Gender Equity in Early Childhood

Promoting Equality, Preventing Violence

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The Early Years… Imagine!

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world.”

— Nelson Mandela
#Re-draw the balance...
Violence against Women In Australia

To end men’s violence against women we need to challenge the foundations of violence.

Source: Our Watch Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.
Why is Gender Equity important in Early Childhood?

1. Effective promotion of children’s learning and development
   - How we contribute to their world: language, toys, materials, books, displays, music…

2. Intrinsically linked to NQF, EYLF practice principles and learning outcomes
   - ‘Equity and Diversity’, ‘High Expectations for Every Child’, ‘Respectful Relationships and Responsive Engagement’
3. Positive Impact on Workplace Culture
   - Role-modelling Equal and Respectful Relationships
   - Policy Framework
     - Workplace Response to Family Violence Policy
     - Interactions with Children Policy
     - Workplace Flexibility Norms

4. Create generational change!
YMCA and VicHealth Project

Objective: To ensure that all programs and services reflect the principles of gender equality and equal and respectful relationships.

- Three Year Project with a primary prevention
- Focus on Healthy Workplaces and Respectful Relationships
- Increasing women’s representation and leadership in the workplace
- Pilot approach across YMCA
Pilot: Gender Equity in Early Childhood

How?

• Challenging unconscious bias from Educators
• Encouraged us to think about…

What does equality look like in Early Childhood?

At the most micro level, discrimination impedes girls and women from achieving their individual hopes and dreams.
Our Actions

• Training on understanding gender, gender stereotyping, and gender equality
• Information on expectations for staff, including at induction
• Statement in all Position Descriptions regarding gender equity
• Audit of books, resources, play spaces
• Evaluated our philosophy, policies
Intentionality and Self-Reflection...

- Play spaces
- Educator Language (including jokes!)
- Representation of toys, books, drawings, music, posters...
- Conscious use of language in written evaluations
- Marketing and communications material
- Understand gender inequity hot spots

Dress up days, ‘When I grow up’ activities, outdoor play, arts and crafts, cooking, colours, greeting new siblings…
Embedding a Gender Lens

*Educators have an understanding about gender equity, unconscious bias, the importance of positive role models, and avoiding or eliminating negative stereotypes.*
Understanding Why…

‘Not only are they playing with only half the toys, they do not spend much time playing with children who are interested in other toys and begin to see each other as opposites.’

‘This perception of differences and segregation continue throughout development. That means that early toy play has an impact on social relationships across the genders.’

Source: Play Unlimited Website
But I **LOVE** pink!

There is nothing wrong with pink and princesses for girls as long as they are also free to play with toys that promote the development of other important skills. Conversely, there’s nothing wrong with boys playing with trucks and building model aeroplanes if they are also encouraged to nurture other aspects of themselves.

*Source: Play Unlimited Website*
Why is gender equity important in Early Childhood?

Create generational change!
Some Helpful Resources...

LEAN IN
WOMEN, WORK, AND THE WILL TO LEAD
SHERYL SANDBERG

Play Unlimited.
every toy for every body.

"If she can see it... she can be it."

Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

Our WATCH
End violence against Women And Their Children

Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016
THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice in the early years

You can Make a difference
www.maketelink.org.au

Delusions of Gender
The Real Science Behind Sex Differences
CORDERLIA FINE
Goodluck and enjoy the Conference!

KEEP SOME ROOM IN YOUR HEART FOR THE UNIMAGINABLE
MARY OLIVER