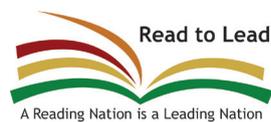


PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING WITH OTHERS IN A
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



THIS MATERIAL WAS DEVELOPED BY
THE DBE AND VVOB SOUTH AFRICA



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LEARNING WITH OTHERS IN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY IS A GROUP OF EDUCATORS WHO COME TOGETHER REGULARLY TO LEARN WITH AND FROM EACH OTHER ON NEEDS THEY HAVE IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES.

This booklet gives ideas of what you can do in a professional learning community to improve your gender-responsive practice.

STEP 1: DECIDE ON A LEARNING FOCUS

Together, you can decide what you want to focus on. Some ideas of topics, covered in this booklet:



1. UNDERSTANDING GENDER



2. GENDER & THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: INDOORS AND OUTDOORS



3. GENDER & PLAY MATERIALS



4. GENDER, PICTURES AND STORIES



5. GENDER & LEARNING ACTIVITIES



6. INTERACTIONS & LANGUAGE USE IN THE CLASSROOM



7. INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

STEP 2: DECIDE ON A LEARNING ACTIVITY

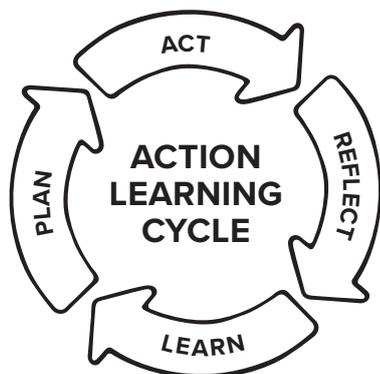
For each topic, this booklet gives some ideas that can inspire your PLC to get learning. These ideas are linked to the teachers' guide.

Note: If you do not have the teachers' guide yet, you can download it here: <https://bit.ly/3sboxDs>



STEP 3: AN ACTION LEARNING CYCLE

Many PLCs use an action learning cycle, to help them learn and improve practice together. In different sessions, they focus on different steps in the cycle. For example: they plan for an intervention or action together, then implement the action, together or each in their own classroom. In a next step, the PLC reflects on the action: what did and didn't work? How do we know? What do we learn from it and what will we do next?



PLAN

what do we need to do for this activity or action? What are the steps?

ACT

Take an action. Carry out plans.

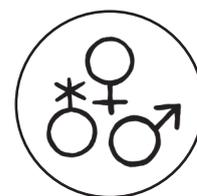
REFLECT

What happened? How do you feel? What went well? What didn't go well?

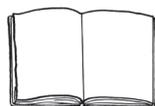
LEARN

Why did we have success? Why didn't it go so well?

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PLC!



1. UNDERSTANDING GENDER



TEACHERS' GUIDE PAGE 3 TO 10



DISCUSS:

Do gender and sex mean the same thing?

 Pages 5-6 of the Teachers' Guide



DO:

Make a poster that explains why your PLC thinks it is important to promote gender equality in Early Childhood Development.

 Pages 3-4 and 9-10 of Teachers' Guide



WATCH:

Watch this video. Afterwards, discuss what you saw, and how it made you feel?

Do you think it is important, why or why not? How does it relate to your own context and classrooms? <https://bit.ly/3dadKFd>



SHARE:

Have you ever felt that you were prevented from doing something, in your work context or personal life, because of gender expectations? Take turns sharing. This activity can help you become more aware of how gender stereotypes affect us all.



ROLE PLAY:

A few PLC members act out a scene depicting a gender stereotype that is prevalent in your community. Afterwards, the spectators can take turns to share what they saw and how it made them feel. Discuss as a group how the gender stereotype that was acted out is harmful. Discuss or role play what the scene would look out without the gender stereotype.

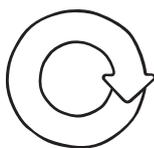


LOOK:

Below you will find examples of gender inequality in South Africa. Do you recognise any of these in your own community? Discuss as a group. If you have the time, think together what this means for you as teachers of young children – as agents who promote gender equality in ECD?

Page 7 of Teachers' Guide

<p>GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL AND HAVE LOWER PASS RATES FOR MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE SUBJECTS ^{1,2}</p>	<p>BOYS HAVE HIGHER EXPULSION RATES AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPEAT PRIMARY SCHOOL GRADES ³</p>	<p>MORE THAN HALF OF LGBTI* PEOPLE REPORT THAT THEY EXPERIENCED VICTIMISATION AT SCHOOL BASED ON THEIR LGBTI STATUS ⁴</p> <p><small>*LGBTI: LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX</small></p>
<p>TRADITIONAL STEREOTYPES – ESPECIALLY PRESSURE TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILIES – ARE DIFFICULT FOR MANY SOUTH AFRICAN MEN TO LIVE UP TO ⁵</p> <p>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.</p>		
<p>ONLY 10% OF CEOs IN SOUTH AFRICA ARE WOMEN</p>	<p>WOMEN AND LGBTI PERSONS ARE AT HIGHER RISK OF SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE ^{7,8}</p>	<p>GENDER NON-CONFORMING INDIVIDUALS ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE EMPLOYED ⁹</p>
<p>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</p>		<p>FOR EACH HOUR THAT A MAN SPENDS ON UNPAID CARE WORK, WOMEN SPEND EIGHT HOURS OF EQUIVALENT WORK ¹²</p>



ACTION LEARNING:

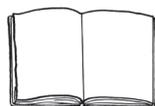
As a PLC, you can use several sessions to go through an action learning cycle related to this topic. Together, you can plan, act, reflect and learn – so you can strengthen your understanding of gender. Check out the example below:



<p>PLAN For two weeks, we each keep record of gender stereotypes we notice in ourselves and around us (at school, at home, in the community).</p>
<p>ACT Make diary entries of such occurrences, include reflections.</p>
<p>REFLECT In a PLC session, we share our diary entries and reflections and take further discussion around the negative impacts of gender stereotypes.</p>
<p>LEARN We also discuss what we learn from this. What worked for us and what didn't go so well?</p>



2. GENDER AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



TEACHERS' GUIDE PAGE 14 TO 20



DO:

Draw a floorplan of your playground(s) and discuss the following:

- Are there areas that are dominated by certain groups of children?
- Which groups? How do they dominate the area e.g. unconsciously, aggressively, what do they say?
- What could you do to encourage all children to play in a variety of areas?
- What could you do if certain groups of children are preventing other children from joining in?

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WATCH:

Watch the Siyalingana video with tips to promote gender equality through your learning environment. Afterwards, discuss what you saw to help everyone understand the different tips. You can discuss which of the tips you would like to try in your own classrooms. Choose only one tip (or a few) and plan together how you can put the tip into practice. <https://bit.ly/3mEDGMa>



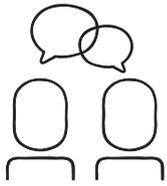
ROLE PLAY:

One of the PLC members is the teacher; about 4 are children and others are observers.

THE SCENE: This teacher uses different learning areas in her class. Some of the children are playing in the fantasy area, some in the construction area. The teacher has noticed that the same children tend to play in the same areas all the time. The teacher wants to encourage the children to try out playing in different learning areas, and to interact with different children.

Role play what the teacher could do.

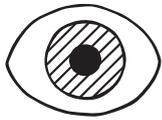
After the role play, the observers can take turns to share what they saw and how it made them feel. Discuss as a group what went well and what other actions the teacher could have taken.



SHARE:

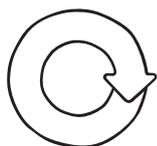
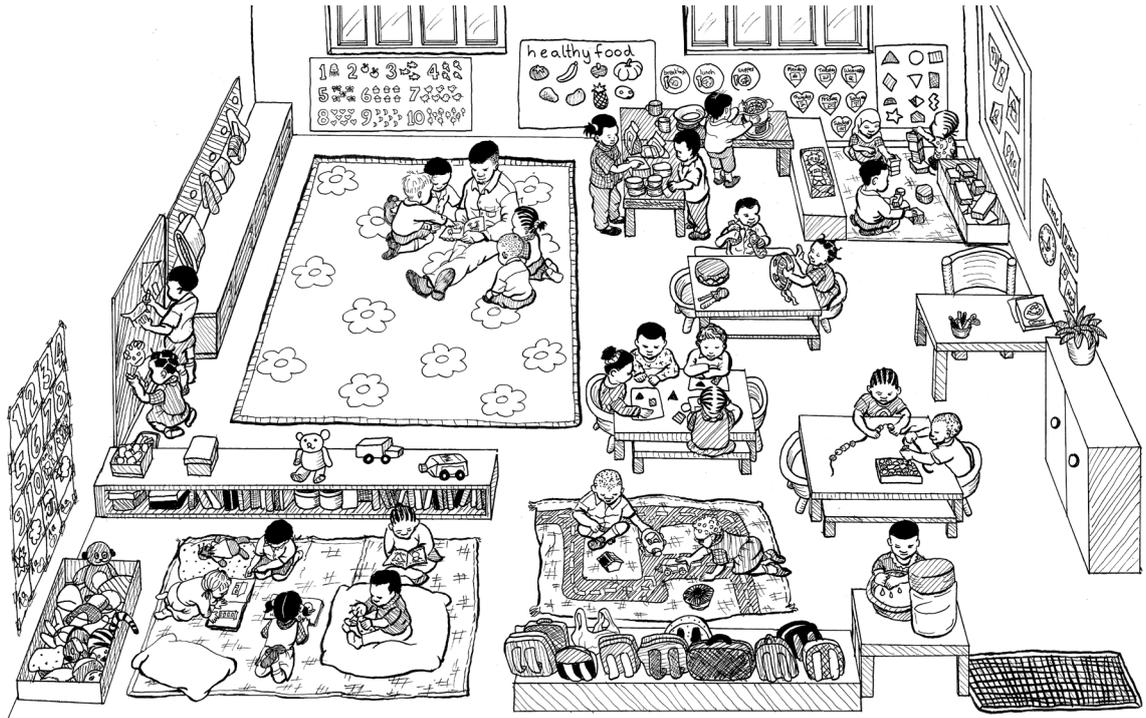
Take turns to share ideas of how you can organise seating arrangements or groupings in a way that is gender responsive.

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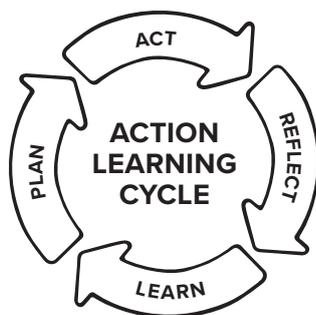
LOOK:

Look at the picture below. Which learning areas shown in this picture, do you have in your classrooms (they may look quite different but with the same purpose). Which learning areas do you have in your classroom that are not in the picture. Share ideas on how you can attract diverse children to play in the different learning areas.



ACTION LEARNING:

As a PLC, you can decide to take several sessions to go through an action learning cycle, related to this topic. Together, you can plan, act, reflect and learn – so you can strengthen how you use your learning environment to promote gender equality. Check out the example below:



PLAN

After sharing ideas in the PLC, each member will reorganise one learning area to make it more attractive to children of all sexes. As part of the plan, list ideas of the changes to make.

ACT

Change the set-up of the learning area, observe what happens, make a record about the children's participation in the learning area (e.g. take photos)

REFLECT

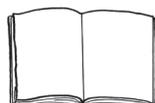
Share photos (in a session or in a phone chat group) and reflect: did more children of all sexes participate in play in the learning area?

LEARN

What worked well and what didn't? Why do we think so? What might we do differently next time (replan)



3. GENDER & PLAY MATERIALS



TEACHERS' GUIDE PAGE 21 TO 24



DO:

If your PLC is meeting in a classroom, you can look through the play materials in the class and identify the material that mostly girls play with, mostly boys, and material that everyone plays with (3 categories).

If you are not in a classroom, you can draw up an inventory on a sheet of paper, using three columns. Take turns to pick a toy from the two categories of toys that mostly appeal to one sex. Share an idea of how you can encourage all children, regardless of their sex, to play with the toy you've chosen.



WATCH:

Watch the Siyalingana video with tips to promote gender equality through play materials. Afterwards, discuss what you saw to help everyone understand the different tips. You can discuss which of the tips you would like to try in your own classrooms. Choose only one tip (or a few), and plan together how you can put the tip into practice.

<https://bit.ly/3wQKPO8>



CASE STUDY:

Read the case study below.

Benjamin is playing with building blocks and Zanele joins him and asks if she can help him build. Benjamin says: "I don't want you to help because you will break everything. You are a girl, you should go play with the dolls."

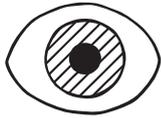
Discuss how you would respond if this kind of conversation happened in your classrooms.



DISCUSS:

In your context, are there some colours that are considered more for boys, and other colours that are considered more for girls? If play materials have a certain colour, might children think they are only for children of a specific sex to play with? Take some time to share experiences. Also discuss why this is possibly harmful, and what you could do and say to encourage children to play with a variety of play materials.

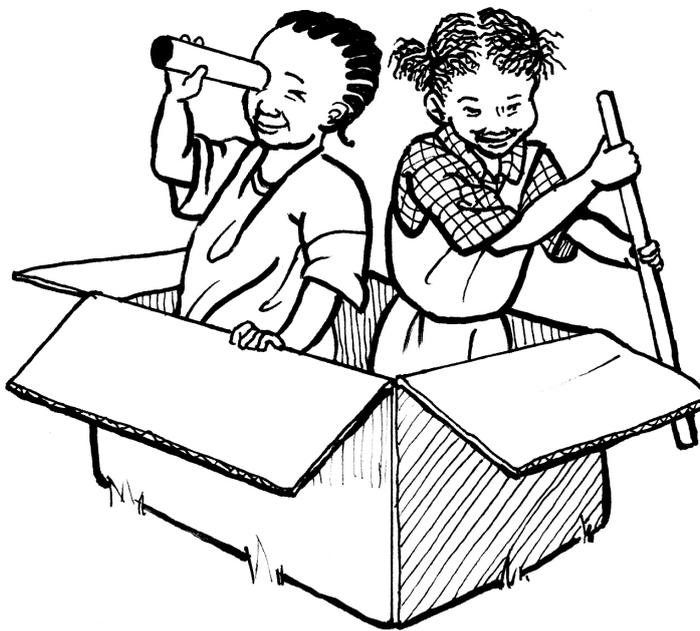
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LOOK:

Look at the illustration below. It shows children playing with gender-neutral low-cost play materials. You can discuss why these materials are gender-neutral. You can share ideas of other gender-neutral, low-cost play materials. Where can you find them? Can you make them yourselves?

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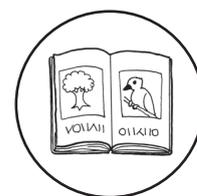


ACTION LEARNING:

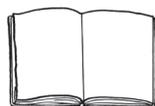
As a PLC, you can decide to take several sessions to go through an action learning cycle, related to this topic. Together, you can plan, act, reflect and learn – so all of you strengthen how you use play materials to promote gender equality. Check out the example below:



<p>PLAN We will do an audit of how gender-responsive our play materials are.</p>
<p>ACT Make an overview of play materials and assess their gender-responsiveness. Document the audit.</p>
<p>REFLECT Analyse the results together. How gender-responsive are our play materials?</p>
<p>LEARN What does this mean going forward: what will we do with the play materials we currently have? What does it mean for play materials we will make or use in the future? Check the teachers' guide if you are not sure.</p>



4. GENDER, PICTURES & STORIES



TEACHERS' GUIDE PAGE 25 TO 28



DO:

Each bring a storybook from your class to your PLC session. You could choose a storybook you plan to use for the current learning theme. Together, use the guidance in the TG p26-27 to determine the type of gender content each of the storybooks contains. You can discuss your preference for certain types of stories, and you can discuss how you can use the different books to talk about gender with children during story time.



WATCH:

Watch the Siyalingana video with tips to promote gender equality through pictures and stories. Afterwards, discuss what you saw to help everyone understand the different tips. You can discuss which of the tips you would like to try in your own classrooms. Choose only one tip (or a few), and plan together how you can put the tip into practice.

<https://bit.ly/3mF2ALH>



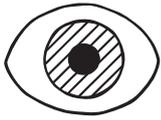
ROLE PLAY:

One of the PLC members is the teacher; about 4 are children and others are observers. You will need a storybook to do this role play.

THE SCENE: The teacher reads a story to the children. As the teacher reads the story, he/she asks the children questions so that they become more aware of gender stereotypes.

After the role play, the observers can take turns to share what they saw and how it made them feel. Discuss as a group what went well and what other actions the teacher could have taken.

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LOOK:

Look at the picture below. Discuss what you see and what message you think this picture gives to children? Are there things you would change in the picture to give a different message? If so, what would you change?



ACTION LEARNING:

As a PLC, you can decide to take several sessions to go through an action learning cycle, related to this topic. Together, you can plan, act, reflect and learn – so you strengthen how you use pictures and stories to promote gender equality. Check out the example below:



PLAN
Assess the posters we use in our classrooms for gender stereotypes.

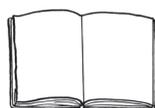
ACT
Each of us takes pictures of posters in our classrooms and shares (either in PLC session or on phone chat group) where possible, an example of a poster that contains explicit and implicit gender stereotypes, a gender neutral example, an example that challenges gender stereotypes or embracing gender diversity.

REFLECT
We discuss our findings – how gender-responsive are our posters?

LEARN
What does this mean for how we use them?



5. GENDER & LEARNING ACTIVITIES



TEACHERS' GUIDE PAGE 29 TO 35



DISCUSS:

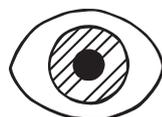
Are there people in your community who have taken on a non-stereotypical gender role? For example, a female business leader, a father who takes care of the baby. Think of other examples too. Discuss how you can talk about such role-models in class.



WATCH:

Watch the Siyalingana video with tips to promote gender equality through learning activities. Afterwards, discuss what you saw to help everyone understand the different tips. You can discuss which of the tips you would like to try in your own classrooms. Choose only one or a few, and plan together how you can put the tip into practice.

<https://bit.ly/3uLEaDo>



LOOK:

Below you find examples of questions that teachers can ask, to create opportunities to discuss gender. These questions are linked to the learning theme 'All about me'. Together, think of other questions you can ask. Develop questions that you can use for the theme you are currently teaching.

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“ALL ABOUT ME”

QUESTIONS:

- What career do you want 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?





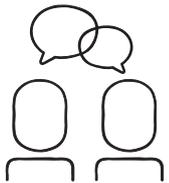
CASE STUDY:

Read the case study below.

THE SCENE: It is almost the end of the day in teacher Khosi’s class, and it is time to tidy up! Teacher Khosi asks the boys to lift the chairs onto the tables. She encourages them: *“You boys are so strong!”* She asks two of the girls to sweep the classroom, and three other girls to sort the books in the library corner. She encourages them: *“Thank you girls, you have such a good eye for detail!”*

Discuss what you would do the same or differently, so that you promote gender equality.

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SHARE:

Take turns to share how you group children, for example for small-group activities, or for daily routines such as snack time and toilet breaks. You can make a list of all the different ways that they are mentioned. Discuss which of these groupings are gender-responsive, and what other ways of grouping children you could use.

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DO:

Think of a song or songs that you sing in class and that contains gender stereotypes. Change the words to make them more gender neutral. Sing the song together.

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ACTION LEARNING:

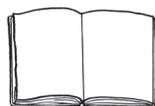
As a PLC, you can decide to take several sessions to go through an action learning cycle, related to this topic. Together, you can plan, act, reflect and learn – so you strengthen how you use learning activities to promote gender equality. Check out the example below:



- PLAN**
Making our daily programmes more gender-responsive. Steps we will take: a volunteer will explain their daily programme; together we develop ideas to be gender-responsive in each aspect of the programme and we try them out in our classes.
- ACT**
We implement the plan, and keep a record of what worked well and what didn't.
- REFLECT**
We discuss what worked well and what didn't in a PLC session.
- LEARN**
Why do we think we had success or no success?



6. INTERACTIONS & LANGUAGE USE IN THE CLASSROOM



TEACHERS' GUIDE PAGE 35 TO 46



WATCH:

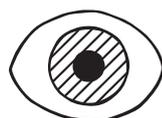
Watch the Siyalingana video with tips to create positive interactions with and between learners, and to use inclusive language. Afterwards, discuss what you saw to help everyone understand the different tips. You can discuss which of the tips you would like to try in your own classrooms. Choose only one tip (or a few), and plan together how you can put the tip into practice. <https://bit.ly/3aqkzRh>



DISCUSS:

Discuss the rules around friendship that you have in your classes. For example: how and when you introduce such rules; what material you use to introduce this topic to your learners or to remind them (eg poster, stories, songs). You can share ideas and make supporting material, such as a poster, in your PLC.

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LOOK:

Look at the picture below. It illustrates the 4 basic emotions (happy, scared, angry and sad). Discuss ideas of how you could use this illustration (for example, as a poster, in a story) to help children understand their emotions, and express them in a way that does not hurt anyone (with words or physically). Importantly, discuss how you can make sure all children, regardless of their sex, are encouraged to express their emotions.





DO:

Come up with a set of steps that you can take as teachers, to help children cope with their emotions. Write these steps down, so that each of you can easily refer back to them when confronted with a situation in class where the steps can help. You can also develop supporting materials, such as a story, a poster, a comfort toy or activity that can help children express and cope with emotions.

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SHARE:

Does teasing take place in your classes? Share your experiences and share your ideas of how you can address such situations.



CASE STUDY:

Read the case study below.

Thandi says she wants to be a doctor when she grows up. Her friend Abraham says that Thandi won't have time for that because she will have to look after the children.

Discuss how you would respond if this kind of conversation happened in your classrooms.



ACTION LEARNING:

As a PLC, you can decide to take several sessions to go through an action learning cycle, related to this topic. Together, you can plan, act, reflect and learn – so you strengthen how you use learning activities to promote gender equality. Check out the example below:



PLAN
Zero-tolerance to bullying – this is a long-term plan. Our first steps will include: deciding on quick-win changes that we can make in our classrooms and trying those out.

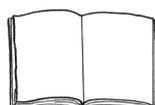
ACT
We discuss and decide on a few quick-win steps we can take in our classrooms. We then all try them out in our classrooms. We keep a record of the successes and challenges we encounter.

REFLECT
In our next session, we discuss the success and challenges.

LEARN
Ad why we think we had success or no success? We can learn lessons and plan new actions from what we have learnt.



7. INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



TEACHERS' GUIDE PAGE 37 TO 51



WATCH:

Watch the Siyalingana video with tips to promote gender equality through your interactions beyond the classroom. Afterwards, discuss what you saw to help everyone understand the different tips. You can discuss which of the tips you would like to try in your own context. Choose only one tip (or a few), and plan together how you can put the tip into practice.

<https://bit.ly/32sOZOo>



SHARE:

Have you ever experienced a situation at your centre or school where an adult at the school or centre (teaching or non-teaching staff) actively promoted gender equality? Or the opposite, perpetuated a gender stereotype? What role could you play to help them become more aware of the good and bad practices they are using?



DO:

List questions that caregivers have asked you (or might ask you in the future) about gender. Look at each question in turn, and write down a possible answer. This can help all PLC members be better prepared for questions they might be asked in the future.

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ROLE PLAY:

One PLC member plays the role of teacher; another the role of Abraham's grandmother. The other PLC members are observers.

THE SCENE: Abraham's grandmother approaches Teacher Khosi at the end of school. She is concerned because Abraham has come home from school and told her stories about how he has been playing with dolls. She does not think this is normal.

Role play what the teacher could do.

After the role play, the players and the observers can take turns to share what they saw and how it made them feel. Discuss as a group what went well and what other actions the teacher could have taken.

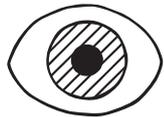
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DISCUSS:

Take turns to share your experiences regarding your interactions with male caregivers (for example fathers). How present are they in the life of their child? How involved are they in the development of their child? Discuss whether you think they can play an important role in the learning and development of their child? How? And what can you as teachers do to encourage their involvement more?

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LOOK:

Imagine a parent approaches you to ask for advice on how they can promote gender equality with their child at home. Look at the tips for parents and caregivers on the next page. Discuss which of these tips you think will work well. Say and/or write them in your own words.

Tips to break away from gender stereotypes in raising your child

1

Empower your child to value and respect other people.



2

Seek out good role models of different sexes in the life of your child.

3

Give equal opportunities to every child, regardless of their sex.

4

Facilitate and encourage gender discussions in your environment.

5

Give equal chores to children, regardless of their sex.

6

Use language that supports gender diversity and equality.

7

Encourage your child to express themselves and make personal choices.

8

Treat children of different sexes with the same gentleness and 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 heavily gendered TV programmes and toys.

15

In your own home, model how chores and caring work can be done by everyone, regardless of their sex.

16

Let children learn about diversity of gender irrespective of their age.

17

Seek female tradespeople, 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, regardless of their sex.



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING WITH OTHERS IN A
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

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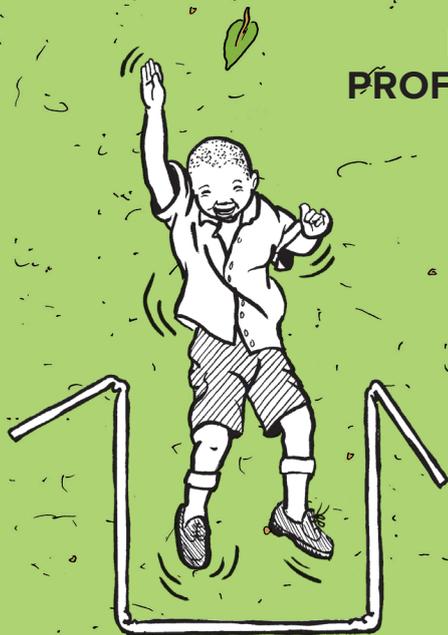
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