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Gender Equity**

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Gender Equity

– Cheryl Asmus

Gender equity moves a step beyond equal treatment of males and females. It means fair, just and impartial opportunities and expectations for both males and females.

Gender equity enhances the quality of life and well-being of all youth and families in our state. Aspects include pay equity for the workforce, opportunity and achievement in education and careers, political voice, criminal justice, health care and economic autonomy.

While Colorado ranks in the top third in four of five categories measuring the status of women in the states, women's median earnings are less than those of men (Institute for Women's Policy Research). Although women make up nearly half of the total labor force in Colorado, they hold only a quarter of technology positions, which tend to be higher paying. Nearly one-third of high-tech companies report no women in top management positions. Proportionately more women work in lower-paying positions. Women tend to earn less than men in the same positions (Women's Foundation of Colorado).

This issue of the *Briefs* touches on gender equity issues in education, justice and programming. Jan Evenstad of the Interwest Equity Assistance Cen-

ter discusses differences in achievement of girls and boys in the classroom. Susan Davis describes Girls E.T.C., a state-wide juvenile justice program that addresses specific needs of girls. Laurie Klith introduces gender-specific programming on the local level designed to meet needs of at-risk girls.

We have included a list of related Web sites.

– Cheryl Asmus, Ph.D., is coordinator of the Family and Youth Institute.

Gender Equity and Education

– Jan Perry Evenstad

As Coloradans anxiously await the results of the Colorado Student Assessment Program test (CSAP) given to students in grades 4, 8 and 10 in mid-February, questions of gender equity and testing come to mind. Will CSAP results be used to sort students for instruction? Will they be used to place students into a different level? Will they lead to further diagnosis of student learning? Will they provide information for teachers to make instructional changes?

Gender equity and Title IX cover both male and female students. One trend that arose out of analyzing test data is the emphasis on how poorly girls do in math and science compared to boys. This has led some schools to experiment with single-sex classrooms with the intention that girls would receive more atten-

tion from teachers, encounter less harassing and disruptive behavior, and improve in math and science.

According to Valerie Lee of the University of Michigan, who has researched single-sex secondary education for a number of years, comparing Catholic girls' schools and private independent girls' schools found few positive effects and even some negative results (Vojdik, 1997). Based on classroom observations, Lee found that single-sex classrooms were not free of sexism or sex bias.

Research from the Institute of Education at the University of London (1999) found that the influences of social class and previous academic achievement were more powerful indicators of academic success for students in girls' schools than the single-sex setting.

A study by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) indicated that girls' interest can be increased by career conferences focusing on math and science, summer math and science programs, and residential science institutes for girls (Vojdik, 1997).

In any classroom, the pattern of teacher-student interactions and range of acceptable behaviors influence the learning environment. Also, the curriculum needs to reflect a balance in male and female role models, as well as contributions of people of color. Experiments need to be conducted by both males and females, without females always being relegated to note-taker. A variety of teaching techniques needs to be incorporated to better match children's variety of learning styles.

When considering gender equity, academic achievement and testing, do not overlook boys. William Pollack in his book *Real Boys* (1998) points out how boys are not doing well in schools and especially in the academic areas of reading and writing. A long-time trend based on testing and achievement is the repetition of a grade level by boys.

The AAUW report indicated that

while girls tend to get higher grades, boys tend to score higher on standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). However, gender differences in test scores are decreasing. Test score differences are more closely related to socioeconomic status than gender.

Test data need to be analyzed with a more specific focus for both girls and boys in order to provide a more complete picture of achievement. If we look at data on a particular student based on race, gender and socioeconomic status, we would have a better picture of who is making the grade as reflected by such instruments as the CSAP. By analyzing data even further, we can see where particular students are left behind. In light of President Bush's goal not to leave any child behind, we would benefit in getting a more comprehensive picture. Perhaps then we really can use data to inform teaching in the classroom where both boys and girls are successful.

– Jan Perry Evenstad is a research associate at the Interwest Equity Assistance Center, Colorado State University at Denver (Phone 303-623-9384).

Interwest Equity Center (<http://www.colostate.edu/programs/EAC/index.html>) is one of 10 regional equity assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The grant funding the center was submitted by the School of Education at Colorado State with the intent of bringing the resources of the university and strong technological capabilities into the delivery of services. The center and staff are housed in Denver at the Colorado State University Denver Center.

The center provides training and technical assistance to public school personnel, students, parents and community members. It supports access and equity in public schools for all students particularly as related to race, gender, and national origin. Its

services are available without charge to school districts in Colorado, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

References

Pollack, W. S. (1998). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York: Random House.

Press Release: Institute of Education (1999). Research casts doubt on single sex education being sole reason for success of girls' schools. London, England: Institute of Education, University of London.

Vojdik, Valerie K. (1997). Girls' schools after VMI [Virginia Military Institute]: Do they make the grade? *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*. World Wide Web: <http://www.law.duke.edu/journals/djglp/articles/gen4p69.htm>

Gender Equity Web Sites

- Institute for Women's Policy Research: <http://www.iwpr.org/>
- Status of Women in Colorado: <http://www.iwpr.org/states/pdf/co.PDF>
- Statistics and issues in science math and technology: <http://girlscount.org/media%5Fkit/issues/default.html>
- National female work trends: http://www.girlscount.org/articles/whole_article/emp_female_work_trends.html
- Report on how the software industry does not favor females' learning or interest styles: <http://www.wfco.org/WFCCyberpink.htm>
- Girls Count, a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding girls' education and career opportunities: <http://girlscount.org/>
- The Women's Foundation of Colorado, working to further equity for Colorado's women and girls: <http://www.wfco.org/>

– Elizabeth Garner is coordinator of County Information Services, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

Justice and Equity

– Susan Davis

In 1995, Colorado was faced with a formidable challenge – an increasing number of girls in the juvenile justice system and few available resources. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in Washington, D.C., called for states to develop gender-specific services for girls. At that time, most Colorado juvenile justice professionals said, “The services we offer are for boys and girls. Most of our clients are boys, but if a girl is referred, she is welcome to participate.” It was a “one size fits all” service-delivery system. However, it became evident that placing girls in programs designed for boys led to failure for both the girls and the program.

In 1996, the Colorado Juvenile Justice Council, the governor-appointed state advisory group for implementation of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in Colorado, formed Girls E.T.C. (Equitable Treatment Coalition) to address the unique needs of girls in our state. Gender-specific programming must provide services designed to intervene comprehensively in a young girl’s life. The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice staffs Girls E.T.C. and the council. The first order of business was to train juvenile justice professionals on the nature and purpose of gender-specific services and why these services were needed. About 600 people attended six regional training sessions.

Over 100 free copies of a four-hour interactive video training tape on gender-specific services have been distributed statewide. A newsletter is mailed four times a year to over 200 people. “Guidelines for Female-Specific Programs” outlines the unique needs of girls and provides research-based program ideas. On-site technical assistance for programs interested in expanding, enhancing or developing gender-spe-

cific services is available. Over 90 members of Girls E.T.C. primarily work with girls and meet six times a year to network, discuss issues and share program information.

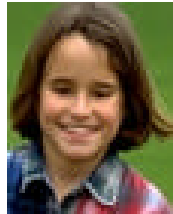
Gender-specific services are specific to the female experience and free from gender bias. They:

- meet the unique needs of females;
- value the female perspective;
- honor the female experience;
- celebrate the contributions of girls and women;
- respect female development;
- empower girls and young women to reach their full human potential;
- work to change established attitudes that prevent or discourage girls and young women from realizing their potential; and

• should be accurately designed around statistical data and developmental research that is verifiable and able to withstand critical analysis.

For more information, contact Susan Davis at the Division of Criminal Justice at 970-493-7932 (susan.davis@cdps.state.co.us) or the Girls E.T.C. Training Coordinator, Pam Turner at 970-221-3676 (pturner@lanminds.net).

– Susan Davis is the staff person for Girls E.T.C.



Programming for Equity

– Laurie Klith

In my work with Larimer County Sheriff’s Office and Probation Services, I saw many young people enter the juvenile justice system and felt that there had to be a way to help them earlier. I started the Center for Community Justice Partnerships (CCJP), a nonprofit organization, as a response to the need for advocacy for young people. We offer community advocacy for victims, crime and violence prevention workshops, bully-

proofing, restorative justice projects, a youth justice institute, and a young women’s series. CCJP builds community relationships, which improve trust levels and enhance community resource availability.

One of our main projects is to offer advocacy, education and outreach to young women who are ages 13 to 18. Our goal is to remove barriers for young women and create communities where women can participate as full and equal partners.

We are constructing a blueprint for a comprehensive continuum of gender-responsive prevention and intervention for young women. Scholars consistently have identified victimization – physical, sexual and emotional – as the first step along females’ pathways into the juvenile justice system. We focus on prevention instead of incarceration.

Gender-specific programming is designed around issues of gender development along with traditional programming. It is based on a profile of the characteristics of needs and life circumstances of young women entering the juvenile justice system. Programming is family-based and tailored to individual needs, including young women’s diverse racial and cultural background, innate strengths and resiliencies. We build on young women’s strengths while establishing relationships that support them and their families. The goal is to introduce strengths-based programs that address barriers and build on assets.

When young people become engaged and involved in the community, they feel a part of something. They also gain appreciation for their potential as citizens who can act effectively to solve their communities’ problems. This helps prevent crime and encourages young people to make contributions to society.

– Laurie Klith is executive director of the Center for Community Justice Partnerships (Phone 970-495-0084).

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Invitation to dialogue

What issues and concerns would you like to see addressed?

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Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Family and Youth Institute staff.

**Coming next:
Mental Health**