

Career and Technical Education: Equity Activities



*Equity Activities for Perkins Core Indicators

*Increasing Nontraditional Enrollment in Your Classroom

Developed by: Gender Equity Advisory Committee (GEAC) of the Illinois State Board of
Education and Statewide Nontraditional Leadership Team (SNLT) of the Illinois Workforce
Investment Board

Ensuring Individual Economic Self-Sufficiency through Rising Real Incomes for All Illinois Residents

Illinois productivity and competitiveness demands that we fully utilize all potential workers. The ability of the education and workforce preparation system to meet the training and education needs of all future workers will have substantial impact on the economy of Illinois. Full access to education and training must be available to all. An education and workforce preparation system that strives to be inclusive cannot merely open its doors and expect equity to happen. Deliberate action from everyone involved in the education and workforce preparation system must be taken to insure that barriers that limit opportunities are identified and corrected. While barriers to full participation have impacted both men and women, the economic inequities have had a greater impact on women, which is evident in the persistent 30% wage gap between men's and women's wages. In 1999, male and female graduating high school seniors in Illinois will experience a lifetime difference in earnings of \$1.59 million if the current wage gap persists.

Efforts to improve access and opportunities are important because of the increasing reliance on women's wages for the well being of families. Approximately 46% of Illinois single mothers have incomes that are at or below the poverty level and another 12% are near the poverty level. Women's low earnings have a direct impact on the number of children living in poverty in Illinois, currently one in five. Women continue to be over-represented in the lowest paid, lowest opportunity jobs in the economy. They comprise 79% of the administrative support workers and only 2% of workers in construction trades. In 1998, the six leading occupations for women were still secretaries, nurses, beauticians, waitresses, teachers and cashiers. These segregated occupational patterns contribute significantly to women's generally low wages and to the wage disparity between males and females. Seventy percent of women still earn \$25,000 or less a year. Women and men with specialized technical training can expect to earn half a million dollars more in their lifetime than someone who is working at a low-skill, minimum-wage job.

All students should be encouraged to explore career options based on their abilities and interests, not their gender. Gender-based obstacles appear in the early stages of formal instruction and continue throughout women's educational and career experiences. Barriers to equal educational opportunity for girls and women in science, math and technology-related areas prevent Illinois from preparing its full pool of talent for the technologically sophisticated needs of employers. Such obstacles prevent girls and women from accessing the high wage opportunities available in technical fields. To adequately prepare all students to make educated choices, efforts must be made at the beginning of the educational process to present bias-free information to students and eliminate gender-biased attitudes and behaviors. Gender equity programs at later stages of the education process are necessary to reach students who have already received years

of traditional training and messages about gender roles that may limit occupational choices. Counselors, teachers and parents play a crucial role in the decisions young people and returning adults make concerning career choices. Their understanding of gender equity issues is fundamental to ensuring equitable educational environments.

To ensure all Illinois residents achieve economic self-sufficiency through rising real incomes, the Gender Equity Advisory Committee and the Statewide Nontraditional Leadership Team recommend the following equity activities for Career and Technical Education.

EQUITY ACTIVITIES FOR PERKINS CORE INDICATORS

Student Attainment of Challenging State-established Academic and Vocational Technical Skill Proficiencies

- Enhancement activities such as tutoring and mentoring will be provided in areas in which learners have deficiencies.
- Teachers, students, and parents will be provided with information about the future workforce, skills required in the future, the importance of math, science, and technology education, the earning potential of various careers, and the importance of nontraditional¹ employment opportunities.
- Students will research at least one nontraditional occupation as part of an academic and/or vocational class.
- Instruction will include applied academics to assist students in making the connection between school and their career choice.
- A student evaluation will include determination of whether the student is being exposed to all aspects of an industry including areas that are nontraditional for their gender.
- A list of available community resources will be compiled and disseminated to schools and programs.
- Barriers for specific learners will be identified and services needed to overcome those barriers will be determined.
- Availability of vital support services including childcare, transportation, tutoring, preparatory training, support groups, and mentoring will be determined. A plan to address gaps in services will be developed.
- Linkages will be made with social services and community-based organizations to assist in meeting the support service needs of students.
- An on-site liaison/advocate will be designated to assess the needs of specific learners and assist them in accessing the services they need to fully participate.
- Technical assistance and in-service activities will include the following equity issues: gender role stereotyping, gender-fair language, gender-fair teaching, changing roles

¹ Nontraditional refers to occupations or fields of work, including careers in the computer science, technology, and other emerging high-skill occupations, for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work.

of women and men, labor market and workforce trends, impact of career choice on wages, nontraditional careers, balancing work and family, family-friendly work environment, and an environment free of racial and sexual harassment.

- Technical assistance and in-service activities will address serving special populations students including how students are defined and identified, what barriers prevent their full participation, and how services will be provided to overcome those barriers.
- Curriculum and instructional materials including computer software will be reviewed to determine if all materials are inclusive, represent diversity, and are gender fair. (Can all students see themselves, are all students represented, is the language inclusive, and are the graphics inclusive?)

Student Attainment of a Secondary School Diploma or Its Equivalent or a Postsecondary Degree or Credential

- An on-site liaison/advocate will be designated to assess the needs of specific learners and assist them in accessing the services they need to continue their education.
- An ongoing support system for nontraditional students is provided that includes a drop-in counseling program, time spent with female role models/mentors from various nontraditional shops/jobs, and job shadowing with employees in nontraditional occupations.

Placement in, Retention in, and Completion of Postsecondary Education or Advanced Training, Placement in Military Service, or Placement or Retention in Employment

- Placement staff is provided training on overcoming barriers to entry into nontraditional employment.
- Opportunities are provided for nontraditional students to strategize on how to succeed in an occupation dominated by the other gender.
- Linkages are developed with employers to ensure all students have equal access to jobs.
- Articulation agreements have provisions for traditionally underrepresented populations to ensure equity in transition.
- Employers will be provided with information on nontraditional employment including opportunities and potential barriers.

- Follow-up studies will include the retention rate of students entering nontraditional occupations and their wage rate.

Student Participation in and Completion of Career and Technical Education Programs That Lead to Nontraditional Training and Employment

- Each and every student will be exposed to a full range of careers including those that are nontraditional for their gender.
- Prior to assessing students' career interests, they will be provided with career exploration activities, including the provision of experiences and information about high-wage, high-skill, and nontraditional occupations, access to role models in nontraditional careers, and visits to worksites.
- Career assessment will include interviews that draw out skills and interests learners may have that are transferable to nontraditional employment.
- Administrators, counselors, and teachers will be provided training and support on gender equity, nontraditional careers, and the needs of the future workforce.
- Posters, brochures, flyers, and other promotional materials will include nontraditional occupations, which feature photos and testimonials of women and minorities working in these occupations.
- Career fairs will include nontraditional occupations and role models that represent the workforce including those in nontraditional careers.
- Recruitment materials feature pictures of students in nontraditional programs, emphasize information about the types of jobs in which nontraditional training will result, and indicate the salary range for entry-level and experienced workers.
- Women-owned and minority-owned businesses will be involved in all phases of planning and implementation of work-based learning experiences.
- Availability of work-based learning experiences in high-wage, high-skill occupations will be expanded.
- All participating businesses/organizations will receive an orientation about nontraditional careers and the composition of the future workforce and will be encouraged to require gender parity in the students they accept for placement.
- Training provided for workplace mentors will include awareness of gender issues and how to mentor girls interested in nontraditional occupations.

INCREASING NONTRADITIONAL ENROLLMENT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Recruitment

- Help your school develop an equitable learning environment for all students where they are supported when making nontraditional course/career choices.
- Have nontraditional role models representing your occupational area participate in your school's career fair or other career activities.
- Obtain career information materials for the guidance and counseling program that show nontraditional members of that field.
- Develop a display or bulletin board in the main hallways of the school about careers in your program area. Have a majority of the photographs show nontraditional role models.
- Conduct a school-wide career interest survey and directly recruit those nontraditional students who have indicated an interest in careers in your program area.
- Have current nontraditional students encourage others of their gender to participate in your program.
- Develop promotional materials (i.e., brochure, video, displays, bulletin boards, etc.) that show nontraditional students participating in the program.
- Sponsor an open house or special event that presents hands-on activities designed to encourage occupational exploration. Have nontraditional students and role models facilitate the activities.
- Offer a "summer camp" for nontraditional students to explore your program area. Include hands-on activities for career exploration. This can be held at your school, a community location, or a local college.

Retention

- Maintain an equitable teaching environment in your classroom.
- Invite nontraditional role models as guest speakers.
- Take field trips where students will meet nontraditional role models employed in their area of interest and see them working on the job.

- Have students job shadow a nontraditional role model from breakfast to dinner to get an understanding of balancing work and family responsibilities.
- Develop a mentoring program where nontraditional students have nontraditional mentors.
- Offer additional support services to nontraditional students to ensure their success (i.e., tutoring, study groups, coaching, independent study, support groups, etc.).
- Involve parents of nontraditional students in a career awareness event using nontraditional role models and techniques they can use at home to encourage their child's success.
- Encourage girls to take more advanced math and science courses.
- Have nontraditional role models displayed in all posters in the classroom.
- Eliminate curriculum materials that contain sex bias and stereotyping.
- Use cooperative learning and team techniques for instruction. Vary your teaching techniques in order to reach students with a variety of learning styles.
- Acknowledge the contributions of both men and women in your program area.
- Create an attractive classroom environment (research shows that girls learn better in an esthetically pleasing environment).
- Encourage a “can do” attitude; teach students to give themselves credit and take risks.
- Develop a safe classroom environment on nontraditional students that is free from harassment.
- Encourage nontraditional students to participate in vocational organization activities.
- Give special recognition to the highest achieving nontraditional student (i.e., breaking traditions award).

Placement

- Be sure all students are adequately trained and prepared prior to placement. Nontraditional students tend to be evaluated more harshly on the job.
- Place nontraditional students in workplace settings that support their differences.

- Develop an employer education program to assist in developing nontraditional friendly work environments.
- Teach students assertiveness skills.
- Develop a comprehensive sexual harassment training program for school staff, students, and employers.

For more information, contact: Kathy Malcom, Chair, Gender Equity Advisory Committee (309-796-5038) or Julie Kruse, Chair, Statewide Nontraditional Leadership Team (312-942-1444)