Body Image, Art and Math
Education 200
Analyzing Schools
Curriculum Project
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Introduction:

For our curriculum project we have decided to focus our lesson on the subject of body image as seen through the media, art and mathematics. It is our hope to promote a healthy body image to our sixth grade students. We believe that this particular subject is important because of the demands made on young boys and girls to conform to a specific image of an ideal body. Carolyn spent her time working in a sixth grade science classroom at Bellizzi Middle School and Erin worked in a sixth grade classroom at McDonough Elementary School. Through our placements we discovered that sixth grade is a sensitive age for both boys and girls. There is a large emphasis placed on buying the right clothes, wearing your hair a certain way, and most importantly, conforming to the ideal physical body type. Sixth grade girls constantly expressed feelings of doubt concerning their body. They would not eat at lunch and constantly remark that they were too fat and needed to go on a diet. Sixth grade boys were constantly in competition with one another to prove who was the toughest or the strongest, and in essence who was the manliest. Both boys and girls are presented with an impossible image to emulate. Girls are expected to be thin while boys are expected to be strong and muscular. Sixth grade students accept these images without ever questioning them. None of them question why this image is considered beautiful, nor do they question who told them they need to look a certain way to be considered attractive. It is our hope that through this curriculum project that we will have the students questioning why they try to conform to a certain standard of beauty, what avenues are telling them that this ideal is considered beautiful, and hopefully convince them that this standard of beauty is unrealistic. Our ultimate
hope is for the students to reconstruct their standards of beauty and consequently, have a greater appreciation for what makes them unique.

Objectives:

- Students will think critically about where they get body image perceptions
- Students will challenge existing beauty standards
- Students will draw connections between body image and mathematics using their knowledge of proportions and ratios
- Students will draw connections between body image and art work
- Students will strengthen self-esteem during vulnerable middle school years

The subject of body image is important to discuss during a time when boys and girls bodies are changing because ultimately, they are looking to the standards set by society to guide them in their perceptions of their appearance. Children in the sixth grade are just now entering puberty and they accept society’s standards of beauty without questioning them. It is our objective to have them questioning where this beauty standard comes from, and whether or not the standard is realistic. We have chosen to use both math and art as a means to challenge body image. Students will use their knowledge of proportions to mathematically prove that the measurements of the ideal body are only found in a small majority, and in fact are not realistic. Students will use their creativity through artwork to discuss what makes everyone unique, and to discover that beauty can come in many different shapes, sizes and body types. Ultimately, the overarching objective of this entire unit is to strengthen the self-esteem of sixth grade boys and girls whose bodies
are changing and are feeling unsure about themselves and their appearance in hopes to make them appreciate their own unique beauty.

**Justification:**

The objectives for our curriculum project are supported by the Connecticut State Department of Education Division of Teaching and Learning under the Health section. It states in *The Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards* that schools should promote an evaluation of health issues in order to become healthy, responsible citizens (“Health and Safety Education: Program Goals” 42). It also states that schools should teach the students to make decisions and set goals in order to implement a healthy lifestyle (“Health and Safety Education: Program Goals” 42). In addition to promoting a healthy lifestyle, the department states that students should learn the impact of media and culture on eating behaviors (“Content Standard 1: Healthy and Active Life” 44). Lastly, we used the Connecticut State Department of Education Division of Teach and Learning under the Mathematics section when applying body image to mathematics. We chose proportions in order to display the unrealistic standards of beauties and also because *The Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards* states that sixth grade students should learn to develop, apply and explain methods of using ratios and proportions in a variety of situations (“Content Standard 4: Ratios, Proportions and Percents” 92). Therefore we feel that it is important to present these students with a healthy body image using knowledge that is relevant to their age group.
Activities:

Weekly Plan:

Our curriculum project is designed over a five-day plan. The details of each day, including activities is described below.

Day One (Monday)

On the first day of the curriculum project the teacher will hand out journals to each of the students and are told that they will have to write a journal entry each night to express their feelings about body image. The teacher will introduce the topic of body image to the students through a guided discussion. The discussion will ask the students to think of words, phrases, images or actions which to them, represent or express the ideal beauty of a man and a woman. The teacher will write every thing down each of the student’s responses and post them up on the wall as a reminder for future discussions throughout the week. The teacher will guide the discussion asking such questions as “What does it mean to act like a man? What words or expectations come to mind?” For example, men are supposed to be strong and not cry. Next the teacher will ask questions concerning women. “What expectations or words do you think when picturing the ideal woman?” For example, women are supposed to be thin and delicate. This discussion hopefully will introduce the students to the stereotypes surrounding the ideal body image (Gender Stereotypes and Body Image Website).

After the class has finished brainstorming the students will be broken up into groups to discuss where these gender stereotypes originate from. The teacher will give the students prompts to help their discussion such as “What people teach us these
stereotypes? People in entertainment, sports media?” (Gender Stereotypes Website)

This discussion will lead the students into their homework assignment for the next
day. The students will have to respond to the following question in their journals:

*Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt you had to look a certain way?*

In addition to the journal entry students will be asked to bring in pictures from
magazines, movie posters, etc which represent to them ideal beauty and what they
consider to be unattractive.

**Day Two (Tuesday)**

On the second day of the curriculum project students were told to bring in
clippings from magazines or advertisements which represent to them ideal beauty and
what they consider to be unattractive. The first activity of the day is to use these
clippings to initiate a discussion concerning where our perceptions of body image
originate from. The teacher and the students will go through a number of the pictures
brought in by the students and the children will be asked to rate the pictures in a scale
of one to ten (one being unattractive and ten being beautiful) the attractiveness of the
image. The children will then have to discuss as a class whether each picture
conforms or defies beauty standards based on yesterday’s discussion (words and ideas
should be hung on wall as reminder). From the activity students will be able to draw
connections between the influence of the media and culture to our perceptions of
body image (Shaping a Healthy Body Image Website).

After the children are finished discussing they will be assigned their journal entry
for the evening. The children will respond to the following question: *How do you
think these images in the media influence people’s beauty standards?*
Day Three (Wednesday)

On the third day students will be learning about how everyone is unique and how to respect others. Tell students that they will be searching for the most positive aspects of some very unusual “people” (Everybody is Unique Website). This activity will reinforce the idea that one cannot always judge the quality of a person by his or her appearance; sometimes people can be appreciated for their differences (Unique Website).

In small groups of three to four people students will discuss and write down what it means to be “unique”. Students should be asked what the word “unique” means to them. Next, draw an outline of a person on the board with two lines horizontal across the outline (Unique Website). One line will divide the head (including the neck) from the torso (shoulders to waist) and the other line will divide the torso from the lower body (waist down) (Unique Website). Have students discuss and give suggestions (which you will write next to the outlined person) about how different parts of the body can look (Unique Website). Some examples you can start the class with could be that some people have glasses, a hat, no hair, brown hair, bushy eyebrows, etc (Unique Website). Have the students do this for each section of the body (Unique Website). Once the students have come up with lots of ideas, provide the students with three pieces of white paper. One should be two square inches, four square inches, and three square inches (Unique Website). On the first sheet of paper students should draw a head, using as much detail as possible (Unique Website). Remind them that their drawing should not be of someone they know; it should be a unique person from their imaginations (Everybody is Unique Website). Have students refer to the list on the board for ideas if needed (Unique Website).
When done with the head, students will do the same for the torso and lower body (the four inch square for the torso and the three inch square for the lower body) (Unique Website). As students finish their final square have them put the heads in one box, the torso’s in another and the lower body drawings in a third (Unique Website).

Provide each student with a head, a torso and a set of legs (Unique Website). Students should not receive a body part they drew. Have them tape together the three body parts to create a totally unique “friend” (Unique Website). Tell the students, “Everyone is different or unique. What a person looks like on the outside has nothing to do with what is on the inside. Every person has special talents and qualities” (Unique Website). Have students come up with a name for their new “friend”. In their groups they should discuss the special qualities and characteristics that their new friend might have (Unique Website). Ask students what kind of qualities their unique friend has? What do you have in common with your new friend? How are you different?

Students should then tape their new friend into their journals. For their journal entries ask them to write about, “Why is this person one of your new friends?” Then have students write about what makes them unique (Unique Website).

Day Four (Thursday)

On the fourth day students will be learning about body image through the use of math, specifically ratios and proportions. Have students break up into small groups, three to four people of the same sex. Give each group (corresponding to their sex) either a Barbie doll or a GI Joe doll. Ask the students if they have ever seen a map of the United States? Is the map the actual size of the United States (Create A Scale Website)? Explain that it is a scale drawing of the country. Ask the students for other examples of
where we can find scales and what they measure (Create A Scale Website). Explain that scales can show shapes and compare locations of things very different in size (Create A Scale Website). Use the map example; if the scale on the map says one inch equals fifty miles then we can measure the distance from one state to another (Create A Scale Website). Explain that scales are ratios used to determine the size of a model of a real object (Create A Scale Website). Have students as a class explain what ratios are (they will have prior knowledge of ratios but this can be a helpful review) (Create A Scale Website). Tell students that we can think of the Barbie and GI Joe dolls in the same way as the map. They are like models of real human bodies. Tell students that as a group they will be coming up with a way to compare their own bodies with that of the Barbie/GI Joe dolls. Since the students have been doing work with ratios and proportions have them discuss as a group different ways they could compare their body to that of Barbie/GI Joe. Tell the students that they should compare the bust (upper torso), waist and height of the dolls to their own bust, waist and height. Tell the students they should use one person from their group to keep their measurements accurate. Also all measurements should be done in inches so other groups can compare answers. Make sure students know there is no “right” way to do the problem. Have the groups keep track of their strategy and how they came up with their results. For example some students might measure Barbie’s bust and then their own bust to come up with a ratio to use as a comparison for the other areas. Have students present as a group their strategy for solving the problem and their answers. When the students are done ask, “Do you think Barbie and GI Joe are good models for human bodies? Are Barbie’s and GI Joe’s bodies the kind that most people have?” Tell the students specific measurements for Barbie/GI
Joe. For example tell them that the average woman is 5’4”, has a 37 inch bust and a 29 inch waist (Body Image Website). If Barbie were a real person she would be 7’2”, have a 40 inch bust and a 22 inch waist (Body Image Website). Ask what students think about these facts. Encourage students to draw these differences between Barbie/GI Joe and normal bodies in their journal. Have students discuss as a class how Barbie and GI Joe effect the way they think about beauty. For their journal entries have students write about, “How Barbie/GI Joe is different from their new friend.” Have them draw a picture of what they think Barbie/GI Joe should look like so that it is a better model or more “to scale” for humans.

Day Five (Friday)

On the fifth day students will be putting together all their lessons about body image. Have students discuss as a class their new ideas about beauty. Ask them how they thought about beauty at the beginning of the week and how they think about beauty now. How have their ideals changed? Write down some of their ideas on the board. After you have discussed as a class have them work independently in their journals. This will be the final journal entry, to be completed during class. For their journal entry have them write about, “What they have learned this week that surprised them?” Have them write ideas for how they can change the way society thinks about ideal beauty. Tell students they can draw any pictures that might describe their new thoughts and feelings about ideal beauty.

Evaluation:

In order to see the progress the students have made in thinking critically about body image and challenging existing beauty standards we will be using the journals to
evaluate their work. The journals will allow us to see if the students are making connections between body image, art and math. By keeping a journal throughout the week we can see the students thoughts during discussions in class as well as how they are thinking about these new ideas in their discussion questions each night. The pictures will not only gauge how well the students are connecting body image and art but also show their feelings. Hopefully the thoughts and images will show an improvement in the self-esteem of the students, especially the girls who may be struggling with the “girls are bad at math” stereotype. In essence the journals will show the students “evolution” regarding beauty standards and allow us to see the level they have challenged and analyzed beauty ideals. Through the course of the week we hope to promote healthy ways of thinking about body image and we hope to see that message conveyed through their journals.
References

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Everybody Is Unique:  
A Lesson in Respect for Others

Subjects

- Arts & Humanities
  --Language Arts
  --Visual Arts
- Social Studies
  --Psychology

Grade: 6-8

Brief Description

Teach about respect for others’ unique qualities in this lesson that combines art and language arts.

Objectives

Students will

- talk about the meaning of the word unique.
- draw a truly unique person, one part at a time.
- create a totally unique person, with a head drawn by one student, a torso drawn by another student, and lower body drawn by another.
- define the most positive qualities of this person.
- write about why this person is one of your new best friends.

Keywords

unique, friend, writing, friendship, self-esteem, appreciation, differences

Materials Needed

- 2-inch square of white drawing paper, one sheet per student
- 3-inch square of white drawing paper, one sheet per student
- 4-inch square of white drawing paper, one sheet per student
- art supplies (might include crayons, markers, or paints)
- writing paper and pen/pencil

Lesson Plan

In this lesson, students search for the most positive aspects of some very unusual "people." The activity reinforces the idea that one can’t always judge the quality of a person by his or her appearance; sometimes people can be appreciated for their differences.

To begin the lesson, write the word unique on the chalkboard or on a chart. Younger students, especially, will be intrigued by this "unique" word! Ask students what the word means to them. Ask: What is it that makes you unique among your classmates?
Next, draw a simple outline of a person on the board or chart. Draw two horizontal lines across the person’s body. One line should divide the person’s head (including the neck) and torso (shoulders to waist); the other should divide the torso and leg area (from the waist-down). Talk about one section of the body at a time.

- Discuss some of the features that might make up a person’s head/neck. Lead students to understand that people can have blue eyes or brown eyes, small ears or big ears, curly hair or straight hair, dark skin, light skin, or a shade in between, freckles, glasses, or a hat, and so on. Write students’ ideas about a person’s head on the board or chart next to the head area of the person you drew.
- Discuss some of the ways in which people’s bodies might be different. Lead students to understand that people can be skinny or heavy, muscular or frail, square- or round-shouldered, and so on. Talk about the kinds of clothing people might wear -- a T-shirt, a sweater, a feathered boa. Write down some of the possibilities students name.
- Finally, focus on the lower body (from the waist down). Point out that people can have skinny or stubby legs and their feet point in, out, or straight ahead. People wear pants, dresses, high-top sneakers, high-heeled shoes, construction boots, ballerina slippers, and so on. Write down students’ ideas.

When you are satisfied that students have the three parts of the body sorted out, provide each student with a piece of white drawing paper measuring 2 inches square. Have students write their names on one side of the paper and draw on the other side of the paper the head of a person. Tell students that this should not be somebody they know; this unique person should come from their imaginations. Remind them to think first about the features the person’s head will have; they can refer to the list they and their classmates created in the first part of the lesson. They should include as much detail as possible in their drawings.

It is very important that students fill up the entire square with the image of the person’s head. Also, remind them their head could use a neck to sit on!

When students finish drawing a unique head, provide them with a sheet of paper that measures 4 inches square. After students write their names on one side of the paper, they should turn the paper over and draw the torso (shoulders to waist) of the person. Before they draw, remind students to imagine the features of the person’s torso. How is the body shaped? What clothing is the person wearing? Once again, students should fill the entire space and draw as much detail as possible. Think unique!

When students finish drawing a torso, hand them a third sheet of paper; this time a 3-inch square. Have students write their names on one side of the paper, and draw the bottom part of their person (waist down to the feet). Remind students to fill up the space and include as much detail as possible. Once again, tell them to think unique!

As students finish their final square, have them check to be sure their names are on all three parts; then collect them. You might have students put the heads in one box or folder, the torsos in another, and the legs in a third.

Putting It Together
This part of the lesson might be done the same day or the next day. Distribute to each student a head, a torso, and a set of legs. Students should not get a body part that they drew. Have students tape together the three body parts to create a totally unique “friend.” The new friends will be pretty unusual-looking people, to say the least! But...

Here is the crux of the lesson...

Everybody is different, or unique. What a person looks like on the outside has nothing to do with what is inside! Every person has special talents, special qualities...
After students have had a good laugh about how the three body parts came together to create an unusual-looking person, ask each student to think up a name for his or her new “friend” and to give some thought to some of the characteristics the new friend might have. Ask: What special qualities does this unique person have? What special talents does the person possess? What do you have in common with your new friend? How are you different?

After students have decided what qualities their new friends have, tell them you would like them to write about their new friends. You might ask each student to begin a story with the words: *I would like you to meet my new friend, [name goes here]...* Then give students the freedom to choose what they will write as they go on to describe exactly what it is they like so much about their new buddies.

When students have finished their stories, invite them to share them with their classmates. You might use this read-aloud session as an opportunity to reinforce the lesson you hope they will take from this activity: *What a person looks like on the outside has nothing to do with what that person is like on the inside!*

The essays and illustrations might make a fun bulletin board display too!

**Assessment**

Introduce a writing rubric to be used with this lesson.

**Out of Order: When Food Becomes More Than Something to Eat**

Whether we’re aware of it or not, we are influenced by messages about our bodies from our friends, family, advertisements, movies, and other parts of our culture every day. These statements may reflect your thoughts about yourself.

___ I am constantly thinking about my body size, shape, and weight, and I am always working to improve it.

___ I would be much happier and my life would be better if I were thinner or more muscular.

___ I commonly skip meals to lose weight.

___ I weigh myself more than once a day.

___ I know how many calories are in almost every food I eat.

___ I exercise mainly to lose weight or to look better.
my weight. (Food groups include milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables, breads and grains, and meat, beans, and nuts).

I don't participate in sports and other activities because I'm embarrassed about my body.

I like to wear oversized clothes to hide "flaws" in my body.

I believe there are good foods and bad foods.

When I see a model in a magazine I want to look like her/him.

If you checked most of these, you may be trying too hard to "fit in" to an unrealistic body type. It is important to realize that how we feel about ourselves and our bodies should come from within ourselves, not from what our friends think or from models in magazines or on television.

Did You Know...

- The genes that we inherit from our mother and father determine 70% of our body weight and shape. This means that we can improve the body we were born with, but only to a certain degree. No matter how hard we try, most of us will never be able to look like Cindy Crawford or Brad Pitt.

- Pictures of models in magazines and advertisements are technically altered. This means that a computer changes their picture by making their legs longer, their stomach flatter, and their muscles bigger. Most of the pictures you see in magazines have been altered, and in fact it is humanly impossible to achieve these body types!

- During your pre-teen and teen years your body and your bones are growing quickly. Eating a balanced diet, including foods from all 5 food groups every day, will give your body the nutrients it needs for this growth. To develop strong bones it is especially important to eat at least 4 servings from the milk group every day, and to get some type of physical activity regularly.

- Feeling badly about your body size and shape can lead to unhealthy eating habits, such as skipping meals, low-calorie diets, and throwing up after eating. This type of behavior can lead to an "eating disorder," and eventually could result in medical problems and even death. Keep an eye out for your friends to make sure they are not showing signs of an eating disorder.

- Exercise is important for your health and growth of your bones… but too much can be a bad thing! Excessive exercise may be a sign that someone is overly worried about their body size and shape. In fact, another sign that someone may have an eating disorder is that they are always worried about how much and how hard they are exercising.

- There are no "good" foods and "bad" foods. All foods can fit into a healthy diet. Choosing lower fat choices from the food groups most of the time and exercising regularly will allow you to "splurge" on sweets and candy once in a while. But, remember to balance your food intake over time… if you eat a lot of candy and sweets one day, make an extra effort to eat less the next day!
Discussion Group Assignment

Factor influencing body image assigned to group: ____________________

Directions

Each group should have one picture depicting what a teenager "should" look like from the pictures students brought to class. Each group will be discussing one of three factors that impact body image: culture, mass media or advertising.

Discuss how this key factor influences body image.

Each person in the group selects one question off this sheet to discuss further with the group.

Decide what the primary message your picture is communicating. Have one person from your group report what your group determined.

Discussion Questions:

- Does this preteen/teen model represent the "perfect" body?
- Can a pre-teen or teen "fit-in" if they are not dressed in the popular styles?
- Is a person that looks different from the media's representation of "cool" less worthwhile as a person?
- How does our culture view attractiveness? How does this differ between men and women?
- What image do the models project?
- What does the ad want you to feel? What does the ad want you to think?
- Who do you think this ad would appeal to?
- What does this ad not show?
- What is the health message in the ad?
- Why are people willing to risk their health to get a perfect body?
- Why is the reality that people come in a variety of shapes and sizes ignored when people try to have the "ideal" body image?

Gender Stereotypes and Body Image

Level: Grades 6 and 7

Overview
To make students aware of the dangers of gender stereotyping and the media’s role in perpetuating gender stereotypes.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students will demonstrate:

- an understanding of the potentially damaging effects of living up to stereotypes, and how they can lead to abuse and violence against ourselves and others.
- an understanding of the media’s role in perpetuating these stereotypes.
- an understanding that "going along with the crowd" can involve sacrificing one’s own principles, as well as infringing on the rights of others.

**Preparation and Materials**

- for Day 1, a flip-chart and markers
- for Day 2, magazine photos of a thin woman and a muscular man for distribution or overhead projection.

**The Lesson: Day 1**

**Guided Discussion**

Write *Act Like a Man* at the top of the flip chart paper and record student responses. (Note: Begin by directing the question to the boys. The girls can then be encouraged to respond. Attempt to record students’ own choice of words. If their responses are too wordy, ask them to simplify for display purposes. If the offers are slow to come, ask them to discuss the topic in pairs, then share with the class, or make specific prompts by asking what does it mean to "Act Like a Man" in sports, business, on a date, etc.)

Ask students:

- What does it mean to act like a man? What words or expectations come to mind? (e.g., men don't cry, men are tough, men are strong)

- Draw a box around the entire list.

We're going to call this the *Act Like a Man* box. Inside the box is a list of attitudes and behaviors that boys are pressured to adopt in the process of becoming men in our society. Men and boys are not born this way; these roles are learned.

Next, write *Be Ladylike* at the top of another sheet of flip chart paper and record student responses. (As with the boys, begin by directing questions to the girls, then encourage boys to respond.) Ask your students:

What does it mean to be ladylike? What words or expectations do you think of? (e.g., girls are polite, girls are neat, girls are passive)

Draw a box around this list.
This is the **Be Ladylike** box. It's full of stereotypes, just like the Act Like a Man box. Its walls of conformity are just as restrictive. Women also learn to conform to very specific role expectations as they grow up being female in our society.

**Learning Gender Roles**

Ask students:

- Where do we learn these gender roles? (Discussion prompts: What people teach us these stereotypes? People in entertainment? Sports? Media? When the students respond "TV" or "movies, " ask for specific examples to list.)
- Where do women learn these messages? (Discussion prompts: You may put "moms" on the paper and ask for discussion. What other people influence our learning of gender roles? Where else in society do we find these messages? Ask for specific examples if the comments are too general.)
- Write these responses down the left side, outside the box. You may draw arrows to illustrate how these influences reinforce the wall of the stereotype box.

**How Stereotypes Are Reinforced**

Ask students:

- What names or put-downs are directed at boys when they don't fit the box?
- What names are women called if they step out of the stereotype box?

*Note:* Allow students to be blunt with their slang in this educational context.

- Write the names along the bottom of the appropriate box. You may draw arrows to illustrate how they reinforce the wall of the stereotype box.

Ask students:

- How do these labels and names reinforce the stereotype box?
- How does it feel when we are called these names?
- What do you think the person who is using these put-downs is feeling?

(These names are used in order to hurt people emotionally, and we react by retreating to the "safety" of the stereotype box.)

**Evaluating the Gender Stereotypes**

Ask students:

- How many boys in the class have never cried, hands up? (Note: Choose "don't cry" from their list. If it was not offered during the brainstorming, select another reference.)
- Does this mean that those of you who didn't put up your hands are wimps, nerds, etc.?
- What about the girls; how many want to be passive, etc.?
We're all real people and we can experience the full range of emotions, including happiness and sadness, love and anger. The bottom line is that stereotypes are destructive because they limit our potential! Yet how many guys do we know who try hard to act like the stereotype, without even a second thought? What damage do we do to ourselves and others? Boys are not born to be violent, or to have unhealthy attitudes towards girls. We learn these attitudes and behaviors through the stereotypes of what society thinks it means to "Act Like a Man," and we can free ourselves from the restrictions of these boxes once we see them as unrealistic ideals. Then we can start the process of change.

This is not to say that it's wrong for guys to like sports or fix cars or for girls to enjoy cooking (cite other examples from student generated list). (Note: It is important to make this point in order to be sensitive to boys or girls who may feel defensive.) The problem is that we are told that we must perform these roles in order to fit in. It is important for all of us to make our own decisions about what we do.

A stereotype rigidly confirms the belief that if you are a girl or a boy, or a woman or a man, you must perform these specific roles, and do them well. This belief takes away our personal choices in determining our own interests and skills. It also discourages men from participating in "women's work" (such as flower arranging and child care) and it restricts women from choosing roles that are traditionally "male" (such as engineering and science).

Ask students:

- What are some situations where you may be pressured to "Act Like A Man" or "Be a Lady?" (e.g., for boys, friends may tell you to try a cigarette or participate in a risky activity, to prove that you're 'tough', or for girls, you might be prevented from playing a certain sport or you might let someone bully you into doing something that you don't want to do, because it isn't "ladylike" to argue or be assertive.)
- How might these stereotypes lead to violence? (e.g., boys might be expected to 'fight it out,' rather than 'talk it out,' and girls might be expected to put up with bullying, rather than be assertive.)

Activity

Journal Entry

Have you ever experienced a situation where you were expected to act a certain way because you were a girl or a boy, even though it may not have been the way you felt like acting?

Day 2: Gender Stereotyping and Body Image

Background for Teachers

The concepts of acting like a man or being ladylike do not only relate to attitude. There are also physical expectations which are connected with these stereotypes, many of which are unrealistic. When we unconsciously try to live up to the standards of these stereotypes, we can do physical and emotional harm to ourselves. Often, we
don't notice this because we tend to mold ourselves to fit these stereotypes as a matter of course. This can be damaging. A boy with a very slight build who wants to be musclebound is fighting against himself if he tries to change his physique to match that of the stereotypical male. A girl who has an angular nose can fall into the same trap if she listens to her friends and/or relatives who are trying to convince her she needs a nose job.

It takes conviction and self assurance to accept oneself despite of the judgements of others. The first step is seeing that aspirations towards stereotypical ideals stem from a weak sense of self. Being accepted by others, as desirable as it may be, is not as important as self acceptance. The activities in this lesson are designed to help students see the harmful effects of accepting gender stereotypes.

Guided Discussion

Yesterday we discussed stereotyping and how it can make you act a certain way, even if you don't really want to. We also looked at how these stereotypes might lead to violence, because boys and girls feel that they have to live up to certain expectations. Today we are going to talk about how these stereotypes can lead to another kind of violence.

Have you ever noticed similarities in the images of males and females in magazines, in movies and on TV? Like the attitudes of being a man or acting like a lady, these images also affect how we see ourselves. Male and female stereotypes portray the perfect face, the perfect body, the ideal build – images that are totally cool. We tend to want to be like them. We want to look like the woman on the cover of Seventeen or high-fashion models or the men that we see in commercials, in the movies, and on TV. If we are not careful, we can begin to lose self-esteem, because we want to be like someone else — our media heroes. What does this have to do with violence? It means not liking who we are. This is a subtle form of violence towards ourself. The next step is that we begin to expect and want others to fit these stereotypes too — we begin to like the stereotypes more than the real people, and so we try to fit our friends into these boxes. This causes lots of problems in relationships.

Note: Students may need help with this point because there is a big difference between thinking somebody else looks good, and wanting to be like them. It's important for us to fundamentally like the way we are.

Show photos of "fashionably" thin women from any women's magazine on an overhead projector or on a handout.

How does the average woman compare to a mannequin and a Barbie doll?

The average woman is 5'4", a size 12. She has a 37" bust, a 29" waist and 40" hips.

A mannequin is 6', a size 6. She has a 34" bust, a 23" waist and 34" hips.

Mannequin image
A **Barbie** doll is 7'2". She has a 40" bust, a 22" waist and 36" hips. To see Barbie go to [Barbie.com](http://Barbie.com). Barbie is a product of Mattel Inc.