

Pipeline Newsletter: Vol. 01- Issue 6, Spring 2011

COORDINATOR'S BRIEF

Girls need help making decisions about choosing a high school and selecting electives to study in later grades. Both decisions are very important and are also a girl's first opportunity to follow her passion and to begin to think about what her future could be like as well as begin to shape her career goals.

Schools can help make the decision-making process easier. For example, teachers and guidance counselors can help girls in the following ways:

- Those who like to design or decorate should be encouraged to consider carpentry or architecture.
- Those who are fascinated with cars should be encouraged to study auto mechanics or transportation technology.
- Those who show interest in computers should be encouraged to consider computer technology or graphic arts.

This guidance can help girls figure out what they like and what would be challenging, but also manageable and can lead to interesting careers. Teachers can go further and explain details such as coursework difficulty at high school. Most importantly teachers should encourage girls to think about how high school can prepare them for high wage careers.



At McKee H. S., student mentors provide support and encouragement to students exploring CTE electives. **Pictured above** is senior Victoria Caldwell who mentors some girls in the grade nine exploratory computer technology class. *Photo courtesy of McKee.*



Read more on page 2 about Femi Agana, a carpenter and interior designer. *Photo courtesy of Femi Agana*

CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Watch What You Say

'Girls can only do... and boys are better at...'

We have heard these words on many occasions and some of us have said them quite innocuously. Unfortunately, girls hear these words and often internalize the stereotypes when these words are voiced by those around them who have influence and power. Many medical and social scientists have agreed there is no "math or technical gene" in either sex that should influence the ability of girls to do well in subjects normally associated with boys. There are many studies that suggest that encouraging girls to pursue technical and scientific studies can lead to greater participation in related careers. The key to overcoming these negative stereotypes about girls' abilities is to constantly repeat positive messages about the capabilities of girls. Educators should always directly address sexist attitudes and assumptions, especially those in academic materials, including novels and primary historical sources.

Sometimes negative stereotypes can be nonverbal, but just as powerful. Every effort should be made to remove nonverbal stereotypes from the classroom. For example, avoid posters that only show men and women performing traditional gender jobs. It is important to ensure brochures and other materials given to students do not reflect gender stereotypes, but illustrate both men and women performing a variety of occupations.

Telling girls they 'can do...' should become our new habit.

HIGH SCHOOLS AT WORK	Grade 9 What's Next?	<p>Some students find it difficult to adjust to high school, while others think being in grade nine means they have 'arrived.' However, grade nine is just the first rung on the ladder and students must be properly prepared for grades 10-12. Students need guidance to figure out what electives they should choose, including whether they will be taking advance placement classes and why they are choosing a particular CTE elective. Ideally, each student should be paired with a mentor who meets regularly with the student to help her set goals as well as a tutor who will provide academic support and motivation for the student. The reality is that schools do not have the resources to provide these kinds of services but schools can still provide guidance through creative strategies.</p> <p>One strategy worth trying is having seniors mentor freshman students. During the course of the school year, mentors should meet their mentees at least once a month to discuss managing and surviving the upper grades. Schools may introduce this strategy as an afterschool club supervised by a shop teacher. Girls should be paired with other girls or boys who are themselves studying programs considered nontraditional for girls. This can help girls identify with both a positive peer and realistic role model. Schools should reward seniors for doing this community service. Strategies like this can also help to create a school environment that promotes positive reinforcement and that offers help with important decisions that students need to make.</p>	MIDDLE SCHOOL ZONE	Helping Parents Understand High School Choice	<p>Parents are the most influential during the process of students choosing a high school. However, this does not mean schools do not have a role or any influence in the high school choice process. Parents may have a personal and emotional bias about what their children should be studying. This bias can be addressed by the practical knowledge and assessment by the educator working with their children. Schools therefore have a duty to provide information to parents about various post secondary options and opportunities. In addition, schools have the important role of reminding parents that high school is about laying the groundwork so that students can access a multitude of opportunities after graduation. By providing information about nontraditional careers this can inspire more parents to encourage their daughters to consider nontraditional high school electives in technology, science, construction and math.</p> <p>One way to inform, support and influence parents is by introducing career workshops or including this discussion in presentations about choosing a high school. Any presentation should address gender stereotypes about careers girls are suited for and challenge parents to recognize that gender is never an obstacle because a majority of careers are gender neutral. Presentations should also emphasize that economic security, like job satisfaction, is an important career benefit. It is important to remember that parents do not have all the information and that they too need help in order to provide better guidance to their children.</p>
	WOMEN IN NONTRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS	<p>Femi Agana knew she loved designing and creating but in high school she was encouraged to study fashion. Today, she is a carpenter and interior designer. Femi did not abandon her creative skills to become a carpenter but rather recognized that these skills were transferrable. Femi is also a shop steward and member of the Carpenter's the Women's Committee. She is proud of her work with Women's Committee because she believes that by participating in her union it ensures not only her success but that of other women in her trade. Today, Femi supports and nurtures young women in the trades. She recently completed a 10-minute film on women in construction, which she screens at middle and high schools to increase girls' awareness about careers in the construction industry.</p>	GENDER EQUITY NEWS	<p>ABC Legal Analyst Dan Abrams has written a book from the perspective of a lawyer making a case. He presents studies and other "evidence" to prove that women are better than men in areas many believe males are superior. These areas include using a hammer, gambling, and even being better hedge-fund managers. "Man Down" is a fun book to bring to an ELA class. Both girls and boys will be surprised by Abrams research which challenges many stereotypes.</p>	
	<p>THE NEWSLETTER WILL BE ISSUED MONTHLY.</p> <p>Next issue: May 2011. If you have a gender equity activity/event submit information to bwatson@legalmomentum.org. Deadline for the next issue: Friday, May 6, 2011.</p>	ABOUT US	<p>The Pipeline Project is designed to create effective recruitment and retention strategies for girls exploring non-traditional career opportunities; provide technical assistance on compliance with the gender equity requirements of Title IX and the Carl Perkins Act; and develop systemic approaches to gender segregation in CTE schools and career training tracks.</p> <p>Legal Momentum is dedicated to advancing rights and opportunities for women and girls. Founded in 1970 as the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, our work focuses on economic security/justice and freedom from gender-based violence. Legal Momentum has developed nationally-recognized expertise and precedent-setting cases focused on the employment rights of women, as well as programs that challenge discrimination and expand opportunities for women and girls in historically male-dominated fields such as the skilled trades.</p>		