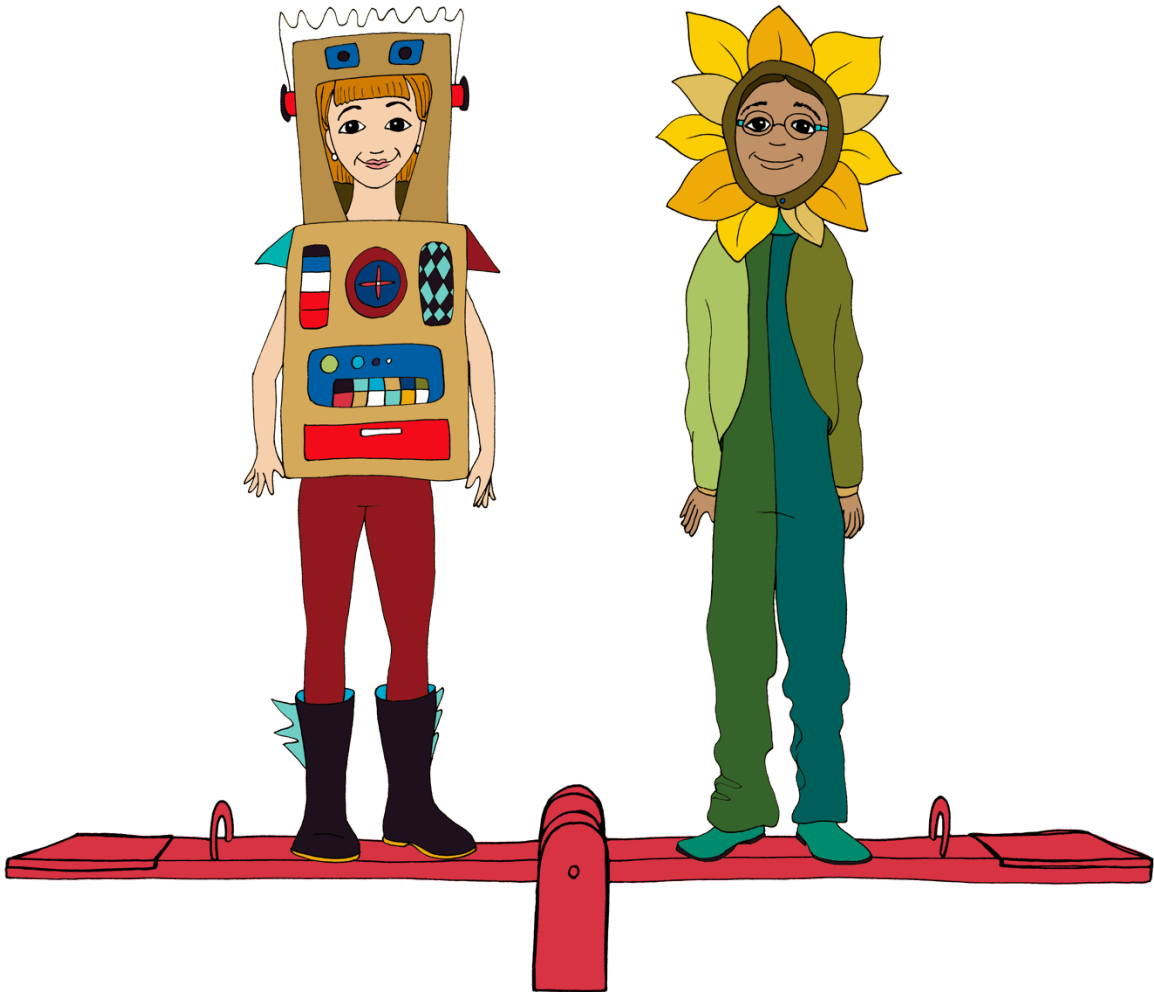


Teaching Equality

A project led by the Table de concertation féministe ·
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine



Intervention Guidelines for Elementary Level Educators

Original version: 2020 | Updated version: 2025



Table de concertation féministe
GASPÉSIE · ÎLES-DE-LA-MADELEINE

With the financial support of

Québec 

Gender stereotypes and elementary school children

Once they've started primary school, children already have a fairly advanced understanding of what it means to be a boy or a girl. In fact, by around 5 to 7 years of age, children understand that an individual's gender remains constant in all circumstances and the same over time, and that it is defined by biology¹, at least in a society that assigns a gender at birth based on the child's genitalia. Trans children, however, would believe less in the biological stability of gender². Children now realize that identity is not influenced by changes in appearance or gender-related activities (so by gender expression) although this identity only becomes permanently stable at around 7 years of age. Other studies suggest, however, that the construction of sexual identity is dynamic and can be reshaped in children later as they develop³. From this stage of gender constancy onwards, there is no difference between cisgender children and transgender children in terms of how they express their gender (clothing, attitudes, etc.) or interests, which are often consistent with their gender identity (games, leisure activities, hobbies)⁴. Thus, when they enter primary school, children have very often already developed characteristics traditionally associated with their gender because of the differentiated socialization they experienced throughout their early childhood⁵.

Development of Gender Identity

Gender identity continues to develop throughout early childhood and usually crystallizes at around the age of seven, although in some people this can vary and continue to be reshaped throughout life⁶. Gender identity is "each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from the gender typically associated with their sex assigned at birth."⁷ All people have a gender identity. Consequently, it is possible for children of primary school age to wonder about their gender identity. And this is not necessarily directly tied to the children's interests (games, clothing, models, etc.). "So it is important to avoid thinking, for instance, that because a boy is interested in a so-called feminine activity, he sees himself as a girl, or vice versa. On the contrary, children commonly adopt behaviours that are

¹ Denise Boyd & Helen Bee, *Les âges de la vie*, 2015.

² Kristina R Olson & Elizabeth A Enright, *Do transgender children (gender) stereotype less than their peers and siblings?*, 2018.

³ Yoan Mieyaa & Véronique Rouyer, *Genre et socialisation de l'enfant*, 2013.

⁴ Kristina R Olson, Aidan C Key et Nicholas R Eaton, *Gender cognition in transgender children*, 2015.

⁵ Secrétariat à la condition féminine (2018). « Boîte à outils sans stéréotypes », <https://www.quebec.ca/famille-et-soutien-aux-personnes/enfance/developpement-des-enfants/consequences-stereotypes-developpement/boite-outils>

⁶ Yoan Mieyaa & Véronique Rouyer, *Genre et socialisation de l'enfant*, 2013.

⁷ Department of Justice Canada, *Gender Identity and Gender Expression*, 2016.

socially attributed to the opposite sex and such behaviours have nothing to do with the gender to which a child identifies inwardly⁸”.

Gender stereotypes in elementary school-aged children

According to a study conducted in Québec by the Conseil du statut de la femme⁹, most primary school teachers surveyed fully or somewhat agreed with the following statements:

- Girls do better in French than boys;
- The brains of boys and girls do not work in quite the same way;
- Gender differences are not the result of inequalities between men and women;
- Schools in Québec are not adapted to the needs and specificity of boys;
- Boys need more dynamic and active educational methods; and
- Boys need to move more than girls.

However, these claims are neither based on biological characteristics nor are they scientifically founded. At birth, the brains of boys and girls differ only in reproductive function. Children between 0 and 3 years of age therefore have the same cognitive (intelligence, reasoning, memory, attention, spatial identification) and physical skills. The differences that develop between girls and boys are attributable to the plasticity of the brain, that is to say, its ability to transform with learning and environment.¹⁰ As for the psychological and behavioural differences between genders, while they tend to increase from childhood to adulthood, they are nearly absent in infants and toddlers.¹¹

Since the development of identity takes place in early childhood and because an individual's identity crystallizes at between five and seven years of age¹², when children enter primary school, most have already adopted the behaviours expected in children of their gender. Thus, in a study conducted at several primary schools in the Québec City area, “all of the boys had internalized an evaluation model depicting masculinity based on traditional stereotypes. According to these stereotypes, a boy must be sporty, undisciplined, indifferent to academic results and able to defend himself. Boys who refuse to conform to this model are excluded from the group¹³”. The

⁸ Gouvernement du Québec, *Identité sexuelle et de genre*, 2025, <https://www.quebec.ca/famille-et-soutien-aux-personnes/enfance/developpement-des-enfants/consequences-stereotypes-developpement/identite-genre-orientation-sexuelle> [traduction libre]

⁹ Conseil du statut de la femme, *Avis : L'égalité entre les sexes en milieu scolaire*, 2016, https://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/avis_egalite_entre_sexes_milieu-scolaire.pdf

¹⁰ Catherine Piraud-Rouet, *Stéréotypes de genre : bien les comprendre pour mieux les combattre*, 2021, <https://www.lesprosdela petiteenfance.fr/article/stereotypes-de-genre-bien-les-comprendre-pour-mieux-les-combattre/>

¹¹ Louise Cossette, *Cerveau hormones et sexe. Des différences en question*, 2017.

¹² Denise Boyd & Helen Bee, *Les âges de la vie*, 2015.

¹³ Claudette Gagnon, *Pour réussir dès le primaire, Filles et garçons face à l'école*, 1999, p. 29.

same study further observes that “behaviours perceived as being male raise the self-esteem of most boys and make them popular with their peers, but distance them from academic achievement, locking them into a limiting mould¹⁴”.

As for girls, they would already like to be thinner at the age of 4. At this age, they can already identify a part of their body that they want to improve¹⁵. It is estimated that between 6 and 12 years old, 40 to 50% of girls would like to be thinner¹⁶. As soon as they enter primary school, girls are also less confident and underestimate their competencies¹⁷. Thus, we see the phenomenon of **stereotype threat** appear. “Take the example of a class of 11- to 13-year-olds who are preparing to take a test measuring their spatial representation capabilities. If the test is introduced as an exercise in geometry, the boys’ scores are on average better than those of the girls. But if the teacher announces that it is a drawing test, then the girls beat the boys! (Massa et al., 2005). This experiment and many others show just how much girls apprehend geometry exercises. They consciously internalize the prejudice that they are not good at math¹⁸”. However, girls of primary school age appear to be more resistant to female gender stereotypes, particularly if they have better grades¹⁹.

Thus, boys and girls seem to adopt behaviours and demonstrate strengths that naturally differ according to sex. But these differences, however, turn out to be the result of differentiated socialization.

Differentiated socialization

Although the family, daycare centre, toys and books for children are the primary agents responsible for the differentiated socialization²⁰ of girls and boys during early childhood, this process continues at primary school: “so the teachers play a key role in this gendered socialization of pupils by extending what the children have already experienced within their families²¹”.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁵ Gouvernement du Québec, *Image corporelle*, 2025, <https://www.quebec.ca/famille-et-soutien-aux-personnes/enfance/developpement-des-enfants/consequences-stereotypes-developpement/image-corporelle>

¹⁶ Naître et grandir, *L’image corporelle chez les enfants*, 2023, <https://naitreetgrandir.com/fr/etape/5-8-ans/alimentation/image-corporelle-chez-les-enfants/>

¹⁷ BBC, *No more boys or girls, can our kids go gender-free?*, 2018.

¹⁸ Catherine Vidal, *Cerveau, sexe et préjugés*, 2017, p. 19.

¹⁹ Claudette Gagnon, *Pour réussir dès le primaire, Filles et garçons face à l’école*, 1999

²⁰ Differentiated socialisation is the process of inculcating in children the behaviours expected of their gender in a manner consistent with the society in which they are growing up. Much of this differentiated socialisation occurs without our knowledge.

²¹ Johan Epiney, *(In)égalités filles-garçons à l’école primaire : regards et représentations des enseignant-es du second cycle en Valais*, 2013, p. 17.

It is, therefore, essential for teachers to pay attention to the often unconscious ways in which they act differently towards the boys and girls in their classes. Attention must also be paid to what the pupils say and do: indeed, peers also play a role in this differentiated socialization through their reactions towards children who adopt or transgress against behaviours traditionally associated with their own gender. For instance, boys who demonstrate interest in things associated with girls and women (makeup, reading, dance, arts, etc.) are often excluded by their classmates, particularly the boys. In contrast, unruly boys who are talented in sports or who defy authority will gain the admiration of their friends as a result.

As part of this differentiated socialization taking place at primary school, “children almost exclusively establish relations with their peers of the same sex, a phenomenon that exists in almost every culture in the world (Cairns and Cairns, 1994; Karkness and Super, 1985). Boys play with boys and girls, with girls; each group plays different games and in a different place²²”. There are, of course, transgressions between boys’ and girls’ groups for some games, but the segregation generally persists throughout primary school and even into adulthood, although it becomes increasingly less rigid over time. This gendered division helps reinforce gender stereotypes and accentuates differentiated socialization.

Mixed-Gender Classes

This being the case, are mixed-gender classes better? Would single-gender classes encourage a gender-free socialization of children? Would this foster the academic success of both girls and boys? Although a number of conservative circles argue in favour of single-gender school environments, international studies conducted in various countries (the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand) clearly show that the academic results of children in single-gender classes are not better than those of children in mixed-gender classes” (Halpern *et al.*, 2011). These studies also show that segregation at school creates an artificial unisex environment that encourages sexist prejudices. In contrast, mixed-gender classes, which encourage co-operation and collaboration, reduce stereotypical attitudes. The mixed-gender school prepares children to take their place in a society where women and men interact in public and private life²³. Therefore, to combat gender stereotypes and promote school perseverance, it is important to maintain mixed-gender classes and give preference to activities that counteract the gender segregation that occurs at school due to gendered socialization.

²² Denise Boyd & Helen Bee, *Les âges de la vie*, 2015, p. 257.

²³ Catherine Vidal, *Cerveau, sexe et préjugés*, 2017, p. 25.

Sex Education and Early Hypersexualisation

Sex education has been a huge issue in Québec (and elsewhere!) in recent years. The Québec program has a whole section dealing with the deconstruction of sexual stereotypes and hypersexualisation, which stems from the stereotypes imposed on children. But teachers and parents continue to have many questions about what children should and should not be taught about sexuality.

First, as stated by the ministry, sexuality is obviously not limited to genitality and should not be reduced to sexual practices alone; affective and relational considerations are central to the world of sexuality²⁴. In this regard, upon entering primary school, “children may experience certain intimate behaviours such as holding hands, standing close to one another, or having strong feelings for a friend. These emotions lead them to wonder and question, even if they do not explicitly talk about them.

Unfortunately, affective and romantic relations are not free of sexual stereotypes. In fact, boys and girls are expected to behave differently when it comes to interpersonal relations. For instance, “when talking about a boy who says he has a girlfriend, adults are often heard to say such things as *Hey, you go, kid!* You’ve probably also heard people say things like *You’re quite a charmer!* to a young boy who seems to be popular with several girls at the same time and who says he has more than one girlfriend. But what do people say to young girls in the same situation? It’s more common to hear comments warning girls about boys or about their own seductive potential (an example that springs to mind is the myth that contends that girls who are attractive risk being sexually assaulted). These spontaneous reactions send messages to children. In other words, the romantic relationship is valued for boys and synonymous with “danger” for girls. With the best of intentions in mind, adults may, through their attitudes, reinforce the image of the “vulnerable” woman and the man as a “predator”. Not ideal as a way of fostering healthy, equalitarian relationships!²⁵”.

In addition, the models often provided to children feature families and hetero-normative couples, in other words, families composed of a father and a mother and couples formed by a man and a woman. In this regard, “the first discussions with children concerning affective and romantic relationships must foster inclusiveness and be non-heterosexist. The earlier children have access to a range of models, the earlier they will develop openness to sexual diversity. A strong

²⁴ Ministère de l’Éducation, *L’éducation à la sexualité dans le contexte de la réforme de l’éducation*, 2003, p. 9.

²⁵ Secrétariat à la Condition féminine, *Portail sans stéréotypes*, 2018.

adherence to gender stereotypes can lead to being uncomfortable with anyone who deviates from these stereotypes, and later lead to homophobia or transphobia²⁶.

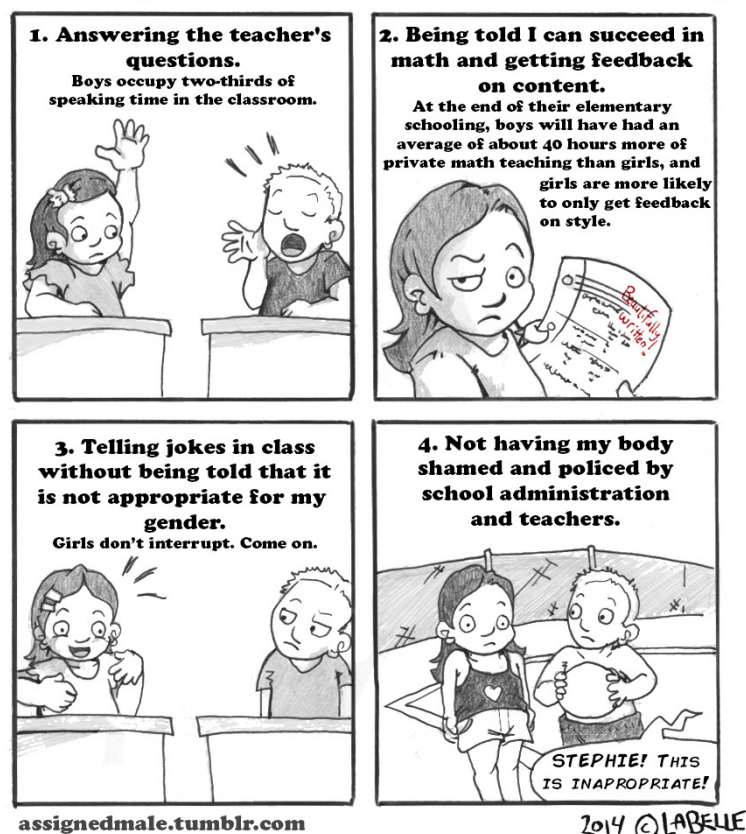
Finally, we see early hypersexualisation in children of primary school age and content that specifically targets them. Girls between the ages of 8 and 13 are increasingly targeted as consumers by the fashion, music, magazine and movie industries; pre-adolescents are one of the largest demographic cohorts since the baby boomers²⁷. The female stereotypes depicted by these media are often presented as being accessible to young girls while in reality, this is not at all the case. The model girls, and boys as well, are encouraged to mirror are highly exaggerated and assign sexualized roles to children that are unsuitable for their psychosexual level.

Specificities Concerning the Connection to School in Elementary School Pupils

Although the socialization of children becomes gender-differentiated well before their arrival at primary school, it does not stop there. On the contrary, it continues and even becomes more accentuated as children contend with an educational experience that differs depending on their gender²⁸. This section deals with the ways in which gendered socialization modulates the characteristics of the children's connection to learning.

First of all, gendered socialization translates into **differentiated interactions with adults and peers**. Adults, parents and educators, although they feel they do not act differently with children, change their behaviour depending on a child's gender. This results in different learning and in different experiences for children. The older the children, the greater the influence their peers have on their behaviour. This cartoon by Sophie Labelle, about a young trans girl (assigned male at birth), illustrates some of the differences with humour:

Privileges I lost when transitioning



²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Natasha Bouchard et Pierrette Bouchard, *La sexualisation précoce des filles peut accroître leur vulnérabilité*, 2017, <https://sisyphe.org/spip.php?article917>

²⁸ Claudette Gagnon, *Op. cit.*

These differentiated interactions lead children to develop **connections to school and learning** that differ according to gender. A thorough understanding of these differences makes it possible to see the consequences of differentiated socialization and to start thinking about our own behaviours with children. The following observations are drawn from various studies²⁹ on the subject and represent observed trends rather than absolute facts about boys and girls. Individual children adhere more or less markedly to the multiple stereotypes associated with their gender.

Relationships between students

Relationships between students are rapidly influenced by gender stereotypes and are often marked by a **gender division**. Girls are clearly rejected in sports by boys, particularly during recess. They are however more open to fraternizing with boys than vice versa. In disadvantaged communities, where gender stereotypes are more pronounced, girls see boys more negatively because of their sexist stereotypes—which target girls—leading to a greater gender division. Relationships between girls and boys are therefore more difficult in such communities. Often, Girls prefer to work in teams with other girls, claiming that boys don't work hard enough. Most pupils, girls and boys, prefer mixed classes at school.

The segregation and stereotypes that **girls** are subject to encourage them to adopt behaviours of resistance by seeking to build coalitions within their gender category. Girls put more effort into their interpersonal relations, and their school girlfriends are of great importance and they often talk with them about anything that affects the school environment. They enjoy transmitting their knowledge to younger children.

During recess, **boys** tend to instigate physical and verbal violence more often. Boys like to clown around in class. They don't particularly enjoy being scolded, made to write out lines or expelled but such punishments earn them the respect of their peers. The more unruly boys are in class and the more they make others laugh, the more popular they are with their male peers. Rejection is more common for boys and is often based on male gender stereotypes or transgressions, that is, behaviours deemed female. Boys who get good grades and have a positive relationship with school are more likely to be bullied and excluded socially, precisely because they do not fit in with the group culture of boys. Those who do not like sports or who are not good at sports are rejected by other boys because they don't correspond to masculine criteria concerning physical performance. These boys are subjected to homophobic slurs.

²⁹ Mostly the BBC's documentary *No More Boys or Girls, Can Our Kids Go Gender-Free?* and the study by Claudette Gagnon (1999).

Connection to school and learning

Girls generally have a positive relationship with school: they love school, feel comfortable there and take it seriously. They see the benefits of what is being taught and even enjoy subjects they find difficult. Girls see learning as something that relates to the self-actualization: learning enables them to look to the future and to value themselves, and they believe more strongly that good grades will guarantee them of a better future. They have higher occupational aspirations than boys: their career choices require more schooling, most often a university-level education.

In girls, the satisfaction threshold regarding good grades is very high. They experience a lot of stress during exam periods. Girls self-evaluate based on their academic results; for instance, their self-esteem depends, among other elements, on their exam results. Girls tend to blame intrinsic factors for their poor grades, which makes the self-esteem of girls who have poor grades suffers: they are convinced their grades will never earn them the recognition of others. Girls are very concerned about their success and this is why they spend as much time as possible in class. They are calmer and less impulsive than boys, and follow rules and instructions more closely.

Boys generally have a negative relationship with school; they have no or little liking for school and prefer sports and recreation. For them, school recalls boredom, restrictions and obligations, and is considered an unpleasant task. Boys see learning as being instrumental: it's a tool that allows them to cope in life. In the case of boys who say they like school, it's because for them, school is primarily a place where they take part in activities. Masculine sociability, sports and recess encourage boys to enjoy school in the short term. More boys don't know what they want to do later. More boys think they'll do the same thing as their fathers do (in contrast to girls and their mothers) and would like to have jobs in their fields of interest or connected to their favourite recreation activity.

Boys volunteer less often for tasks suggested by their teacher and are more selective: the tasks have to correspond to so-called masculine activities connected to recreation (like bringing in the ball after recess) or ones that require them to display physical strength (like carrying a pile of books).

Boys worry less about doing well at school because they have opportunities to learn to value themselves socially (sports and recreation, activities connected to games, etc.). School is less important to boys and they don't compare their grades as often as girls do. Boys are satisfied with much lower grades than girls and tend to be more satisfied with them than proud of them. Boys overestimate their capacities to resolve the problems presented to them.

Educational experience

Boys and girls don't have the same educational experience. Textbooks today continue to present stereotyped views of men and women and still render invisible certain inequalities between women and men. Boys are questioned more often when new concepts are introduced while girls are questioned primarily at the end of a class. Boys are not as comfortable at school as girls and are more permeable than the latter to disturbances, to a change in teachers for instance.

When tests and assignments are evaluated, girls are judged and congratulated for their form (neat writing, careful presentation, good conduct, work) while boys are judged and congratulated for the content of their work and their performance (skill, intelligence, giftedness, creativity).

The comments concerning difficulties experienced by girls tend to refer to cognitive considerations and feedback focuses on a need to return to basics and concerns about the pupil's general comprehension. In the case of boys, these same difficulties are perceived as being more punctual in nature and primarily related to their behaviour.

Interactions with adults

Parents act differently with their sons and daughters, which influences the way boys and girls navigate the school system. During early childhood, boys are encouraged more to play with trucks by their parents and girls, with dolls. The toys parents buy for their boys and girls are not the same colour. Parents are more abrupt with their sons and gentler with their daughters. Parents interpret the reactions of their daughters and sons differently (for instance, a girl who cries is sad whereas a boy who cries is angry).

When it comes to **homework and lessons**, mothers—who are primarily responsible for overseeing these tasks—give their daughters more leeway to organize how they go about doing their work, and give their sons more guidance. In terms of **pastimes**, parents direct their daughters primarily towards fine arts and individual sports, since such activities appear to have characteristics (for instance, quiet and artistic talent) that are perceived as being intrinsic to girls. Boys are quickly introduced by their parents to pastimes that give them the opportunity to express their dynamism and inventiveness; examples include group sports, martial arts and technological activities.

As for their **teachers**, girls appreciate their human qualities or at least, expect to see those qualities in their teachers. They perceive those qualities positively. Boys do not appreciate a

teacher's authority or teachers who are considered "too tough". They see them as authoritarian figures who are against pleasure and fun, and not as pedagogues.

Despite doing so involuntary, teachers give their attention to boys and girls in a different way.

Girls receive compliments from their teachers as much for their behaviour as for their academic performance: they would appear to be quiet, dynamic, disciplined although sometimes talkative, in accordance with female stereotypes. Girls are asked to lend a hand more often than boys to tutor students experiencing difficulties or to help the teacher, which reinforces the stereotype of the girl responsible for the care and well-being of others.

Adults in school environments give more of their time to **boys**, who overall receive more encouragement, criticism, listening and praise than girls. Boys speak in class more often and more spontaneously in response to questions from teachers, and interrupt in class more often than girls. In addition to being asked to answer questions more often, boys are given more complex instructions and their spontaneous interventions earn more responses. The greater attention given to boys apparently helps them build their self-confidence and their ease in public speaking. Teachers pay attention more quickly when boys are turbulent, since they are reputed to be more agitated. Consequently, they notice this behaviour more often, which reinforces their initial beliefs. Similarly, boys tend to contribute more when performing physical tasks, which reinforces the belief that strength is a masculine quality.

General recommendations

To encourage all children to stay in school, deconstruct gender stereotypes and keep children from adhering to them as much as possible, it is crucial to put into practice a feminist pedagogy, one that ultimately aims to eliminate the inequalities existing between men and women.

"According to Penny Welch (1994: 156), all feminist pedagogies are based on three principles, their common goal being to:

- Establish egalitarian relations in the classroom;
- Ensure that students feel valued as individuals; and
- Use the students' experiences as a source of learning.

To these principles, Burke and Jackson would add that "the pedagogical activity should be transformative³⁰". Building on these principles, this information sheet provides a number of general recommendations that you can integrate into your pedagogical practice to deconstruct

³⁰ Geneviève Pagé, Claudie Solar et Eve-Marie Lampron, *Pédagogies féministes et pédagogies des féministes*, 2018, p. 8.

gender stereotypes with primary school pupils. To help you target your actions, this sheet deals with 6 different themes: interactions with children, proposed activities and models, sex education and hypersexualisation, actions on the part of the team, actions to take with the parents and self-reflection. For each of these themes, there are a series of general recommendations followed by more specific recommendations for boys and for girls. The goal is not to further differentiate between boys and girls but simply to recognize that at this age, gender-based socialization has already had an impact and some stereotypes acquired by boys and by girls need to be dealt with differently.

Interactions with students

General recommendations:

1. Vary your teaching practices to reach as many children as possible and allow all individuals in your class to learn in the way that works best for them.
2. Help children to think critically about gender stereotypes by:
 - encouraging reflection and raising awareness whenever you spot an opportunity;
 - openly criticizing stereotyped images in the public space;
 - drawing attention to gender stereotypes while using web applications on their tablets and computers, or when playing video games;
 - questioning the stereotypes or prejudices perpetuated by students or other people; and
 - Correcting the impression that there are specific activities for women and others for men.
3. Create a climate conducive to learning and self-expression by:
 - Reacting to sexist, inappropriate and discriminatory words;
 - Not challenging children who do not comply with stereotypes and by correcting children who make comments about these behaviours or make fun of them; and
 - Encouraging children to show open-mindedness regarding the choices of other children and by showing them that an individual's gender does not limit that person's toy and activity options.
4. Teach children to respect others and that making fun of others will not be tolerated. Teach children how to respond to mockery and discuss the consequences of bullying.
5. Raise your pupils' awareness every day about the use of transphobic and homophobic slurs. Intervene systematically to show that the use of such terms is unacceptable.
6. Encourage all students equally.

7. React verbally when faced with situations involving inequality and discuss them with the children to deconstruct stereotypes, encouraging them to change their perceptions and adopt more equalitarian values.
8. Compliment the children for whom they are and not for their appearance.
9. In sports where gender stereotypes are highly prevalent, intervene quickly when you hear someone say something discriminatory.
10. In physical education class, avoid asking two pupils to take turns picking classmates to make up their teams because this encourages intimidation and reinforces stereotypes; instead, set up the teams yourself before the beginning of class.
11. Verify the children's perceptions and feelings of competency regarding some subjects like English and math as well as the values they attach to those subjects to intervene discreetly:
 - Girls experience more anxiety and often feel less competent than boys in math. They need support and encouragement; and
 - Boys often attach less importance to English and reading. They should be encouraged early to discover the enjoyment these subjects procure.
12. Reassure the children in their capacities, while recognizing their preferences and especially, insist that anything is possible for girls and for boys.
13. Speak to the children about equality between women and men. Transmit equality-related values.
14. Allow boys and girls to speak equally, by inviting boys and girls to speak in turn for instance.

Recommendations for boys:

1. Find alternatives to suspension and expulsion for dealing with unruly boys.
2. Stimulate their emotional learning and help them learn to express emotions more easily. Value emotions.
3. Encourage their artistic talents.
4. Foster their adhesion to the value of academic success.

Recommendations for girls:

1. Be vigilant about the invisible needs of girls. Attention must be paid to signs of dropping out in girls, who are not as often labelled as potential drop-outs and who more often internalize their difficulties.
2. Try to make transitions easier, particularly the transition from primary to secondary school, since girls are more sensitive during this transition.

3. Value and encourage girls to speak in class (make sure they have parity during class discussions, introduce practical tools and activities to build confidence in public speaking, etc.).
4. Reduce stereotype threat³¹ by introducing a reinforcing discussion at the beginning of an activity, pointing out that all pupils can do well in the activity.
5. Act preventively to foster good self-esteem and a healthy body perception in girls.
6. Encourage girls to speak in class.

Proposed activities and models

General recommendations:

1. Invite children to take part in a range of activities involving both boys and girls (particularly in sports) since this will foster collaboration instead of competition between genders.
2. Work on gender stereotypes with the children (particularly with boys who adhere to them more).
3. Support and encourage the academic, occupational and social aspirations of children, in their perceptions and in real life. Help them become convinced that anything is permitted and possible, regardless of gender.
4. Show children different occupational role models (for instance, a female truck driver, male nurse). Encourage them to see themselves doing a job that takes their own interests into account amongst all educational options.
5. Encourage girls and boys to improve their strength and physical abilities by taking part in activities such as soccer, dance or martial arts so they learn to control their bodies and develop a sense of body competence.
6. Offer children a variety of tasks and responsibilities and encourage them to switch them from time to time.
7. Encourage children to choose toys and activities they tend to ignore.
8. Offer activities that combine artistic and sports competencies to encourage boys to become involved in cultural practices and girls, in physical activities. Implement promotional campaigns to support this.
9. When communicating and promoting activities, make efforts to connect with girls and boys equally. Think about using female models for posters, sports assemblies, achievement honouring activities, etc.

³¹ When working on the same assignment (a geometry exercise), girls do better if they are told it's a drawing exercise than if they are told it's a math exercise. This phenomenon is called stereotype threat and can be mitigated by reaffirming the competencies of all pupils at the beginning of the assignment.

10. Avoid gender stereotypes when designing learn and evaluation situations (LES) and exercises.
11. Encourage children to build multiple interests by offering them a wide variety of books, games and toys.
12. Help children perfect their competencies by inviting them to participate in activities usually reserved for members of the opposite gender (for instance, offer girls construction games and boys, artistic creation activities).
13. Avoid giving stereotyped answers, or place them into the context in which they were produced.

Recommendations for boys:

1. Offer all boys, including those who do not perform as well academically, opportunities demonstrate their competencies at school.
2. Invite boys to play roles to help them improve their socio-affective language and capacities.
3. Invite boys to do tasks stereotypically associated with the opposite gender, such as tidying and caring for a young child (at the daycare centre, for instance).
4. Propose activities that help develop fine motor skills.

Recommendations for girls:

1. Invite girls to use building games so they can build their fine motor skills and relation to space.
2. Invite girls to do tasks stereotypically associated with the opposite sex, such as finding a solution for fixing a chair or helping with the yard work.
3. Teach them visuospatial aptitudes: visualization, measurements, how to evaluate distances and depths, mental navigation, etc.
4. Stimulate their visual attention, perception of space and reactivity.
5. Introduce computer science and its functionalities.
6. Encourage girls to participate in ideological debates and to speak in public.
7. Plan activities for girls that will build their self-confidence.

Sex education and hypersexualisation

1. Organize activities to raise the awareness of the children about the issue of hypersexualisation.
2. Rather than focusing on the individual child's gender (you as a girl/you as a boy), adopt a non-stereotyped approach that more closely encourages discussion of interested, non-

judgmental issues related to the development of feelings of love by asking, for instance:

“What does the expression *being in love* mean to you?”

3. Encourage children to think about the differences between the desire to please, being in love and the effects of peer pressure on children of their age.
4. Offer to answer their questions and show them that their curiosity about sexuality is legitimate.
5. Pay attention to sexual and gender diversity in your interactions with children, with regard to their own gender and that of their families. This can be done by reading stories that present different models of couples and families.
6. Deal with the issue of gender roles and stereotypes and their effects on relations between boys and girls.

Teamwork recommendations

Make a list of the pupils who participate in extracurricular or school-organized activities along gender lines to identify which activities are more popular with the boys and which, with the girls; try to offer a combination of these activities in which boys and girls both take part.

Taking Action With Parents

Make parents aware of the aptitudes children develop through the various games, toys and activities they're offered and show that such aptitudes are beneficial to all children, both girls and boys.

Self-reflection

1. Build self-reflection practises: be vigilant and examine your own (often unconscious) attitudes towards children. For instance, one teacher filmed her class and realized that she didn't behave in the same way with girls as she did with boys.
2. Examine your own stereotyped behaviours. Be aware that you serve as models for the children in your classes.

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