



Career and Technical Education: Equity Activities

- Equity Activities for Perkins Performance Indicators
- Increasing Nontraditional Enrollment in Your Classroom

Productivity and competitiveness demands that we fully utilize all potential workers. The ability of the education and workforce preparation system to meet the training and education needs of all future workers will have substantial impact on the economy. Full access to education and training must be available to all. An education and workforce preparation system that strives to be inclusive cannot merely open its doors and expect equity to happen. Deliberate action from everyone involved in the education and workforce preparation system must be taken to insure that barriers that limit opportunities are identified and corrected. While barriers to full participation have impacted both men and women, the economic inequities have had a greater impact on women, which is evident in the persistent wage gap.

According to a 2007 presentation by Gwen Rubenstein of the Workforce Alliance, 65% of women have less than an AA degree. These women typically earn less than \$25,000 annually. Efforts to improve access and opportunities are important because of the increasing reliance on women's wages for the well being of families. Women's low earnings have a direct impact on the number of children living in poverty. Women are the majority of participants in most federally funded training programs. Career counselors often have an opportunity to provide career exploration services to three generations at the same time. Meanwhile, women continue to be overrepresented in the lowest paid, lowest opportunity jobs in the economy. They comprise 79% of the administrative support workers and only 2% of workers in construction trades. With this, it is obvious that women's education and skills attainment have room to grow. The labor market needs skilled workers and will reward them. Women and men with specialized technical training can expect to earn half a million dollars more in their lifetime than someone who is working at a low-skill, minimum-wage job.

All students should be encouraged to explore career options based on their abilities and interests, not their gender. Gender-based obstacles appear in the early stages of formal instruction and continue throughout women's educational and career experiences. Barriers to equal educational opportunity for girls and women in science, math and technology-related areas prevent society from preparing its full pool of talent for the technologically sophisticated needs of employers. Such obstacles prevent girls and women from accessing the high wage opportunities available in technical fields. o adequately prepare all students to make educated choices, efforts must be made at the beginning of the educational process to present bias-free information to students and eliminate gender-biased attitudes and behaviors. Gender equity programs at later stages of the education process are necessary to reach students who have already received years of traditional training and messages about gender roles that may limit occupational choices. Counselors, teachers and parents play a crucial role in the decisions young people and returning adults make concerning career

choices. Their understanding of gender equity issues is fundamental to ensuring equitable educational environments.

To ensure all residents achieve economic self-sufficiency through rising real incomes, the following equity activities for Career and Technical Education are being presented.

Equity Activities for Perkins Performance Indicators

Student attainment of challenging state-established academic and career and technical skill proficiencies

- Enhancement activities such as tutoring and mentoring will be provided in areas in which learners have deficiencies.
- Teachers, students, and parents will be provided with information about the future workforce, skills required in the future, the importance of math, science, and technology education, the earning potential of various careers, and the importance of nontraditional employment opportunities.
- Students will research at least one nontraditional occupation as part of an academic and/or CTE class.
- Instruction will include applied academics to assist students in making the connection between school and their career choice. •
- A student evaluation will include a determination of whether the student is being exposed to all aspects of an industry including areas that are nontraditional for their gender.
- A list of available community resources will be compiled and disseminated to schools and programs.
- Barriers for specific learners will be identified and services needed to overcome those barriers will be determined. •
- Availability of vital support services including childcare, transportation, tutoring, preparatory training, support groups, and mentoring will be determined. A plan to address gaps in services will be developed.
- Linkages will be made with social services and community-based organizations to assist in meeting the support service needs of students.
- An on-site liaison/advocate will be designated to assess the needs of specific learners and assist them in accessing the services they need to fully participate.
- Technical assistance and in-service activities will include the following equity issues: gender role stereotyping, gender-fair language, gender-fair teaching, changing roles of women and men, labor market and workforce trends, impact of career choice on wages, nontraditional careers, balancing work and family, family-friendly work environment, and an environment free of racial and sexual harassment.
- Technical assistance and in-service activities will address serving special populations students including how students are defined and identified, what barriers prevent their full participation, and how services will be provided to overcome those barriers.
- Curriculum and instructional materials including computer software will be reviewed to determine if all materials are inclusive, represent diversity, and are gender fair. (Can all students see themselves, are all students represented, is the language inclusive, and are the graphics inclusive?)

Student Attainment of a Secondary School Diploma or Equivalent or a Postsecondary Degree or Credential

- An on-site liaison/advocate will be designated to assess the needs of specific learners and assist them in accessing the services they need to continue their education.
- An ongoing support system for nontraditional students is provided that includes a drop-in counseling program, time spent with female role models/mentors from various nontraditional shops/jobs, and job shadowing with employees in nontraditional occupations.

Placement in, Retention in, and Completion of Postsecondary Education or Advanced Training, Placement in Military Service, or Placement or Retention in Employment

- Placement staff is provided training on overcoming barriers to entry into nontraditional jobs.
- Opportunities are provided for nontraditional students to strategize on how to succeed in an occupation dominated by the other gender.
- Linkages are developed with employers to ensure all students have equal access to jobs.
- Articulation agreements have provisions for traditionally underrepresented populations to ensure equity in transition.
- Employers will be provided with information on nontraditional employment including opportunities and potential barriers.
- Follow-up studies will include the retention rate of students entering nontraditional occupations and their wage rate.

Student Participation in and Completion of Career and Technical Education Programs that Lead to Nontraditional Training and Employment

- Every student will be exposed to a full range of careers including those that are nontraditional for their gender.
- Prior to assessing students' career interests, they will be provided with career exploration activities, including the provision of experiences and information about high-wage, high-skill, and nontraditional jobs, access to role models in nontraditional careers, and visits to worksites.
- Career assessment will include interviews that draw out skills and interests learners may have that are transferable to nontraditional employment.
- Administrators, counselors, and teachers will be provided training and support on gender equity, nontraditional careers, and the needs of the future workforce.
- Posters, brochures, flyers, and other promotional materials will include nontraditional jobs, which feature photos and testimonials of women and minorities working in these occupations.
- Career fairs will include nontraditional occupations and role models that represent the workforce including those in nontraditional careers. •
- Recruitment materials feature pictures of students in nontraditional programs, emphasize information about the types of jobs in which nontraditional training will result, and indicate the salary range for entry-level and experienced workers.
- Women-owned and minority-owned businesses will be involved in all phases of planning and implementation of work-based learning experiences.
- Availability of work-based learning experiences in high-wage, high-skill jobs will be expanded.
- All participating businesses/organizations will receive an orientation about nontraditional careers and the composition of the future workforce and will be encouraged to require gender parity in the students they accept for placement.

- Training provided for workplace mentors will include awareness of gender issues and how to mentor students interested in nontraditional occupations.

Increasing Nontraditional Enrollment in your Classroom

Recruitment

- Help your school develop an equitable learning environment for all students where they are supported when making nontraditional course/career choices.
- Have nontraditional role models representing your occupational area participate in your school's career fair or other career activities.
- Obtain career information materials for the guidance and counseling program that show nontraditional members of that field.
- Develop a display or bulletin board in the main hallways of the school about careers in your program area. Have a majority of the photographs show nontraditional role models.
- Conduct a school-wide career interest survey and directly recruit those nontraditional students who have indicated an interest in careers in your program area.
- Have current nontrad students encourage others of their gender to participate in your services.
- Develop promotional materials (i.e., brochure, video, displays, bulletin boards, etc.) that show nontraditional students participating in the program.
- Sponsor an open house or special event that presents hands-on activities designed to encourage occupational exploration. Have nontraditional students and role models facilitate the activities.
- Offer a "summer camp" for nontraditional students to explore your program area. Include hands-on activities for career exploration. This can be held at your school, a community location, or a local college.
- Remember: Careers are everywhere. Encourage students to have ears and eyes open all the time. Take classroom time daily to mention or post examples on a bulletin board or write on a chalkboard. Reporting out give students an opportunity to practice public speaking.

Retention

- Monitor and maintain an equitable teaching environment in classrooms.
- Invite nontraditional role models as guest speakers. •
- Take field trips where students will meet nontraditional role models employed in their area of interest and see them working on-the-job. •
- Have students job shadow a nontraditional role model from breakfast to dinner to get an understanding of balancing work and family responsibilities.
- Develop a mentoring program where nontraditional students have nontraditional mentors.
- Offer additional support services to nontraditional students to ensure their success (i.e., tutoring, study groups, coaching, independent study, support groups, etc.).
- Involve parents of nontraditional students in a career awareness event using nontraditional role models and techniques they can use at home to encourage their child's success.
- Encourage students to take more advanced math and science courses.
- Have nontraditional role models displayed in all posters in the classroom.
- Eliminate curriculum materials that contain sex bias and stereotyping. •

- Use cooperative learning and team techniques for instruction. Vary teaching techniques in order to reach students with a variety of learning styles.
- Acknowledge the contributions of both men and women in program areas.
- Create an attractive classroom environment.
- Encourage a “can do” attitude; teach students to give themselves credit and take risks.
- Develop a safe classroom environment on nontrad students that is free from harassment.
- Encourage nontraditional students to participate in career and technical organization activities.
- Give special recognition to the highest achieving nontraditional student (i.e., breaking traditions award).

Placement

- Be sure all students are adequately trained and prepared prior to placement. Nontraditional students tend to be evaluated more harshly on the job.
- Place nontraditional students in workplace settings that support their differences.
- Develop an employer education program to assist in developing nontraditional friendly work environments.
- Teach students assertiveness skills.
- Develop a comprehensive sexual harassment training program for school staff, students, and employers.
- Ensure that co-op or any work place based program is an extension of the classroom. For more information on cooperative education, contact: Michael Stanger at: 717-772-4870.
- If paid work experiences are not available, encourage students to shadow and volunteer. Some of these opportunities may turn into paid employment.
- Document experiences, awards, transferable skills/operations, etc. Learning does not stop with graduation or when a requirement is met.
- Encourage students to keep setting goals-financial independence, wellness activities, personal relationships, business achievement, etc.

Developed by: Gender Equity Advisory Committee (GEAC) of the Illinois State Board of Education and Statewide Nontraditional Leadership Team (SNLT) of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board and revised by Jerilynn Millvan, PDE/BCTE in 2008.