

Lesson Plan: Gender Self Portrait

(based on content from *the Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know*)

Curriculum Connections

Arts Education 5/6/7

- Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through the arts

PHE 5/6/7

- Describe and assess strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying
- Influences on individual identity, including sexuality and sexual identity

Rationale

This lesson will help students to think critically about the ways that traditional gender expectations limit a person's potential and self-expression. It will also explore the harm, stigmatization and bullying of people who challenge gender expectations.

Lesson Plan

Facilitate a discussion with students about how they are expected to look and act based on their gender. Encourage them to reflect on expectations held by their friends, family, and school.

Tell the students they will be creating a collage that illustrates what gender expectations they have encountered in their life, and how their own identity may fit with and/or challenge these expectations. Provide an assortment of magazines and newspapers, as well as a legal-sized piece of paper for each student. Ask students to fold their paper so that two front flaps of equal size cover the middle of the sheet.

Figure 1. Flaps open.



On the inside (Figure 1), ask the students to create a collage representing who they really are. On the front flaps ask the students to create a collage of who they are supposed to be, based on their gender.

Afterwards, ask students to form a circle with their chairs and invite volunteers to share their collage, to the extent that they feel comfortable. Elicit ways that traditional gender expectations are enforced (through the erasure of gender diversity and the stigmatization and bullying of people who are different). Draw attention to how this affects people who do not conform to gender expectations. Invite students to think critically about whether traditional gender expectations do harm.

This activity was adapted from an activity in the Straightlaced curriculum guide by Ground Spark, 2009.