Educators have a professional, moral and legal duty to protect learners from any harm while they are at school.

Therefore they have a leading part to play in protecting learners from sexual violence and harassment – which currently is occurring at too many of our schools.

To support them in doing so, the Department of Education has developed Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Violence and Harassment. In Genderations 4 we focused on:

- Understanding the types of behaviour considered to be acts of sexual violence and/or harassment;
- The importance of a clear learner’s Code of Conduct to express types of behaviour that are unacceptable, as well as consequences a learner would face should they break these school rules; and
- The Code of Ethics for educators, as well as the legal obligations and restrictions concerning the actions of educators.

In this issue of Genderations, we’ll be looking at a number of strategies schools can use to help prevent incidents of sexual violence and harassment from taking place.

These range from practical steps to creating a safer school to shifting attitudes to do with gender relationships.

DEFINING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Guidelines define sexual violence as any sexual act or attempted sexual act using intimidation, threats of violence, or physical force.

Such acts at school may include:

- Assault, forced sex or rape;
- Sexual harassment; and
- Sexual abuse through the sexualised touching of another’s intimate parts, and/or forcing any person to touch any person’s intimate parts.

Know the signs

Some signs that point to a learner having been abused are easy to see, such as bruises or scratches resulting from physical abuse. But there are also types of behaviour to be aware of that could also signal abuse:

- Loss of self-esteem and confidence;
- Depression;
- Emotional withdrawal;
- Absenteeism;
- Loss of interest in school work and resulting drop in achievement;
- Difficulty in concentrating in class; and
- Anger, which may be expressed towards the perpetrator, but may also be directed towards others.

Remember: Educators have a legal duty to notify authorities if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a child is being abused or is in need of care.

DEFINING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In the Guidelines, the basic definition of sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It includes any unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct.

The Guidelines state that sexual attention is sexual harassment if:

- The behaviour is repeated (although a single incident can be considered as being sexual harassment);
- The recipient (or person on the receiving end of such behaviour) has made it clear that she/he considers the behaviour to be offensive; and/or
- The perpetrator (or person carrying out the action/s) know, or should have known, that the behaviour is unacceptable.

Sexual harassment can be committed by and against a male or a female person.

A Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa

The Bill of Responsibilities is a resource for schools developed by the Department of Education and the National Religious Leaders’ Forum in 2008.

This Bill outlines the responsibilities that flow from each of the rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Educators should use this Bill to teach learners about rights, responsibilities, and our country’s Constitution.

The following is the responsibility related to the right to equality:

The right to equality places on me the responsibility to:

- treat every person equally and fairly, and
- not to discriminate unfairly against anyone on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth.

South Africa is a diverse nation, and equality does not mean uniformity, or that we are all the same. Our country’s motto: !KE E: /XARRA //KE, meaning “Diverse people unite”, calls on all of us to build a common sense of belonging and national pride, celebrating the very diversity which makes us who we are. It also calls on us to extend our friendship and warmth to all nations and all the peoples of the world in our endeavour to build a better world.

To get your copy of the Bill, visit www.education.gov.za or contact the Gender Equity Directorate (turn to page 3 for contact details).
You’ve got the will. Now find the way.

Gender is to recognise that it begins with commitment; creativity; practical planning; and good teaching and management practices go a long way towards making schools safe havens for educators and learners alike.

A simple starting point for understanding gender is to recognise that with sexual difference.

It refers to how society shapes the identity of each person based on whether the person is a "male", or a "female". For example, society has certain expectations of how males and females should behave in their roles they should play. Males are expected to be assertive and dominating, and to have positions of authority (for example, as "man of the house"). Females are expected to be submissive and caring, and to respect the authority of the male.

Gender and power Where gender issues can easily create problems is when the power relations between males and females are very unequal.

Our Constitution may officially describe the men and women as being equal, but the reality is often very different.

For example, older and stronger children may abuse younger children, whether they're girls or boys. Family members who have been known to sexually abuse younger children.

Shifting attitudes is never easy Becoming aware of gender in these ways is the first step toward being able to change unfair behaviour, where it exists.

In both primary and high school LO curricula, life orientations (LO) teacher.

Educators shouldn’t think that teaching about gender relations between adults in your workplace.


www.thutong.org.za

Contact details:
Website: www.education.gov.za
Tel: (012) 312-5420/8
Fax: (012) 312-5218
Email: ramatico@cdo.gov.za

GENDERATIONS
Caring School Communities

The males or females?

Are young males in my family given more freedoms and resources than the young females? If so, are girls encouraged to imagine a world where each individual is free to follow their personal interests and fulfil their own potential, regardless of their gender.

Are boys assertive more in their gender.

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Taking steps to lower the risk
Once the SMT has completed the safety audit and identified areas and times of greater risk, they should come up with strategies to reduce such risks.

For example, senior learners and/or teachers could take turns monitoring risk areas, such as toilets or remote areas of the school.

Most importantly, schools must ensure that they have developed a Code of Conduct that clearly sets out rules learners are expected to follow while at school, and punitive measures they will face if they break these rules. For detailed information on this, see “Setting out school rules for learners” in Genderations 4.

SMTs should also make sure that educators are well aware of all the legal obligations and restrictions that exist for practising educators. For detailed information on this, see “Educators and the law” in Genderations 4.

Off the school grounds
Keep in mind that some places where learners and teachers may be at risk are not on the school property at all. For example, many learners are particularly vulnerable when travelling to and from school.

Steps can be taken to encourage learners to work together to protect one another, even when travelling to and from school. Forming a Girls and Boys Education Movement (GEM/BEM) Club at the school is one strategy schools could use to get learners organised and motivated to look after each other (see below for more).

Building networks of support
Ensuring the well-being and safety of all while at school is one of the central responsibilities of education officials, including teachers.

But schools can’t – and shouldn’t – do it alone. One strategy SMTs should include in creating a safe school is therefore to create a list of individuals, organisations and/or government structures that could be offer their support.

Some examples include:
• Role models: School graduates: Have any of your school’s former learners gone on to become public figures, celebrities, or experts in the field of gender or social justice? Do you know of such a person who is part of your local community? If so, contact them and request that they support your school by giving a motivational talk to learners, or by holding a workshop for learners on issues related to sexual violence and harassment.
• Non-Government Organisations (NGOs): There are many NGOs active in areas related to sexual violence and harassment, such as conflict resolution, human rights or gender awareness. Some operate on national and provincial levels, but you may also find an organisation in your own community that could support your school with their expertise.
• Law enforcement agencies: Contact your local South African Police Service (SAPS) station. Many participate in the “Adopt-a-Child” programme, where a SAPS officer offers workshops and training both to learners and teachers in matters such as sexual violence and harassment. Officials from other departments, such as the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, and the National Procuring Authority could also be invited to present information and awareness workshops to your school’s community in relevant areas.
• Social welfare and health agencies: The Department of Social Development and Department of Health can also play a part in supporting your school, through information workshops or other initiatives.
• Departments of education: Most provincial departments have gender focal persons who are located at district and/or provincial offices. These officials can assist your school by providing training sessions for educators, school governing body (SGB) members, and learners.

Once your SMT has compiled such a list, make sure that steps are taken to contact each individual/organisation so that their practical support is secured.

Care committees/support teams
One valuable contribution some of these individuals/organisations could make is to be part of your school’s care committee/support teams.

These are structures that schools should create to deal with any incidents of sexual violence and harassment, or of learner pregnancy, should they occur. The committee/team could include educators; members of the SMT; responsible senior learners; parents; members of the SGB; and officials or representatives from some of the organisations and departments listed above.

The committee/team should have clear lines of communication and responsibility, and have developed a plan of action to effectively and fairly manage any such incidents.

Watch out for Genderations 6, when we’ll take a closer look at strategies for managing sexual violence and harassment at schools.

Have you heard about the GEM/BEM clubs?

These are school-based clubs made up of boys and girls. They’re motivated and thinking youngsters who are committed to the promotion of equal human rights, dignity for all, and mutual respect between boys and girls.

FOR LEARNERS, BY LEARNERS
These clubs are started, organised and run by learners themselves.

In this way, these young adults will learn to become self-reliant and active participants in their life. Of course, they will need the support and guidance of a number of adults, including their educators, and members of business and NGO communities.

THEY’RE ABOUT GETTING THINGS DONE
GEM/BEM clubs are the start of a movement – so they’re about taking action, not just talking.

Some of the activities South African GEM/BEM clubs are involved in include:
• Starting campaigns to keep school premises clean and safe;
• Setting up recreational activities such as drama, art or sports codes at schools;
• Entertain events that include activities such as gumboot dancing, choir, drama, poetry and story telling, which use talent and entertainment to get important social messages across;
• Debating, especially on topics to do with healthy living and gender equality;
• Charity activities, such as collecting and donating clothes and food to those in need in the community;
• Forming walking teams to ensure the safety of learners on their way home; and
• Inviting speakers to present information on different topics in their schools.

START YOUR OWN GEM/BEM CLUB
For more information on how to set up GEM/BEM clubs at school, request a copy of the GEM/BEM Guide for Schools from the Gender Equity Directorate at the National Department of Education:
Tel: (012) 312-5383; Fax: (012) 312-5216; or Email: ramatho.c@doe.gov.za or hlatshasheni.d@doe.gov.za