

DIGNITY IN SCHOOL RESOURCE

Exploring Gender Equality: A rights-based exploration

Introduction

Children's Parliament views equality and gender equality as essential for upholding children's dignity and ensuring they lead happy, healthy, and safe lives.

Equality ensures that all children experience their rights, regardless of their differences (UNCRC Article 2). Protecting children from discrimination as they grow and develop is essential.

All children have the right to be free from discrimination and to be in an environment that promotes gender equality and challenges gender inequality.

This resource, co-created with Park Primary School, Stranraer, provides exercises and information to explore gender and gender inequality in schools through a rights-based approach.

CfE Learning Outcomes

HWB 1-09/2-09a
HWB 1-10a/ 2-10a
HWB 1-14a/2-14a
LIT 2-02a LIT 2-07a

Aims of the Resource

This resource will help you explore ideas around gender, gender stereotypes, gender norms and gender inequality by:

1. Investigating characters in traditional fairy tales to explore gender stereotypes.
2. Creating contemporary fairy tales set in the modern day to challenge gender stereotypes.
3. Examining children's perceptions of gender roles and jobs.
4. Reflecting on gender inequality through various activities.
5. Exploring how different genders experience the school campus and learning environment.



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SESSION NOTE: USING TERMINOLOGY

A Note About The Conversation

It is important to acknowledge that conversations about gender are still evolving and so is the language around it. As our shared societal understanding of gender continues to grow and develop, it is crucial for each of us to stay informed and adapt our vocabulary accordingly. By doing so, we can ensure that our communication remains respectful, inclusive, and reflective of current norms and insights.

How We Refer To Gender

Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys. This includes the norms, behaviours, roles associated with being a woman, man, boy or girl, and relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Alternatively, sex refers to biological differences.

Exploring Gender

Session 1 : Introducing Gender and Equality

Part 3: Introducing Gender

Although equality is about treating everyone the same, it's very important that we notice that everyone is different and celebrate these differences.

Invite the children in the circle to name something that might make someone different to someone else (this may include age, race, religion, interests, names or disability).
If not mentioned already, introduce that someone may identify (or say) they are a boy or a girl (or sometimes there are people that don't feel like either).

**When someone identifies as a boy,
girl (or neither) this is called their gender**

Member of Children's Parliament's definition

Part 4: Connecting To Rights

Depending on your rights journey with the children, this moment can also be used to connect children to an overview of the UNCRC by introducing them to Article 2 “ All children have these rights no matter what their differences are” or for a more advanced journey connecting them to “the right to non discrimination” and Articles 3 (Best interest), 6 (The right to survive and develop) and 12 (The right to have your views heard and taken seriously).



Exploring Gender

Session 1 : Introducing Gender and Equality

Session Requirements:

Length: 45 minutes

Location: Indoor space

Materials: N/A

Session Plan:

Part 1: Check-In

At Children's Parliament, we start every session with a check-in which takes place in a circle with all adults and children sitting **IN A CIRCLE**. This sets the tone for the session, allowing children to express themselves freely and gives you a heads up if there are any children who may need a bit of extra support or space during the day. You can find out more about check-ins in our '[Check-In Activity Ideas](#)' Learning Kit.

Part 2: Circle of Equals

After the check-in, bring attention to the circle by asking children why they think they are sitting in a circle in that way.

Explain that being on the same physical level as each other works as a mirror to how we want the sessions to be, with everyone's opinions, voice, ideas and thoughts being equally important in the space. We are trying to make things equal and trying to achieve equality in the space.

Provide the following definition and ask the children why do we need equality?



Equality means that everyone is treated the same and has the same opportunities, no matter who they are, **NOT ABOUT BEING TREATED THE SAME - ABOUT HAVING YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS MET**

Exploring Gender

Session 1 : Gender Stereotypes in Fairy tales

Session Requirements:

Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Location: Indoor space

Materials: A3 Paper, fairy tale descriptions, character sorting sheets, pens/pencils, music playing device

Session Note!

It is important to note that children's associations or familiarity to fairy tales may differ depending on each individual's culture and background. For illustrations of gender stereotypes we have chosen to use three traditional Western fairy tales.

Session Plan:

Part 1: Introducing the Fairy tales

Begin the exercise by inviting children to discuss their existing knowledge of fairy tales by asking the following questions:

- What is a fairy tale?
- When and where do we hear fairy tales?
- What fairy tales or traditional stories from different cultures do you know of?

Invite children to get into four groups and provide each with a large A3 piece of paper and pens, and one of the following overviews of these fairy tales to read:

Fairy tale 1: Snow White

1. Snow White, a kind princess, runs away from her wicked stepmother, the Queen.
2. She finds a cosy home in the forest with seven friendly dwarfs.
3. The Queen, disguised as an old woman, gives Snow White a poisoned apple.
4. After eating the apple, Snow White falls into a deep sleep.
5. A prince finds Snow White, kisses her, and she wakes up, and they live happily ever after.

Exploring Gender

Session 1 : Gender Stereotypes in Fairy tales

Fairy tale 2: Cinderella

1. Cinderella is treated poorly by her stepmother and stepsisters.
2. A fairy godmother helps her attend a royal ball, where she meets the prince.
3. She must leave by midnight, losing a glass slipper as she rushes away.
4. The prince searches for the owner of the slipper and finds Cinderella.
5. They get married and live happily ever after.

Fairy tale 3: Sleeping Beauty

1. A princess is cursed to fall asleep for 100 years.
2. A wicked fairy casts the spell, but a good fairy changes it so she will wake up with a kiss from a prince.
3. One day, the princess pricks her finger on a spinning wheel and falls asleep.
4. A hundred years later, a prince finds her and gives her a kiss.
5. She wakes up, and they live happily ever after.

Part 2: Bringing The Stories to Life

Using the overviews of fairy tales, invite children to create 5 still images using their bodies to communicate the different parts of the story they have been provided with.

For groups that may require more support encourage them to use a narrator to help support the images being shown.

Once the groups have created the 5 images, ask them to link each of the images together to make a visual story that flows between images. You may wish to use some atmospheric music in the background to set the scene.

Once made, share each visual story back to the other group members, using the following questions to reflect on what has been shown.

What did we see happening in the story?

Does someone need help?

Who needs help and where does the help come from?

How are the male and female characters shown in the story?



Exploring Gender

Session 1 : Gender Stereotypes in Fairy tales

Part 3: Investigating the characters

MALES	
Male Characters	What are they trying to do in the story?
What words would you use to describe how they look?	What words would you use to describe their personality?

FEMALES	
Male Characters	What are they trying to do in the story?
What words would you use to describe how they look?	What words would you use to describe their personality?

Take the reflections further by providing each group with an A3 sheet of paper and splitting it up or providing them with the above “character templates”.

Invite each group to investigate the characters in the story using the questions provided. After time, bring the class together placing all charts next to each other asking if there are any similarities or differences. They may notice the same representation of male and female characters in each story.

Lead the children to the idea of a stereotype, using the following description as a starting point to draw out the conversation:

What is a stereotype?

“A stereotype is when people think everyone in a group is the same. It's like saying all boys like blue or all girls like pink.”

Member of Children's Parliament's definition

Exploring Gender

Session 1 : Gender Stereotypes in Fairy tales

Once you have discussed what a stereotype is, return to the sheet of the characters created, reflecting on it with the following questions:

What do you think about the way these characters are shown? Are they stereotypes?

These are old fairy tales - can you think of any characters in films, TV or video games that break these stereotypes?

What effect might using stereotypes have on people? How might that make someone feel?

What could you change in a fairy tale?

How might stereotypes be linked to dignity? (We describe dignity as being when you feel happy, healthy and safe.)

Exploring Gender

Session 2 : Pitch: Challenging Stereotypes

Session Requirements:

Length 1 hour

Location: Indoor space

Materials: Large A3 paper, ideas sheet, pens/pencils, music playing device, digital tablets

Session Plan

School Fairy Tales: Pitch!

Building on understandings of the gender stereotypes explored through the fairy tales, this activity invites children to explore current gender stereotypes associated with boys and girls and challenges them through the creation of their own fairy tales. This activity can be delivered through using a fictional framing in a “dragons den” style forum, or through placing children in roles as “story makers” responding to a brief.

Exploring Gender

Session 2 : Pitch: Challenging Stereotypes

Part 1: The Brief

Begin by showing children the following challenge (as shown on slide).

Your challenge: to come up with an idea for a brand new fairy tale!

A fairy tale that breaks away from the old and challenges stereotypes within them!
You must pitch your idea in an entertaining way to tell us all about your idea.

Challenge Rules

1. The fairy tale must take place at school.
2. The lead character(s) must challenge gender stereotypes in some way.
3. It must have an unexpected ending!

Part 2: Researching Ideas

Before generating ideas with the children invite them to use the planning sheet to develop their ideas and reflect upon what gender stereotypes may exist or are associated with boys and girls today.

It's important to remind children that as these are stereotypes being discussed, some people may feel sensitive about them and may have experienced being stereotyped in these ways.

BOYS	
Boys Like.....	Boys are good at...
Boys talk about....	Boys are.....

GIRLS	
Girls Like.....	Girls are good at...
Girls talk about....	Girls are.....

Exploring Gender

Session 2 : Pitch: Challenging Stereotypes

Once the children have developed the planning sheets, allow time for them to develop their ideas and ways of presenting them. Encourage the children to use the stereotypes on the planning sheet as things they may wish to challenge through their stories. Use the following questions to help structure their pitches:

Tell us about the lead character of the story

What are they trying to do in the story?

What happens in the story?

Do they face any difficulties?

How does this challenge stereotypes?

Part 3: PITCHING!

Invite children to find ways to make their pitch entertaining and informative, invite them to use PowerPoints, Dramatic Moments, still images or drawings to help illustrate their ideas.

Allow them to share their pitches to the rest of the class, allowing questions to be asked about their ideas, to support them to reflect on them. Celebrate all pitches made and use the following to frame a plenary discussion about their work.

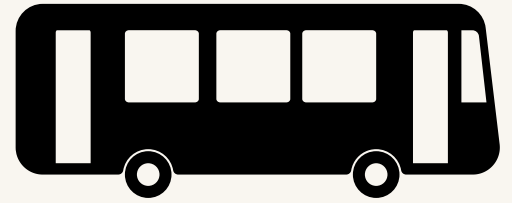
Where do we learn stereotypes from?

How should we treat people that may not fit into a stereotype?

How might these new fairy tales help children?

Exploring Gender

Session 3 : Bus Stop



Session Requirements:

Length: 45 minutes

Location: Indoor space

Materials: chair per pupil, job title cards, bus identity slides

Session Plan

This activity sets out to explore gender stereotypes in society with a specific focus on jobs and roles in the world of work. It will look at the assumptions we may have about who can do different roles and how that affects how we may relate to the world around us.

Part 1: Creating The Bus

Invite pupils to create a bus within the centre of the classroom or working space. The bus should have 5 different sections, an entrance way and enough chairs for each person in the class. You may wish to use sound effects or visuals to create an atmosphere in the classroom.

Once the bus has been created, invite 5 children to take one of the following “Job Cards” and place themselves in one of the sections in the bus.

THE
FARMER

THE
PARENT

THE
DOCTOR

THE
NURSE

THE
TEACHER

Once seated, invite the rest of the children to board the bus and sit by one of the children holding the “Job Cards” already on the bus.

Exploring Gender

Session 3 : Bus Stop

Part 2: Picturing The Passenger

Invite each group to work together to build up a description of each person “The Farmer” etc, encouraging them to think about what they look like, their back story, their home and work life. The aim is to develop a story for each of the “named” people on the bus. They can write these ideas down or simply prepare to share them.

Part 3: Revealing the ticket holder

Once each group has shared their descriptions, bring attention to the following slides to reveal the identity of who was on the bus. The people on the slides may oppose the descriptions given by the group. Give the children time to respond to this and use the following questions to help guide their reflection.

Part 4: Reflecting on the journey

Were these people different from what you expected? How?

What are your thoughts about these people doing these jobs?

Is there a difference in how these people might do these jobs?

How might these gender stereotypes affect what job you might do in the future?

Part 5: (Extension Activity) New Seats

Invite pupils to leave the bus they have just been on, informing them that they are going to take a new journey shortly with different passengers on it. Breaking them into smaller groups, invite each group to think of a famous person who challenges the gender stereotype of someone in that role.

They may wish to research the jobs given or search for a new job that they would usually expect to be done by either a woman or a man. Allow them to find out information about them and then re-enter the bus to report back on their findings.

Exploring Gender

Session 4 : Party Of Equals

Session Requirements:

Length: 1 hour

Location: Outside/Inside

Materials: party equipment, invitation sign, music.,



Session Plan

This exercise uses an “invite only” party as a provocation to introduce the concept of gender inequality.

Part 1: The Party

To begin, decorate a part of the playground or classroom as a party (streamers, hats, balloons) and display a sign inviting only one group of the children to the party.

Each child will be randomly assigned a group: polka dot or stripes. Only one group will be invited to the party. Allow the invited group to choose music and games, and ask them to give tasks to the excluded group.

Ensure children know that this is an experiment and can be stopped if it affects them negatively.

After the activity, form a circle and discuss the following questions as a form of reflection:

What happened?

How did you feel?

Was this fair?

Does this happen in other situations?

Explain that this activity illustrates gender inequality and introduce them to the following definition:

Gender inequality means treating boys and girls differently, usually unfairly.

Exploring Gender

Session 4 : Party Of Equals



Part 2

Moving from the definition of gender inequality, use the following video to help expand the conversation about where else gender inequality might exist in society.

[Gender Equality - Child Social Experiment by The Norwegian Trade Union - YouTube](#)

Review the clip by using the reflective frame below:

What did you see?
What did you think?
What questions do you have?

Following on from this, put the following spider diagram up on the board in the classroom and invite the children to write down any ways they think boys and girls may be treated differently at school.

“Ways that girls and boys at school are treated differently”

Following on from this, invite pupils to expand the conversation about areas outside of school. You may wish to utilise the following statements to help expand the thinking:

- At ages 7 to 11, boys are almost twice as likely as girls to want to be scientists.
- 57% of girls aged 7 to 10 think girls are better at doing chores at home than boys.
- There is a 22% gap between boys and girls playing team sports.
- Women make up only 31% of parliamentarians.

Exploring Gender

Session 5 : Gender Glasses

Session Requirements:

Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Location: Outside/Inside

Materials: clipboard, 3D glasses, map of school, pens, post-it notes.,

Session Plan

This activity sets out to expand on the previous activity by inviting children to look at gender inequality and “gendered” activity and spaces across school.

Part 1

Begin by watching the following video of a social experiment exploring how things can be “gendered” [Watch here](#)

After watching the video open up a discussion around the children’s thoughts and feelings about it:

What happened in the experiment?

What were the results of the experiment?

Were you surprised by anything in the video?

Bring attention to the the idea that some things are gendered which means “things that are associated with being a boy or a girl” - this may be that pink is for girls and blue is for boys, or boys play sport and girls like make up.

Re-watch the video a second time with the children and ask them to write down anything they notice that could be “gendered” in the video. This may include clothing, toys, interests, behaviours, appearance.



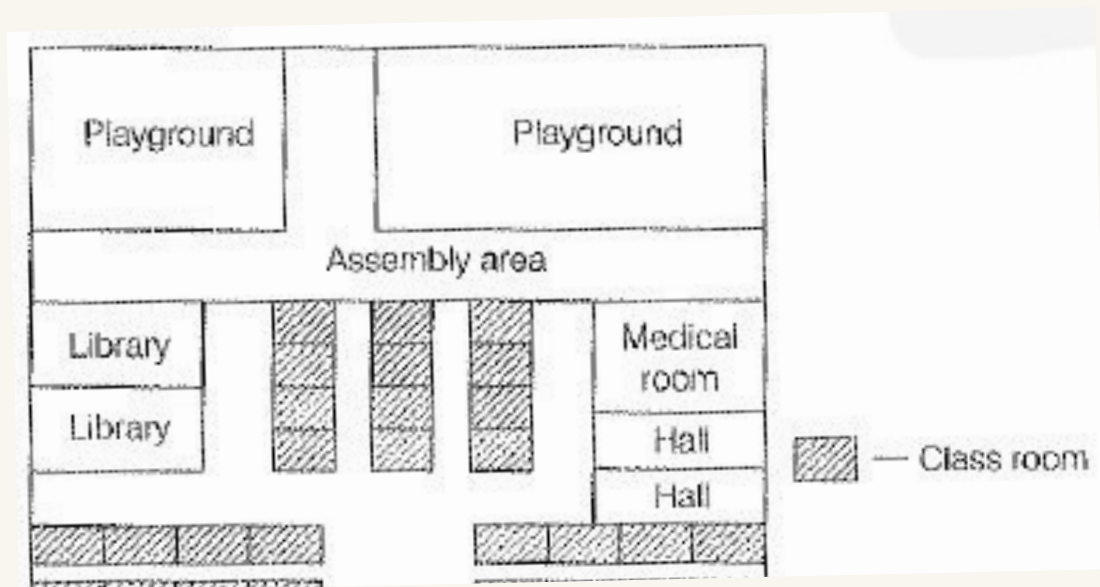
Exploring Gender

Session 5 : Gender Glasses

Part 2: Putting On The Glasses

Building on previous activities, children will conduct a "gender survey" of their school.

Begin by providing or creating a map of the school with the children, including all areas they use (hall, canteen, playground).



In groups, inform children that they are going to put on their gender glasses (these can be fictional or created out of paper) which will allow them to see gender wherever they go.

Part 3: Surveying The Space

Begin by inviting the pupils to decide on a location within the school they want to survey and encourage them to visit exploring the following questions:

What things is this space used for?
How does it feel in this space?

Exploring Gender

Session 5 : Gender Glasses

Part 4: Investigating the Space

Once they have got a sense of the space, ask them to explore it from the perspective of gender using these questions:

- Is there anything here that may be gendered?**
- Do girls and boys get treated differently here?**
- Are there any examples of gender inequality here?**

Using different coloured pens linked to the key, ask them to write the answers to this on the location on the map.

Part 5: Sharing the Results

Bring together the groups and invite them to share their findings with each other, and discuss what the findings might tell us.

Part 6: Changing Spaces

Provide the children with post-it notes, invite them to locate any areas on the map in which they felt boys and girls were treated differently. Invite them to write down any suggestions they would make to change it to make sure everyone was being treated equally.



Exploring Gender

Session 6 : Difference and Equality

Session Requirements:

Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Location: Outside/Inside

Materials: A2 roll of paper, a mix of clothes and accessories, celebrity slides.



Session Plan

Part 1:

Begin by inviting the children to sit in a circle and lay out various items of clothing or accessories on the floor in the middle of it (hats, skirts, jumpers, trousers, stick-on moustache, glasses)

Part 2:

Invite children as a group or by taking turns to separate the items into three categories: Boys, Girls and Either. Ask them to explain their reasonings each time they have sorted an item.

Part 3:

After sorting them inquire if the Girls' pile could actually be items that boys wear or if the Boys' pile could be items that girls wear?

Bring attention to any items in the Either pile and generate discussion as to why they weren't classed as boys' or girls' items.

Part 4:

Explain that these these items when worn by the assigned group could be seen as being a "gender norm".

"A gender norm is a rule or idea about how boys and girls are supposed to act, look, or feel based on whether they are a boy or a girl."



Part 5:

Using the slides provided, show the class the photographs of well known celebrities that appear to challenge the “gender norm”.

Part 6:

Ask the children for their initial thoughts and immediate feelings about the photographs of celebrities. Be aware that some children may have difficulty in articulating their responses potentially stating confusion, finding them strange or potentially weird. It’s important to provide space and be non-judgmental at this time.

Part 7:

Bring the conversation round to discuss that these people may seem different because they don’t fit in with the “gender norm” which we may be used to. Use the piles of clothes on the floor to emphasise this point further.

Part 8:

Invite the children to get into groups and provide them with either two copies of the template provided below, or create two large-scale body outlines on two separate pieces of paper. Divide the body up so there are four sections with the headings and titles shown below.

Read the following scenario and invite the children to respond:

Scenario: It’s your first day back at school after the holidays. You are told someone called Bobbi will be joining the class for the first time tomorrow, she has moved from another area with her family. When they arrive they have short hair, wear shorts and school shirt and are wearing trainers. They don’t look like they fit the “gender norm” you expected.

Invite the children to imagine two different ways that Bobbi gets treated when she arrives

1. As someone who isn't treated equally.
2. As someone that is treated equally.

Part 9

After giving the children some time to write down or draw their thoughts, work with them to discuss their responses, prompt children to think about the role that rights may play in Bobbi’s experience of their first time in class.

Ask the children what needs to happen to ensure that Bobbi would be treated equally, thinking about what they can do, teachers can do and what school can do to support them.

A person that's been treated equally

How other people in the class
reacted to them?

How other people in the class
have treated them?



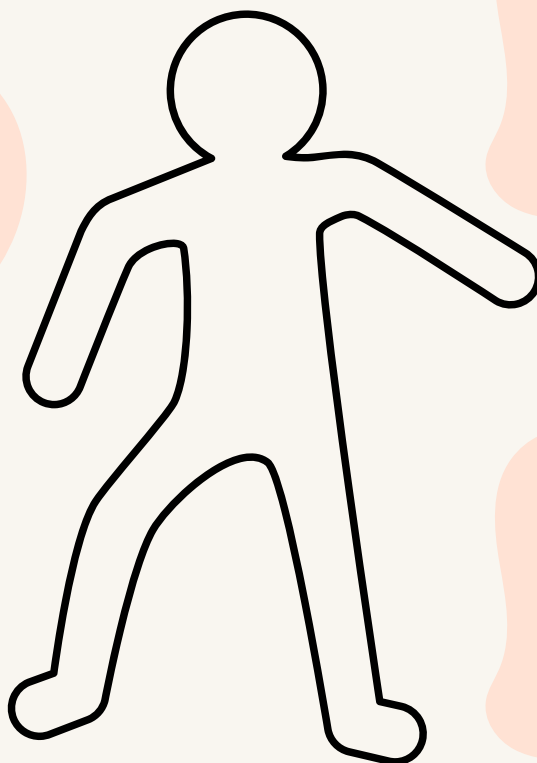
How may they feel?

How have teachers, and the
school helped them join

A person that hasn't been treated equally

How other people in the class
reacted to them?

How other people in the
class have treated them?



How may they feel?

How have teachers, and the
school helped them join
(Think about their rights!)

Furthering The Discussion



We recognise that this resource can act as a starting point for children and schools to explore concepts around gender, gender stereotypes and gender inequality. We also recognise that this may open up broader conversations around masculinity, gender identity and LGBTQ+ sexualities. We recommend the following resources to continue your journey with your school.

TIE Scotland: Resources

LGBT Inclusive Education in Scotland involves integrating LGBT themes across the school curriculum from early years through secondary education, with a focus on understanding diverse families, addressing prejudice, and introducing LGBT rights and history, supported by national CPD for teachers. Find out more [here](#).

Youth Link Scotland: Imagine a Man

A resource pack exploring the concept of positive masculinity by addressing the need for boys and young men in Scotland to engage in conversations about masculinity, challenge harmful stereotypes, and develop a better understanding of their roles in society, with the aim of fostering optimism and helping them flourish. You can access it [here](#).

Children's Parliament: Gender Equality In Education and Learning Report

The report focuses on gathering the views of girls and young women to inform a Theory of Change model, aiming to achieve gender equality in Scottish education by addressing sexism, sexual harassment, and ensuring gender competence among educators, while also involving boys as allies in this effort.

The report was commissioned by Equality in Education Team, part of the Scottish Government's Teacher Education, Leadership and Reform Unit.

You can access it [here](#).

