

**Thinking  
Critically About  
Gender Equality  
in the  
Classroom**

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Gender Equality

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It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike.

“Gender equality is more than a goal itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”

–Kofi Annan

# Critical Thinking and Gender Equality

# Barriers to Gender Equality in Education

Discuss the barriers to gender equality in education.

Which barriers affect your school or community?

Consider different types of barriers:

- Cultural
- Economic
- Government
- School

# Possible Barriers to Gender Equality

## Cultural:

- Restrictive gender norms and roles
- Early marriage and pregnancy
- Girls are expected to stay at home and do household chores and boys are expected to work
- Valuing boys over girls
- Limited parent engagement

## Economic:

- Cost of schooling
- Earning potential of males vs. females
- Pressure on males to support family
- Girls have to stay home to care for siblings
- Lack of investment in education

# Possible Barriers to Gender Equality

## Government:

- Policy relating to curriculum design and school systems
- Lack of commitment to equity
- Approach to resource distribution
- In areas of instability and violence, recruitment of boys as child soldiers
- Insufficient infrastructure to support response to natural disasters or emergencies

## School:

- Long and unsafe commute
- Lack of services for students with special needs
- School conditions and poor bathroom facilities
- Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence
- Inadequate training of teachers
- Lack of adequate hygiene facilities and supplies for girls during menstruation

# Challenges and Solutions for Gender Equality in Education

# Raising Awareness of Gender Issues

## Jigsaw Reading Activity:

1. Read your article in your **number group**. (Everyone has the same article)
2. Discuss the most important information. Take notes so you can share the information with others. (5 minutes)
3. Move to sit with your **letter group**. (Everyone has read different articles)
4. Everyone will have 1-2 minutes to share their group's reading. Start with article #1 (5-10 minutes)

# Jigsaw Reading Articles

1. Girls' Education - The Facts
2. Sexist Language Persists in the EFL Classroom
3. Gender Bias is Rife in Textbooks
4. Girls as young as 6 believe men are smarter than women, study shows

# Gender Inclusive Teaching

**Gender Inclusive Teaching:**  
Teaching with content and  
pedagogy that helps girls and  
boys achieve success.

# Observe, Reflect, Take Action

1. **Observe** current teaching practices. Take notes about your own teaching or ask a colleague to observe your class.
2. **Reflect** on the gender friendliness of those practices. Think about gender issues and how you could be more inclusive.
3. **Take Action** toward a more gender-friendly classroom. Choose some strategies and make a plan to try them.

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*Creating Supportive Learning Environments for Girls and Boys: A Guide for Educators* is a great source for guided exercises and reflection questions

# Gender Inclusive Learning Environments

1. Establish rules and enforce them
2. Have equal academic and behavior expectations for all students
3. Have a classroom seating plan
4. Use group work
5. Divide leadership roles and chores equally

# Gender Inclusive Teaching Strategies

1. Call on students equally and provide enough wait time
2. Pay attention to your body language
3. Provide equal amounts of encouragement and support
4. Use gender neutral language
5. Intervene if students create an unfriendly atmosphere

# Gender Inclusive Content and Materials

1. Teach gender neutral language
2. Choose a textbook that doesn't include stereotypes or supplement with other materials
3. Use unbiased or counter-stereotypical examples
4. Feature both genders in your visual aids
5. Discuss gender issues in class

# Resources for Gender Inclusive Teaching

- **Creating Supportive Learning Environments for Girls and Boys: A Guide for Educators** (TEA Program Guide)
- Promoting Gender Equality in the English Language Classroom (American English Webinar)
- Promoting Gender Equality with Teaching Strategies (Voice of America article)
- Supporting a Girl's Right to Learn (YALI Course)
- What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment
- CARE: The Power to Lead: A Leadership Model for Adolescent Girls
- Gender and Development Network
- Gender Responsive Life Skills-Based Education
- United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

"Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone's responsibility."

–Ban Ki-moon

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