



GAY STRAIGHT ADVOCATES FOR EDUCATION

Working to Make Every Student and Every Educator SAFE at School
Regardless of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression

Gender Box Activity

Goal: To demonstrate to students how many expectations are put on them to fit their gender stereotypes, and how these are more restrictive for boys. It also encourages them to defy the stereotypes, and support others who do.

1. Outline two boxes on the floor (with masking tape) with some space between them. Mark one with and F or G (for female or girl) and the other with M or B (for male or boy). Explain that these are the gender boxes that society tries to put us in.
2. Ask the group whether what they can do is limited by whether they are male or female (boy or girl). Are there some things they can't do because of their gender?
3. Show a number of objects, such as toys and clothes. Have the group identify whether the objects belong in the M box, the F box or either. Put them in the identified box, or in the middle, if either.
4. Most likely, very few objects will end up in the M box. Objects will be identified as being for girls, or for either. Discuss why this happened.
 - Who has more options in what they do, play with, and how they dress – boys or girls? (Girls) Is this fair?
 - What do people say when females do traditionally male things, like sports, or build with blocks or work on cars? (They get encouraged, i.e. “Good for you! You can do anything you set your mind to!” It is considered bettering themselves.)
 - What do people say when males do traditionally female things, like dress-ups or play with dolls or dance? (They get discouraged, made fun of, called a “girl” or “gay.” It is considered lowering themselves.)
 - If students are old enough to understand, make the connection between heterosexism and sexism – masculine traits are considered superior to feminine ones in our culture.
5. Discuss whether we want both boys and girls at this school to get to do whatever, or dress however they want to. How can we support each other (be allies) in this effort?
6. Have student volunteers step into the box marked with their sex (M or F) and say:
“I am a male (or female) and I step out of my gender box because I _____”
As they fill in the blank with something they like to do that is not traditional for their gender, they can step out of the box. Teacher can start it off with an example. After each one does this, others should applaud to show their support.

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