

Jefferson County School System Classroom Practices for Gender Equitable Education

Student/Teacher Interaction

- Call on girls as often as you do boys, and be sure to ask the girls some of the higher-level cognitive questions. Research shows that both male and female teachers initiate more interaction with boys, and on higher cognitive levels.
- Have high expectations of both male and female students. Do not encourage learned helplessness by over-nurturing the girls.
- Encourage girls and boys to be active learners by using manipulatives and providing hands-on learning experiences.
- Use gender-free language in classroom discourse.
- Use quality, precise feedback to girls' as well as boys' answers - not just a nod or a "good."
- Make eye contact with all students and call them by name.
- Provide adequate wait time, perhaps 3 or 5 seconds, before calling on a student to answer the question. Females often wait until they have formulated an answer before they raise their hands; boys often raise their hands immediately and then formulate an answer.
- Do not interrupt girls or boys or let other students do so.
- Refrain from recruiting students to perform classroom "chores" based on traditional gender roles. Do not ask only boys to assist in carrying boxes and girls to clean the bookshelves.
- Be a model of non-bias behavior for not only your classroom, but also the entire school.

Lesson Planning/Classroom Management

- Balance cooperative and competitive activities. Research shows that most girls learn more readily in cooperative situations.
- Establish rules for participation and rotate jobs within each group.
- Give girls and boys an equal amount of assistance and feedback.
- Ask students to discuss concepts orally. This helps students to learn the vocabulary of the subject.
- Encourage all students to take additional math and science courses. Adult encouragement proves to be a major factor in students' decision-making processes.
- Encourage girls and to participate in extracurricular math and science activities.
- Plan activities that use technology in real life scenarios. (Do the same for math and science.)
- Provide opportunities for female and male students to teach lessons or tutor younger students or even parents in math, science, and technology. As a teacher, you will ascertain that the girls really know the content and the opportunity to verbalize such fosters higher self-esteem.
- Stress safety precautions instead of dangers. Girls will sometimes be reluctant to participate in lab activities if they seem too dangerous.

- Insist that girls as well as boys learn to set up and use all electronic equipment: VCR's, video and digital cameras, printers, scanners, DVD players, etc...
- Address inappropriate behavior with a fair and respectful attitude, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic class of students.
- Use computer and lab partners. Again, most girls work better in cooperative groups or teams.
- Introduce lessons with an overview. Females learn more readily from the "big picture" rather than from disconnected details.
- Provide female and male role models. Research shows that girls need to see females in certain professions or career choices in order to visualize themselves in the same or similar roles; whereas boys need only to hear about certain roles to imagine themselves taking place in those same roles.
- Provide learning experiences for girls and boys to develop spatial visualization skills.
- Use writing to help students express and clarify their feelings and thoughts (e.g., math autobiographies, science journals).
- Create an attractive classroom environment. Research shows that girls learn better in an aesthetically pleasing environment.
- To appeal to students with various learning styles, encourage students to solve problems by multiple methods.

Curriculum Content

- Use gender inclusive language.
- Avoid generalizations that stereotype women or men in certain roles.
- Encourage a "can do" attitude; teach students to give themselves credit. Females tend to credit their achievements to luck rather than to their ability.
- Analyze curricular materials for bias and supplement as needed.
- Set aside an area in the classroom to serve as a resource center that includes materials in career opportunities in math, science, technology, and engineering.
- Diversify classroom resources to include females, males and diverse races.
- Assign biographical essays to students. Focus on male and female inventors and females in other areas of math, science, and technology.
- Acknowledge the contributions of both men and women to mathematics and science via posters, reports, examples, story problems, etc.
- Provide current events representative of women and other minorities with varying economic, legal, and social concerns.
- Invite guest speakers of both genders to speak to students.
- Incorporate students' comments into lectures. This technique validates the students' understanding of concepts.
- Help female and male students value themselves. Girls often have a severe drop in self-esteem during the middle school years. Women teachers need to model a healthy self-respect and male teachers need to have respect for both girl and boy students and female and male colleagues.