

# **eccdc**

early childhood community development centre  
Understanding the Early Years



# **DESIGNING GENDER- ADVANTAGED PROGRAMMING**

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# Designing Gender-Advantaged Programming

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## Agenda

1. Introductions, Agenda, Intended Outcomes
2. Overview of Knowledge on Gender Differences
3. More Local Information, Tips, and Discussion
4. Resources and mini 'Make & Take'
5. Closing/Evaluation

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## Learning Outcomes

1. Increase understanding of gender differences and similarities in development and learning.
2. Understand the benefit of designing gender-advantaged programming.
3. Identify and share strategies, activities, and resources for designing gender-advantaged programming.

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## The Evidence is Mounting!

- Brain-based research shows similarities between boys' and girls' brains and how they grow, develop, and work (Barry et al., 2004; Blanton et al., 2004; Hindmarsh, O'Callaghan, Mohay, & Rogers; 2000; Sylwester, 1995).
- **But**, boys and girls' brains are wired differently and there are differences in how boys and girls play, learn, and interact.

However, remember that each child is an individual who should not be limited by gender stereotyping.

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## Local findings

### District School Board of Niagara (DSBN; 2005)

- Boys and girls do not differ greatly in cognitive ability as shown in testing.
- Boys and girls score similarly well in mathematics in the primary and later grades.
- Boys show a slight advantage in their ability to use numbers and girls in verbal and memory abilities.

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## Local findings (continued)

### Understanding the Early Years (UEY; 2005 & 2006)

- Overall the majority of boys and girls are ready to learn in Niagara Falls and the Niagara Region.
- However, girls were ready for school more often than boys were.

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## Local findings (continued)

### Boys' & Girls' Advantages (UEY 2005 & 2006)

#### Attending JK

- Significantly higher scores in readiness to learn in school EDI\* domains\*\*.

#### Attending part-time preschool

- Significantly higher scores in Physical Health & Well-being and Communication Skills & General Knowledge EDI domains.

**Early learning and care programs appear to have a positive effect on readiness to learn in school!**

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## Why Gender-Advantaged Programming?

Build on your successes so far and increase the likelihood of optimal healthy development through programming that:

- reflects the needs of both boys and girls; as well as
- nurtures individual growth and development.

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## Setting the Stage

Experiencing safety and stability through bonding, attachment, and supervision is a critical foundation to optimal, healthy development.

The following tips/strategies establish a sense of well-being in the brain and allow it to more fully focus on learning.

# Designing Gender-Advantaged Programming

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## Strategies

1. Small ratio of children to teacher/caregiver
2. Bonding activities that are appropriate for both genders (i.e. activities and labeled 'cubbies' for boys and verbal praise for girls)
3. Ordered, daily, and consistent practices and schedules
4. Showing a genuine interest in each child through using his/her name, making eye contact, smiling, touching when appropriate, giving choices, allowing for mistakes when learning, providing appropriate praise, and listening - then listening some more

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## Discussion

1. Do the overall findings on gender coincide with your experience?
2. Do you have any additional research information or insights on gender differences or similarities?
3. What additional bonding strategies, transition activities, and/or scheduling practices have you found effective?

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## Reading/Literacy

- Girls show stronger reading achievement than boys as early as Grade 1 and this trend continues into secondary school (DSBN, 2005).
- Almost half (44.2%) of boys considered vulnerable had difficulties:
  - participating in games involving the use of language;
  - being understood by others; or
  - understanding others; and
  - had trouble with native language (UEY, 2005).

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## Strategies

### For both girls & boys:

- give lots of choice in what is read;
- create a book rich environment; and
- provide materials on topics that both genders find interesting (i.e. fiction for girls and non-fiction & action stories for boys).

### Strategies for boys:

- talk less when giving instructions; and
- help them use concrete, emotion-laden words to express what they feel rather than actions.

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## Discussion

1. Do the findings on literacy/reading coincide with your experience?
2. Do you have any additional research information or insights on gender differences in literacy?
3. What books, reading activities, and language-based games do you recommend?

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## Vulnerability

### DSBN (2005)

- More boys are identified as 'gifted'.
- However, more boys are identified with behavioural and learning disabilities through the Special Education processes.

### UEY (2005)

- Boys were identified more often as 'vulnerable' than females and among these children:
  - 37% were found to never, or almost never, show most of the helping behaviours\*\*\*; and
  - 20% showed most of the aggressive behaviours\*\*\*\*.

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## Strategies for Managing Aggression

### Encourage boys to:

- use concrete, emotion laden words to express what they feel rather than actions;
- redirect bumping, hitting, etc., to inanimate objects- Nerf bat, cushions;
- shadow box and work with their natural aggressive nurturance to show them what is acceptable and what is not;
- address the bruise or hurt when an injury occurs; and
- use bonding activities e.g., 'high five' game\*\*\*\*\*.

### Encourage girls to:

- redirect cruel words and name calling to words that explain feelings.

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## Discussion

1. Do the findings coincide with your experience?
2. Do you have any additional research information or insights on differences between boys and girls ?
3. Are there any other strategies or activities that you have found helpful in addressing vulnerabilities of boys and/or girls (i.e. behavioural, learning disabilities, and other special needs) ?

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## Attitudes Towards Learning

DSBN (2005)

- Boys' attitudes are less positive than girls' in school learning.
- Boys enjoy math but do not like reading and writing, nor the books and materials as much as girls.
- Boys are less likely to complete work or follow rules.
- Boys do not like school as much as girls.

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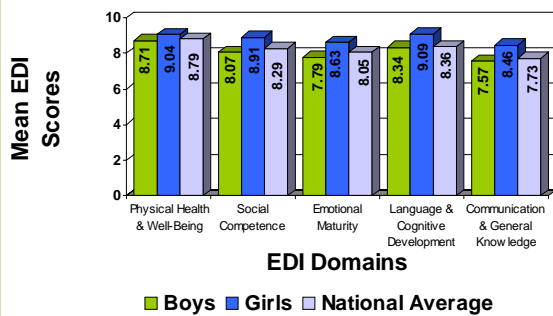
## Less Enjoyment and Lower Scores...

UEY (2005 & 2006)

- Boys' EDI mean scores in the Niagara Region were significantly lower than girls', and below the national averages, in all readiness to learn domains.
- Boys' EDI means scores in Niagara Falls were significantly below the national averages on all the domains, except Language & Cognitive Development. Boys scored significantly lower than girls in all of the school readiness to learn domains.

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## Gender Comparisons with National Average (UEY, 2006)



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## Strategies for boys

- Make learning experiential with lots of concrete activities and manipulatives.
- Talk less when giving instructions.
- Use the high energy of boys to assist in cleaning up activity centers and moving things around the play area and then use lots of praise.
- Teach sewing/beadwork to increase boys' fine motor skills.
- Create a book rich environment on topics that they find interesting.

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## Strategies for girls

- Use lots of manipulatives to increase math and science learning.
- Make scientific things experiential (i.e. use a water/sand table).
- Encourage playing with puzzles to help perceptual learning.
- Play active ball games (i.e. kick ball) to increase girls' gross motor skills.
- Use lots of praise, even more than you think, for activities that are well done.
- Identify girls who have high energy but may be intimidated by loud boys and help them to become leaders.
- Have areas where they can safely climb to help increase their experience with three-dimensional space.

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## Discussion

1. Do the findings coincide with your experience?
2. Do you have any additional research information or insights on attitudes toward learning?
3. Are there any other strategies/activities that you have found helpful in addressing overall attitudes towards learning and/or specific subjects?

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## Resources and Make & Take

- Ruth Lawryk

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## Thank you!

Kindly complete an evaluation. With appreciation,  
Janet, Marion, Glory & Ruth



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\*EDI – The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a teacher-completed checklist of behaviour and development indicators that reports on populations of children, aged 5-6, at the community level. The checklist is usually completed well into the school year of senior kindergarten. The EDI is a population and not a diagnostic measure and the results are one source of data only. EDI data should be used in combination with other sources, such as those found on the Regional Municipality of Niagara's website [http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health\\_wellness/reports/default.aspx](http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health_wellness/reports/default.aspx), when using it for the purposes of planning and decision-making.

\*\*Domains - Language & Cognitive Development, Physical Health & Well-being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, and Communication Skills & General Knowledge

\*\*\* Helping behaviours mentioned include not helping someone who was hurt, sick, or upset and not inviting bystanders to join in (UEY, 2005).

\*\*\*\* Aggressive behaviours include physical fights, kicking or biting others, taking other people's things, being disobedient, or having temper tantrums.

Note: Some of the behaviours exhibited by boys (and girls) may not be signs of a disability. Appropriate interventions, in some cases, can remediate antisocial behaviours and challenges in learning (DSBN, 2005).

\*\*\*\*\*High Five Game - Give me five, up high, down low, and pulling your hand away so the child misses but tries to make contact. The competition for the boys to be quicker creates a connection with the caregiver. Boys enjoy the nurturance through physical contact.

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## Understanding the Early Years

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