

Trinity College
300 Summit Street
Hartford, CT 06106

December 11, 2006

Ann Horton
Executive Director
Trinity College Community Child Center
300 Summit Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Ms. Horton,

We are psychology students here at Trinity College who, over the past semester have been working on a public policy project for our Child Development class. Our project was to examine sex-role stereotyping and form a solution that could be applied to some aspect of the Hartford Community. Sex role stereotyping can be defined as generalized expectations about the traits and behaviors of the members of each sex (Koblinsky, Cruse & Sugawara 1978).

Throughout the semester we have examined children and have spoken with community members who work with Hartford children of many ages. To begin our research, we focused on middle school students, where it is clearly shown what the children think in terms of these stereotypes that generalize expectations depending on sex. However, we found that the most crucial time in predicting sex-role stereotyping is earlier in the educational process. We therefore decided to target the Trinity Child Care Center for our project. Children have been found to exhibit sex role stereotypes by the age of 4 and to develop more complex ideas of sex appropriate behavior as they mature (Koblinsky et al., 1978).

Sex-role stereotyping can have detrimental effects on children as they mature. Studies have shown that sex role stereotypes can influence perceptions in performance and in life (Gavin & Reis 2003). Math has been a very well studied topic and several studies have shown that a Teacher's sex role stereotypes can influence children and their class performance (Streitmatter, 1997; Tiedemann, 2002). These types of affects have also been linked to college achievement and future career choices (Gavin & Reis, 2003). Catching this at such an early age, between 3-5, is important because it is the best way to make the issue less of a problem.

We have attended and observed the Child Care Center and noticed that the teachers do a very good job of addressing these issues, by watching their language, (e.g., using firefighter and not fireman) having very diverse books and use words that are not stereotyping as well as correcting children who do stereotype. Research has shown that teachers have a substantial impact on the development of sex role stereotypes in children; often times it is due to teacher feedback, classroom roles assigned by teachers and

organization of the classroom (Bossert, 1981). We therefore applaud you and your staff and thank you very much for your efforts. We do believe that one thing you could change would be implementing a lesson plan that directly addresses the concepts behind sex role stereotyping.

We have attached a lesson plan that we believe would educate the children about sex-role stereotyping and how to be conscious about using it in everyday language. In order to make our lesson plan compatible with your curriculum, we took a lesson plan that you have previously used and modified it. We have provided a supplementary book list in addition to those books listed in the lesson plan that are supposed to be gender neutral. We have also included several useful tips about ways to continue educating the children about sex role stereotypes. This will allow you to incorporate these books and tips in future lesson plans.

If you have any questions please feel free to email us. We hope you consider incorporating this into your curriculum and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Emily Moore
Trinity College
300 Summit Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Box Number 701472

Emily.Moore@trincoll.edu

Larwence King
Trinity College
300 Summit Street
Hartford, Ct 06106
Box Number 701552

Larwence.King@trincoll.edu

Activity Plan

Monday

Date:

Group Time

(Same all week, use a different song each day)

CT Performance Standard: Sing expressively, with appropriate dynamic, phrasing, and interpretation. (Arts-Music, Content Standard 1, b)

Content Area: The content area is singing and dancing. (Use CD)

Name of Activity: “Sing Through the Day: Eighty Songs for Children”

Source: “Sing Through the Day: Eighty Songs for Children” by Marlys Swinger (Editor), Nancy McKernan (Illustrator), Brenna McKernan (Illustrator)

Materials: This activity requires the CD, a CD player and an open space.

Planning Questions:

What do I expect the children to do in this activity? As a group, everyone will sing the songs and dance freely. This allows the children a “warm-up” time.

What will children learn? The children will learn the meaning of the songs by before singing, explaining what the song means. Teachers should break it down line by line in order for the children to understand.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: These songs do not sex role stereotype, therefore, teachers should comment on how both the girls and the boys in the classroom can dance to the songs, sing the songs and relate to the songs.

Story Time

CT Performance Standard: Use what they know to identify or infer important characters, setting, themes, events, idea, relationships or details within a work. Generate a variety of responses based upon the experience they have had. (English/Language Arts, Content Standard 1, b and m)

Source: “Stone Soup” by Marcia Brown (Illustrator)

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: This book shows boys and girls working together to make the community a better place. This book relates to sex role stereotyping because the children and towns people are all equally represented.

Discussion Ideas: Working together to accomplish something greater than working alone.

- Why did the village think the stone was magical?
- Can the village people make the soup without the traveler helping?
- Does working together end with a good result?
- Make sure to relate this to sex role stereotyping, how the children and towns people are both girls and boys.

Small Group Activity Time

Content Area: Jobs

Name of Activity: Girls and Boys like to Work

Materials: This activity requires cards with pictures of boys and girls doing the same jobs, doctor, policeperson, firefighter and lawyer, etc.

Planning Questions:

What do I expect the children to do in this activity? Children are expected to start off saying the gender that is stereotyped as correct and by the last few cards say that both boys and girls can do that job.

What will children learn? Children will learn that jobs are not limited by gender.

Steps to Present the Activity: Phrase the question: "Who does this job, boys, girls or both?" At first let the child say whatever they think; if they answer either just boy or just girl ask them why it cannot be both boys and girls. If by the end of the cards the child is still stereotyping, go through the cards again.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: Many people are limited by thinking that occupations are gender specific. This activity is to give visuals showing that both genders can participate in all jobs.

Dramatic Play

Content Area: Working together in the kitchen.

Name of Activity: Boy and Girls can Cook

Materials: The play kitchen set including a bowl, plastic vegetables, a ladle and a stone.

Planning Questions:

What do I expect the children to do in this activity? The children will be grouped into groups of 4 with 2 girls and 2 boys. Children are expected to work together and mimic the "Stone Soup" book.

What will children learn? The goal is for children to learn that both girls and boys cook.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: A long standing stereotype is that women prepare the food, this activity is supposed to go against that stereotype.

Steps to Present the Activity: Ask the children who cooks in their house. Some children will respond with mom and some will say dad. Stress the fact that both parents came up as the answer and even both parents can work together to make meals. Broaden the topic to household chores, moms, dads, boys and girls are all responsible to clean.

(This would be a great day for the teacher to put together a soup for the children to eat at lunch. This aids in the learning the concepts behind the book and gives more reference to remember the book. Tell the children they are eating the "Stone Soup")

Tuesday

Date:

Story Time

CT Performance Standard: Use what they know to identify or infer important characters, setting, themes, events, idea, relationships or details within a work. Generate a variety of responses based upon the experience they have had. (English/Language Arts, Content Standard 1, b and m)

Source: “My Mother the Mail Carrier” by Inez Maury, Lady McCrady (Illustrator)

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: The stereotype is that there are “Mailmen.” This book and the discussion following is made to decrease that stereotype and illustrate to children that both genders can work any job.

Discussion Ideas: The goal behind this book is to show children how women can be as strong as men.

- Can you <insert girl name> carry a book? Can you <insert boy name> carry a book?
- Talk about how many dogs can be scary, but both girls and boys get afraid of things.

Wednesday

Date:

Story Time

CT Performance Standard: Use what they know to identify or infer important characters, setting, themes, events, idea, relationships or details within a work. Generate a variety of responses based upon the experience they have had. (English/Language Arts, Content Standard 1, b and m)

Source: “Firefighters” by Chris L. Demarest (Illustrator)

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: The stereotype is that only boys can be “firemen.” This book has pictures of both girl and boy firefighters as well as showing them both as rescuers.

Discussion Ideas:

- Talk about the game played on Monday.
- Talk about how both men and women can be firefighters.
- Bring up the Doctor and Nurse from the prior day, talk about how it goes against what the children think would be the correct gender for doctor and a nurse.
- Prepare the class for tomorrow’s police visitor(s).

Small Group Activity Time

Name of Activity: Fireman's hat

Source: Fireman's hat Submitted by: Kristi Levensgood

<http://www.preschooleducation.com/ahelper.shtml>

Materials: red construction paper, yellow construction paper cut in the shape of a badge, glue, scotch tape

Directions: Cut the red paper in half the long way, measure the child's head. Then tape enough pieces of red paper together to make a head band around the child's head. After the headband fits right have the child glue the badge with their name on it to the headband.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: This is a continuation of breaking down the same stereotype of only boy firefighters. Both the girls and boys in the classroom make the hats and wear them.

(Make the firefighter hat and have the children wear them to the firehouse. Make the children believe that they too can someday be brave and become firefighters.)

Dramatic Play

Content Area: Caring and nurturing children

Name of Activity: Moms and dad love babies

Materials: This requires a baby doll, blanket and bottle.

Planning Questions:

What do I expect the children to do in this activity? Children will be grouped into a pair with one girl and one boy. They will play with the baby doll, both feed the baby using a bottle and both cradle the baby.

What will children learn? The “parents” will learn that dads and moms are both responsible for their children.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: It is a common stereotype that moms are the only caregivers for children. This activity is meant to break that stereotype and show children that if they want, they can too be a caregiver for their children or siblings not based on gender.

Steps to Present the Activity: Begin by showing the children the right way to care for a child. Then have both the boy and the girl show that they can do it on their own. After they prove they know how to do it, let them on their own to care for the child.

Thursday

Date:

Story Time

CT Performance Standard: Use what they know to identify or infer important characters, setting, themes, events, idea, relationships or details within a work. Generate a variety of responses based upon the experience they have had. (English/Language Arts, Content Standard 1, b and m)

Source: “Wild Dads!” by Ginjer L. Clarke, Betina Ogden (Illustrator)

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: This book is supposed to relate to the previous day’s dramatic play activity of playing the with baby doll, once again breaking down the stereotype dealing with mothers being the only caregivers.

Discussion Ideas: Start by talking about the animals in the book.

- Ask questions about what the children’s dads do to take care of them.
- Relate personal stories to stories from the book.
- Explain that mothers are known as the nurturing type but dads are just the same.

Small Group Activity Time

Content Area: Boys and Girls can all be smart, strong, friendly and show leadership.

Name of Activity: Smart, strong, friendly and leadership.

Materials: This requires 8 pictures found either online or drawn by the teacher.

Planning Questions:

What do I expect the children to do in this activity? Start with a picture of a strong looking girl and a strong looking boy. Then, ask the child what they think of each picture. (Continue for smart, friendly and leadership pictures)

What will children learn? The pictures are all correct; strong kids can be boys and girls, as well as the smart kids, friendly kids and kids with leadership qualities.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: There is a subtle stereotype that girls are more studious than boys and boys are stronger than girls. This activity is meant to inspire children to be open-minded about their abilities.

Steps to Present the Activity: Before starting, ask the children if they think boys or girls are strong, and then ask why. After the activity talk to the students and inform them that everyone has all the qualities to be whatever they want. If girls want to be strong, they can be strong, if boys want to be friendly, they can be friendly.

Friday

Date:

Story Time

CT Performance Standard: Use what they know to identify or infer important characters, setting, themes, events, idea, relationships or details within a work. Generate a variety of responses based upon the experience they have had. (English/Language Arts, Content Standard 1, b and m)

Source: “Raggedy Ann” by Johnny Gruelle

“Raggedy Andy” by Johnny Gruelle

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: These are old stories that inspire children. The activities that Ann and Andy engage in are not stereotyped. This will give a conclusion to the week.

Discussion Ideas:

- Talk about all of the activities that both Ann and Andy do.
- Show how they are both strong, smart and so on.
- Ask how Ann and Andy are different.
- Work off of the children’s ideas.
- Try to get them talking a lot about it by now, it is the end of the week and they should understand some of the concepts presented during the week.
- Bring up some of the ideas talked about in the opening discussion on Monday morning.

Small Group Activity Time

Content Area: Colors and Clothing in Discussion

Name of Activity: Discussion about clothing and colors

Planning Questions:

What do I expect the children to do if they participate in this activity? Children are expected to voice their favorite color and learn a little history about clothing.

What will children learn? Children will learn that boys and girls can like the same colors. Talk about clothing and how girls used to not be allowed to wear pants, they always had to wear dresses.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: There are common stereotypes of relating girls to pink and purple and boys to blue and green (along with other colors). This is the time to find out what stereotyped colors the children think and reinform children that both genders can like all colors. The stereotype is also that girls have longer hair and boys have shorter hair as well as girls wear dresses and boys wear pants. These stereotypes should also be broken.

Special Activities

Source: Raggedy Ann and Andy Coloring pages

<http://www.coloring.ws/raggedy1.htm>

Dramatic Play

Content Area: Dress-up using colors and clothing

Name of Activity: Dress-up

Materials: This requires enough T-shirts of different colors to cover all of the children.

Planning Questions:

What do I expect the children to do in this activity? Children will be expected to put on clothes provided for them (that fit over their clothing) and wear a shirt that is a different color than they would normally wear.

What will children learn? Children are expected to become tolerant of colors. Boys and girls can both like blue, pink, green, purple and red.

How this relates to sex role stereotyping: This is the time for children to be reinforced about color and clothing stereotypes. People have the choice of what to wear and what to like.

Steps to Present the Activity: Refer back to the discussion that day.

There have been observed decreases in stereotyped attitudes among children when they are exposed to a non-sexist curriculum. Some examples start with studies showing that girls seem to be more responsive to a nonsexist curriculum than boys. They also seem to expand their perception of available occupational roles when exposed to materials that depict women in a variety of traditionally masculine jobs. Boys do not seem to respond or make as many changes and older boys seem to harden their sex-stereotyped positions when they are exposed to a nonsexist curriculum (Bossert, 1981).

However, one of the biggest problems with using the curriculum to change sex role stereotypes is not just the curriculum itself, but the way the teacher's use it. Many teachers who use nonsexist materials tend to engender sex role differences by treating girls and boys differently while they are teaching (Garrahy, 2001). Based on this we have developed a few tips on using the sex role stereotyping lesson plan and ways to avoid reinforcing sex role stereotypes in the classroom.

Tips for Nonsexist Teaching

- 1) **Children should all receive equal feedback.** Teacher should think about whether they are giving equal feedback to all of their children. Boys and girls should both receive similar types of feedback in frequency, type and quality. Studies have shown that girls receive more task relevant feedback than boys (Bossert, 1981). Studies have also shown that girls receive more negative feedback on the overall quality of their work and receive more positive feedback on the form of their work. Boys receive more negative feedback for behavior in the classroom but they receive more overall praise within the classroom. Further study on this topic found that this type of differential feedback increased the probability that boys would attribute their failures to lack of effort and girls would attribute their failures to lack of ability (Dweck et al., 1978).
- 2) **Children should all receive the same type of opportunity structure.** Teachers must be very careful to make sure that both boys and girls have similar opportunities and are chosen to do the same type of tasks. Studies have shown sex role stereotypes can easily be passed on through the classroom's role opportunity structure. For example boys may be the only ones called on to do manual tasks, whereas girls are more likely to engage in secretary type tasks (Bossert, 1981).
- 3) **Trying to use a "Gender Blind" teaching style is not effective.** Boys and girls do have differences, but they should be treated equally while recognizing that they are different. Studies have shown that teachers that use gender blindness believe that they are being fair by attempting to see generic students, but this actually gives them a false sense of objectivity and impartiality. The generic child does not exist and in these cases the dominant culture prevailed and strong gender biases were reflected in both teaching strategies and expectations (Garrahy, 2001).
- 4) **Discuss the roles of boys and girls even when the differences are clear in books.** Studies have shown that gender stereotyping in children's books have detrimental effects on children's perceptions of gender roles (Kolbe & La Voie, 1981). Research has also shown that gender stereotypes have slightly decreased in children's picture books. (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). However discussion is needed even for books that do not have sex role stereotyping, if teachers really

want children to remember it. Studies examining children's memory for sex role content in children's books found that children remember the stereotypic and reverse-stereotypic content in different ways. Children remember more of the feminine sex typed characteristics of the female characters and of the masculine sex typed characteristics of the male characters (Koblinsky, Cruse & Sugawara 1978). Children also tend to change the sex of a character in a story when the character is involved in reverse-stereotypic behavior, so that their behavior is consistent with their sex when they are asked to remember a story (Martin & Halverson, Jr., 1983). Based on this, discussing the roles and what happened in the story is crucial in preventing children from forming sex role stereotypes.

Criteria for Choosing Nonsexist Books

- 1) **Look for Stereotypes:** A sex role stereotype can be defined as generalized expectations about traits and behaviors of the members of each sex. Some examples of overt stereotypes are the completely domesticated mother, or the doll-loving little girl. You may not always find stereotypes in these blatant forms, but look for variations which in any way demean or ridicule characters because of their sex.
- 2) **Who's doing what?** Do the illustrations put people in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles based on their sex? Are males the active "doers" and females the inactive observers?
- 3) **Check the story line:** Are the achievements of girls and women based on their own initiative and intelligence, or are they due to their good looks or to their relationship with boys? Are sex roles incidental or critical to characterization and plot? Could the same story be told if the sex roles were reversed?
- 4) **Note the heroes and the villains:** Are there heroes of both sexes in the books? Who are the villains? When female heroes appear are they admired for the same qualities that have made male heroes famous? Are the villains mischievous in the same ways or are their roles dependent on their sex?
- 5) **Consider the Effect on a Child's Self-Image:** Are norms established which limit any child's aspirations and self concept? What happens to a girl's self image when she reads that boys perform all of the brave and important deeds? In a particular story, are there one or more persons with whom a male or female child can readily identify to a positive and constructive end?
- 6) **Watch for loaded words:** In this context, a word can be considered loaded when it has insulting overtones. Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude or ridicule women. Look for the use of the male pronoun (guys) to refer to both males and females. The following examples show how sexist language can be avoided: Ancestors instead of forefathers; firefighters instead of firemen; mail carrier instead of mailman; police officer instead of policeman.

Resource Packet

Websites:

(1) The Gender Equality Bookstore

<http://www.genderequalbooks.com/>

This website provides a great booklist with information on a variety of different types of books that help children break through gender stereotypes. The site also provides background information on the different books and on the effects of sex role stereotypes on children.

(2) 10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books

<http://www.birchlane.davis.ca.us/library/10quick.htm>

This website provides information on ways to analyze books for racist and sexist material. It provides a variety of different categories to look at in the different aspects of the books. It also provides a series of different questions to ask yourself as you read the texts, which can also be helpful in weeding out sexist and racist children's books.

Articles:

(1) Bossert, S. T. (1981). Understanding sex differences in children's classroom experiences. *The Elementary School Journal*, 81(No5), 255-266.

This article discusses many of the different problems related to sex-role stereotypes and gives a variety of ways that teachers can work to overcome these problems. The article focuses a lot on the different ways teachers can use a nonsexist curriculum to teach children.

(2) Reha, R. K., & Nappi, A. T. (1975). Are your sex stereotypes showing? *The Elementary School Journal*, 76(No1), 70-74.

This article focuses on the way that Sex-role stereotypes can appear in the academic setting and give several insightful ways for teachers to go about not reinforcing the sex role stereotypes within the classroom. The article also has a strong focus on the reasons why teachers need to make dealing with sex role stereotypes a priority within the classroom.