Queen Bees and Wannabes: Gender Equity in the Classroom

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Background on Boy World/Girl World

Boy World
- Boys' behavior, choices, and personal boundaries are largely dictated by their desire for masculinity.
- Most boys won't reveal their feelings and problems to their male friends. If they reveal their problems to anyone, it's usually to a female friend.
- Most boys aren't violent. A few are, and the rest have no idea how to stop them.
- The more a boy believes in gender stereotypes, the more vulnerable he is to perpetrate violence.
- The boy honor code values loyalty and silence over everything else.
- Just like girls, boys are often intimidated by and in awe of the leader of their group.

Girl World
- A clique is defined as a group of girls who are close friends.
- Cliques are worse in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.
- The power of cliques silences girls because those in positions of power will not take responsibility for their actions, and those not in power fear the consequences of speaking out.

Gender Equity Survey
- Three groups of sixth-grade students in Colfax, Wisconsin were asked the question: what is a real man/woman? The results of this survey are below.
- The study group consisted of a limited sample of three classes of sixth-grade students with varying numbers of males and females.
- Each student was given one copy of the Act Like a Man/Woman Box (plotted to the right).
- Students were given no cues as to what answers may be appropriate in order to obtain candid answers.

Adolescent Brain Activity
- Boys and physical learning
  - Boys have more dopamine in their bloodstream which can increase impulsive behavior.
  - They also process more blood flow in the cerebellum, the area of the brain that is associated with doing and physical movement.
  - These two factors are contributed to boys’ tendency to learn less than girls when exposed to instruction without physical movement.
  - Boys are more likely than girls to connect learning to physical movement.
- Girls also exhibit advanced development of the language centers of the brain. In general, girls tend to use more neural pathways and brain centers for verbal communication and expression of experience, emotion, and cognition through words than do boys.
- Hormonal differences in boys have been shown to naturally lean better through action response and competition versus verbal communication.
- Boys use less of their brain for thinking, use 15 percent less blood flow to the brain, and are set up to multi-task much better than their male counterparts.

Strategies for Creating a Gender Equitable Classroom
- Call on an equal number of boys and girls when asking questions.
- Increase wait time to 3-5 seconds before calling on students.
- Distribute students evenly by gender in your classroom.
- Encourage girls to join you in the front of the room for demonstrations.
- Describe the students equally when the misbehavior is identical.
- Praise both boys and girls for the appearance and neatness of their work.
- Offer specific feedback to both genders on their work, including praise, criticism, and remediation.
- School textbooks and supplemental resource materials tend to be filled with male protagonists and stories. Teach lessons that portray an equal number of male and female protagonists and stories.
- Use precise, clear feedback and distribute it fairly.