

Lesson Plan: Questioning Gender Stereotypes

(Based on content from *The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know*)

ADAPTED for Grade 3-only Curriculum

Overview

This lesson will explore identity, the societal stereotypes often held about gender, how these affect us, and how we can encourage one another to be authentic to our passions and interests.

Curricular Connections

- **ELA 3** - The role that story plays in personal, family, and community identity
- **PHE 3** - Identify personal skills, interests, and preferences and describe how they influence self-identity

Lesson Plan – Part One: Gender Stereotypes

Introduce the lesson by telling students that you will be talking about identity, in other words, what makes a person who they are. Part of a person's identity is defined by their interests, what they're good at, and often the things they like to do.

Ask students to talk in small groups about things they are good at or like to do. These can be things they like to do at school, after-school or at home. They should write 3 things each on 3 separate post-it notes (or small pieces of paper). Now ask for their help to place these activities (with words and picture icons) in a large Venn diagram on the board (or using string on the carpet). Use the headings of "Only for Girls", "For Anyone" or "Only for Boys". What about colours? Are some only for boys, or only for girls? Engage students in discussion about the items. Hopefully they should all eventually land under, "For Anyone".

Next ask if there are activities that are more popular among boys or girls. Sometimes when something is popular for many boys, people begin to think that it's ONLY for boys, or if it's popular with many girls they think it's ONLY for girls. Is this true? These ideas are called stereotypes.

- Who gets to decide what a person should like?
- Are there certain jobs that are only for men or only for women?
- What if someone likes something that people don't think is right for them based on their gender? How might they be treated by other kids and sometimes even adults?
- How might this make them feel? Could this feeling affect their interests and even choice of job in the future?

Next read two stories about kids who felt like this.

- Boy stereotypes: *Henry Holton Takes the Ice* by Sandra Bradley, *The Only Boy in Ballet Class* by Denise Gruska, *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by Tomie dePaola, or *The Sissy Duckling* by Harvey Fierstein
- Girl stereotypes: *A Fire Engine for Ruthie* by Leslea Newman, *Allie's Basketball Dream* by Barbara E. Barber, *The Worst Princess* by Anna Kemp or *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch

Ask students to talk about how the main characters challenged or handled the pressure to follow gender stereotypes. Have they ever felt this pressure? How did they handle it?

When people follow their true passions, abilities and strengths they are happier and the world gets their best.

Activity

- Letter Writing – Ask students to write a letter to one of the characters from the stories to tell the character what they think about their decision to be true to themselves. Have them include what they

will do if they see this happening to a friend in future and whom they could seek help from if they were teased because of what they like or who they are.