groups.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE (2020-2030)

- Ensures a coordinated national response to the crisis of gender-based violence and femicide.
- Promoting gender in early childhood is a prevention response of the Department of Basic Education in this plan.

SADC CARE AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (2008)

- Ensuring educational rights of all children, including those who are most vulnerable, through schools becoming inclusive centres of learning, care and support.
- Promoting gender in early childhood is a part of this framework.

The South African Department of Basic Education is committed to protecting the rights of all children.

The South African government recognises the importance of reducing gender biases and stereotypes, and supporting gender equality in education:

- The **Ministerial Task Team on Evaluation of Textbooks and Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM)** ensures that gender discrimination and bias is not evidenced within prescribed text for learners so that all texts, graphics and language are suitable to all learners and avoid gender stereotypes
- **The Directorate: Social Cohesion and Equity in Education** oversees social cohesion, nation building and gender empowerment in schools, where the **Gender Equity sub-directorate** coordinates and monitors gender empowerment and equity issues in schools.
- The **Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools** aims at standardizing how schools must respond to reports of sexual abuse and harassment in schools.
- The introduction of a **Life Skills Programme in Primary schools** that deals with gender issues such as gender violence, teenage pregnancy and discrimination, among other concerns, is considered a key contributor to minimising gender inequalities in schools. The programme aims to promote personal development, self-esteem and self-confidence among learners.

GENDER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Infants observe messages about gender from adults around them. What adults look like, what they do and how they behave shapes children's ideas about gender. For example, when a child sees that men in their community drive taxis, and that women do not, they may start thinking that driving a car is something that is only done by men.

Often, adults' interactions with their infants are shaped by their own past experiences. They will interact with their child differently based on their child's gender. This in turn shapes the child's understanding of gender.

Toddlers of 18 to 24 months, or even younger, begin to define gender. They use messages from many sources. As they develop a sense of self, toddlers see patterns in their homes and early care settings (whose voice they hear, who cuddles them, who feeds them). This point is important for parents, teachers and practitioners to be aware of. Gender is one way to understand 'group belonging', which is important for child development.

At ages 3 to 4, gender identity takes on more meaning as children begin to focus on all kinds of differences. Children begin to connect the concept "girl" or "boy" to specific attributes. They form stronger rules or expectations for how someone should behave and look, based on their gender. This can be observed in their choice of toys and friends at the centre, school or home.

The ability to recognise when things are the same or different is an important skill that children develop over time. It is called the skill of 'categorisation'. It's natural that children start asking questions to help them sort out the differences between boys and girls. It's easy to see how they may think that being a boy means doing some things and liking some things, and being a girl means doing and liking other things. As children become more aware of gender, they also start internalising gender stereotypes and biases. They apply these to themselves and others, in an attempt to give meaning to their own identity.

5- and 6-year-olds are very aware of rules and of the pressure to comply with them. They do so rigidly because they are not yet developmentally ready to think more deeply about the beliefs and values that many rules are based on. They may even police what other children are allowed to do and play with.

As children get older, they will typically become less rigid in their ideas and rules about gender, especially if they have been exposed to ideas, interactions and activities that promote gender equality. With this change, children develop stronger moral impulses about what is "fair" for themselves and other children.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

CHILDREN LEARN AND DEVELOP OPTIMALLY WHEN:

- THEY PARTICIPATE IN A VARIETY OF LEARNING AND PLAY ACTIVITIES
- THEIR TEACHERS MAKE THEM FEEL SAFE AND SUPPORTED
- THEY RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TO TRY DIFFERENT THINGS AND INTERACT WITH OTHERS

Gender stereotypes and biases negatively affect how children participate in activities, and what they are able to gain from their education. When children are treated differently because of their sex, it can hold them back from participation, interaction and learning, and from realising their full identity and potential.

Based on how the learning environment is set up and what teachers say/do or do not say/do, children 'learn', for example, whether their voices matter, who gets to lead in school or be a leader in future, or who gets to engage in particular activities.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS OFTEN PASS ON POWERFUL GENDER MESSAGES THROUGH WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS THE 'HIDDEN CURRICULUM' – WHAT CHILDREN LEARN FROM OBSERVING HOW THINGS ARE DONE IN THE CLASSROOM AND BY SCHOOL STAFF.

EXAMPLES OF GENDER BIASES IN EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:

- Dividing groups by sex and only assigning certain tasks to girls (e.g. tidying) and other tasks to boys (e.g. moving furniture)
- Discouraging girls from participating in activities considered rough, and boys from playing with dolls
- Gently patting a girl who hurts herself and is crying, while a boy in the same situation is told, 'Get up, boys don't cry.'

As leaders of the classroom and change agents in the community, teachers and practitioners play a central role in providing **equal opportunities for all young children to engage and learn and help them break free from harmful gender stereotypes that hold them back in life.**

THE BENEFITS OF SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY

When early learning environments support gender diversity and give attention to gender issues, both children and teachers benefit.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY HELPS CHILDREN:

DEVELOP GOOD SOCIAL SKILLS

When learning environments support children to interact constructively and respectfully with children of diverse abilities and backgrounds, children learn to enjoy being with others who are different from themselves, including how to be sensitive to and adapt to these differences. This helps to improve communication skills and prepare children for healthy social interactions in future.

DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING

Being exposed to different viewpoints, opinions and experiences gives children the opportunity to think critically about their own beliefs and examine the world in fresh ways.

PRACTICE CREATIVITY

Creativity is all about bringing together different ideas and transforming them to make something new. The more ideas and experiences children are exposed to, the more creative they can be.

DEVELOP A HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM

When children's individual abilities are recognised and supported, they feel worthy and capable. This helps them cope with making mistakes and encourages them to try again. Children with healthy self-esteem are less likely to fear differences or put other children down to feel better about themselves.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY HELPS TEACHERS:

- gain new knowledge about the different ways that children learn
- develop more positive attitudes and approaches towards people, children and situations
- experience greater job satisfaction and a higher sense of accomplishment when all children's learning is supported
- have a meaningful and long-lasting impact on children's development, sense of identity and future success

GENDER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

THE ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS AND PRACTITIONERS

YOU PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE IN PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL YOUNG CHILDREN TO ENGAGE AND LEARN AND HELP THEM BREAK FREE FROM HARMFUL GENDER STEREOTYPES THAT HOLD THEM BACK IN LIFE.

Your personal beliefs, experiences, and cultural background shape your value system. These values can affect how you view children and how you interact with them, as well as how you teach.

For example:

- A teacher who values cultural diversity may actively seek diverse perspectives and experiences when engaging with learners.
- A teacher who values discipline and structure may prioritise clear rules and routines in the learning environment. They may also place a strong emphasis on following a structured curriculum and maintaining order.
- A teacher who values gender equality may use play activities and materials that actively challenge gender stereotypes. They may place strong emphasis on creating a learning environment that encourages children to play with a variety of different materials, engage with many other learners and engage in a variety of different activities, not limited by gender stereotypes.

Our own experiences and beliefs shape our teaching practice. So, it is important to reflect and examine biases that you may bring to the class. Otherwise, there could be a danger that negative biases (e.g. ideas of what girls and boys can and can't do) could be transferred to children and impact on their values. This may mean that

we need to dismantle our own gender biases, examine our teaching practices and reflect on how to ensure effective inclusivity.

When you reflect deeply on your personal understanding of gender, you can make more informed decisions and create opportunities to address negative bias, stereotypes and inequality. You can be intentional in your teaching practice to promote gender equality.

You have a powerful role to help children develop positive values and attitudes. Planning, facilitating and reflecting on diversity issues (which includes gender equality) are therefore important elements in your teaching practice.

Addressing gender equality requires you to actively:

- raise social justice issues or tackle gender stereotypes in the school/centre setting (with colleagues, parents and other caregivers, community members);
- use teaching and learning processes to ensure equal treatment of all learners, ensuring their holistic development and well-being.
- instil values in children that embrace diversity and respect for others.

TEACHERS AND PRACTITIONERS WHO USE TEACHING APPROACHES THAT ADDRESS GENDER-BASED BARRIERS, IMPROVE THE LEARNING FOR ALL CHILDREN.

As a teacher or practitioner, you can use your teaching approaches to support positive gender relations among children in your care and provide them with equal opportunities for learning.

THIS GUIDE OFFERS KEY MESSAGES, ACTIONABLE TIPS AND EXAMPLES THAT CAN HELP YOU IMPLEMENT PRACTICAL APPROACHES IN ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR TEACHING, INCLUDING:

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

HOW YOU ORGANISE YOUR CLASSROOM AND OUTDOOR AREA

LEARNING MATERIALS

HOW YOU EQUIP YOUR CLASSROOM WITH PLAY AND LEARNING MATERIALS

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

HOW YOU PLAN YOUR LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISE YOUR TIME WITH YOUR LEARNERS

INTERACTIONS AND LANGUAGE USE IN THE CLASSROOM

HOW YOU ENGAGE WITH CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE

HOW YOU FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN YOUR LEARNERS

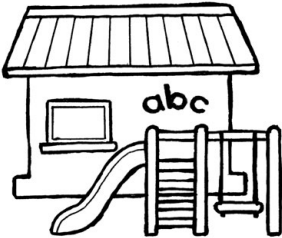
INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

HOW YOU INTERACT WITH OTHER TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

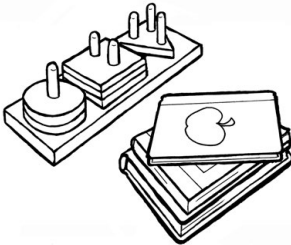
HOW YOU WORK WITH PARENTS TO INVOLVE THEM IN THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING

HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS GUIDE

THERE ARE 5 UNITS IN THIS GUIDE RELATED TO 5 ASPECTS OF TEACHING



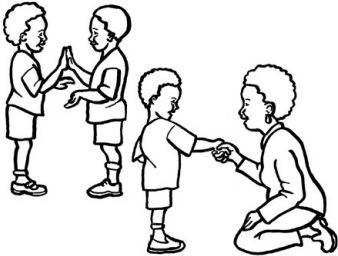
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



LEARNING MATERIALS



LEARNING ACTIVITIES



CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND LANGUAGE USE



INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

IN EACH ASPECT, YOU WILL SEE:

KEY MESSAGES



- 1** DIFFERENT WAYS TO PUT THIS MESSAGE
- 2** INTO ACTION



PRACTICAL TIPS

and illustrative examples

KEY MESSAGES FOR TEACHERS AND PRACTITIONERS

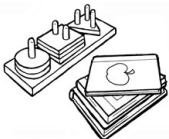


LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

CREATE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION OF ALL CHILDREN

HOW?

1. Set up learning areas to attract all children to play or work together
2. Arrange seating to encourage all children to participate fully
3. Prevent children from taking up all the space or excluding others



LEARNING MATERIALS

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE ALL TYPES OF TOYS AND PLAY MATERIALS

HOW?

1. Offer toys and play materials in a way that appeals to all children
2. Encourage children to explore a wide variety of play materials

USE PICTURES AND STORIES TO TALK ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPES AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

HOW?

1. Be aware of the gender sensitivity of books and pictures that you use
2. Draw children's attention to stereotypes and role models and help them reflect on gender



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

USE LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER

HOW?

1. Avoid making activities sex-specific
2. Create opportunities for children to engage in a variety of play and learning activities
3. Use activities to question gender roles and stereotypes to promote gender equality



CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS & LANGUAGE USE

USE YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN TO BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

HOW?

1. Respect and praise children for their individuality
2. Treat children equally, regardless of their sex
3. Use language that supports gender equality and respects gender diversity

SUPPORT CHILDREN TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES FREELY AND ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER

HOW?

1. Help children to treat one another with respect
2. Encourage children equally to express emotions
3. Help children to develop empathy and respect diversity



INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

USE YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOL STAFF, PARENTS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE GENDER EQUALITY

HOW?

1. Promote gender equality and model an anti-bias approach in your interactions with other adults
2. Help parents support their child's holistic development



LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

THE WAY IN WHICH YOUR CLASSROOM AND LEARNING AREAS ARE ARRANGED INFLUENCES CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT AND LEARNING.

Depending on their personality and interests, children participate in their learning environment in different ways. Some children like to speak in front of their peers while other children are more reserved and prefer to follow the lead of others. Some children easily explore different activities and roles, whereas others need more encouragement and support.

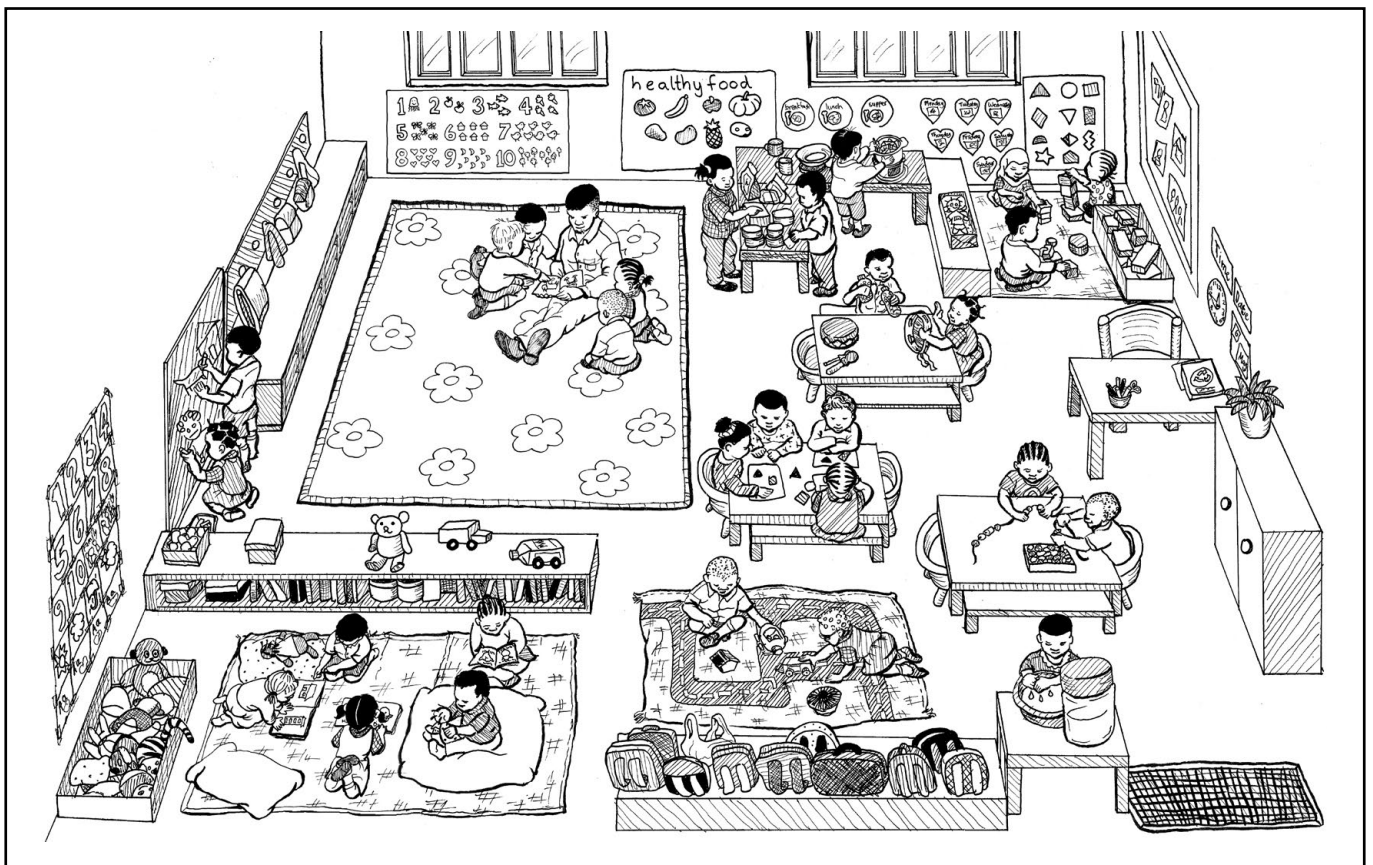
By organising your classroom space differently, you can change children's play behaviours.

CREATE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION OF ALL CHILDREN

HOW?

- 1 SET UP LEARNING AREAS TO ATTRACT ALL CHILDREN TO PLAY OR WORK TOGETHER**
- 2 ARRANGE SEATING TO ENCOURAGE ALL CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE FULLY**
- 3 PREVENT CHILDREN FROM TAKING UP ALL THE SPACE OR EXCLUDING OTHERS**

NOTE: Many schools are limited in their infrastructure and furniture. Overcrowded classrooms are more difficult to set up for effective learning. Regardless of this, children should not be divided into groups by sex, all children's participation should be encouraged, and their specific needs and interests should be considered.



CREATE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION OF ALL CHILDREN



1 SET UP LEARNING AREAS TO ATTRACT ALL CHILDREN TO PLAY OR WORK TOGETHER

The set-up of learning areas can influence the variety of play materials, who plays with them and which activities children engage in.



REGULARLY REORGANISE YOUR LEARNING AREAS TO INSPIRE NEW GAMES AND ENCOURAGE DIFFERENT CHILDREN TO MINGLE.

Bringing the fantasy and construction areas closer together can encourage cross-play between the two areas. This encourages elements of fantasy and construction play in both areas, and can encourage different children to play together.



REGULARLY CHANGE THE PLACEMENT AND COMBINATION OF MATERIALS IN YOUR LEARNING AREAS.

This helps inspire children to use materials that they would usually be less interested in playing with during free play.

Moving blocks into the fantasy area could inspire children to build a house for the dolls and include play with dolls in building activities.

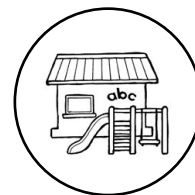


ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO TRY OUT ALL THE LEARNING AREAS.

Observe how children move between different learning areas, what and who they play with. Gently encourage them to try out a new toy or activity, or play with someone that they might not have played with before. You can role-model for children to inspire them.

NOTE: The objective is not to force children to do things they usually do not want to, but rather to help them explore and expand their learning through trying different things. Creating opportunities for children to participate in a variety of activities will help them grow, learn and develop.

2 ARRANGE SEATING TO ENCOURAGE ALL CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE FULLY



SEATING:

Seating and group arrangements can influence how children participate, especially children who need more encouragement to speak in group contexts, such as shy children or those who are not used to being the focus of attention.



FOR A WHOLE-CLASS ACTIVITY, LET EVERYONE SIT IN A CIRCLE ON THE GROUND WITH YOU, THE TEACHER, AS PART OF THE CIRCLE, TO CREATE MORE EQUAL INVOLVEMENT.



ARRANGE CHILDREN IN SMALL GROUPS AROUND A LARGE TABLE OR ON THE CARPET TO IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF SHYER OR LESS ACTIVE CHILDREN.



DURING TEACHER-GUIDED ACTIVITIES, MOVE AROUND THE ROOM AND SIT IN DIFFERENT PLACES TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS INVOLVED AND FEELS ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE.

3 PREVENT CHILDREN FROM TAKING UP ALL THE SPACE OR EXCLUDING OTHERS



PHYSICALLY DIVIDE THE PLAYGROUND AND LEARNING AREAS INTO DIFFERENT SPACES TO ALLOW DIFFERENT GROUPS TO PLAY AT THE SAME TIME.

Use furniture to divide areas into different spaces, such as a carpet, storage boxes and shelving (inside) or plants and low hedges (outside)



TRY TO INTERVENE WHEN A GROUP OF CHILDREN TAKE UP ALL THE PLAY SPACE OR CHASE OTHERS AWAY.

A group of girls playing house might not welcome a boy into their game, or a group of boys playing outside may be using all the balls, not allowing girls to play along.

IF A CHILD SAYS:

“YOU CAN’T PLAY IN THE KITCHEN AREA, YOU ARE A BOY!”

YOU CAN RESPOND BY SAYING:

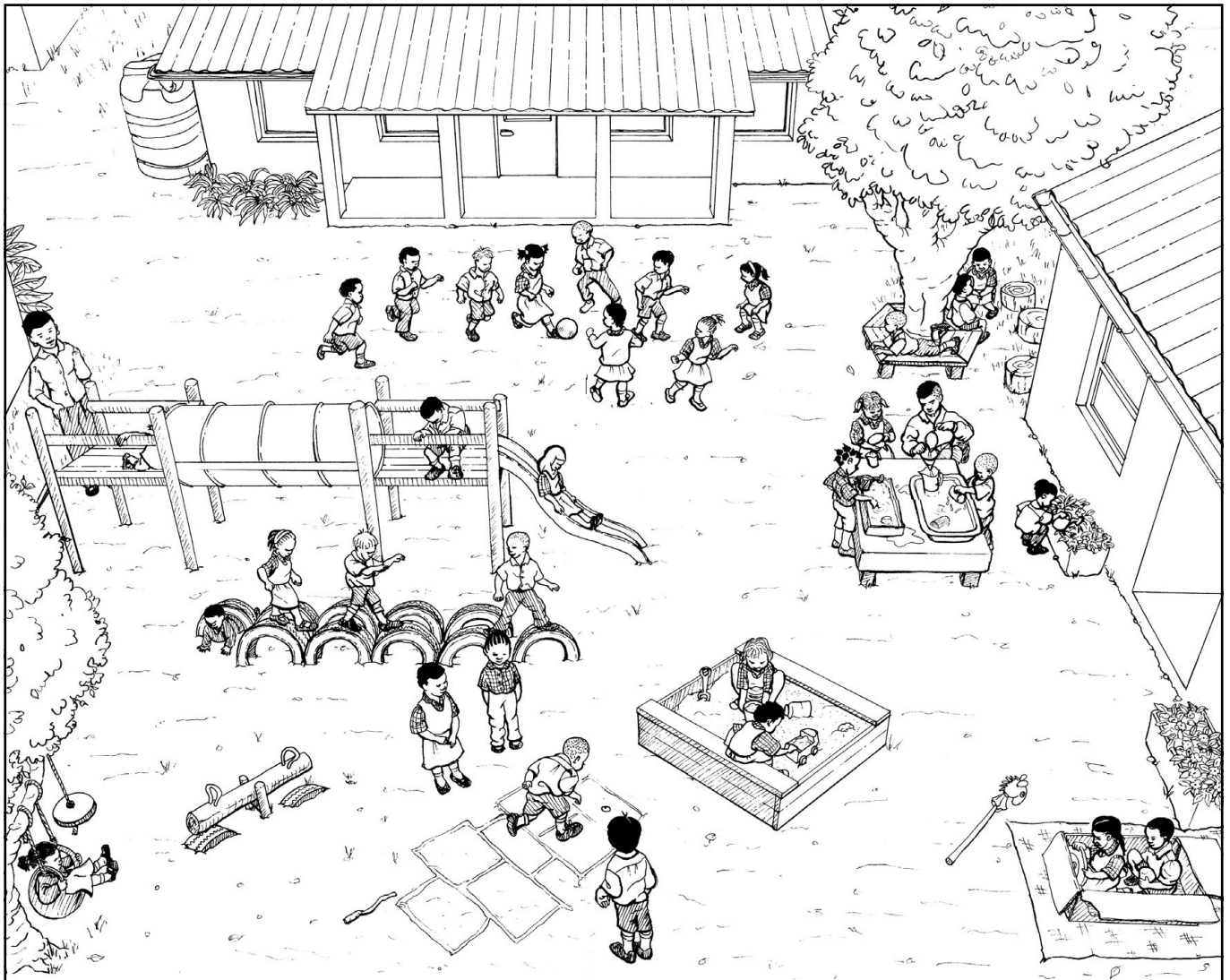
“WE CAN ALL LEARN TOGETHER HOW TO MAKE A RECIPE AND COOK FOOD TOGETHER”



YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



Here is an example of an outdoor area and how to encourage participation and learning for all children:



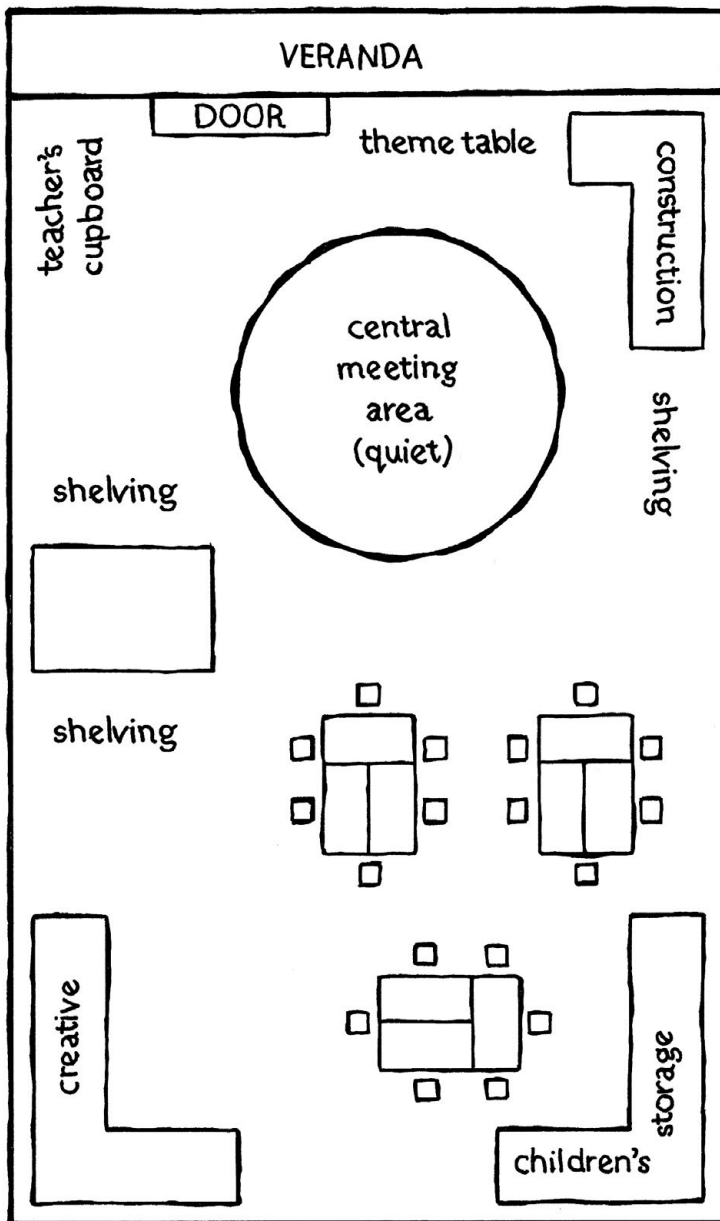
Have designated spaces for different types of activities (running; climbing, hanging and swinging; pretend play area; resting area; water play area; sand area). **This allows different groups to play at the same time.**

Encourage children to mingle while playing games on the playground.

INDOOR CLASSROOM LAYOUT: AN EXAMPLE

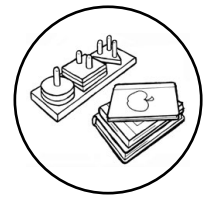


The set-up of learning areas can influence how attractive they are to different children. Here are some key points to keep in mind:

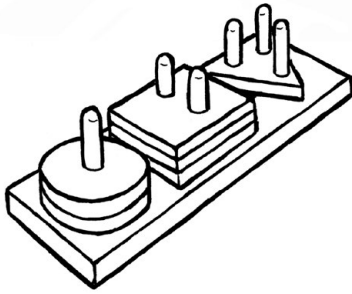


- ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO TRY OUT ALL THE LEARNING AREAS
- HAVE THE CLASS SIT IN A CIRCLE ON THE FLOOR, WITH YOU AS THE TEACHER AS PART OF THE CIRCLE FOR MORE EQUAL INVOLVEMENT
- MOVE AROUND THE ROOM TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS INVOLVED AND TO ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE
- ARRANGING CHILDREN IN SMALL GROUPS CAN IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF SHYER OR LESS ACTIVE CHILDREN
- TRY TO INTERVENE WHEN A GROUP OF CHILDREN TAKE UP ALL THE SPACE AND CHASE OTHER CHILDREN AWAY

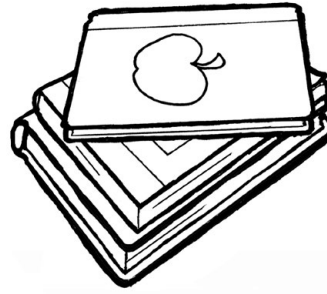
LEARNING MATERIALS



IN THIS UNIT, WE WILL LOOK AT DIFFERENT LEARNING MATERIALS:



PLAY MATERIALS



PICTURES AND STORIES

PLAY MATERIALS

A variety of experiences with different play materials will help children learn a wider range of skills.

However, toys and play materials often adhere to a clear gender binary (“toys for girls”, “toys for boys”), which can limit what children play with.

By marketing toys and colours for boys and girls separately, manufacturing companies can sell more products.



“TOYS STEREOTYPICALLY USED FOR GIRLS”



“TOYS STEREOTYPICALLY USED FOR BOYS”

Both children and adults often see a clear division between toys for children of different sexes.

You have probably noticed in your own classroom that girls and boys typically play with specific toys, for example, girls with dolls, and boys with toy cars. If children ONLY play with such toys, gender stereotypes may be instilled or reinforced. As a teacher, you can stimulate children to play with a variety of toys. This way, children develop a wider range of competences.

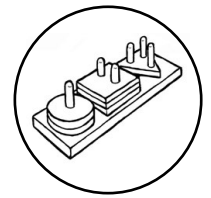
WHEN PLAY MATERIALS APPEAL TO ONE SEX ONLY, ALL CHILDREN MISS OUT ON IMPORTANT LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE ALL TYPES OF TOYS AND PLAY MATERIALS

HOW?

- 1 OFFER TOYS AND PLAY MATERIALS IN A WAY THAT APPEALS TO ALL CHILDREN**
- 2 ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE A WIDE VARIETY OF PLAY MATERIALS**

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE ALL TYPES OF TOYS AND PLAY MATERIALS



1 OFFER TOYS AND PLAY MATERIALS IN A WAY THAT APPEALS TO ALL CHILDREN

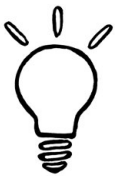


TO ENCOURAGE MIXED-SEX PLAY, COMBINE MATERIALS SO THAT THEY HAVE AN ELEMENT OF INTEREST FOR DIFFERENT CHILDREN.

If certain learners share an interest (e.g. animals), you can stimulate their involvement by using animal themes or learning materials. This will also encourage mixed-sex play.



If you know that a shy child only plays with a few children and panics when there is too much noise and activity, encourage the child to mix with other children by choosing a quiet activity like looking at a book or playing with blocks. This may motivate the shy child to join in play with classmates.



WHERE POSSIBLE, AVOID GENDER-STEREOTYPED USE OF MATERIALS

There is nothing wrong with children being drawn to some play materials more than others. They will, however, develop more skills by playing with a variety of toys.

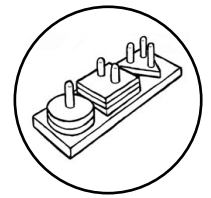
You can buy or make a doll that can be any sex. If you name the doll, choose a name that is used for boys and girls. If you dress it in clothes, use a colour and design that is not typical for either boys or girls. Another option is to make several dolls so that you provide variety: different sexes, different ages, different sets of clothes.



During fantasy play, open-ended materials such as pieces of cloth and cardboard boxes stimulate children's imagination. These kinds of materials allow children to play in a variety of ways. Gender-stereotyped use of materials, such as princess dresses or firemen outfits may encourage stereotypical behaviours and limit learning experiences.



2 ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE A WIDE VARIETY OF PLAY MATERIALS



QUESTION BELIEFS ABOUT WHO IS ALLOWED TO PLAY WITH CERTAIN TOYS.

Always question children when they say things like:

‘Only boys can play with cars.’ or ‘Dolls are for girls.’

Ask them whether they are sure this is true. You can ask other children if they know girls who play with cars or boys who play with dolls.



Alternatively, offer other views yourself.

“When I was a child, I loved playing with cars.”

“I think lots of children in this class – boys too - will enjoy playing with dolls because they are caring and like being kind to others.”



QUESTION BELIEFS ABOUT COLOURS AND WHAT THEY MEAN.

Boys may refuse to play with anything pink while girls may claim pink toys as ‘theirs’. There is no need to avoid pink or blue – there are no wrong colours – but aim to use a range of colours.

If a child asks:

‘Is green a boy colour or a girl colour?’

Here are some ideas of how you can respond:

‘Colours are just colours. You can like any colour you want to.’

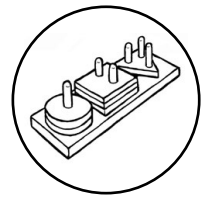
‘Do you think there are colours just for boys, and colours just for girls?’

Maybe colours are just colours and everyone gets to like whatever colours they find beautiful!’

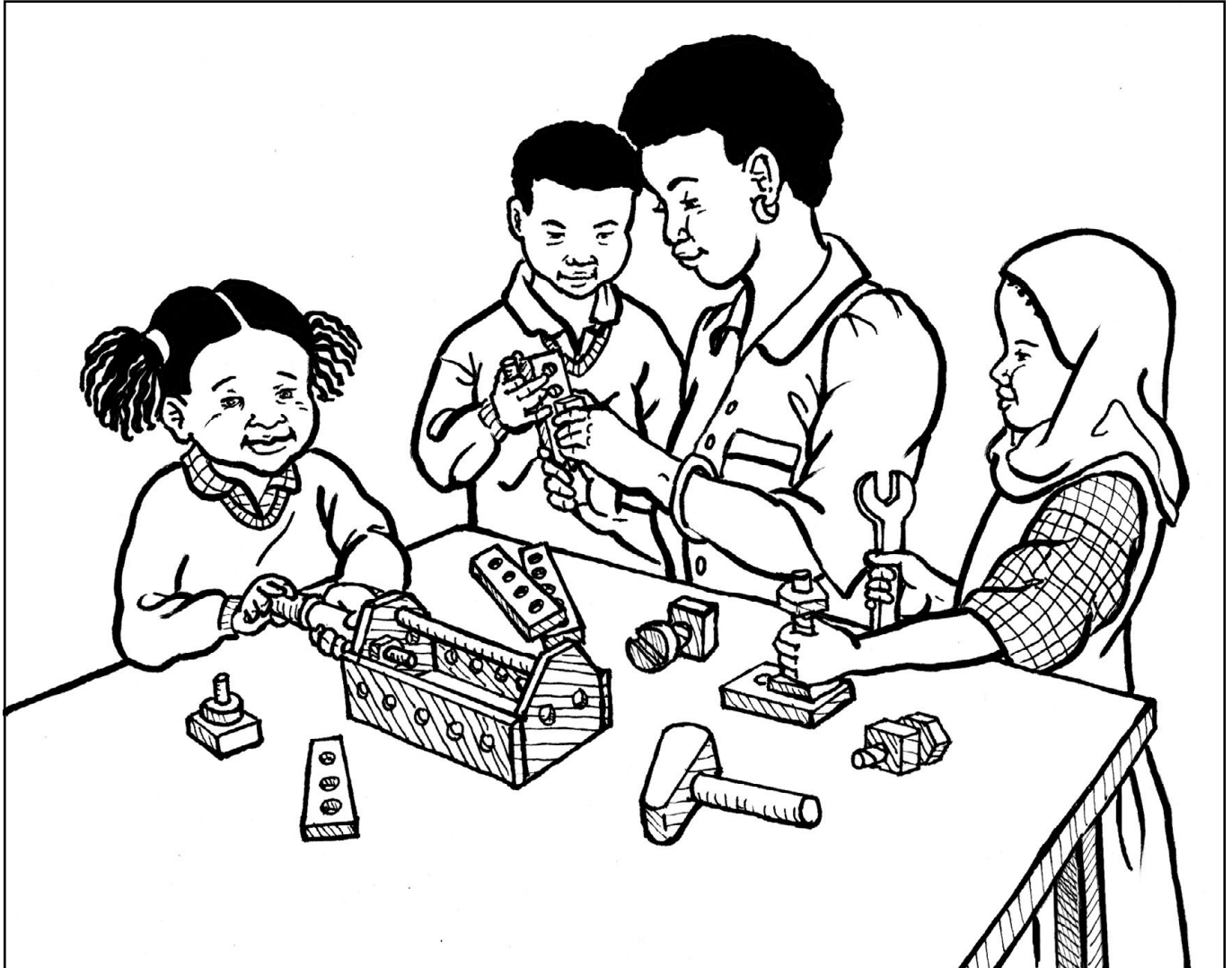
‘I think the world is filled with so many beautiful colours and that we all get to enjoy them. How sad would it be to think that someone couldn’t like a colour because of who they are?’



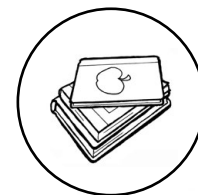
MODEL NON-STEREOTYPICAL PLAY BEHAVIOURS FOR CHILDREN.



Show children who may not have had much opportunity to play with certain materials how to use them to get them started.



PICTURES AND STORIES



Every storybook and poster, even one with stereotypes, can offer an opportunity to talk with children about gender roles.

STEREOTYPES IN STORYBOOKS

Pictures and words in storybooks and posters often convey gender stereotypes. This can influence children's understanding of different gender roles.



The words used to describe characters in a book are often linked to gender stereotypes, such as boys are naughty, competitive, strong, brave, ambitious, clever; girls are beautiful, sweet, good, shy. Stories and pictures may show certain professions are only for one sex (for example, the housewife or nurse is typically female, while the doctor or businessman is typically male). Diversity in all its forms (e.g. gender, race, age, religion, ability) is often missing from pictures and stories. This limits opportunities to actively work with children around respect for diversity and inclusion.



STEREOTYPICAL ACCESSORIES



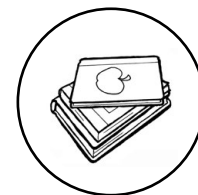
STEREOTYPICAL ROLES AND ACTIVITIES



USE PICTURES AND STORIES TO TALK ABOUT GENDER ROLES AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

HOW?

- 1 BE AWARE OF THE GENDER SENSITIVITY OF BOOKS AND PICTURES THAT YOU USE**
- 2 DRAW CHILDREN'S ATTENTION TO STEREOTYPES AND ROLE MODELS AND HELP THEM REFLECT ON GENDER**

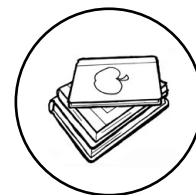


1 BE AWARE OF THE GENDER SENSITIVITY OF BOOKS AND PICTURES THAT YOU USE



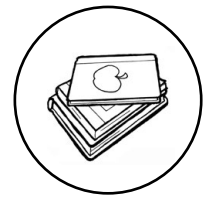
CHECK A STORY BOOK, PICTURE BOOK OR POSTER TO DETERMINE HOW GENDER STEREOTYPICAL OR DIVERSE THE CONTENT IS.

TYPE OF CONTENT:	EXAMPLES:	HOW TO USE IT:
<p>CONTENT WITH VERY CLEAR GENDER STEREOTYPES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional fairy tales (prince and princess), stories or posters that show the mother at home looking after the children while the father is absent / at work • pictures in commercial magazines often contain very strong gender stereotypes (e.g. pictures of strong men, women and make-up) 	<p>Encourage children to identify the stereotypes in the story or illustrations.</p>
<p>CONTENT WITH NOT SO CLEAR GENDER STEREOTYPES OR ROLES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a story with a brave (male) dog and a scared (female) cat • a story with animal characters that are not explicitly identified as male or female, but male pronouns are used in the words <p>The gender stereotypes in a story or image are not always easy to detect, they can be hidden in smaller details. Still, in their hidden way, they can send messages to children about gender roles that are stereotyped.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘What do you think about this?’ • ‘Is it always this way?’ • ‘Is it like that in your home / community?’ • ‘Do you know of examples where things are done differently?’ • ‘Can the roles in the story be reversed? Why/why not?’ • ‘Would you do things differently?’



TYPE OF CONTENT:	EXAMPLES:	HOW TO USE IT:
<p>CONTENT THAT CHALLENGES GENDER STEREOTYPES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a story about a brave girl, saving her brother from danger • a poster of a father who cooks for his family or takes care of a sick family member 	<p>Ideal content for questioning roles and stereotypes with children and respecting diversity. Help children reflect on their responses and reactions to these examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they think about this? • Is it always this way? • Is it like that in our school? • Would we be 'judged' (as some of the characters in the books are)? • Why are they judged? • Would you like to be this character? Why? Why not?
<p>CONTENT THAT HIGHLIGHTS RESPECT FOR GENDER DIVERSITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a balance of characters of different gender identities, expressions and roles • a story about a boy being teased because he wears a skirt and earrings 	
<p>GENDER NEUTRAL CONTENT THAT DOES NOT CONTAIN GENDER STEREOTYPES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stories where characters do not have a specific gender identity for example, a story with two animals with gender-neutral names • a story that does not assign stereotypical roles to one sex 	<p>Even without talking about them explicitly, this content promotes the message that characters of different sexes are equal. Use these examples to help avoid children thinking in stereotypes.</p>

2 DRAW CHILDREN'S ATTENTION TO STEREOTYPES AND ROLE MODELS AND HELP THEM REFLECT ON GENDER



HELP CHILDREN TO BECOME AWARE OF BOOKS, POSTERS, ILLUSTRATIONS OR CHARACTERS THAT CONFIRM OR CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES, AND DRAW THEIR ATTENTION TO THIS.

Ask questions such as:

'What are the different children doing in this picture?'

'Would you like to do this?'

'What do you think about this?'

'Is it always this way?'

'Is it like that in our school?'

'Is it like that in your home / community?'

'Do you see this often?'

'Would you like to be this person? Why / why not?'

'Would you want to do things differently?'

Use these questions and discussions to convey the following message to children:
CHILDREN CAN DO OR BE OR LIKE ANYTHING BECAUSE THEY ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH HOPES AND LIKES AND DESIRES. THIS IS NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE BOYS OR GIRLS.



DISPLAY DIVERSITY IN PICTURES AND POSTERS E.G. GENDER, RACE, AGE AND ABILITY. THIS WILL HELP LEARNERS TO ACCEPT AND RESPECT THIS DIVERSITY IN SOCIETY.



DRAW ATTENTION TO CHARACTERS OR PICTURES OF PEOPLE DOING THINGS NOT TRADITIONALLY SEEN FOR THEIR SEX...

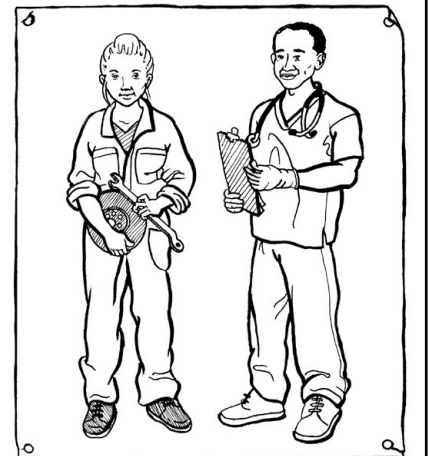
Such as male nurses, childcare providers and dancers;
female soldiers, auto mechanics and athletes

Ask children about these examples:

'Can you also do this?'

'Why can you do this?' or

'Why can't you do this?'



LEARNING ACTIVITIES



When children engage in a variety of learning activities, where they have opportunities to interact with different children, they develop a broader range of socio-emotional and cognitive skills.

Stereotypical ideas about gender roles may prevent children from engaging in certain play behaviours or from taking on different roles in group settings. This may happen both during teacher-guided activities, and during free play.

TEACHER-GUIDED ACTIVITIES:

During teacher-guided activities, teachers work with the whole group, or, divide the class into smaller groups. The teacher will work more closely with one group, whilst other groups are engaged in independent activities.

When children are divided into groups based on sex, it reinforces beliefs that children of different sexes can't work together and can't perform the same tasks. In addition, when we assume that children won't be interested in an activity because of their sex, those children miss out on important learning opportunities.

Creating separate groups for different sexes can unintentionally reinforce rigid gender stereotypes and limit opportunities for learners to benefit from working and learning together in a manner that promotes respect for gender diversity.

FREE PLAY AND CHILD-INITIATED ACTIVITIES:

Across multiple contexts, children may engage in certain activities based on their sex. Boys often tend to favour construction and technical activities (e.g. playing with big blocks or small construction materials) and gross motor activities such as football. Girls are more likely to be found at indoor play in the fantasy play area doing fine motor and creative art activities or looking at storybooks.

When children are encouraged to engage in a variety of activities, they will develop more skills / more holistically.

You can use your teacher-guided activities, children's free play and daily routines to address stereotypical ideas about gender that might hold children back from active participation, exploration and learning.

**USE YOUR LEARNING
ACTIVITIES TO
BREAK DOWN
STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS
ABOUT GENDER**

HOW?

- 1 AVOID MAKING ACTIVITIES SEX-SPECIFIC**
- 2 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO ENGAGE IN A VARIETY OF PLAY AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES**
- 3 USE ACTIVITIES TO QUESTION GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY**

USE YOUR LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER



1 AVOID MAKING ACTIVITIES SEX-SPECIFIC

There is no need for you to have separate activities for boys and girls. Rather, encourage mixed-sex groups and interaction during different activities.



DIVIDE CHILDREN INTO GROUPS IN RANDOM WAYS (NOT BY SEX)

- Avoid pairing children boy/girl/boy/girl
- Avoid dividing boys and girls into separate groups
- Use ways other than sex to group children (for example, by their month of birth, favourite animal, food, or what letter their name starts with).

Learners come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and it is important that every child feels a sense of belonging in the classroom. Rigid grouping by sex can unintentionally marginalise some learners and should therefore be approached with care.



CHANGE GROUPS EVERY SO OFTEN TO ALLOW CHILDREN TO INTERACT WITH MANY OTHER CHILDREN.

This will help them develop social skills, such as respect for everyone. Occasionally you may want to combine certain children based on their needs, to work at their specific level. For example, children who struggle with expressing themselves in the language used in class may benefit from hearing a story in a smaller group and being asked to answer questions at their level.



AVOID ROUTINES THAT SEPARATE THE BOYS FROM THE GIRLS. MAKE SURE THAT EXPECTATIONS, RULES AND ROUTINES ARE THE SAME FOR ALL CHILDREN.



AVOID ASSIGNING TASKS BY SEX (E.G. CHORES LIKE SWEEPING FOR GIRLS OR TIDYING AWAY THE CHAIRS FOR BOYS)



NOTE: While encouraging mixed sex groupings is important for reducing stereotypical behaviour, it needs to be carefully managed and teachers should oversee interactions and provide support where necessary. This will help prevent certain children from dominating the activity and encourage less participative children to get involved.

2 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN TO ENGAGE IN A VARIETY OF PLAY AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES



AVOID ASSUMPTIONS THAT CHILDREN WON'T BE INTERESTED IN AN ACTIVITY TYPICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH ONE SEX

Be aware of stereotypical ideas about certain qualities and abilities associated with different genders (for example, that girls like dolls, dancing and singing, indoor quiet play and games associated with domestic roles, that boys enjoying cars, blocks, football, science and fighting). These ideas may dictate what activities children engage in.

Now and again, create opportunities for groups of children to have time to engage in activities that they might not gravitate towards by themselves. For instance, invite a group of children playing house to come and engage in construction activities, or create space for less experienced children to have time with the ball.



WHEN A LEARNER SHOWS INTEREST IN AN ACTIVITY OR ROLE THAT IS NOT STEREOTYPICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR SEX, TEACHERS SHOULD SUPPORT THE LEARNER'S PARTICIPATION.

When other children make negative or disrespectful comments, address these in a way that allow all children learn to respect each other.



ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO TRY OUT ALL THE LEARNING ACTIVITIES OR PLAY AREAS

When you notice that either boys or girls never engage in a certain activity, ask children why they are avoiding it.

Follow up by asking whether they think boys or girls can be good at this activity.

After listening, perhaps inform children that there are children of a different gender who enjoy the activity. Where possible, refer to individuals known to the children. You can also show a picture (e.g. a female football team member)

Have children rotate between different activities. This persuades them to play with all materials (including things that they may typically consider boyish or girlish).

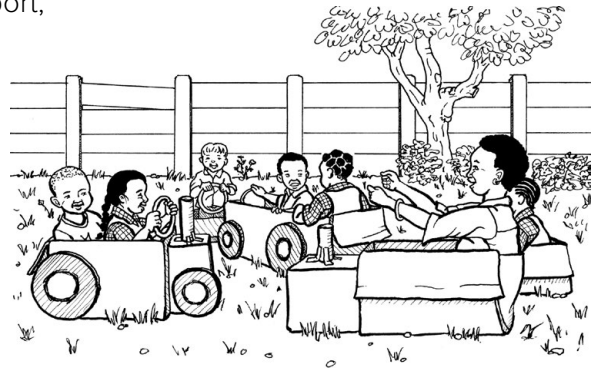
3 USE ACTIVITIES TO QUESTION GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY



ORGANISE WHOLE-GROUP ACTIVITIES THAT BREAK TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

For instance, while learning about transport, all children can pretend to drive tractors.

This may initially meet some resistance and children may make remarks about certain behaviours not being for boys or for girls. This is a perfect opportunity to introduce examples of people who do break these gender roles by, for example, showing a drawing of a female tractor driver or car mechanic.



MODEL NON-STEREOTYPICAL PLAY BEHAVIOR TO INSPIRE CHILDREN (FOR EXAMPLE, PLAYING A MOTHER BUILDING A HOUSE OR A FATHER COOKING)



OCCASIONALLY USE VARIOUS EXAMPLES AND CHARACTER REFERENCES WHEN TEACHING SONGS, RHYMES OR STORIES, SO THAT LEARNERS SEE THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN FAMILIAR CLASSROOM MATERIALS AND UNDERSTAND THAT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES CAN DIFFER

For example, occasionally rotate children's names from the class or commonly used South African names when singing a song that references a person's name, e.g. Old MacDonald had a farm.

For example, occasionally use terms like "families" or "parents" instead of "mommies" when singing The Wheels of the Bus to avoid gender stereotyping.



DURING ACTIVITIES, ASK THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS THAT CHALLENGE GENDER ROLES.

Have discussions about different professions, responsibilities, family members and what they do around the home.

"Whose father cooks?"

"Who helps their parents in the kitchen?"



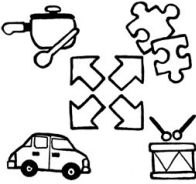


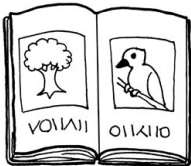

"Can girls also drive lorries?"

THE OBJECTIVE IS TO BROADEN CHILDREN'S THINKING, NEVER TO DISAPPROVE OR JUDGE.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGHOUT YOUR DAILY PROGRAMME



Below are some examples of ways to support equal participation and learning during daily activities and routines.

<p>MORNING CIRCLE (WELCOME, GREETING)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that everyone has a turn in answering questions . • Monitor whether you give children of different sexes equal turns • Sit with children in a circle on the floor for more equal involvement.
<p>TEACHER-GUIDED ACTIVITY (LESSON, WORK TIME)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage interaction by creating mixed-sex groups. • Avoid making activities sex specific. • Praise and help all children equally. • Change grouping regularly to allow different children to work and bond with one another. • Ask thought-provoking questions to challenge gender stereotypes.
<p>FREE PLAY</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage children to try out different learning areas and activities. • Discourage teasing and name-calling. • Support learners' interests across activities and roles, and actively discourage teasing, ridicule or negative comments from peers. • Use play activities to demonstrate a variety of practical life skills and household tasks, without limiting these to particular family members • Intervene when a group of children take up all the play space. • Question beliefs about who is allowed to play with certain toys.
<p>REFRESHMENTS TOILET ROUTINE</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid routines that separate children based on their sex. Make sure that expectations, rules and routines are the same for all learners. • All children need to learn how to apply hygiene such as washing hands before eating, cleaning up after snack time, use proper toilet hygiene.
<p>MUSIC, MOVEMENT, OUTSIDE PLAY</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use various examples and character references when teaching songs or rhymes, so that learners see themselves reflected in familiar classroom materials and understand that roles and responsibilities in families and communities can differ. • Try to intervene when a group of children take up all the play space and chases other learners away. • Encourage mingling and games that involve mixed-sex groups.
<p>STORY TIME</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw attention to examples that confirm or challenge gender stereotypes and help children reflect on these examples. • Promote discussion about emotions and empathy, and knowledge of emotional states and emotional cues.
<p>TIDY UP</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children of different sexes similar tasks or chores like sweeping or tidying away the chairs.

LEARNING THEMES THAT CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS GENDER



Below are some examples of questions and tips on themes or topics that may be discussed during the year.

“ALL ABOUT ME”

QUESTIONS:

- What do you want to do when you grow up? Why?
- Which sports do you like? Why?
- Which toys do you like best? Which colours do these toys have? Is that important?
- What is your favourite colour?
- What sports do you like to play?



“HOME”

QUESTIONS:

- Who do you think should wash the dishes at home? Why?
- Who should sweep at home? Why?
- Who should prepare the food at home? Why?
- Who should put your baby brother to bed? Why?



“MY CLASSROOM”

QUESTIONS:

- What learning activities do you like best? Why?
- What are your favourite toys to play with? Why?
- What activities do you think you are good at? Why?
- Where and how do you help your classmates in the classroom?
- Where do they help you?



“MY FAMILY”

QUESTIONS:

- What activities do you like to do with your father? Why?
- What activities do you like to do with your mother? Why?
- What activities do you like to do with your sister? Why?
- What activities do you like to do with your brother? Why?
- What activities do you like to do with your grandmother/grandfather/uncle/aunt? Why?



“FRIENDS”

QUESTIONS:

- What games do you like to play?
- What games do you like to play with your friends?
- What games do you like to play outside with your friends?
- Do you think boys and girls like different games? Why?



“JOBS PEOPLE DO”

Provide learners with examples of people who break gender roles.

Where possible, refer

to local people who like activities that may be considered atypical for their gender. Link jobs to the community. Explain to learners that there are a lot of people in the community that help us. Draw attention to female police officers, male teachers or nurses.



CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND LANGUAGE USE



Interactions with adults and other children play an important role in children’s learning and development.

As an early childhood teacher or practitioner, you are an important presence in the lives of every single child in your care.

Your engagement with children and how you facilitate engagement between children will play a crucial role in their sense of identity and belonging.

It is through interactions with other children and adults, and observations, that children build their social skills. How well these are developed will determine how they will relate to others now and in the future. Developing these skills is crucial in preventing violence and gender based violence in particular.

Creating positive interactions and using inclusive language is important for all children.

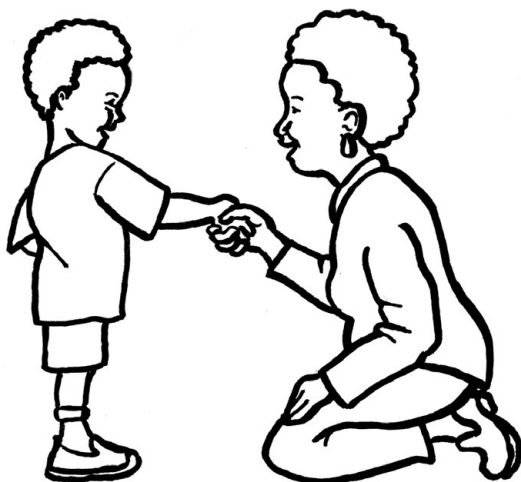
Many children whose gender identity is seen as different from what is expected of them can face very difficult circumstances such as teasing, bullying and violence. Creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment will benefit all children in the school.

Identity and belonging is a key Early Learning and Development Area in South Africa’s National Curriculum Framework for children from birth to four.

Through classroom interactions and language use, teachers and practitioners can help children develop a healthy sense of identity and belonging by helping children to:

- see themselves as capable and confident learners
- develop a strong sense of self care
- build strong relationships
- develop a strong sense of celebrating difference

IN THIS UNIT, WE WILL LOOK AT DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERACTIONS:



TEACHER-LEARNER INTERACTIONS



LEARNER-LEARNER INTERACTIONS



TEACHER-LEARNER INTERACTIONS

Your expectations of children's abilities affect their learning outcomes.

These expectations may be shaped by stereotypical ideas about certain qualities and abilities associated with different sexes:

- *girls need to be cooperative, disciplined, kind, respectful, subservient*
- *boys need to be action-oriented, outgoing, leaders, strong or competitive*

THE LANGUAGE YOU USE CAN LEAD CHILDREN TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT ONLY CHILDREN OF A CERTAIN SEX CAN DO:

- Using words like 'good' or 'excellent' specifically for boys and words like 'beautiful' or 'lovely' specifically for girls.
- Your tone of voice may be calm or pleasant when talking to girls but harsher when talking to boys.
- You may use language that suggests that boys or girls naturally have certain qualities or behave in a certain way.
 - Descriptions like 'sensible, helpful girls' versus 'silly, naughty, rough boys'
 - Stereotypical requests, such as: 'Girls, please show these boys how to organise these bags nicely.'
 - Complaints like 'boys will be boys'

YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN SHAPE THEIR SENSE OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING.

Criticism and unsupportive language make children doubt themselves and their abilities. Affection and encouragement help children know they belong and motivate them to feel confident about who they are and what they can do.

USE YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN TO BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

HOW?

- 1 RESPECT AND PRAISE CHILDREN FOR THEIR INDIVIDUALITY**
- 2 TREAT CHILDREN EQUALLY, REGARDLESS OF THEIR SEX**
- 3 USE LANGUAGE THAT SUPPORTS GENDER EQUALITY AND RESPECTS GENDER DIVERSITY**

USE YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN TO BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY



1 RESPECT AND PRAISE CHILDREN FOR THEIR INDIVIDUALITY

There is no need for you to have separate activities for boys and girls. Rather, encourage mixed-sex groups and interaction during different activities.

It is critically important that children are respected and accepted for who they are. This will help them feel they belong.



GIVE ALL CHILDREN POSITIVE FEEDBACK BASED ON THEIR UNIQUE SKILLS AND QUALITIES RATHER THAN THEIR SEX

Be conscious about how you praise learners. Girls are often praised for their clothes or hairstyle, or for being sweet or kind, while boys are often praised for being big, or tough or independent.

For example, you might say to a child:

“I noticed how kind you were to your friend when she fell down”

“You were very helpful with clean-up today - you are such a great helper”

“You were such a determined runner on the playground today.”

IF YOU HEAR THIS TYPE OF PRAISE FROM OTHERS, THINK ABOUT JOINING IN WITH OTHER TYPES OF PRAISE.



RESPECT ALL CHILDREN'S SELF-EXPRESSION AND PERSONAL CHOICES

Celebrate children's self-expression and personal choices when they challenge gender stereotypes.

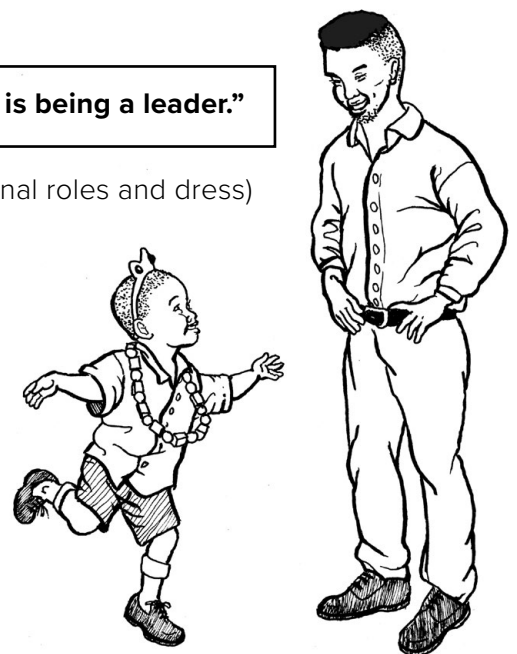
Point out that **“Thabo is being kind”** or that **“Vuyo is being a leader.”**

Accept children's gender exploration (e.g. non-traditional roles and dress)

“That looks great! If you like it and it makes you feel good, that's what matters”

Respect children's descriptions of themselves, such as **“Today, I am a ballet dancer.”**

“You sure are good at that; I wish I could do it as well as you do”



THIS GIVES ALL LEARNERS A SIGNAL THAT THEY ARE VALUED AND ACCEPTED.

2 TREAT CHILDREN EQUALLY, REGARDLESS OF THEIR SEX



Treating children equally will set a good example that will positively influence their behaviour towards other children.



GIVE EQUAL AND SIMILAR ATTENTION TO CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT SEXES

Ensure all children are equally talked to or asked to talk. Some shyer children are easily overlooked. Make sure that everyone has a turn.

Try to slow down and not pick the first or second person who raises their hand. Add more wait time and think time to encourage diverse participation.

Another way to encourage everyone's participation is to enforce a **“three then me”** rule: **“If you've already shared, you have to wait for three more people to share before you share again.”**

This also creates space for more reserved children to contribute.

Reflect on your behaviour when interacting with different children:

- **Do you consistently kneel to be at the same level as the child regardless of their sex?**
- **Do you divide classroom chores and tasks equally?**

Distribute classroom tasks equally among children regardless of their sex (for instance, asking all learners to carry things, wipe down the tables, help serve snacks, tidy up the classroom).

Treat children of different sexes with the same gentleness or firmness in similar situations (for instance, when a boy cries, or when a girl shows anger).



3 USE LANGUAGE THAT SUPPORTS GENDER EQUALITY AND RESPECTS GENDER DIVERSITY



There is no need for you to have separate activities for boys and girls. Rather, encourage mixed-sex groups and interaction during different activities.

It is critically important that children are respected and accepted for who they are. This will help them feel they belong.



USE GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- Use inclusive, respectful language that brings the class together, such as greeting learners as a group rather than separating them by sex. For example, **“all children can”** instead of **“boys can, girls can’t”**.
- Use children’s names when giving positive or negative feedback: Rather than saying **“Boys, stop quarrelling”** use their names: **“Tendai and Musa, stop quarrelling.”**

THIS APPROACH IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT WHEN TEACHERS ARE AWARE THAT SOME LEARNERS MAY BE MORE VULNERABLE TO FEELING SINGLED OUT, OR WHEN TEACHERS ARE STILL GETTING TO KNOW THE CLASS. USING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES HELPS ENSURE THAT NO CHILD FEELS EXCLUDED.

When meeting someone for the first time, it is not always clear how they prefer to be addressed. Using a person’s name, or neutral forms of reference where appropriate, can help avoid unnecessary assumptions and ensure respectful communication.

Early in the year, teachers may invite learners to share how they prefer to be addressed, for example by asking “What is your name?” or “What do you like to be called?”. This helps ensure that all learners are addressed respectfully and accurately. Learners should be reassured that they may choose not to share if they are uncomfortable.



AVOID STEREOTYPICAL LANGUAGE

- Do not use blanket statements, e.g.. **“Boys never clean up their toys”**, as these instill gender stereotypes. rather be specific in your feedback **“Tendai sometimes forgets to clean up the toys.”**
- Use children’s references to stereotypical ideas about gender as a teachable moment e.g. When a child says **“Boys should not cry”**, you could say **“everyone is allowed to feel sad sometimes. That is fine. How can we help Sam to be happy again?”**



“EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT, AND EACH OF US IS FREE TO BE WHO WE ARE. ISN’T THAT GREAT?”

“ALL CHILDREN HAVE DIFFERENT THINGS THAT THEY ARE GOOD AT”

“TOYS ARE TOYS, COLOURS ARE COLOURS AND CLOTHES ARE CLOTHES – EVERYONE CAN PLAY WITH ANY OF THE TOYS IN OUR CLASS”



HELP CHILDREN TO REFLECT ON GENDER STEREOTYPES

When stereotypical statements about gender are made, use questions like:

“Is that always true?”

“Can anyone think of an example that does not fit the pattern?”

“Who decided what things are for boys and what things are for girls?”

“We get messages that some things are for boys and some things are for girls.

But these messages are just some people’s ideas. They may not be right for you.”

WHEN CHILDREN ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT GENDER, RESPOND IN A WAY THAT HELPS BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER:

WHY DOES SHE ALWAYS PLAY WITH THE BOYS?

- “Those are the games that she likes to play, just as there are different games that you like to play.”
- “She can play with whoever she wants to, just like you.”

“GIRLS CAN’T DRIVE TRUCKS!”

- “Is it fair to tell a child what they can or can’t do? I think children can have any interest they want.”
- “When I was growing up, sometimes people made fun of me because I liked to bake. Do people sometimes make fun of you about something you like to do?”

WHEN YOU HEAR CHILDREN MAKE COMMENTS SIMILAR TO THE ONES BELOW, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER THESE RESPONSES:

“You’re such a girl!” (said in an insulting tone to a child who identifies as a boy)
“IT’S NOT OKAY TO CALL SOMEONE A ‘GIRL’ TO MAKE THEM FEEL BAD.”

“Boys are better at sports than girls.”
“SOME CHILDREN ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS AT SPORTS, IT DOESN’T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEIR BEING A BOY OR GIRL. ALL CHILDREN HAVE THINGS THAT THEY ARE GOOD AT.”

LEARNER-LEARNER INTERACTIONS



FACILITATING INTERACTIONS

BETWEEN LEARNERS:

Interactions with other children are important, and interactions during early childhood offer learning experiences that provide the foundations for children's peer relationships as they grow and develop.

When children have the opportunity to play and interact with various children, they will develop skills for interacting effectively and comfortably with children of other sexes and gender identities.

Children will benefit from these social skills later in life as well, since in most settings in a society (school, workplace, church, family and community), they will have to interact and work with various people.

HELPING CHILDREN TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES AND THEIR EMOTIONS:

There is nothing wrong or abnormal about emotions, however, certain emotions are considered more "acceptable" for certain groups of children to display (for instance for boys to respond aggressively when angry, or for girls to cry when they are upset).



Researchers have found that, even more than intelligence, your emotional awareness and ability to handle feelings will determine your success and happiness in all walks of life. All learners should know that it is fine to feel a range of emotions and to cry at times. They should be encouraged to express themselves freely and to talk about how they feel. This is an important part of developing children's sense of self care. To achieve this, it is helpful to create a safe and supportive environment for all children, regardless of their sex.

SUPPORT CHILDREN TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES FREELY AND ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER

HOW?

- 1 HELP CHILDREN TO TREAT ONE ANOTHER WITH RESPECT**
- 2 ENCOURAGE CHILDREN EQUALLY TO EXPRESS EMOTIONS**
- 3 HELP CHILDREN TO DEVELOP EMPATHY AND RESPECT DIVERSITY**



1 HELP CHILDREN TO TREAT ONE ANOTHER WITH RESPECT



TAKE A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO GENDER-BASED (OR OTHER) TEASING, EXCLUSION, AND BULLYING

- Make one of your class rules 'We are all friends'.
You can stick this rule, with a picture, up on your wall and refer to it regularly. Introduce the rule by telling a story about teasing, bullying and excluding. The story should make clear to your learners that this behaviour is never fun and that it causes sadness.
- Discourage negative comments and any bullying.
When a child shows behaviour that is different from typical gender roles (perhaps a boy chooses a doll to play with or engages more with girls), respect the choices made by this child and expect the other children to do the same.
- Intervene when children try to restrict each other's play or use biased language.
Remind children that everyone is encouraged to play, explore, and express themselves freely, and that as long as children are not hurting each other, each should be allowed to play with what is most interesting to them.



2 ENCOURAGE CHILDREN EQUALLY TO EXPRESS EMOTIONS



ENCOURAGE ALL CHILDREN EQUALLY TO EXPRESS THEIR EMOTIONS

Every child is different and will respond differently when they feel certain emotions. All children should be encouraged to express a range of emotions, regardless of their sex and associated gender.

- Do not discourage girls from being assertive by telling them they are “behaving like boys”. When girls cry, do not caution them to “stop behaving like girls”.
- Put a stop to any negative comments from peers when a child shows emotions or vulnerability.
- Make an ‘emotions chart’ to help children become conscious of the four basic emotions (happy, scared, angry, sad) and to learn which behaviour is acceptable and which is not.



All children need to learn that they can not hurt someone (with words or physically) when they feel angry, for example. As a teacher, you can help each child to find ways in which they express their emotions in a healthy way.



HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH THEIR EMOTIONS

- Suggest that the child spends some time alone in a quiet corner of the classroom.
- Give the child a task to distract them.
- Ask the child to draw a picture of what they are feeling.
- Once a child has managed to work through their feelings, it is important to talk to them about what happened, especially if their behaviour was disruptive.

3 HELP CHILDREN TO DEVELOP EMPATHY AND APPRECIATE GENDER EQUALITY



Empathic skills include the ability to understand and share (appreciate) the feelings of another. Developing these skills helps children learn to care for others and assist them, which counters bullying and aggression.



HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP EMPATHIC SKILLS

- Providing opportunities for play and role-taking allows children to practice expressing emotions and putting themselves in someone else's shoes
- Using children's books and stories to promote discussion about emotions and empathy, and knowledge of emotional states and emotional cues
- Facilitate activities and games that focus on the identification and expression of emotions

Role model prosocial behaviour for children – they rely heavily on imitation and social modelling as a learning tool.

You can also use questions to help children develop empathic skills:

“How do you feel when...”

“How do you think he feels about it?”

“What do you think she needs from us?”

“How do you think they would react if...”



HELP CHILDREN APPRECIATE DIVERSITY

If you respect and praise children for their individuality, you can set a good example that will positively influence children's behaviour towards others.

Give children opportunities to share interesting facts about themselves, their families, their passions and talents. Show children how to appreciate and celebrate differences:

“That's cool! I never knew that before!”

“I like the way you do that.”

“Can you tell me more about that?”

Seeing you respond to diversity in a consistently supportive, empathetic way will teach children positive attitudes and effective strategies to do the same.

INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



The interactions in your classroom extend to the wider school community and to children’s home environments. Children observe interactions between adults, and what they see and hear influences what children believe about the world and about themselves. Just as children may police gender boundaries, adults may also impose gender stereotypes and expectations on children.

Gender biases may be present in the school organisation and culture as well. Often when there are men in preschool, they are either in leadership positions such as principals, chairs of governing bodies or in stereotypical male roles such as drivers and groundsman. Male teachers might behave in stereotypical ways, such as supervising vigorous games, doing maths and construction projects with children. Furthermore, we often consider that early childhood teachers should be female and treat male teachers with suspicion.

Given the challenge that many families and communities hold to prevailing harmful gender stereotypes and expectations, teachers can help inform families and communities by modelling an anti-bias approach and providing information about the effects of gender bias.

“ECD SERVICES HAVE TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF FAMILIES BUT AT THE SAME TIME MUST MAKE SURE THAT NO CHILD IS TREATED UNFAIRLY BECAUSE OF GENDER”

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT’S GUIDELINES FOR ECD SERVICES (2005)

You can model behaviours that support gender equality to help other staff members and children’s families understand gender as a spectrum. You can demonstrate how children can be encouraged to express their own gender identity and break away from harmful gender stereotypes. This will have a significant impact on the health and well-being of children, because more flexible gender roles help children develop a broader range of socio-emotional and cognitive skills.

USE YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOL STAFF, PARENTS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE GENDER EQUALITY

HOW?

- 1 PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND MODEL AN ANTI-BIAS APPROACH IN YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER ADULTS**
- 2 HELP PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD’S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT**



1 PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND MODEL AN ANTI-BIAS APPROACH IN YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER ADULTS

- Respectfully address norms and beliefs that reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Raise awareness of the persistence of gender stereotyping in school systems and how this affects learners and the community at large. Use occasions like school open days and parent meetings.
- Recognise that this may feel uncomfortable for some teachers, school staff, parents or community members. Be ready to answer their questions and respond to their concerns.
- Think about how stereotypes or biases can be addressed in your interactions with staff or parents. The tips provided on pages 35-38 are not only applicable when interacting with children. The same principles apply when engaging with adults.

Identify common goals for how learning environments should be for all children:

- Safety is something I think we can agree is important for every child here
- Kindness and respect are two values that will help every child learn
- Creating a more positive learning environment helps every child be more successful



2 HELP PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT



HELP PARENTS UNDERSTAND HOW GENDER STEREOTYPES NEGATIVELY AFFECT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND WHAT THEY ARE ABLE TO ACHIEVE

Children learn and develop optimally when:

- they participate in a variety of learning and play activities
- their teachers make them feel safe and supported
- they receive encouragement to try different things and interact with others such as when they're happy, scared, angry, sad and to learn which behaviour is acceptable and which is not.

Discuss with parents how gender stereotypes may prevent children from engaging in certain activities, play behaviour or taking on different roles in group settings.

That is one reason why children should be exposed and encouraged to a variety of play and interactions with peers, regardless of their sex.



MAKE YOUR TEACHING APPROACHES THAT ADDRESS GENDER-BARRIERS TO LEARNING CLEAR TO PARENTS AND HIGHLIGHT HOW THIS BENEFITS THEIR CHILDREN

"As your child's teacher I want to influence how children will think of themselves and what they'll be able to do with their lives as adults. I don't want gender stereotypes to stand in their way from achieving their dreams and potential."

THIS HELPS ADDRESS THE GENDER STEREOTYPE THAT CAREGIVING AND PLAY WITH CHILDREN ARE PREDOMINANTLY FEMALE ROLES.



MAKE CONSCIOUS EFFORTS TO INVOLVE MALE CAREGIVERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN, WHERE POSSIBLE.

Raise awareness that male caregivers' contribution to learning through play adds value to the development of their children. Be conscious that many male caregivers need to check with a primary caregiver to schedule time with their child. It is therefore also important to raise awareness among primary caregivers.



ADDRESS CONCERNS THAT PARENTS MAY HAVE ABOUT GENDER-RELATED TOPICS

See examples (next page) of questions parents might have, and how you might respond.

QUESTIONS ABOUT GENDER THAT FAMILY MEMBERS MIGHT ASK YOU:



WHY ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION TO GENDER IN SCHOOL?

Schools and ECD centres are places where children are taught to respect one another and to learn to work together regardless of their differences. Creating a tolerant, inclusive, and accepting learning environment teaches all children to recognise and resist stereotypes.

Creating a more tolerant, inclusive, and accepting learning environment teaches all children to recognise and resist stereotypes. It is important to teach children to stand up for others, to resist bullying, and to work together, despite differences.

WHY ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION TO GENDER WITH SUCH YOUNG CHILDREN?

Messages about gender are everywhere, and children receive many messages about the “rules” for boys and girls, as well as the consequences for violating them. By learning about the diversity of gender, children have an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests, ideas, and activities. By paying attention to gender equality in the classroom, children get an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests, ideas, and activities.

WHY DO YOU ALLOW MY SON TO DRESS UP AS A PRINCESS?

As a teacher, it is my task to make sure all children feel welcome and respected. Therefore, I respect the choices your child makes about what they play with and how, as long as they are respectful to other learners and materials. An important part of children’s development is to make choices and try out different things. This way, they develop a wide variety of skills. In my class children also learn to respect each other, even though everyone is different.

I SUSPECT THAT MY NEIGHBOUR’S CHILD IS BEING ABUSED. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Answer: Are you comfortable to come with me to the principal? My principal will be able to guide us.





GIVE PARENTS TIPS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AT HOME



Parents may approach you for advice around what they can do at home to promote gender equality with their children. Below are some tips you can consider.

TIPS TO BREAK AWAY FROM GENDER STEREOTYPES IN RAISING YOUR CHILD

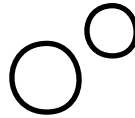
1

Teach children to value and respect each other.



2

Seek out good role models for your children.



3

Give equal opportunities to every child.

4

Tell stories with diverse role models.



5

Share duties equally among your children.

6

Praise all children for efforts they make.

7

Encourage your child to express themselves and make personal choices.

8

Treat all children with the same gentleness of firmness.



9

Promote kindness amongst children.

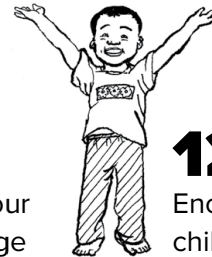
10

Be a role model by showing how to deal with conflict without violence or aggression.



11

Encourage your child to engage in different kinds of play.



12

Encourage your child to play with different kinds of toys.



13

Consider buying or making toys that are not typically meant for one sex only.

14

Avoid TV programmes with violence or gender stereotypes.



15

Model how chores and caring work can be done by everyone.

16

Show respect in all relationships.

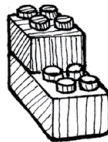


17

Seek female trades people, such as taxi drivers or business owners, and let your child watch them work.

18

Do not allow teasing, bullying and violence.



19

Encourage your child to express their emotions.

20

Allow your child to like different colours, toys and clothes.



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