



Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years

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Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years – the project

1. Gender Equity Project team

2. Partnership with Women's Health In the North – expertise to support developing resources and tools

3. Professional development sessions

- Two Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years sessions
- Gender equity Intentional Play Space
- Expert Panel presentation

4. Development of Resources – in consultation with early years educators and professionals

Gender Equity Intentional Play Space: professional development for educators



An interactive resource for Local Government

- links to resources
- tools and assessments
- policy template
- self reflective questions
- supportive videos with early years professionals and gender equity experts

Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A Resource for Local Government

The early years are a critical time when gender roles and stereotypical notions of what it means to be masculine or feminine are shaped, and when positive influences on children's and families' understanding of gender norms can most easily be achieved (Rainbow Families Council, 2012; OurWatch 2015). There are endless opportunities for educators, early years professionals and policy makers to have a positive influence on gender, through encouraging children's play, language, toys and storytelling. Promoting positive gender norms in the early years creates the necessary foundation for children to grow and develop their ideas and understanding about gender and to learn about equal and respectful relationships.

This resource provides a number of tools and resources for the local government and early years sectors across Victoria. Sections of this resource may also be relevant to other sectors working to improve gender equity and prevent violence against women. Each section in this resource focuses on a theme or audience for improving gender equity in the early years, is accompanied by a training video, additional resources and reflective practice questions.



Overview of Resources:

Resource 1: Gender Equity Assessment Tool

Gender Equity Assessment Tool	Yes	No	Key considerations and potential actions
This centre has a gender equity policy, or makes reference to gender in an equity and inclusion policy.			
Staff use language that is equitable and respectful and does not promote gender stereotypes or gender inequality.			
We apply a gender lens to all learning activities to ensure equal representation of the range of experiences, knowledge, skills and aspirations of women and men in all areas of life.			

I. Observational Assessment

Play spaces and physical environment	Yes	No	Key considerations and potential actions
Imagery			
Does the visual imagery throughout the centre depict both girls and boys, women and men? Counting all the images of people you can see throughout the whole environment, is there a balance in how many times women/girls and men/boys are depicted?			
Do the images around the centre portray many different roles, jobs and activities for women and men, girls and boys?			
Do any images challenge gender stereotypes by showing women and men in non-stereotypical roles?			
Use of space			

Resource 2: Gender Equitable Spaces Assessment Tool

Resource 3: Books and Stories Library Assessment Tool

Review the Storyline	
Prompt for consideration	Assessment Questions
Note the main characters	<p>Considering all the books at your centre:</p> <p>How many books include only male characters? How many books include only female characters? What percentage of books have a female protagonist? Compare this to the percentage of books that have a male protagonist? Of all the characters in all the books, what percentage overall are female?</p> <p>When reading individual books:</p> <p>What activities and storylines does the main character participate in? Do the attributes, activities and behaviours of the main character reflect gender stereotypes? For example, the male characters are depicted as the hero in the story.</p>
Consider who has power in the relationships	<p>Consider the balance of people in 'doer' roles. Who is taking an active role in the story and who is ornamental or passive? Do female characters achieve success because of their own initiative and intelligence, or is their success due to their looks or relationships with male characters? Who typically causes a problem and who resolves it?</p>
Consider the messages	<p>Diversity can be depicted in a range of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male/female roles within the family • Family structure • Ethnicity • Types of work • Socioeconomic conditions

Resource 4: Template Gender Equity Policy for Early Years Services

Context

It is important to remember that for some people working in your centre, reading this information may be the first time they have thought about what gender equity means and why it's relevant to think about in an early years centre. This presents an opportunity to share the background information that you think is required. It is also important to state early on in the policy, how this work is valued by the organisation and why you need a policy to support it.

Points to consider:

- Why gender equity is important
- Why you have a gender equity policy
- The impact of gender stereotypes on young children
- How this is relevant to an early years environment

You will know where best to place this content and under which heading it should be so that is reflective and aligned with the structure of other organisational policies.

SAMPLE CONTENT

Children are exposed to many factors which influence their attitudes, behaviours and aspirations. One of these factors is gender. By the age of four children have already formed an understanding of what it means to be a woman or a man in today's society.

Resource 5: Self-Reflection tool for Early Years Educators

Reflective questions	Yes	No	Notes
Do I have gender biases?			
Is my practice open to equal and diverse experiences for both girls and boys?			
Is my practice informed by frameworks supporting gender equity in the early years			
Is my practice guided by continued professional development?			
Do my biases about gender impact on the professional development that I undertake?			
Do I have tools, resources and support for talking with children about gender?			
Does my service provide a range of dress ups and toys to allow children to explore different roles or different stories?			
Do I read books that open up the possibilities about what girls and boys can be or do?			
Does my practice reflect on how spaces, language, toys and play might contribute to gender inequity?			
Does my service or program gender stereotype or prioritise based on gender?			
Are there opportunities in the services I provide, to challenge gender stereotypes?			

Overview of supporting videos



- Challenges and learnings
- Next steps for gender equity in the early years
- Accessing Resources

For more information and to access *Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A Resource for Local Government*, associated resources and support videos, visit www.darebin.vic.gov.au/geey



Feel free to get in touch, to discuss further:

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