

Curriculum Checklist

“The formal school curriculum must include the experiences of women and men from all walks of life. Girls and boys must see themselves reflected and valued in the materials they study.”

—“*How Schools Shortchange Girls*,” 1992 AAUW Report

Guidelines for Detecting Bias

- **Invisibility/Exclusion** — Females and minority ethnic groups are often omitted from classroom materials, painting a picture in students’ minds that only white males participate in these occupations or activities. Males also may be excluded from certain materials, such as parenting or home management texts.
- **Stereotyping** — Do your materials portray males, females, people with disabilities, or ethnic groups in narrowly defined roles?
- **Imbalance/Selectivity** — Make sure textbooks do not ignore certain points of view. For example, “Columbus discovered American” denies the fact that the land was already inhabited and ignores Native American perspectives.
- **Unreality** — Materials often present history unrealistically. Do they gloss over controversy or avoid discussion of prejudice or discrimination?
- **Fragmentation/Isolation** — Placing issues concerning women or ethnic groups separate from the text’s main body, treats them as afterthoughts and gives them less value.
- **Linguistic Bias** — Using words like “he” or “mailman” generically may not seem like a big deal, but they perpetuate the image that only men do these jobs. By changing our language, we can change perceptions.

Things to Look For

Use this checklist to determine the degree in which sex bias is present in the curriculum.

1. Are occupations shown open to all. Are females and males portrayed in nontraditional careers?
2. Are sex-free titles used, as indicated in the current *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*?
3. Are females and males portrayed in the same number of active and passive roles?
4. Are various races and ethnic groups presented throughout in a balanced or representative fashion?
5. Do the same number of females and males appear throughout the materials? Are they shown to have all human traits?
6. Are gender-free, plural pronouns used? Is there an equal balance of gender-specific, singular pronouns? Are gender-free nouns substituted for gender-specific pronouns?
7. Are both minority and non-minority females and males pictured equally in varied levels of occupational status and responsibility?
8. Do illustrations of people include a variety of body types along with evidence of disabilities?
9. Is written reference made to physical appearance only when there is a legitimate purpose for the reference?

Sources: GESA Facilitator Handbook; Idaho’s Vocational Education Equity Perspective; and Wisconsin Department of Public Information materials.