



FEATURE

Toolkit for “Gender Spectrum”

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Gender-fluid young people navigate a variety of gender-specific spaces throughout their day at school. From seating charts based on gender to dress codes and roles in school activities, we ask students to put themselves into boxes labeled “girls” and “boys” all the time.

To break away from these boxes and labels, consider hosting a gender-neutral day in your classroom. In preparation for the day, have students brainstorm a list of some of the ways their normal routines are gendered.

Brainstorm

Have students think about the gendered spaces during class time, recess, after-school activities and in the school cafeteria. Below are some possible questions to get the conversation started.

- Are there gender differences in what kids are expected to do during recess?
- Are more girls than boys called on to answer questions in class? Or vice versa? Does it depend on the lesson or subject?
- Do gender differences exist in which sports students are expected to play during physical education class? Or in who gets chosen to be team captains?
- In the lunchroom, do students sit together in gender-based groups?
- Are there differences in which school activities boys and girls are expected to participate, such as choir, drama club, sports teams, etc.?
- When students read aloud in class, do teachers tend to match students with roles based on their gender?

Action Steps for Gender-Neutral Day

1. After the brainstorming session, have students pick two to three ways they will reject gender stereotypes for the day.
2. Students should make specific commitments, such as choosing to sit somewhere new in the lunchroom or deciding to try out a new game or activity on the playground or during PE class.
3. As the teacher, you can also make specific commitments to challenge gender norms in your classroom, such as rearranging the seating chart or assigning speaking roles during class readings without considering gender.

Reflection

After the designated period for the gender-neutral activity, make time for students to reflect on the experience. Reflection could be done through journal writing or as a class discussion. Here are some possible reflection questions.

- What activities or behaviors did you alter for the gender-neutral day?
- What was it like to try something new?
- How did other people respond to your changed behavior?
- What did you learn from this experience and how might it affect your future actions and choices?