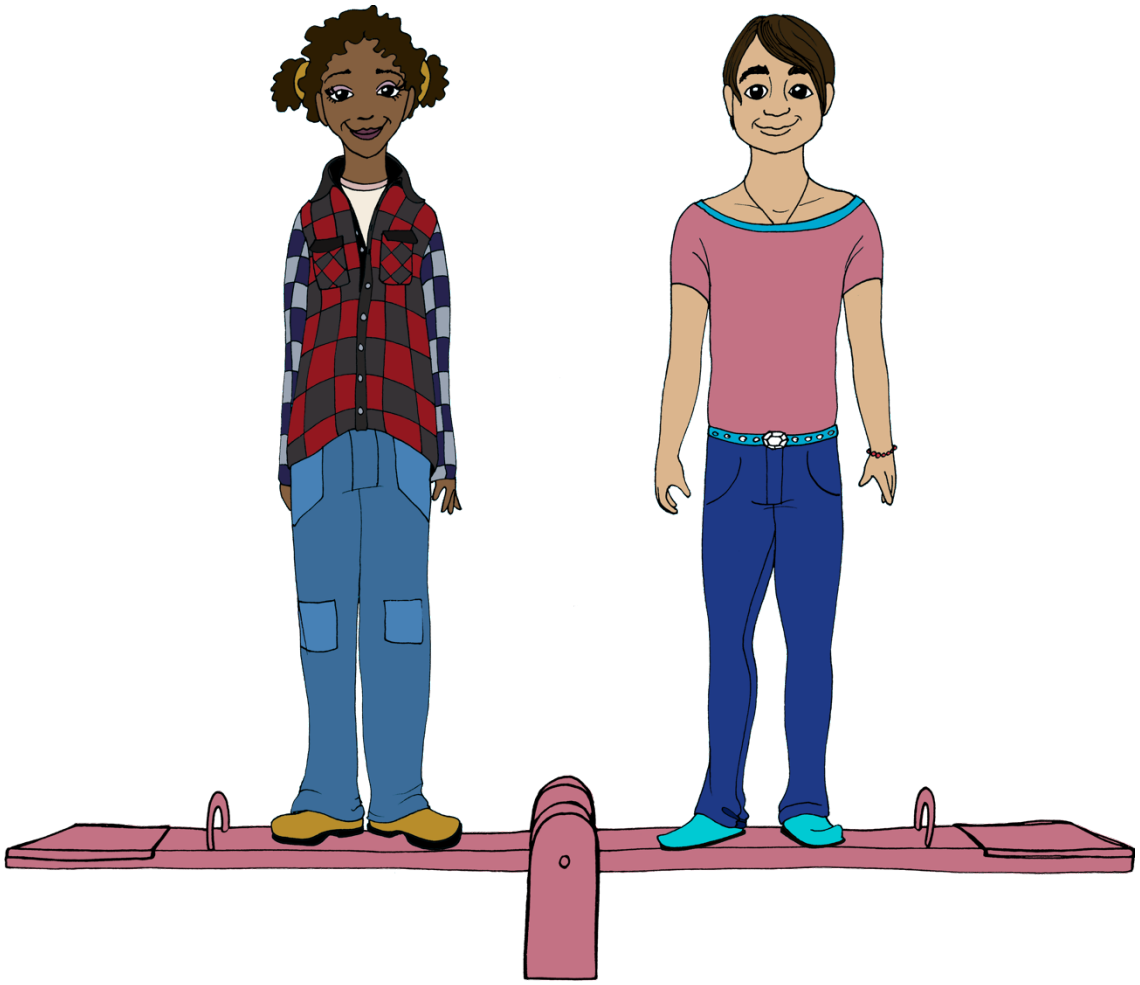
Teaching equality

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



Intervention Guidelines for Adults Working with High School Level Youth

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Gender stereotypes at secondary school

Entry into secondary school corresponds approximately to entry into adolescence. This period, which often begins at the end of primary school, is a time of great upheaval for young people, bringing about major changes in their identity as well as physical, physiological, hormonal and emotional evolution. These changes are caused by the sex hormones that carry the child into adulthood. During this period, known as puberty[1], growth accelerates and the body gradually prepares itself for the acquisition of its reproductive function. While the physical changes are obvious, major metabolic, intellectual, social and emotional changes are also occurring at the same time. This process causes adolescents to question and define their identity, sexual and romantic attractions and relationships to the world.

Not only are these profound transformations analyzed and perceived through the lens of gender[2], but the experience of young people is also determined and guided by their more or less strong adherence to the gender stereotypes that have surrounded them since birth. In this section, we will explore the influence of gender stereotypes on the different stages of development in adolescence.

Gender socialization and gender stereotypes

A great deal of research has posited the existence of a whole range of differences between the brains of men and women. In recent decades, and particularly since the advent of brain imaging, many of these ideas have been refuted in favour of the thesis of cerebral, cognitive and psychological diversity, regardless of gender[3, 4, 5]. Thus, there would appear to be little or no biological basis for cognitive differences between men and women, with the exception of functions related to reproduction[6], and especially there would seem to be no specific traits found only in men or only in women[7].

[1] To find out more: The Stages of Puberty: Development in Girls and Boys.
[2] Virginie Vinel (2014). « Controverses médicales autour de la puberté : précocité féminine et invisibilité masculine », *Revue des sciences sociales*, Vol 51, p. 64-73.
[3] Jordan-Young (2011). « Brainstorm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences », *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58(10), p. 1442-1446.
[4] Cordelia Fine (2010). *Delusions of Gender. How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference*, WW Norton, 368 pages.
[5] Catherine Vidal (2013). « Le genre à l'épreuve des neurosciences », *Recherches féministes*, Vol. 26, No 2, p. 183-191.
[6] Louise Cossette (2012). *Cerveau, hormones et sexe : des différences en question*, Éditions du Remue-ménage, 116 pages.
[7] Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (1999). *Pour une meilleure réussite scolaire des garçons et des filles*, Sainte-Foy, Le Conseil, 110 p.

Rather, it is through learning, experience and imitation that children and adolescents gradually develop their skills, preferences and strengths[8, 9, 10]. For example, children who are strongly encouraged and stimulated in motor activities will build the skills and brain connections they need for such activities. This process speaks to the brain's plasticity; in other words, neural connections in the brain change as a result of experience and lifelong learning. This also means that it is possible to develop new neuronal connections, and therefore new learning, that our experiences have not allowed us to develop so far. Since development in children, and therefore that of their brain, is linked to their socialization, we notice cognitive differences between girls and boys because socialization is strongly gendered. Indeed, children will integrate various cultural elements (values, norms, beliefs, rules of conduct) according to their gender since adult behaviours and social models differ depending on whether the child is a girl or a boy. Girls and boys do not learn the same values, norms, rules and beliefs and are not stimulated in the same way. Much of this differentiated socialization takes place unconsciously. It has the effect of reproducing gender stereotypes, which are reductive clichés that associate women, men, girls and boys with two separate worlds by assigning them distinct characteristics without regard to their individuality.

Examples of gender stereotypes

Girls	**Boys**
Girls are more docile and seek to please.	Boys listen less to instructions and are less attentive.
Girls will sometimes sulk longer and for no particular reason.	Conflicts are more easily resolved with boys; it's less dramatic.
Girls are calmer and more patient.	Take up more space and are constantly on the go.
Girls are more persistent.	Boys want to understand everything and are creative.
Girls are more manipulative. They play on feelings.	Exchanges between boys are more direct and violent.
Girls are more fragile.	Boys don't cry.
Girls are interested in fashion, arts and boys.	Boys like video games and sports.
Girls are more perfectionist and better at cleaning.	Boys are messier and less involved in household chores.
Girls are good in languages.	Boys are good in math.

[8] Catherine Vidal (2017). *Le cerveau a-t-il un sexe?*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQHXEXaXeaM
[9] S. J. Kass *et al.* (1998). « Eliminating gender differences through practice in an applied visual spatial task », *Human Performance*, 11(4), p. 337-349.
[10] Elizabeth S. Spelke (2005). « Sex differences in Intrinsic Aptitude for Mathematics and Science?: A Critical Review, *American Psychologist*, 60(9), p. 950-958.

By the time they reach adolescence, young people have generally already integrated gender stereotypes quite well and their attitudes, skills and values begin to diverge to a greater extent. These differences, which are at least in part the product of socialization, thus intervene at all stages of identity construction during adolescence. They come into play not only in how adolescents are considered by others in their milieu, but also in the expectations that young people set for themselves.

Identity construction in adolescents

Psychologically, the central task of adolescence is to build one's identity in the broadest sense (CSE, 1999). It is divided into three main operations: the construction of one's own identity (who I am, what I believe in), the construction of identity in relation to social relationships (who I am in relation to others), and the construction of gender identity (how I define my gender and to whom I'm attracted).

Who am I?

Adolescence is the pivotal period in the development of the concept of self. During this time, through examining values, future prospects and beliefs, young people become aware of and make choices about their specificity and their particularities.

In addition to these questionings, indigenous students must also contend with the necessity to value their cultural identity, which becomes in a minority situation within the dominant culture of the student population if they must attend a school outside of their community[11]. Even if the school is located in the community, "youth from Indigenous communities are experiencing a loss of identity (Poirier, 2009), since all too often, their schools are copies of Quebec public schools with values and ways of doing things not reflecting theirs[12]". Indigenous youth's pride in their ethnic identity is crucial in the development and maintenance of their self-esteem, self-confidence and academic success[13]. They also state that adolescence is a particularly crucial time to become aware of their ethnic identity and to accept it. It is also at this point in life that youth will either take pride in their differences or accept them. In a project conducted in the Gespugwitg, Sugapune'gati, Esge'gewa'gi and Unama'gi districts, currently known as Nova Scotia, "both male and female Mi'kmaq youth described their identity as Mi'kmaq and spoke of

[11] One must note that even if the school is located in the community, "youth from Aboriginal communities are experiencing a loss of identity (Poirier, 2009), since all too often, their schools are copies of Quebec public schools with values and ways of doing things not reflecting theirs" (Pinette & Guillemette, 2016, p. 18).
[12] S. Pinette et S. Guillemette (2016). « La reconnaissance culturelle innue au sein d'une école primaire », *Revue de la persévérance et de la réussite scolaires chez les Premiers Peuples*, 2, p. 18-21.
[13] Martinez, R. et Dukes, R. (1997). « The Effects of Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity, and Gender on Adolescent Well-Being », *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 26, p. 503-516.

their background with considerable pride[14]". The construction of cultural identity is thus an integral part of the identity construction work of teenagers trying to answer the question, "Who am I?"

Who am I in relation to others?

To work this out, adolescents build their identity in terms of two distinct but interrelated elements of socialization. **Socialization sourced in the adult world** (family, school, culture) will push adolescents to internalize social norms and rules. They will generally conform to gender role expectations based on the gender stereotypes conveyed in their socio-economic environment of origin. Yet, as many young Mi'gmaq of Gespeg'ewa'gi must pursue their high school education outside of their community, they can be confused between the stereotypical norms conveyed in their community and the ones presented in the school environment, experiencing a sort of forced immigration, a new socialization[15].

Adolescents will also be greatly influenced by their peers, who are becoming increasingly important, especially as the quest for autonomy gets underway. Thus, the expectations and norms formulated in the juvenile world will largely influence adolescents as they build their identity and interpret their social roles. In this context, gender stereotypes will notably play a role in the acquisition of popularity capital among others[16].

Mi'gMaq students are, furthermore, at risk of experiencing racism and exclusion from their peers and the school staff[17, 18], which can influence the way they will construct their identity in relation to others. The welcoming or the rejection of the Mi'gmaq students' cultural identity can facilitate or complexify their identity construction during adolescence in regard to the questioning "Who am I in relation to others?"

How do I define my sexual being?

The hormonal, physical and physiological changes associated with puberty allow for the consolidation of gender identity. During this period, young people often tend to use gender

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[14] L. McIntyre, F. Wien, S. Ruddherham, L. Etter, C. Moore, N. MacDonald, S. Johnson et A. Gottschall (2001). *An Exploration of the Stress Experience of Mi'kmaq On-Reserve Female Youth in Nova Scotia*, Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, p. 5.

[15] C. Brabant, M.-J. Croteau, J. Kistabish et M. Dumond (2015). « À la recherche d'un modèle d'organisation pédagogique pour la réussite éducative des jeunes et des communautés des Premières Nations du Québec : points de vue d'étudiants en administration scolaire », *Revue de la persévérance et de la réussite scolaires chez les Premiers Peuples*, 1, p. 29-34.

[16] Gabrielle Richard (2019). Hétéro, l'école? Plaidoyer pour une éducation antioppressive à la sexualité, 168 pages.

[17] Cynthia Baker, Manju Varma et Connie Tanaka (2001). « Sticks and Stones: Racism as Experienced by Adolescents in New Brunswick », *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 33(3), p. 87-105

[18] David Perley (2019). « Reflecting on Colonial Education Experiences Sharing My Story », *Antistatis*, 9(1), p. 256-288.

stereotypes in their behaviour, attitude and clothing to, unconsciously, consolidate their gender identity. This being said, while gender identity develops primarily between the ages of 2 and 7, it is important to remember that it continues to evolve and can change throughout life[19]. Moreover, friendly and loving relational experiences often shed light on the types of attractions that develop. A young person's sexual orientation is often determined in adolescence.

According to a conceptualization by John Robert Sylliboy[20], a two-spirited Mi'gmaq, the identity of a human being (L'nu) has four dimensions (emotional, spiritual, physical and mental) and encompasses both historical traditions and contemporary practices. Therefore, Mi'gmaq children develop their gender identity while balancing its spiritual dimension, rooted in cultural traditions, and its mental dimension that reflects contemporary practices. The physical dimension on its part is associated with sexuality, while the emotional dimension is associated with gender identity.

Thus, to define their self-concept, young people will go through several experiences and experience a variety of needs during adolescence that will consolidate their psychosexual development and lead them towards greater autonomy.

From 12 to 14 years old	**From 15 to 17 years old**
○ Develop their own way of expressing their femininity or masculinity ○ Want to be accepted by others (conformity and loyalty) ○ Great importance of friends ○ Desire for proximity (friends, lovers) ○ Questions about their identity ○ Tendency to test their limits (willingness to take risks) and those of authority figures (parents, teachers, counsellors, educators) ○ Growing interest in seduction, relationships, and sexual practices ○ Often deliberate contact with pornography	○ Development of emotional and sexual intimacy and the place of desire ○ Transition from adolescence to adulthood that involves greater responsibility for social and sexual roles ○ Feeling of invincibility and magical thinking ○ Importance of the group of friends ○ Love and sexual relationships

Source: Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux du Centre-Sud de l'Île-de-Montréal

[19] Yoan Mieyaa et Véronique Rouyer (2013). « Genre et socialisation de l'enfant : pour une approche plurifactorielle de la construction de l'identité sexuée », *Psychologie Française*, 58(2), p. 135-147.
[20] John R. Sillyboy (2017). *Two-spirits: Conceptualization in a L'nuwey Worldview*, Mount Saint Vincent University, 113 pages.

During this period, gender stereotypes can represent both constraints and spaces for exploration. These stereotypes are reinforced mainly by the family, school and the media. The rigidity of their models as well as the more or less strong adherence to them will influence young people's gender mobility, and thus their ability to question or distance themselves from the expectations and norms attributed to their biological gender[21]. Thus, the more their framework allows young people the possibility of reflection that challenges gender stereotypes, the greater their freedom to experience these stages of psychosexual development, with sufficient space to allow for authentic self-assertion.

Identity construction in boys

Identity construction in adolescents who identify as boys is marked by the need to prove their virility and is defined above all in relation to other boys and men. Moreover, this occupies considerable space in male social interactions throughout life. Thus, being with other boys or men can exacerbate this need to demonstrate strong virility and while being with family or loved ones can lessen it[22]. For adolescent males, the idea is to demonstrate that they are different from women, gays or children. It is therefore fundamental for them to exclude any attitude, aptitude or behaviour that could be that of a girl.

During adolescence, young Mi'gmaq boys must construct their masculine identity while juggling with two very different conceptions of masculinity: the hegemonic masculinity inherited from colonization and the more traditional masculinity that was valued by indigenous societies before colonization, but that is nowadays impaired. The dominant masculinity, which is assuming that all men aspire to accumulate wealth, demonstrate independence and compete for status, clashes with the indigenous culture which, according to Getty[23],

> values the collective and sharing interactions with others (Coyhis & Simoneli, 2008; Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005; Gone, 2011; Goodkind et al., 2010; Morgan & Freeman, 2009; Portman & Garrett, 2006). Ownership and accumulation of wealth are not important, whereas careful stewardship of the land and its living creatures is an imperative. All living beings are considered to be equal in a circle of life. In such a society, the kind of masculinity men aspire to achieve may be very different from that of the dominant society (Brokenleg, 2010, 2012).

So demonstrating this virility often involves virility rites and tests that give rise to sometimes extreme behaviours where boys will try to reproduce the dominant models of virility as conveyed in movies, music videos, social media and video games (warrior, woman charmer, stuntman,

[21] Pierrette Bouchard, Jean-Claude St-Amant et Jacques Tondreau (1997). « Stéréotypes sexuels, pratiques sociales et rapport différencié à l'école secondaire », *Recherches sociographiques*, 38(2), p. 279-302.
[22] Denis Jeffrey (2015). *Identité masculine et épreuves de virilisation à l'adolescence*.
[23] Getty, G. (2013). *An Indigenist Perspective On The Health/Wellbeing And Masculinities Of Mi'kmaq - Mentet-pagi-tel-sit: Perceiving Himself To Be A Strong Balanced Spiritual Man*, Dalhousie University, p. 55, traduction libre.

adventurer, etc.). Yet, the masculinity models we find in the media are very often white. According to Getty[24], Indigenous men in the media have rather been

> presented as "innocent," "simple," "savage," drunkards,' "cruel," "wise," "lazy," and multiple other epitaphs (Bird, 1999; Valaskakis, 2005). As children, they have been construed by white boys, teachers, and others in society as either deviant, poor, victims, or stereotyped as "noble savages" (Beckett, 2003, p. 83; Bird, 1999). Positioned as "the other," their masculinity has been dominated by the hegemonic racist masculinities of white boys and men.

Thus, being a minority in a dominant white society valuing hegemonic masculinity, indigenous boys must construct their masculine identity from models that don't look like them or, when they are represented, they are portrayed in a very negative and stereotypical way. They then find themselves developing a socially constructed racialized identity, far away from traditional indigenous masculinities.

The work of Bouchard and St-Amant[25] suggests that, in general, boys adhere more to sexual stereotypes[26] and remain closer to the proposed gender models than girls. It is interesting to note, moreover, that these gender models "give them social power[27]". Overall, boys show a greater propensity for conformity in their definition of "male identity". Boys are also more likely to approve of an unfair situation. Finally, through the various stands they take, many boys show a certain distancing from the school world[28].

Finally, some authors argue that most adolescent transgressions—acts of defiance, insolence and physical violence, sexist or homophobic behaviour—can be understood not as behavioural problems *per se*, but as behaviours arising from rites to prove masculinity[29]. Thus, the search for autonomy and the construction of identity in boys have little to do with the adult world.

Identity construction in girls

While boys construct their identities by paying attention to the reactions of other boys and men, girls are often more open and attentive to the adult world. Their identity construction is not, like that of boys, articulated around the obligation to prove their femininity, nor to distance

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 54, traduction libre.
[25] Pierrette Bouchard et Jean-Claude St-Amant (1996). *Garçons et filles, stéréotypes et réussite scolaire*, Éditions du Remue-ménage, 300 pages.
[26] In general, the editorial team favours the use of the word "gender" and gender stereotypes over sex and sexual stereotypes. This vocabulary refers to the social nature of gendered identity and we distance ourselves from binary (male and female) representations of the gender spectrum. However, some older authors and text writers did not use this vocabulary, which has become popular in recent decades. The texts of Bouchard, St-Amant and Tondreau are good examples of this. In order to faithfully cite the reported comments, we have maintained in this case the use of the term sexual stereotype.
[27] *Op. cit.* (1997), p. 287
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Sylvie Ayral (2011). *La fabrication des garçons*, Paris : PUF.

themselves from anything perceived as masculine in order to be recognized as women. Girls' identity construction has a strong relational dimension. In addition to the search for increasing autonomy that characterizes adolescence, they take into account their interpersonal relationships in the validation of their identity. They are more animated by the desire to be accepted by others and the adults' gaze is more often considered. For example, girls are more likely to take action with a view to being accepted or even appreciated by the teacher and their peer group. This often results in girls being more compliant with the rules that emerge from the adult world[30].

While girls on average seem more concerned about being validated by the adult world, they adhere, on average, less to gender stereotypes than boys. They are more likely to show signs of resistance or rebellion with respect to the norms and values that stem from gender stereotypes and are less inclined to make judgments based on belonging to one gender or the other[31]. This greater flexibility appears to be linked to a better understanding and awareness of gender relations, particularly because sexism works against them[32]. However, a study conducted in many Mi'gmaq communities of the Gespugwitg, Sugapune'gati, Esge'gewa'gi and Unama'gi districts (Nova Scotia) revealed that gender roles were still quite rigid and that young Mi'gmaq girls living on a reserve felt pressure to take care of other children in the family[33].

Obviously, not all boys and girls adhere to gender stereotypes in a uniform manner. Some will tend to adhere strongly to them, while others will distance themselves from them. Young people who do not conform to expected norms, values, and attitudes are more likely to experience exclusion or bullying at school. Looking at the criteria that contribute to popularity during this period, we see that they are different for boys and girls. For girls, the most important traits in determining popularity are attractiveness to boys (being coveted by boys) and being fashionable. For boys, it is the unequivocal demonstration of heterosexual sexual desire and/or sexuality (boasting) and certain macho attitudes (denigrating girls) [34, 35, 36]. Endorsement of gender stereotypes varies according to children's socio-economic level. Children from more economically

[30] *Op. cit.* (1999).
[31] *Op. cit.* (1996).
[32] *Op. cit.* (1997).
[33] *Op. cit.* (2001).
[34] Neil Duncan (2004). « It's important to be nice, but it's nicer to be important: girls, popularity and sexual competition », *Sexuality, Society and Learning*, 4(2), p. 137-152.
[35] Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (2000). « The Cultural Production of English Masculinities in Late Modernity », *Canadian Journal of Education*, 25(2), p. 88-101.
[36] *Op. cit.* (2019).

disadvantaged backgrounds adhere more strongly to gender stereotypes, as do those whose parents are less educated[37].

In short, identity construction is the central task of adolescence. During this period, children lay down the foundations for the adults they will become. In this sense, this pivotal period, which is particularly governed by varying degrees of adherence to gender stereotypes, will have a decisive impact on several dimensions of adolescents' lives: their emotional and love life, their body image, the expression of their identity, their attitude towards sharing family responsibilities and, of course, their academic success and career choices. Thus, reducing adherence to gender stereotypes in childhood and adolescence may allow individuals to develop more freely, but it is also a strategy for more egalitarian relationships, particularly at school, and a strategy for academic success. This strategy is also consistent with the principles of the inclusive and caring school[38].

Gender stereotypes and school perseverance during adolescence

The learning experience (how the student is treated and trained) is modulated by gender, but the relationship to learning is also determined by gender stereotypes (how the student perceives and acts within the school system). Children, from birth, are treated differently in their social environment (family, school, peers and media) according to the gender assigned to them. This adds on top of a differentiated treatment for Mi'gmaq youth because of their racialized (and, moreover, indigenous) identity. Their strengths, difficulties and attitudes are at least partly the result of this differential treatment and their understanding of what it is like to "be a girl" or "be a boy". These gender stereotypes will ultimately modulate their aspirations and representations of the future, which in turn will influence their professional orientations[39, 40, 41, 42] and equality between men and women.

This section further explores how gendered socialization interacts with the relationship to school and learning and with how teachers contribute, usually unconsciously, to the reinforcement of this socialization. By looking at the social realities of boys and girls, it is, moreover, possible to

[37] *Op. cit.* (1996).
[38] Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (2018). *L'adulte comme modèle de bienveillance à l'école – Document de soutien 2018-2019*.
[39] *Op. cit.* (1997).
[40] Isabelle Plante, Manon Théorêt et Olga Eizner Favreau (2010). « Les stéréotypes de genre en mathématiques et en langues : recension critique en regard de la réussite scolaire », *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, 36(2), p. 389-419.
[41] Patrice Potvin et Abdelkrim Hasni (2019). « Les jeunes filles et la science », *ACFAS Magazine*.
[42] Isabelle Plante, Paul A. O'Keefe, Joshua Aronson, Catherine Fréchette-Simard et Mélissa Goulet (2018). « The interest gap : how gender stereotype endorsement about abilities predicts differences in academic interests », *Social Psychology of Education*, Vol. 22, p. 227-245.

develop pedagogical approaches that can better meet their respective needs. It should be remembered that while boys are generally (but not always) more likely to drop out of school, girls do account for a significant proportion of young people who drop out. This proportion is also on the rise, since efforts to combat dropping out in recent years seem to be less effective with girls[43]. This first section explores the differentiated school worlds of boys and girls in order to better understand their specific educational experiences and connection to learning.

Dominant masculinities and feminities at school

When we look at the relationship to learning, the demands inherited from traditional and dominant masculinities and feminities are linked to factors affecting disengagement from school[44, 45, 46, 47].

Behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs inherited from traditional patterns

Boys	**Girls**
Requirement to demonstrate one's virility to other boys	Strong concern for peer acceptance
Transgressions perceived as virile (conflictual relationships with authority, aggressiveness, behavioural disorders, distrust of rules, consumption)	The relational dimensions with peers and the adult world play a central role in their equilibrium.
Desire for autonomy, which often presents as a difficulty to communicate and ask for help	Calm, listening and discretion are perceived as feminine traits, which can mask their problems
Model of the male provider	Relationship model: girls place a lot of energy and importance on their relationships with peers and adults, including peer acceptance.
Lower value placed on academic achievement, effort and graduation	Higher value placed on academic achievement, effort, and graduation

Young people who drop out also have undifferentiated motivations. Think of the poverty, lack of family support, academic failure and discouragement[48] that are equally common justifications for both genders. On the other hand, boys' and girls' school dropout trajectories also show notable

[43] V. Dupéré et L. Lavoie (2018). « Circonstances en tourant le décrochage scolaire des filles et des garçons de Montréal et de régions avoisinantes », École de psychoéducation, Université de Montréal.
[44] *Op. cit.* (1996).
[45] *Op. cit.* (1997).
[46] Manon Théorêt et Mohamed Hrimech (1999). « Les paradoxes de l'abandon scolaire : trajectoires de filles et de garçons du secondaire », *Canadian Journal of Education*, 24(3), p. 251-264.
[47] Op. cit. (2001).
[48] L. Barribeault (2016). « Le décrochage scolaire chez les filles : un phénomène sous-estimé ? », *RIRE : Réseau d'information sur la réussite éducative*.

differences, in both native and non-native people[49, 50, 51], which are related to the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs presented in the above table.

Factors cited as motivating boys and girls to drop out of school

Boys	**Girls**
The desire or need to work[52]	Frailties in relational dimensions
Conflicts with teachers, suspensions and expulsions related to behavioural difficulties	Family adversity (lack of parental support, violence, judiciarized behaviours of parents, family responsibilities, etc.)[53]
More often say they don't like school[54]	Psychological distress and mental health problems
More problems externalized	More problems internalized[55]

We observe here that boys more often justify their dropping out of school as being due to an interest in work, a rejection of the school world and externalized behavioural issues. Conversely, the reasons given by girls are connected to the personal, relational and psychological spheres. These differences are clearly related to the behaviours, attitudes and values inherited from dominant gender models. Not only do boys adhere more to gender stereotypes than girls, but the norms, values and models related to these gender stereotypes create more distance and conflict with the school world. Nevertheless, these differences remind us of the importance of taking into account the academic difficulties of girls, which are more often internalized and therefore harder to see.

Parents' schooling and social class

In general, the achievement gap between girls and boys is smaller than that between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Academic achievement is strongly correlated with students' social backgrounds from a socio-economic perspective. This is partly related to the under-education of mothers, which is known to have an impact on their children's first diploma: students whose mothers have no diploma or little schooling are more at risk of dropping out of school than others[56]. In indigenous communities, family traits also have an impact on academic

[49] Op. cit. (2001).
[50] McIntyre, L., Wien, F., Rudderham, S., Etter, L., Moore, C., MacDonald, N., Johnson, S. et Gottschall, A. (2003). « A Gender Analysis of the Stress Experience of Young Mi'kmaq Women », Centre of Excellence for Women's Health
[51] Perron, M. et Côté, É. (2015). « Mobiliser les communautés pour la persévérance scolaire : du diagnostic à l'action », *Revue de la persévérance et de la réussite scolaires chez les Premiers Peuples*, 1, p. 12-16.
[52] M. Raymond (2008). *Décrocheurs du secondaire retournant à l'école*, Centre de la statistique de l'éducation, Gouvernement du Canada.
[53] J. Raby (2014). *Raccrocher de toutes ses forces : analyse exploratoire du décrochage et du raccrochage scolaire des femmes au Centre-du-*Québec, 120 pages.
[54] Anne Lessard (2004). *Le genre et l'abandon scolaire*, Université de Sherbrooke.
[55] Réseau Réussite Montréal. (2018). *Lecture et persévérance scolaire*.
[56] FAE et Relais-Femmes (2015). *Le décrochage scolaire des filles : la possibilité d'agir, la nécessité de le faire !*, 24 pages.

perseverance. Indeed, having a parent with at least a high school diploma in hand is related to graduating from high school, as having one or more siblings who dropped out of school is linked to high school dropout[57]. The gap between boys' and girls' school dropout rates is smaller in privileged environments because socio-economic background has a greater effect on boys' success than on that of girls. Some authors put forward the explanation that boys from more advantaged backgrounds adhere less to gender stereotypes, which is consistent with the fact that parental education seems to be a protective factor[58]. Indeed, children whose parents are highly educated are less likely to identify with gender stereotypes. The most vulnerable children have more stereotyped behaviours, which reinforces their vulnerability[59].

The stereotype threat

One of the important phenomena in explaining the role of gender stereotypes in educational success is the stereotype threat[60]. This concept has been widely used to understand the effect of stereotypes on learning among stigmatized individuals (black students, seniors, women, etc.). Several research studies have shown that evoking a stereotype can, unconsciously, have an impact on the performance of the people targeted by the stereotype in question. For example, simply referring to the gender of students before a math exam has an effect on the performance of girls[61]. Thus, there is no need to refer directly to the gender stereotype positing that boys are naturally better at mathematics than girls for there to be an effect. This highlights the unconscious aspect of the role stereotypes play in learning dynamics.

When students are required to answer questionnaires to measure adherence to gender stereotypes, it turns out that young people in our schools today explicitly adhere less to gender stereotypes than before. However, we note that in assessment or learning situations, gender stereotypes connected to different school subjects (mathematics, science, language) still have an impact on student performance[62]. The literature on this phenomenon identifies effects on self-esteem, on students' perceptions of their own abilities[63] as well as on the value placed on learning[64]. In the long term, these stereotypes have a predictive effect on academic success,

[57] FAE et Relais-Femmes (2015). *Le décrochage scolaire des filles : la possibilité d'agir, la nécessité de le faire !*, 24 pages.
[58] *Op. cit.* (1996).
[59] Réseau Réussite Montréal (2025). *Pour une égalité filles-garçons en persévérance scolaire*.
[60] Steven J. Spencer, Claude M. Steele et Diane M. Quinn (1999). "Stereotype Threat and Women's Math Performance", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 35(1), p. 4-28.
[61] S.-B. Kinch (2017). L'effet de la menace du stéréotype sur le rendement des élèves en orthographe, UQÀM.
[62] *Op. cit.* (2010).
[63] *Op. cit.* (2019).
[64] *Op. cit.* (2010).

pathways and orientation that reflect gendered trajectories[65, 66]. These findings point to the importance of deconstructing the idea that certain disciplines are more accessible to boys or girls. Besides, Getty[67] underlines that young Mi'gmaq boys face negative stereotypes because of their ethnic identity, in addition to gender stereotypes.

The school as a place where gender stereotypes are reproduced

We saw in the previous section that gender stereotypes affect students' relationships to learning. However, it is equally important to understand that the school is also a place where gender stereotypes are reproduced. The content conveyed (curriculum and textbooks) and educational practices (interactions with the school team) have the effect of reinforcing the values, behaviours, ideas and models that are traditionally associated with the worlds of women and men and inherited from colonisation[68, 69].

Despite many improvements in the last decades, the curriculum and textbooks in Quebec still tend to mask the contributions of women. In history, for example, certain notions have been added to highlight feminist struggles. However, there is little or no discussion of "their exclusion or their political action, the legal inequalities they suffer or their socio-economic contributions". In terms of textbook choices, highlighting women's contribution to history and explaining the causes of their absence is optional when it comes to choosing the textbooks used by Quebec schools[70]. These practices may suggest that equality between men and women has been achieved.

At the same time, interactions with members of the school team also contribute to reinforcing gender stereotypes. On the one hand, teachers (like other adults) tend to perceive boys and girls differently, and on the other hand, they tend to have different expectations and act differently depending on the gender of their students. The fact that teachers' perceptions are tainted by gender stereotypes is fairly well documented[71, 72]. In 2016, the Conseil du statut de la femme published a survey that told us that:

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[65] *Ibid.*
[66] Véronique Rouyer, Yoan Mieyaa et Alexis le Blanc (2014). « Socialisation de genre et construction des identités sexuées », Revue française de pédagogie, p. 97-137.
[67] *Op. cit.* (2013)
[68] Conseil du statut de la femme (2016). L'égalité entre les sexes en milieu scolaire
[69] *Op. cit.* (2013).
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] Marie Duru-Bellat (2010). « Ce que la mixité fait aux élèves », Revue de l'OFCE, 114 (3), p. 197-212.
[72] Claudie Solar (2018). « Nous devons élever nos fils et nos filles autrement », Les conférences du consensus, 10 octobre 2018.

- 76% of Quebec teachers believe that boys naturally prefer activities that mobilize technical and mathematical skills;
- 73% are convinced that girls apply themselves more and are more disciplined; and
- 72% believe that students have distinct learning styles based on their gender.

This difference in perceptions has an unintended but obvious effect on what is expected of students. For instance, teachers often have higher expectations in mathematics for boys, while girls are expected to work more carefully[73]. Ultimately, these expectations present as teaching practices that are adapted not to the student's gender, but to gender stereotypes[74]. Considering that teachers' expectations and perceptions tend to pull students' results up or down (Pygmalion effect and Golem effect), gender stereotypes may here have the effect of a "self-fulfilling prophecy in terms of the interactions and assessments conducted in a school context", which in turn feeds into the beliefs that students hold about their own abilities[75].

To sum up, the effect of gender stereotypes on the relationship to learning and the differences in boys' and girls' school experiences are related to their academic performance and career orientation. Understanding these differences thoroughly allows us to see the consequences of differentiated socialization and to begin to reflect on our behaviours towards young people. The following findings are drawn from various studies on the subject and represent observed trends and not absolute facts about boys and girls. Individual adolescents adhere more or less strongly to the multiple stereotypes associated with their gender.

Relationships between students

Girls value their friends at school and often discuss with them all matters related to the school environment. They like to pass on their knowledge to younger children and are more involved in their interpersonal relationships. In some settings, academic achievement is seen as a popularity factor for girls. They are more often victims of sexual, verbal or physical violence. The segregation and stereotypes that girls are targeted by lead them to adopt behaviours of resistance by seeking out coalitions within their gender category.

Transgression of rules is perceived as a manly attitude that may be encouraged in **boys** who seek to prove their masculinity to their peers. Boys who perform well and have a positive relationship

[73] *Ibid.*
[74] *Op. cit.* (2010).
[75] Caroline Levasseur et Laurence de Tilly-Dion (2018). *La mixité de genre en éducation : quelques implications des contextes éducatifs non mixtes pour la réussite scolaire et sociale des élèves.*

at school are at greater risk of social exclusion and bullying because they do not fit into the boys' group culture.

Connection to school and learning

Girls generally have a positive relationship with school: they like school, feel good about it, and take it seriously. They are on average more concerned about their success and that's why they maximize the time they spend in class. They are calmer and less impulsive than boys and are more compliant with rules and instructions. They perceive the benefits of the subjects taught and more often like the subjects in which they have difficulties. Girls have a concept of learning that relates to the self-actualization: learning enables them to project themselves into the future and to value themselves. They place more value on graduation and they have higher career aspirations than boys: their career choices require longer schooling, most often at university. Girls experience more anxiety related to schoolwork regardless of their socio-economic background. They experience a lot of stress during exam periods.

Girls have a very high level of satisfaction with good results. They attribute their poor academic performance more to intrinsic factors. Girls are more likely to believe that academic performance is a guarantee of a better future. They tend to self-evaluate themselves based on their academic results; their self-esteem is measured, among other things, by their exam results. The self-esteem of girls with low scores suffers because they believe that they will not be able to get recognition from others for their results. The reasons given by girls for dropping out are more discrete.

As for boys, they have a more negative relationship with school: some of them reject the values associated with school or have a real aversion to school, combined with a much stronger attraction to leisure activities and paid work. For many boys, it is very difficult to reconcile school experiences with their lives outside of school. Play culture, which may conflict with the school world, is more prevalent among boys. They perceive slightly more advantages to dropping out of school than girls and have vaguer career and post-secondary educational aspirations and experience more indecision in this regard. The aggressiveness component associated with factors that can precipitate their dropping out (conflict with authority and academic failure) makes the riskiness of their situations much more obvious to those around them.

Adherence to the value of academic achievement is less evident for many boys. They value effort less in the school setting and attribute their poor academic performance more to extrinsic factors. Boys are more likely to lower the impact of their academic performance on their future. Boys, on average, have lower expectations and place less value on different subjects, which would

appear to reduce their motivation and investment of time and energy. They have a high level of overall self-efficacy, especially in grades 9 and 10.

On the subjects' level, girls are slightly more likely than boys to report an interest in languages and mathematics. Boys have a higher sense of competence in mathematics while girls generally have a higher sense of competence in languages. Both boys and girls consider language-related domains to be more suitable for girls. They are more likely to report reading for three or more hours per week for pleasure. For girls, the choice to engage in physical activity or sport is primarily motivated by the feeling of belonging to a group or social network, whereas for boys, it is primarily a desire to perform. In scientific pathways, girls seem to prefer biology to physics and chemistry.

Educational experience

Girls and boys live a **different educational experience**, i.e. they are treated differently by the school system. First of all, school textbooks still present a stereotypical view of men and women and mask certain gender inequalities. The provision of activities often differs according to gender: for example, physical and sport activities are more often offered to boys and arts and socio-cultural activities to girls. Thus, that from the age of 12 onwards, girls gradually decrease the practice of sports and leisure activities, while boys remain more active than girls, regardless of their age group.

Members of school teams perceive **students' difficulties** differently. In blind tests, in the case of files bearing a female name, difficulties are perceived as being related to the student's general understanding. For files bearing a male name, the same difficulties are perceived as being related to the student's behaviour. When it comes to evaluation, girls receive more comments and congratulations regarding form (good writing, careful presentation, good conduct, work) while the boys receive proportionally more feedback related to content and performance (skill, intelligence, gift, creativity).

Girls receive praise from their teachers for both behaviour and academic performance: it would appear that they are calm, dynamic, disciplined, although sometimes talkative, in keeping with female stereotypes. Girls are more often asked closed questions, and their questions remain unanswered more often. Girls' relational and academic difficulties are often ignored because they are linked to internalized behaviours, which are not very visible if they are not paid attention to. They are more invisible in the classroom and submissive when it comes to authority. Girls are

more solicited than boys when it comes to helping students in difficulty or assisting the teacher, which reinforces the stereotype of girls being responsible for the care and well-being of others.

Boys receive more attention than girls (encouragement, criticism, listening) and receive increased attention when unruly. They tend to have more teacher-focused interactions and more individualized instruction. Teachers often expect boys to have a greater mastery of content, especially in science and math, where they receive more attention. The rough draft aspect of a homework is more likely to be tolerated coming from boys, which reduces the need for them to refine the presentation or structure of their work and evaluations. Finally, boys are asked to perform more physical tasks. The reasons for punishment most often associated with girls are: tardiness in work, chatting, cell phones and smoking. For boys, these are: lack of discipline, insolence, incivility, degradation, and violence.

Interactions with adults

Students' interactions with adults differ according to their gender. Boys are slightly more likely than girls to experience conflictual relationships with their teachers, while girls are more likely to have friendly relationships with the teaching staff. In class, boys are most often questioned when new notions are introduced, while girls are mostly questioned at the end of the session. Girls are however punished less often than boys.

Girls are highly motivated by the goal of acceptance (by the teacher and the peer group). In math and science, girls are more sensitive to the supportive atmosphere exhibited by the teacher.

General recommendations

As we have seen in the previous sections, young people who adhere most to gender stereotypes are also those who drop out the most. Gendered socialization leads them to develop different attitudes and behaviours according to gender. Moreover, boys, in addition to having a higher dropout rate than girls, also adhere more closely to gender stereotypes than girls. Their relationship to learning is therefore different. At the same time, school team members, like other adults, also demonstrate behaviours that change depending on the gender of the student. Finally, the reasons why boys and girls drop out of school are different. Fortunately, neurobiology has shown that brain plasticity allows the brain to transform and learn throughout life[76]. Thus, intervention by the community, particularly the school team, can help mitigate the effect of gender stereotypes on young people's beliefs and learning, even in high school.

[76] Marie Gaussel (2016). L'éducation des filles et des garçons : paradoxes et inégalités, Institut français de l'éducation.

In order to act on gender stereotypes, we have put together several recommendations to integrate into your pedagogical practices, the goal being to:

1. Distance yourself from practices that reinforce gender stereotypes;
2. Develop tools to deconstruct gender stereotypes among students; and
3. Adapt to address the gender needs of adolescent boys and girls.

In order to help you target your interventions, the focus here is on four areas of intervention:

1. Interactions with students
2. Activities dealing with gender stereotyping
3. With the work team
4. Self-reflection activities

For each of these areas, there are recommendations aimed at students in general and others aimed more specifically at boys and girls. The objective is not to further differentiate between boys and girls, but simply to recognize that at this age, gender-based socialization has already taken place and that the effort to deconstruct certain stereotypes already acquired in boys and girls requires different interventions. Since it places respect and acceptance of each student's individuality and specificity at the forefront, this approach is consistent with caring school guidelines that seek to make with the adult a model of caring and falls within the spectrum of inclusive pedagogies[77].

Interactions with students

General recommendations:

1. Keep in mind that not all boys and girls have the same skills and abilities. Take an individualized approach: it will then be easier to take into account different motivational profiles or cognitive styles, regardless of the student's gender.
2. Encourage all students to devote a reasonable amount of time to their studies. For boys, allow sufficient time, and for girls, maintain a balance between school and social life.
3. Pay special attention to the vocabulary used to refer to people in certain trades: for example, "guys" for construction workers, and "girls" for health or education professionals.
4. Promote universal practices that make services and activities available to all students. Such practices should be accompanied by individualized support adapted to each young person's strengths and difficulties.

[77] Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (2017). *Pour une école riche de tous ses élèves*, 165 pages.

5. Be open-minded about diversity. If some young people have discriminatory comments or behaviours towards 2SLGBTQ+ people (i.e., homophobia or transphobia), invite them to reflect on this behaviour.
6. Since group work tasks are often assigned to students based on gender stereotypes, invite students to share tasks or try new ones.
7. In general and in the discipline you teach, make sure you present and value diverse male and female role models.
8. In the context of school outings ensure a fair and non-stereotypical distribution of tasks related to the life of the group.
9. Put in place practises to counteract your blind spots. For example, now that it is known that teachers tend to respond less to girls' questions, it is possible to put up a question box in an easily accessible location to ensure that there is space for their questions to be heard. Other ideas:
    - hide students' names when you mark exams and assessments;
    - draw names for speaking assignments.
10. Put into practice an egalitarian pedagogy that seeks to:
    - establish egalitarian relationships in the classroom;
    - make students feel valued as persons; and
    - use the students' experience as sources of learning.
11. Create a climate for learning and self-expression by:
    - reacting immediately to sexist, racist, inappropriate or discriminatory language (zero tolerance);
    - avoiding challenging students who do not conform to stereotypes and by correcting those who comment on or make fun of such behaviour; and
    - encouraging young to be open-minded about the choices of others and by demonstrating that a person's gender does not limit their choice of activities or professions.
12. Promote mixed teams, especially in sports activities.
13. In the context of a cooperative approach or teamwork, encourage the use of the respective strengths of the girls and boys in the group to enable them to develop their potential, particularly in the case of girls, whose self-confidence is often lower than that of boys.
14. The use of peer support groups, where students work together on certain concepts, but not necessarily in a formal team setting, can be an enriching practice for students and support peer learning. This gives students the opportunity to decide together on the working methods they wish to use and to discuss and reformulate content with each

other. If you use this practice, make sure you have mixed groups and encourage the participation of all group members. Please make sure that it is not mainly the girls who are in a helping relationship with the other group members.

15. Especially in science subjects, integrate your own experiences into your classroom exchanges to reveal yourself as a person to the students. Positive and negative school experiences, difficulties in learning processes, social roles in science and technology, and interests outside the classroom can make the subject more accessible to many students, especially girls.
16. Check students' perceptions and feelings of competency and the value they place on certain subjects such as English/French and mathematics in order to intervene judiciously:
    - Girls experience more anxiety and often have a lower sense of competency in mathematics than boys. They need support and encouragement; and
    - Boys often place less importance on learning English/French and reading.

Recommendations to support boys:

1. Make sure that places of help are more informal (e.g. walk-in support): Boys respond better to informal professional help places, as they are usually more likely to fend for themselves rather than seek formal help.
2. Since motivation is linked to feelings of competency, provide opportunities for all boys, including those with lower academic performance, to demonstrate competency in school.
3. Value the verbalization of emotions and take a non-directive approach (Trépanier, 2014).
4. Encourage artistic talents in boys.
5. Make sure you evaluate form as carefully as content.
6. Organize activities with people who apply the content learned in the course to their work or community involvement. Since some boys tend to place less value on formal, school-based knowledge, knowing how it can be used in the real world can bolster their motivation. This is particularly true when it comes to language learning.

Recommendations to support girls:

1. Be alert to the invisible needs of girls and pay attention to their specific signs of dropping out; girls are less labelled as potential dropouts and whose difficulties are more internalized.
2. Plan activities for girls to build their confidence.
3. Be vigilant about psychological distress.
4. Make sure you assess content as carefully as form.

5. Maximize autonomy in girls by avoiding doing the activities and/or exercises for them when providing explanations.

In the case of vocational training programs

1. Provide young people with a variety of models of workers. Encourage them to project themselves into work based on their own interests and not on gender stereotypes, particularly in the case of vocational students in non-traditional programs for their gender (i.e. girls in the construction trades).
2. Pay attention to humour targeting the skills of either men or women. These jokes, when repeated, can become stifling for students who are in the minority in their program (boys in traditional female vocational programs/girls in male-dominated vocational programs).
3. Allow students who are a minority in their training program to express their needs and share their difficulties.
4. Make sure you offer equivalent training to men and women. Avoid assuming that students already have certain skills, such as being able to drive vehicles or operate equipment.
5. Support the integration of boys in female-dominated sectors.

Activities dealing with gender stereotypes

1. Help students acquire critical thinking about gender stereotypes by:
    - encouraging reflection and awareness when you see them;
    - openly challenging stereotypical images in the public space;
    - drawing attention to gender stereotypes when students are using web, tablet and computer applications;
    - questioning stereotypes or prejudices expressed by students or others; and
    - correcting the perception that there are feminine and masculine activities.
2. Remind students often that there are no activities that are just for girls or just for boys.
3. React verbally to situations of inequality and discuss them with students to deconstruct stereotypes and shift their perceptions towards egalitarian values;
4. In sports, where gender stereotypes are very present, intervene quickly when discriminatory comments are made.
5. Raise awareness of the skills developed through the various activities offered to young people and show that they are beneficial to all, girls and boys alike.
6. Organize activities to raise awareness about the issue of hypersexualization. In particular, dress codes can be a relevant subject around which to organize discussion; it might also be a way to involve students in updating these policies.

7. Organize workshops or games with students to engage in a dialogue around the issue of gender identities.
8. Present models of women and men who break out of stereotypical roles.
9. Work on gender stereotypes with young people, especially with boys, who are more likely to adhere to them.
10. Encourage students to choose activities or tasks that they tend to ignore or avoid.
11. Implement promotional campaigns in this regard. Support and encourage young people's educational, vocational, and social aspirations. Help convince them that anything is allowed and possible.
12. Teach about the "stereotype threat" and put in place measures appropriate to your discipline to counter it when relevant.
13. Put in place mechanisms to ensure that boys and girls are encouraged to speak equitably in the classroom. For example, rotate speaking turns between boys and girls.
14. Mitigate the stereotype threat by a "reinforcing speech" at the beginning of the activity in which you emphasize that all students are capable of doing the activity well.
15. In the readings and role models provided to students, ensure that you have diverse role models (e.g., women athletes, women scientists, or women who have made history).

With the work team

1. Draw up a table of the young people who participate in activities (e.g., extracurricular activities), adding data to pinpoint which students are most targeted by individual activities.
2. Take the time to observe the school materials: textbooks, multimedia tools, library content, etc. Use analysis grids to assess whether gender stereotypes are present.
3. Offer activities that combine arts and sports competencies to engage boys in cultural practices and girls in physical activities.
4. Have male and female role models in non-traditional activities. These role models can help young people become more flexible in their social representations. For example, why not invite a man who writes poetry or a woman physicist to talk about their respective disciplines.
5. Promote safe transportation to activities and appropriate schedules to encourage girls to participate.

Self-reflection activities

1. Develop reflexive practices: be vigilant and question your own (often unconscious) attitudes towards young people. For example, one teacher filmed her class and discovered that her behaviour was not the same towards girls and boys.
2. Take time to identify your own biases about the abilities and aptitudes of boys and girls.
3. Take the time to reflect on:
    - the place men and women occupy in your discipline;
    - the experiences boys and girls have in terms of this discipline and the related competencies; and
    - on the impact these two elements may have on the degree of competency felt by the students in your class with respect to this discipline and its related competencies.
4. Take the time to fully understand the Pygmalion effect and have high expectations for all of your students.

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