



## LESSON

## Gender Stereotyping Awareness

During my career unit with seventh-graders, I take the opportunity to look at gender stereotyping in the work force. After students have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with careers, I challenge their learning with a game similar to the old game show “Password.”

Grade Level 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Topic: Gender & Sexual Identity

Social Justice Domain: Justice

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I tell students that I will be attaching an index card with the name of a job onto their back (painter’s tape works fairly well). Students will then be given an opportunity to mingle within the classroom getting clues to the job with which they’ve been labeled. Students look at the back of a peer and talk to them the way they would someone in that profession. They can refer to the schooling that is needed to obtain that particular job or to the special equipment they might use if they did that job. I usually model how to ask questions without giving the job away.

To challenge students’ gender bias, females in class are given stereotypical male jobs like plumber, firefighter and construction manager. Meanwhile, males are assigned jobs like librarian, nurse or flight attendant. Most students accurately guess what the job they’ve been labeled with quite quickly, but usually not without an air of disgust. My female students have responded, for instance, in a horrified tone, “Plumber! Yuck!” Male students scrunch their faces in disbelief at the thought of a male librarian.

I then take the opportunity to review the definition of a stereotype. We discuss how subtle and overt messages sometimes unintentionally are given to males and females as to what careers they can choose. The lesson ends with the recognition that interests and aptitudes — not gender — should guide people to their careers. You can extend this lesson to discuss the effects of gender on education, paychecks and politics.

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