



GENDER DOESN'T LIMIT YOU!

A Research-Based Anti-Bullying Program for the Early Grades

Written by
*Lindsay Lamb (University of Texas at Austin),
Rebecca Bigler (University of Texas at Austin),
Lynn Liben (The Pennsylvania State University)
Vanessa Green (The University of Tasmania)*

*Published in partnership with the Gender and Racial Attitudes Lab
of the University of Texas at Austin*

TEACHING
TOLERANCE 

Introduction

In 2006, educators at St. Francis School in Austin, Tex., teamed up with researchers from the Gender and Racial Attitudes Lab at the University of Texas at Austin to examine ways to counteract gender bullying among young children.

The project team tested a traditional multicultural technique — using literature to challenge gender stereotypes — against a more experimental one — teaching students catchphrases to interrupt gender bullying. The latter approach produced far greater effects on students' gender attitudes and significantly increased their willingness to take a stand against gender bullying.

This curriculum presents six lesson plans that served as the basis of the St. Francis study. Each addresses a particular form of gender bullying:



PEER EXCLUSION

Exclusion from peer interaction (e.g., “Girls can’t play.”)

ROLE EXCLUSION

Exclusion from particular roles (e.g., “Girls have to be the nurses.”)

TEASING ABOUT GENDERED ACTIVITIES

Teasing about *cross* sex-typed activities, traits, or possessions (e.g., “You have a girls’ lunch box,” directed at a boy.)

BIASED JUDGMENTS

Biased judgments (e.g. “Boys are better at math than girls.”)

GENDERED BELIEFS

Sex-typed beliefs (e.g. “Only boys can fix cars.”)

HIGHLIGHTING GENDER

Highlighting of gender (e.g., “Boys sit over here and girls sit over there.”)

The lessons are sequenced to introduce the problem, teach students a catchphrase and then practice using the response.

LESSON 1

Peer Exclusion

Note: Substitute your school's name for "St. Francis" when reading this script. You can also substitute your students' names for the provided names.

PROBLEM

Sometimes a group of children won't let another kid play with them just because of their gender. Gender is whether you are a boy or a girl. Sometimes boys will say that a girl can't play with them. Sometimes girls will say that boys can't play with them.

RATIONALE

This isn't nice. It is wrong to exclude someone just because they are a boy or a girl, or because of their gender. Not letting someone play with you just because of their gender is called bullying, and bullying is not allowed at St. Francis.

QUESTIONS

What should you do if someone says you can't play in their game just because you are a boy or a girl?

You should answer: *"You can't say, 'Boys [girls] can't play.'"*

CASE PRACTICE

I. Okay, so let's practice what we should say if someone won't let us play with them because we are a boy or a girl! Mark and Steve are playing on the jungle gym, and Sylvia wants to join them, but they tell her that she can't. They say "Girls can't play this game." What do we tell Mark and Steve? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"You can't say, 'Girls can't play.'"*

II. Good job! Let's try another one. Lisa, Laura and Mary are playing on the jungle gym and Andrew wants to join them. They tell him, "Only girls can play this game." What should we tell Lisa, Laura and Mary? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"You can't say, 'Boys can't play.'"*

III. Good job! Let's try another one. Sarah and Kaisha are playing in the sandbox, and Adam wants to join them, but they tell him that he can't because he is a boy. What do we say? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"You can't say, 'Boys can't play.'"*

IV. Good job! Let's try another one. Esteban and Manuel are playing with blocks during playtime in class. Tina really likes playing with blocks and decides to join Esteban and Manuel, but they tell her, "Girls can't play with us today!" What do we tell Esteban and Manuel? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"You can't say, 'Girls can't play.'"*

LESSON 2

Role Exclusion

Note: Substitute your school's name for "St. Francis" when reading this script. You can also substitute your students' names for the provided names.

PROBLEM

Sometimes a group of children won't let other kids do something because of their gender. Remember that gender is whether you are a boy or a girl. Sometimes a kid might say that if everyone is playing a pretend game, that a girl has to cook the dinner, or a boy has to be the doctor.

RATIONALE

Saying something like this isn't a nice thing to do. Boys and girls can have any job they want to, or do any activities that they want. It does not matter what their gender is. Girls were not allowed to do a lot of things in the past, but it is now illegal to stop girls from doing things that boys do. This is a type of bullying, and bullying is not allowed at St. Francis.

QUESTIONS

What should you do if someone says you can't do something just because you are a boy or a girl?

You should answer: *"Not true! Gender doesn't limit you!"*



CASE PRACTICE

I. Okay, so let's practice what we should say if someone says we can't do something just because we are a boy or a girl! Chrissy and Mike are playing at Mike's house. They decide to pretend like they work in a hospital. Chrissy says that she wants to be a doctor, but Mike tells her, "You can't be the doctor. You have to be the nurse." So, what do we say if we are a girl and a boy says that we can't be the doctor, we have to be the nurse? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"Not true! Gender doesn't limit you!"*

II. Good job! Let's try another one. Emily is playing outerspace with her friend Sammy, and she wants to be an astronaut too. Sammy says, "You can't be the astronaut. You have to be the alien." What do we say to Sammy? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"Not true! Gender doesn't limit you!"*

III. Good job! Let's try another one. Jessica and Yvette are pretending that they are dancers. Mario wants to be a dancer too, but they say, "You can't be a dancer. You have to be in the audience." What do we say to Jessica and Yvette? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"Not true! Gender doesn't limit you!"*

IV. Good job! Let's try another one. Serena and Monica are play baking, and Joshua wants to be the baker. Serena and Monica tell Joshua, "You can't be the baker. You have to be the delivery man." What do we tell Serena and Monica? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"Not true! Gender doesn't limit you!"*

LESSON 3

Teasing About Gendered Activities, Traits Or Possessions

Note: Substitute your school's name for "St. Francis" when reading this script. You can also substitute your students' names for the provided names.

PROBLEM

Sometimes boys and girls make fun of each other because they wear something or cut their hair in a certain way that isn't what their gender usually does. Remember that gender is whether you are a boys or a girl. Sometimes someone might make fun of a boy for wearing a pink, "girls" shirt.

RATIONALE

Saying something like this isn't a nice thing to do. Boys and girls can dress any way they want to, or do anything to their hair that they want. It does not matter what their gender is. Making fun of people because they act differently is a type of bullying, and bullying is not allowed at St. Francis.

QUESTIONS

What should you do if someone says that your clothes, hair, or actions are wrong because of your gender?

You should answer: *"There's no such thing as boys' or girls' _____."*

CASE PRACTICE

- I. Okay, so let's practice what we should say if someone makes fun of our clothes, hair or actions because we are a boy or a girl! Samantha is really excited because she got a fancy new haircut. It is a short haircut like her mother's. When she shows up to school, Marcus says, "Why do you have a boy's hair cut?" What do we say to Marcus? One, two, three GO!

Answer:

"There's no such thing as boys' or girls' haircuts."

- II. Good job! Let's try another one. Carey goes to school wearing her brother's old shirt, pants and shoes. Jose sees her outfit and says, "Why are you wearing boys' clothes?" What do we tell Jose? One, two, three GO!

Answer:

"There's no such thing as boys' or girls' clothes."

- III. Good job! Let's try another one. In Henry's culture, it is important for him to have long hair. When he shows up to school, Isabelle says, "Why do you have a girls' hair cut?" What do we tell Isabelle? One, two, three GO!

Answer:

"There's no such thing as boys' or girls' haircuts."

- IV. Good job! Let's try another one. Rick goes to school wearing a pink shirt. Beth says, "Why are you wearing a girl's shirt?" What do we tell Beth? One, two, three GO!

Answer:

"There's no such thing as boys' or girls' clothes."

LESSON 4

Biased Judgments

Note: Substitute your school's name for "St. Francis" when reading this script. You can also substitute your students' names for the provided names.

PROBLEM

Sometimes one group of kids thinks that they are better at something than another group because of their gender. Remember that gender is whether you are a boy or a girl. Sometimes boys say to girls that they are better at school or better at sports just because they are boys.

RATIONALE

Saying something like this isn't a nice thing to do. It's not true that all boys are good at school or sports and all girls are bad at school or sports. Boys and girls can be equally good at any sport or subject in school. Making fun of people for not being good at something because of their gender is a type of bullying, and bullying is not allowed at St. Francis.

QUESTIONS

What should you say when someone tells you that you aren't as good as they are because of your gender?

You should answer: "Give it a rest, no group is best."

CASE PRACTICE

- I. Okay, so let's practice what we should say if someone tells us that we aren't as good as they are because of our gender! Megan is doing her math homework in class, and her classmate Brandon says, "Boys are better at math than girls." What do we tell Brandon? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "Give it a rest, no group is best."

- II. Good job! Let's try another one. Maria and Ricardo are on the same soccer team together. Ricardo says that boys are better at soccer than girls. What do we tell Ricardo? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "Give it a rest, no group is best."

- III. Good job! Let's try another one. Oliver takes ballet lessons outside of school. At the talent show, Lisa tells him, "Girls are better at ballet than boys." What do we tell Lisa? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "Give it a rest, no group is best."

- IV. Good job! Let's try another one. Paul and Vanessa are baking cookies together. Vanessa says that girls are better at baking than boys. What do we tell Vanessa? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "Give it a rest, no group is best."

LESSON 5

Gendered Beliefs

Note: Substitute your school's name for "St. Francis" when reading this script. You can also substitute your students' names for the provided names.

PROBLEM

Sometimes we say something to another person that we believe is true because of their gender. Remember that gender is whether you are a boy or a girl. Sometimes boys tell girls that they are cry babies and are not tough enough to play with them.

RATIONALE

Saying something like this is not a nice thing to do and hurts people's feelings. Girls and boys are more alike than you think. Both boys and girls cry and both boys and girls are tough and can do anything and can act anyway they want to do. Making fun of someone because you think they will act in a certain way because they are a boy or a girl is bullying, and bullying is not allowed at St. Francis.



QUESTIONS

What should you say when someone judges you because of your gender?

You should answer: "I disagree! Sexism is silly to me."

CASE PRACTICE

I. Okay, so let's practice what we should say if someone judges us because we are a boy or a girl! Melissa and Derek are playing with a play fire engine during recess. Derek tells Melissa that she can't play with the fire engine because only boys can become firefighters. What do we tell Derek? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "I disagree! Sexism is silly to me."

II. Good job! Let's try another one. Ashley and Wes are in science class together. The teacher asks someone to help her dissect a frog. Wes tells Ashley that she can't help because girls are crybabies and will only cry when she dissects the frog. What do we tell Wes? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "I disagree! Sexism is silly to me."

III. Good job! Let's try another one. Sumen is playing in her room with her Barbie doll. Her brother Raj comes in and starts to play with another Barbie doll. Sumen tells Raj that he can't play with the Barbie doll because only girls can play with Barbies. What do we tell Sumen? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "I disagree! Sexism is silly to me."

IV. Good job! Let's try another one. Lynda, Javier and Michelle are at home and Lynda decides to play house. Javier wants to play house with Lynda and Michelle, but Lynda says that only girls can play house. What do we tell Lynda? One, two, three GO!

Answer: "I disagree! Sexism is silly to me."

LESSON 6

Highlighting Gender

Note: Substitute your school's name for "St. Francis" when reading this script. You can also substitute your students' names for the provided names.

PROBLEM

Sometimes people use gender to separate kids into groups. This can happen when people make boys join a group just because they are boys, and make girls join a group just because they are girls, even if they don't want to be in that group! Remember that gender is whether you are a boy or a girl. This happens when boys tell girls that they have to sit on the other side of the room because they are girls.

RATIONALE

This isn't nice. It is wrong to separate people because of their gender. Just because someone is a girl does not mean that she should only be around other girls and not boys. Separating boys and girls because of their gender isn't nice. It is a type of bullying, and bullying is not allowed at St. Francis.

QUESTIONS

What should you do when someone separates you from them because of your gender?

You should answer: *"That's weird! Being boys and girls doesn't matter here."*

CASE PRACTICE

- I. Okay, so let's practice what we should say if someone separates us from another group just because we are a boy or a girl! Some boys and girls are sitting in a circle for story time. One boy says that all the girls need to sit on one side of the circle and all the boys need to sit on the other side of the circle. What do we tell him? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"That's weird! Being boys and girls doesn't matter here."*

- II. Good Job! Let's try another one. A class gets to have red and blue markers to make special holiday decorations. William says that all the boys should have blue markers and all the girls should have red markers. What do we tell William? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"That's weird! Being boys and girls doesn't matter here."*

- III. Good job! Let's try another one. Shanaya and her friends like to sit at a table and sing songs during lunch. One day, Stephen decides to join them. Shanaya and her friends say tell Stephen that boys have to sit at the other tables. What do we tell Shanaya? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"That's weird! Being boys and girls doesn't matter here."*

- IV. Good Job! Let's try another one. A class is making hats to wear for a concert. Some are hats have fancy red bows on them and some are plain. Rosa says that all the girls should wear fancy hats and all the boys should wear plain hats. What do we tell Rosa? One, two, three GO!

Answer: *"That's weird! Being boys and girls doesn't matter here."*

Curriculum Standards

This curriculum supports your state content standards. The following standards and benchmarks are drawn from the Compendium of Standards from Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (www.mcrel.org).

LANGUAGE ARTS

Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Benchmarks Grades K-2

- Makes contributions in class and group discussions.
- Asks and responds to questions.
- Follows rules of conversation and group discussion.
- Gives and responds to oral directions.
- Recites and responds to familiar stories, poems, and rhymes with patterns.

Benchmarks Grades 3-5

- Contributes to group discussions.
- Responds to questions and comments.
- Listens to classmates and adults.
- Uses strategies to convey a clear main point when speaking.
- Listens to and understands persuasive messages.
- Interprets the use of nonverbal cues used in conversation.
- Knows specific ways in which language is used in real-life situations.

LIFE SKILLS

Standard 2. Uses conflict-resolution skills.

Benchmarks Grades K-12

Determines the causes and potential sources of conflicts.
Establishes guidelines and rules for negotiating.

Standard 3. Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations.

Benchmark Grades K-12

Works well with those of the opposite gender, of differing abilities, and from different age groups.

Standard 4. Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.

Benchmark Grades K-12

Provides feedback in a constructive manner, and recognizes the importance of seeking and receiving constructive feedback in a nondefensive manner.