

## **Yukon Education Gender Equity Policy**

**Approved:** October 19, 1995 by Deputy Minister

### **Legislation:**

Section # 4(f) of the Education Act states: to develop an understanding of the historical and contemporary role of women and the reinforcement of the principle of gender equality and the contribution of women to society.

### **Purpose:**

The Department of Education advocates, through programming, related student services, and support to professional educators, the principles of gender equity.

- Gender equity exists in an environment where the provision of opportunity for all is based on individual aptitudes, abilities and interests, regardless of gender.
- The need for a gender equity policy grew out of a recognition that gender bias is detrimental for students, communities and society as a whole. Gender equity enhances personal growth and career opportunities and reinforces the social and economic contributions of people of both genders.
- Its purpose is to improve opportunities, access, and support for all in the public school system by promoting and implementing the principles of gender equity.

### **Applications:**

This policy applies to all persons employed with the Department of Education, consultants or contractors, students, parents, volunteers and any others who may operate within the public school system from time to time.

The successful development and implementation of a Gender Equity Policy for Public Schools is dependent upon the support, dedication and commitment of all the partners in education. In recognition of the goals and objectives of the Education Act, gender equity will be promoted as an integral part of all aspects of the school system, including: curriculum, assessment, learning resources, classroom practices, school environment, professional development, hiring and advancement practices, school, family and community, and evaluation of the effectiveness of implementation strategies.

### **Principles:**

Achieving gender equity is an ongoing responsibility that will require sensitivity, determination, commitment, political will and vigilance over time, as well as cooperation between students, parents, teachers, educational organizations and communities. The principles which follow are

fundamental to achieving the goal of gender equity in the school system. They provide a basis for planning and action by the Public Schools Branch in consultation with education partners.

- All students have a right to a learning environment that is gender equitable;
- All educational programs and career decisions are based on a student's interest and ability regardless of gender;
- Attitudes and behaviours which contribute to gender equity are learned and therefore can be taught;
- Language influences the way in which people understand and interpret the world around them. Words create powerful images and must be chosen in a way that is gender equitable. The use of bias-free language ensures the whole audience is included;
- Achieving gender equity will require the examination of all aspects of the school environment and may necessitate change in many of them;
- Female and male students have had different experiences in society and in school, and thus may have different ways of learning. In a gender-equitable school system, all ways of learning are respected equally;
- Students observe and may imitate the behaviour of others. It is important that teachers, administrators and other school staff are positive role models;
- Since teachers have considerable influence on what happens in the classrooms, it is vitally important that they have the skills and attitudes necessary to create and maintain gender equitable classrooms;
- Gender socialization is a lifelong process and therefore affecting change will take time;
- Gender equity in the schools cannot be achieved in isolation, rather, it requires the active involvement of parents and school councils;
- Awareness of gender equity issues by parents, superintendents, administrators, teachers and students is essential to create gender equitable classrooms.

## **Yukon Education Gender Equity Procedures**

### **Objectives:**

- To further the basic goals of education in Yukon by developing the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, cultural and aesthetic potential of each person to their fullest extent;
- To reinforce the principles of gender equity;
- To develop an understanding of the historical and contemporary roles of women in society;
- To acknowledge and reinforce the contributions of women to society;
- To assist the education community in identifying and removing gender equity barriers within the school system;
- To provide basic human rights to all students. Both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Yukon Human Rights Code prohibit discrimination in the provision of education and in employment on the basis of gender.

### **Curriculum:**

The curriculum is the formal program of studies taught in the school. Curricula includes core, supplementary and locally developed components. The Yukon's curriculum is modeled after the British Columbia curriculum, with the exception of locally developed courses.

Curricula which makes it clear that both genders are of equal value and importance in today's world:

- include information on the contributions that both genders have made to society and redress the historical devaluing and omission of the perceptions, experience, and contributions of girls and women;
- are written from viewpoints which include both genders;
- are designed to raise awareness of gender issues and enable students to develop the ability to recognize gender bias in materials;
- recognize and value the activities, qualities, and subject areas that traditionally have been associated with girls and women, as well as men's values and contributions to society;
- include career counseling that explicitly encourages all students to pursue areas of interest without regard to gender stereotyping;
- provide specific strategies, special opportunities and resources to encourage both female and male students to excel in all areas of study especially in areas in which they tend to be under-represented.

**Assessment:**

Assessment refers to the formal measurement of the students understanding of the curriculum.

Gender equitable assessment practices:

- avoid favouring the interests or experiences of either males or females;
- apply consistent standards of achievement to all students;
- use techniques and tools that reflect different ways of learning for both genders.

**Learning Resources:**

Learning Resources are the books, videos, filmstrips, computer software, assessment instruments, and other materials used during instruction, as well as the materials in the school resource centre.

Gender equitable learning resources:

- provide a balanced representation of each gender in illustrations, texts, examples, activities and assignments;
- use examples that are relevant to both genders by valuing women's contributions and experiences;
- provide an analysis and acknowledgement of current and historical inequities, such as power, economics, and ascribed values between the sexes;
- show both genders as having a wide range of abilities, personality characteristics and emotions;
- eliminate gender bias in language and avoid demeaning and derogatory language;
- show benefits and privileges being assigned on the basis of ability and individual preference, rather than gender.

**Classroom Practices:**

Classroom practices involve the interactions that take place between teachers, guests and students and the approaches and techniques used to teach the subject content.

Gender equitable classroom practices:

- ensure that the distribution of attention and resources in the classroom is free of gender bias;
- provide specific strategies, special opportunities and resources to encourage both female and male students to excel in areas of study in which they are typically under represented;
- use techniques and approaches that will assist students to identify gender bias in learning resource materials;
- acknowledge that female and male students have different life experiences and may have different ways of learning;
- make appropriate and consistent use of inclusive, neutral, or parallel language;
- support consistent standards of achievement, courtesy, behaviour and dress for males and females.

## **School Environment:**

The school environment refers to both the school's physical environment and to the intangible "culture" or "climate" which sets the school's atmosphere.

The school, like any other structure in society, operates with written rules and policies. It also has unspoken rules, values and expectations that its students and staff learn through the socialization process. When a strong belief that both genders have equal ability and potential permeates a school, the result will be an environment in which everyone in the school is treated with dignity and encouraged to develop in whatever direction their interests and abilities take them.

A gender-equitable school environment:

- makes it clear that both genders have equal ability and potential;
- treats students and staff of both genders with the same dignity and respect;
- provides an educational and social environment which reflects the experiences, contributions, and perceptions of girls and women as well as those of boys and men;
- ensures resources for both curricular and extra-curricular activities are fairly distributed and equally accessible to both male and female students;
- provides special opportunities and resources that encourage students to excel in subject areas in which they are typically under-represented;
- schedules events and courses that make it possible for students to take both traditional and non-traditional classes;
- encourages consistent use of inclusive, neutral, or parallel language;
- provide positive and active adult role models in all school personnel of non-sexist, collaborative relationships;
- develops opportunities to increase male and female students' awareness of the economic and personal benefits associated with diverse and non-traditional career and educational opportunities;
- displays visual materials in hallways and classrooms which are free of gender bias and promote equity;
- ensures the physical layout of the school is safe for everyone.

## **Professional Development:**

Teachers are an integral part of the school system and as such are important agents of socialization.

To enable teachers to promote the principles of gender equity:

- male and female teachers, counsellors, administrators and superintendents will be encouraged to take part in in-services and professional development activities on gender issues;
- explicit preparation must be undertaken for school counsellors in gender-sensitive academic, personal and vocational counselling.

## **Hiring and Advancement Practices:**

Hiring and advancement practices refer to the methods used when recruiting and promoting individuals into and within the school system.

Hiring and advancement practices will:

- identify and eliminate systemic barriers to the full participation of women and men at all levels in the school system;
- establish strategies, opportunities, and resources to encourage staff to work in areas where they are typically under-represented;
- reflect employment criteria that includes the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to conduct oneself in a manner sensitive to gender equity issues;
- establish flexible working conditions which foster a balance between personal and work life.

## **School, Family and the Community:**

The school interacts with parents, the media and the general public. When the school system ensures that all of these interactions are gender equitable, its commitment to the goals of gender equity is clear. The school also has the opportunity to provide leadership in the community in advancing gender equity. Involving members of the community in planning and implementing gender equity in the schools is a good way to disseminate information, raise awareness and build support. Moreover, the active support of community members, especially family, can be a very positive influence on children and adolescents. The school's interaction with families and communities will reflect the principles of gender equity and will:

- use inclusive, neutral or parallel language in all communication among the school, the family and the community;
- promote and ensure the participation of both women and men on committees and in school/community programs;
- prepare students to work in the community by providing them with practical information about sexual harassment, discrimination and stereotyping

## **Evaluation:**

Evaluation refers to the school system's ability to determine the extent to which progress has been made toward achieving gender equity. To meet the Public Schools Branch objective of promoting and implementing the principles of gender equity in the schools, evaluation will be required to measure the progress towards this goal. Evaluation means:

- developing extraction criteria for existing and new databases;
- including gender information in Department of Education Annual Reports, including participation rates of males and females in all courses, staffing patterns, trend analysis, and measures undertaken to implement gender equity;
- measuring the extent to which the policy's goals and objectives have been met.