

P•A•R•T A

Framework for Action
on
Gender Equity
in Schooling

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSES OF THIS FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools is the result of the work of the Gender Equity Taskforce and Reference Group, working under the auspices of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). The Gender Equity Taskforce is responsible for providing advice which will enable improved educational outcomes for girls and boys in Australian schools.

Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools proposes broad areas for action which will be taken up, in partnership with parents, by the systems and sectors in the states and territories in ways which are consistent with their authority and responsibility for school education.

The document is in two parts:

- Part A: the Framework itself provides a context for the work of the Taskforce, outlines the principles and strategic areas for action and the reporting mechanisms which trace progress at school, sector and system level
- Part B: the Perspectives is a series of papers, generated by the Gender Equity Taskforce, which provide background reading and which have informed the development of the Framework.

The Framework is designed for use by schools and systems, education practitioners, parents and school communities. It builds on the work already undertaken through the *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* and the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97*¹. The Framework will operate in tandem with the National Action Plan which is operational until 1997. The National Action Plan will continue to be the subject of reporting through the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (for 1995, 1996 and 1997). The Framework draws upon growing understandings about the construction of gender and its implications for policy and practice, as well as developments in education which examine the differences in the experiences and outcomes of schooling for both girls and boys, and for different groups of girls and boys².

Ten principles for action have been developed by the Gender Equity Taskforce, and these underpin the series of strategic directions outlined in the Framework. These principles are integral to the broad intentions of the Framework, as well as to the strategies themselves.

A Framework for Australian Schools is based on five strategic directions for action in the areas of:

- understanding the process of construction of gender
- curriculum, teaching and learning

¹ It is important that the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* is read as a companion document to this Framework.

² Throughout this document reference is often made to different groups of girls and boys. This acknowledges that girls and boys should not be seen as homogenous groups and recognises differences based on factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability, sexual preference or rural/urban location.

- violence and school culture
- post-school pathways
- supporting change.

Specific outcomes are provided for each strategic direction, together with a range of approaches and strategies which will ensure that the overall intentions of the Framework are achieved.

The strategic directions are intended for use at every level of schooling and are relevant to girls and boys from the early years of schooling to the post-compulsory years. They are also intended to provide support to work already under way in sectors and states and territories. It is assumed that they will be implemented within the context of the systems and sectors which are party to the agreements through MCEETYA.

The approach in this Framework has been one which strives for practical applications which flow from understanding gender equity, and which will impact on the daily experiences of girls and boys in schools. It is also mindful of current and possible future developments within education which include, for example, developments in civics education, key competencies and information technology.

Each strategic direction includes indicators of improvement, which are intended to achieve two purposes:

- The first is to provide information for accountability purposes, within existing agreements for national reporting, such as the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* and sample surveys, and within existing state and sector arrangements.
- The second is to provide information which will indicate useful directions and demonstrate progress towards achieving the strategic directions at school and system/sector levels. The indicators are designed to focus on improvements in both process and outcomes and they rely on qualitative as well as quantitative data.

The second part of this Framework, *Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling*, contains nine papers and a comprehensive list of resources. These papers, prepared either for the Promoting Gender Equity Conference by individual authors, or for the Gender Equity Taskforce by experts in the field, are grouped together non-sequentially, in a way which will allow readers to access particular information on various issues pertaining to gender equity. At the end of each strategic direction readers are directed to the appropriate paper for further reading and, at the end of the Perspectives document, a list of relevant resources is provided.

BACKGROUND

Gender equity in schooling is based on understanding that differences in experiences and outcomes in education for girls and boys arise from the impact of gender on the expectations, interests and behaviours of both sexes. It acknowledges that the impact is often one which constrains and limits, rather than expands, options and possibilities for girls and women, and boys and men. It also acknowledges that, as with other areas of

human experience, the construction of gender is able to be understood, and is capable of change.

The concepts of gender equity and the construction of gender are examined in the accompanying papers, 'Understanding the Process of Gender Construction' (page 26) and in 'Curriculum, Teaching and Learning' (page 33).

The Gender Equity Taskforce

The MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce was commissioned to provide advice on future action for the achievement of gender equity in schools, sectors and systems, and to report on implementation of the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97*.

In February 1995, the Gender Equity Taskforce and its subgroup, The Gender Equity Reference Group, sponsored a national conference, Promoting Gender Equity, designed to assist it in addressing some central questions about gender and educational disadvantage. The proceedings of this conference set down aspects of current knowledge about the causes and effects of gender inequality in schools. They have been published and distributed widely and have provided broad parameters for the ongoing work of the Taskforce.

The work of the Taskforce has also been informed by the experiences of the many educators who have grappled with putting the theory into practice within schools and the systems which support them. Many of the papers prepared for the conference have referred to the significant contribution made by those who have engaged in the reform process, in thinking through and coming to grips with the interplay of factors which contribute to the inequalities still evident in education.

The current work of the Taskforce also acknowledges the changes and achievements which have taken place since formal and public work in this area of education has been undertaken.

Context

It is now 20 years since International Women's Year and the publication in 1975 of *Girls, Schools and Society*, the first investigation into the issue of gender equity in schools in Australia. Since then, there have been many social, political, economic and legislative changes which have had an impact on the lives of women and girls and men and boys. These include:

- the introduction of the *Family Law Act 1975*
 - the introduction of national equal opportunity legislation (1984), and comparable state legislation, and of other legislation which addressed sexual harassment
 - the increasing numbers of women in the paid workforce and the changing images of women in the public arena as women moved into positions and professions previously the prerogative of men
 - the establishment of women's policy units in both national and state/territory government departments, and in other public and private sector organisations
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- international agreements, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (1981) which have provided governments with a framework for enacting legislation to promote equality between women and men
- the introduction of policies, practices and structures which demonstrate the commitment of all states, territories and sectors within the education system to achieving equitable educational outcomes for girls and boys.

The Australian Education Council established the *National Policy for the Education of Girls* in 1987. *The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* was released by the Australian Education Council in 1993. The directions for action were firmly based on the national policy and derived from a review of the implementation of the policy. The National Action Plan focused on action to address areas of reform essential to improving education for all girls. The implementation of the National Action Plan was overseen by the National Committee on the Education of Girls and more recently by the MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce established in 1994. In 1993 parent organisations called for a focus on the specific educational needs of boys. The terms of reference of this Taskforce were formulated to take account of the issue.

The *National Strategy for Equity*, released by MCEETYA in 1994, provides a broad framework for nationally agreed goals and priorities, which build on state, territory and Commonwealth policies and programs addressing equity objectives. Both the principles which underpin the strategy, and the strategy itself, focus on improving access, participation and schooling outcomes.

Work in this area has operated within the framework established by the *Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in Australia*. Through this the states, territories and sectors demonstrated their commitment to providing an excellent education for all students, so that they can participate actively and fully in all aspects of the life of the community after they leave school. However, girls and women still suffer many inequities because they have less access to participation in policy and decision-making and their contributions to community life are often undervalued. Boys and men, on the other hand, also suffer inequities through narrow definitions of what is appropriate for them in private and public life.

Gender equity for boys and girls

To address the differing concerns and education experiences of boys and girls it is necessary to acknowledge that gender is a central issue for both girls and boys. It is clear that boys have needs that are not being met effectively by schools. Narrow versions of masculinity and obsolete views of men's and women's roles restrict boys' opportunities in relation to their educational and social development, vocational experiences, and therefore their subsequent life chances.

There has been acknowledgment that girls are often disadvantaged by their school experiences, and that girls and boys achieve markedly different outcomes from their schooling. Despite the fact that girls now stay longer at school than boys, they are not deriving the same post-school benefits from schooling. There are also significant differences between the rewards of schooling experienced by different groups of girls and different

groups of boys. It is also acknowledged that to address inequities experienced by girls it is necessary to look at the same time at the education of boys.

This view is supported by a closer examination of both the experience and outcomes of schooling, particularly as they apply to different groups of girls and boys. Differences in subject choices, differences in skill development and significantly different life experiences related to the impact of gender construction³ are evident in the lives of both boys and girls.

Examination of current participation rates in school subjects, activities and programs and of the post-school lives of girls and boys, reveals the following:

- while girls are increasingly entering many traditionally male subject areas and some are achieving better results, overall they are participating in these at significantly lower levels than boys
- boys' participation remains concentrated in subjects traditionally seen as 'male-appropriate'
- boys continue to predominate in literacy, reading and other learning support programs, as well as in those for students with emotional or behavioural disturbances
- the interactive effects of gender with other factors, such as cultural background and socio-economic status, have differential impacts on particular groups of girls and boys
- sexual harassment and sex-based harassment including homophobia continue to have an unacceptable impact on the school experience of girls and some boys
- schools and communities increasingly acknowledge that violence in schools is related to limited understandings of 'appropriate' femininity and masculinity
- there is a greater likelihood of male involvement in violence, risk-taking behaviours, and behaviours destructive of emotional and physical health
- the consequences of girls and boys continuing to narrowly define gender may be reflected in more limited post-school career options for girls than boys, and in boys being less likely to experience positive and active involvement in family life
- school achievements in gender equity do not necessarily translate into reforms in the workplace or the wider community, and schools do not always teach those skills necessary to overcome post-school barriers to equity
- despite the increasing number of women entering occupations that are identified as masculine, women remain under-represented in management and executive positions and within the full range of decision-making forums which shape society
- women and girls carry the greater share of unpaid work, while boys and men have less involvement in caring and family roles
- women predominate in lower-paid and part-time occupations and therefore have lower incomes than men.

³ See the accompanying papers, 'Understanding the Process of Gender Construction', and 'Curriculum, Teaching and Learning' in Part B of the Framework: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

These phenomena are part of the complex dynamic of gender, schooling and society, creating a range of interpretations of masculinity and femininity.

As Connell (1994) states:

... gender is a pattern of social relations that exists at multiple levels in and around schools: in institutional patterns, in interpersonal relations, and in culture. Gender relations divide, positioning people and actions as masculine and feminine, but also shape common frameworks of action. Gender relations are constantly under construction, contain significant tensions, and therefore have many possibilities of change.

Patterns of participation in further education, employment and levels of income also show differences in the experiences of men and women which can be linked to the unexamined acceptance of the 'gender divide'. This is becoming increasingly outmoded as technology, work restructuring and community views about participation and equality are played out in the daily lives of the community. These changes in the nature of work, and in the structure and nature of the family, all have implications for the lives of women, which have been widely commented on and which are now well known. Less attention has been paid to the fact that these changes have also had significant impact on the lives of men.

Women and men now must work alongside each other as subordinates, peers and supervisors in almost all areas of work, as women increasingly make inroads into areas never before available to them—as commercial pilots, as members of Antarctic scientific teams, in the military, and so on. Similarly, men are moving into areas of work previously the domain of women—for example, nursing and child care.

Relations and expectations between women and men have been fundamentally altered by these new arrangements, and so too have women's and men's perceptions about what it means to be female and male in our society. Despite these changes in certain parts of society, ingrained attitudes still exist that create barriers which prevent some women and some men reaching their full potential.

Changes in the community are accelerating and young men and women will be participating in a society which is characterised by both individual and systemic responses to those changes. Inevitably, responses will be centred on the reforming and reframing of structures in society as well as the personal lives of community members.

The community looks to education as one of the main agents in the preparation of young people for participation in work, civic and domestic life. *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* is therefore a response to developing understandings about the demands of our society in the future; to the growth in knowledge about the impact of gender and gender construction on human life in and beyond schooling; and to the need for strategic directions for action.

REFERENCE

Connell, RW (1994), 'Knowing about masculinity, teaching the boys', paper delivered at the Pacific Sociological Association Conference, San Diego, April, 1994.

GENDER EQUITY IN SCHOOLING

PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

The principles for action have been developed to encapsulate best practice in education for all students, and to link the best practice to the demands of a vigorous and changing community. These principles draw upon current understandings of the issues which are central to gender equity, and are the foundation for *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*.

1. Equitable access to an effective and rewarding education, which is enhanced rather than limited by definitions of what it means to be female and male, should be provided to all girls and boys.
 2. Girls and boys should be equipped to participate actively in a contemporary society which is characterised by changing patterns of working, civic and domestic life.
 3. Schools should be places in which girls and boys feel safe, are safe, and where they are respected and valued.
 4. Schools should acknowledge their active role in the construction of gender, and their responsibility to ensure that all organisational and management practices reflect commitment to gender equity.
 5. Understandings of gender construction should include knowledge about the relationship of gender to other factors, including socio-economic status, cultural background, rural/urban location, disability and sexuality.
 6. Understanding and accepting that there are many ways of being masculine and feminine will assist all students to reach their full potential.
 7. Effective partnerships between schools, education and training systems, parents, the community, and a range of other agencies and organisations, will contribute to improvement and change in educational outcomes for girls and boys.
 8. Intervention programs and processes should be targeted towards increasing options, levels of participation and outcomes of schooling for girls and boys.
 9. Anti-discrimination and other relevant legislation at state, territory, federal and international levels should inform educational programs and services.
 10. Continuous monitoring of educational outcomes and program review should inform and enhance decisions on the development, resourcing and delivery of effective and rewarding education for girls and boys.
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NATIONAL MONITORING MECHANISMS

In order to put the principles for action into practice, improved monitoring and reporting procedures are needed which can demonstrate success and critically analyse failure. Much useful information already exists in national data collections. However, where needed, new mechanisms should be designed to monitor the implementation and outcomes using the indicators for improvement within the Framework. These mechanisms, on a national basis, will provide consistency in findings and comparability of data over time. Base-line data, disaggregated by factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability and rural/urban location, need to be established as soon as possible. Suggested monitoring mechanisms include the following:

Periodic national audits/surveys to determine such matters as:

- the content, participation and outcomes, with respect to gender equity, of all professional development courses for teachers
 - teachers' attitudes and teaching practices which reflect an understanding of gender construction
 - school and system initiatives to promote gender-inclusive approaches to curriculum and resourcing
 - school and system practices for the recruitment of teachers which incorporate understandings of gender in their selection criteria
 - quality assurance procedures which include principles of gender equity
 - the extent to which gender equity principles are reflected in curriculum frameworks
 - students' attitudes and knowledge about the construction of gender and its relationship to other demographic factors
 - student attitudes about the processes of teaching and the quality of their learning experience
 - student attitudes to sex-based harassment, awareness of complaints procedures and sense of personal safety at school
 - the range and availability of vocational training programs offered in schools, and the extent to which gender equity principles are reflected in their curriculum
 - parents' and students' attitudes to gender issues in the context of the impact of gender on an individual student's development.
 - levels of parent participation in forums with teachers to discuss mutual concerns about girls and boys
 - the coverage of gender issues in school, system and parent forums and publications.
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Reporting mechanisms

In reporting through the *Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia*, systems should include information on the way in which gender issues have been addressed in each of the selected focus areas. This may include:

- levels of student participation and attainment in key subject areas in the secondary years, vocational education and training programs, and patterns of student transition to post-school destinations
 - changes in the direction of funding
 - major program and policy developments including policies to monitor sex-based harassment and school violence
 - significant achievements in attaining gender equity including those which target particular groups of girls and boys
 - examples of best practice across all levels of schooling, of programs to address sex-based harassment and behaviour management programs which represent a whole of school approach to gender and violence
 - anticipated work in this area.
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STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF GENDER CONSTRUCTION

Understanding of the process of gender construction is crucial if schools and systems are to work for equitable educational experiences for girls and boys. Dominant concepts of masculinity and femininity define males and females as opposites by highlighting their differences and assigning them unequal value, status and power. These dominant concepts limit, in different ways, expectations of girls' and boys' participation and post-school outcomes. They ignore the way boys and girls actively develop their own concept of what it means to be masculine or feminine and how this may change over time and in different contexts. They also ignore the relationship of gender to other factors, such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability, sexuality and rural/urban location.

Increasingly attention is being given to the negative and positive impact schooling can have on the construction of gender. Development of appropriate curriculum will increase the knowledge and skills of the whole education community to better understand gender construction and improve current gender relations.

Outcome

The concept of gender construction will be acknowledged, examined and understood at all levels of schooling

Develop and deliver curriculum within compulsory and post-compulsory frameworks which provide opportunities for girls and boys to:

- study perspectives on the construction of gender within different historical, cultural and socio-economic contexts
- examine and challenge current gender-based relationships which limit options for different groups of girls and boys
- explore the role of language in the construction of gender
- critically examine the influence of popular culture on gender
- understand the impact of gender construction from early childhood to the post-compulsory years
- develop skills, behaviours, attitudes and understandings that will enable them to construct equal and respectful relationships.

Increase the knowledge, understanding and skills of teachers, managers and parents about gender construction by:

- investigating and identifying the appropriate skills which teachers and managers need to deal with gender construction and its impact on the lives of boys and girls
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- identifying ways that teachers, managers and parents can overcome resistance to learning about gender construction
- ensuring that existing and future Commonwealth, state, territory and sector professional development programs, such as the National Professional Development Program, include a focus on the construction of gender in all curriculum areas
- ensuring that parents and teachers work in partnership to explore the issues and develop consistent approaches to achieving gender equity.

Indicators of improvement

- an increase in opportunities across all curriculum areas for students to examine how gender is constructed
- an increase in the provision of, and participation in, professional development courses for teachers and managers which include an examination of gender equity issues
- an increase in the provision of, and participation in, parent/teacher forums on gender equity
- an increase in the proportion of teachers whose teaching practices are gender inclusive
- students are more aware of issues relating to the construction of gender
- classroom dynamics demonstrate improved relationships between girls and boys, boys and boys and, girls and girls.

For background information on this strategic direction and understanding of the concept of 'construction of gender', refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Understanding the Process of Gender Construction', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

2. CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING

The formal curriculum of the school plays a vital role in students' learning about gender relations and in developing a sense of self. Curriculum is fundamental to change, and should be continually trialed, examined and adapted to ensure that it is appropriate. Curriculum reform, through frameworks such as the Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools, will incorporate principles of gender equity into all aspects of curriculum development and delivery. By recognising existing best practice and through constant monitoring, schools will ensure that both girls' and boys' experiences and outcomes of schooling are positive and relevant to their aspirations.

Outcome

Curriculum reform will acknowledge and address gender equity principles in meeting the needs of both girls and boys

Expand teaching and learning within nationally agreed curriculum frameworks, pre-school to Year 12, in ways which:

- incorporate the range of experience, knowledge, skills and aspirations of women and girls as well as that of men and boys
- examine how aspects of current understandings of masculinity and femininity are linked to behaviours which are damaging to boys and men, and girls and women
- ensure that the principles and understandings of gender equity are integral to curriculum development, assessment design and implementation in all key learning areas
- ensure that the curriculum addresses the issues of paid and unpaid work
- develop benchmarks for assessing key competencies which benefit both girls and boys.

Enhance the academic success of all girls and boys by:

- creating the expectation from the earliest years of schooling that literacy and numeracy are core expectations for both girls and boys
 - ensuring that early intervention for girls and boys, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, is sensitive to the impact of the construction of gender
 - investigating and developing responses to differences in participation and achievement for particular groups of girls and boys
 - placing a higher value on participation and achievement in the arts and the humanities for both boys and girls
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- challenging teacher, parent and community attitudes and responses to the continuing sex segregation apparent in subject choices
- establishing links between what girls and boys are learning and their post-school aspirations.

Provide both girls and boys with a powerful basis for engaging in the emerging areas of the curriculum by:

- enabling all groups of girls and all groups of boys to become competent and confident users of all aspects of information technology
- ensuring that the development and delivery of the civics and citizenship curriculum acknowledges and incorporates gender equity principles
- ensuring that enterprise education initiatives with business and industry acknowledge and include gender equity principles and understandings.

Create teaching and learning environments for girls and boys which are characterised by:

- an overall school organisation that is gender-inclusive
- teacher attitudes and behaviours which demonstrate respect for, and have high expectations of, all girls and boys
- reasonableness and flexibility in response to personal circumstances, particularly in situations where students are at risk in gender-specific ways (e.g. pregnancy)
- challenges to disruptive and dominating behaviour within a framework of procedures which reflect an understanding of gender equity
- a range of teaching and assessment, recording and reporting methods
- reduced levels of anxiety and antipathy towards gender equity
- the use by teachers and students of the knowledge and skills needed to actively engage in changing gender relations.

Indicators of improvement

- more schools use information on participation and achievement by gender in planning for improvement
 - an increase in the rates of participation and attainment among all groups of students in subjects where they are currently under-represented
 - an increase in students' perception that their teachers incorporate principles of gender equity to enhance the quality of their learning experience
 - an increase in early intervention initiatives which address the different perspectives of girls and boys
 - an increase in the number of schools and systems with policies and procedures to address gender equity in organisation, resourcing, career support and professional development.
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For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Curriculum, Teaching and Learning', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

3. VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL CULTURE

Schools have an important role in providing an environment in which children feel safe and are supported in dealing with experiences of violence in or out of school. Violence, including sex-based harassment, inhibits learning and impacts on the experiences and outcomes of schooling for girls and boys. This impact can be intensified for some students on the basis of disability and cultural background. Whole-school approaches to identifying and eliminating gendered violence in the lives of students are essential. This involves the development of curriculum responses in key areas, gender-sensitive behaviour management programs and an education environment which is supportive and conducive to respectful gender relationships.

Outcome

Gendered violence and sex-based harassment will be eliminated from schools

Develop and review curriculum programs and operational practices for all levels of schooling which:

- promote understanding of the construction of gender and its links to violence
- challenge gendered violence and sex-based harassment in schools
- teach effective communication and relationship skills, and the management of conflict, to girls and boys at all levels of schooling
- explore the nature of, and reasons for, violence and bullying between boys and girls, boys and boys, and girls and girls, in both single-sex and co-educational settings at all levels of schooling
- provide girls and boys with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding about, and skills to deal with violence, sex-based harassment (including homophobia), and gender-based power.

Establish and maintain an educational environment in which:

- teachers are supported and valued in developing positive and respectful ways of relating to boys and girls
 - school discipline and behaviour management policies and practices are consistent with the principles of gender equity
 - procedures for dealing with complaints of violence and harassment are clearly understood and implemented
 - school structures and procedures are flexible and enable students, teachers and parents to cooperatively address the issues of gendered violence.
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Ensure that the management of student behaviour:

- attends to the behaviour, both passive and active, which inhibits girls' and boys' learning
- develops understanding of, and responses to, resistance to teaching and learning about gender
- challenges the gender-based assumptions about appropriate behaviour
- includes effective, non-violent sanctions against violent and abusive behaviour
- examines the relationship between gender violence and other forms of violence
- operates within policy frameworks and guidelines which are explicit about gender equity.

Extend management procedures for sex-based harassment which acknowledge that gender construction impacts on behaviour by:

- developing and monitoring policies at system and school level
- developing and implementing training and development programs for all staff
- establishing structural processes for handling complaints quickly and effectively
- seeking information from parents, girls and boys to contribute to policy development and to improve practice.

Develop positive, supportive and culturally sensitive environments for girls and boys which:

- respect the need for privacy, confidentiality, safety and physical hygiene
- provide equitable access to, and use of, all learning and recreation areas in school
- are responsive to the views of both girls and boys about appropriate facilities and environments.

Indicators of improvement

- an increase in the number of schools and systems with policies to address sex-based harassment, and behaviour management programs
- fewer incidents of sex-based and homophobic harassment and violence at school
- students, parents and teachers demonstrate lower levels of acceptance of gendered violence and sex-based harassment
- girls and boys report confidence in, and satisfaction with, complaint procedures
- curriculum materials across all levels and learning areas address gendered violence and abuse
- professional development programs incorporate understandings about gender and violence.

For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Violence and School Culture', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

4. POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

Schools and systems have worked for a generation to challenge girls' and boys' choices of traditionally gendered subjects and occupational areas. Major transformations in society and the world of work make it imperative that all students leave school with the knowledge, understanding and skills to contest inequitable structures and practices. Students need to understand the links between gendered assumptions about, and practices within, areas of paid and unpaid work. Outcomes from schooling should enable students to cross traditional gender lines in subject choices and post-school pathways and shape their futures in private, economic and civic life.

Outcome

Post-school pathways for all students will be expanded beyond those governed by conventional assumptions based on gender

Provide opportunities in the curriculum for girls and boys to critically examine paid and unpaid work by:

- examining the history and implications of the gendered division of paid and unpaid work which supports the current dichotomy of public and private life
- examining society's presumed dependence of women on men's paid labour, and men's real dependence on women's unpaid labour
- acknowledging and examining the implications of domestic and family responsibilities on women's lives and careers and of the traditional divisions of labour on men's lives
- exploring the contribution of unpaid work to the Australian economy
- developing, from the earliest years of schooling, skills necessary to undertake family and household management.

Challenge conventional assumptions of gender-appropriate work by:

- increasing girls' and boys' awareness of differences in power, income and work-time flexibility; opportunities and job security in different types of work; and entry-level requirements for specific study and work options
- developing curriculum about the world of work which explores gender-based perceptions of work and careers, at all levels of schooling
- expanding work experience programs in both paid and unpaid work environments for students of both sexes
- developing curriculum pathways which expand general and vocational pathways for both boys and girls
- providing information to teachers, parents and the community about changed and emerging employment patterns.

Ensure that vocational and entry level training and career education programs are constructed in ways which benefit both girls and boys by:

- expanding the access, variety, scope and flexibility of such programs
- diversifying the range of industries and union and industry personnel involved in school-industry schemes
- providing a range of ways in which all students can identify, develop and demonstrate their competencies
- developing measures of effectiveness for these programs which are consistent with the principles of gender equity
- implementing procedures for eliminating sex-based harassment in these programs
- monitoring of female and male participation and developing initiatives to change any significant imbalances which are identified.

Indicators of improvement

- all areas of the curriculum explore the relationship between the public and private domains
- more girls and boys are able to acquire and describe a full range of competencies from experience in both the public and private spheres which are applicable in paid work
- all vocational education programs reflect gender equity principles
- more boys and girls undertake work experience and vocational programs in non-traditional areas
- more equitable participation and attainment in schooling, and in the range of post-school options for employment, education and training, between all groups of girls and boys.

For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Post-school Pathways', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

5. SUPPORTING CHANGE

The achievement of gender equity in schools requires leadership, collaboration and signposts for future directions. Educational leaders and managers, teachers, schools and systems provide leadership in this area, in collaborative partnerships with a wide range of groups, organisations and communities. The most powerful partnership is between schools and parents. Change is also supported by the on-going collection of data, and by reporting and accountability processes to track progress and inform future planning and decision-making.

Outcome

Gender equity principles will be integral to school and system management

Support change for gender equity in education by ensuring leaders and managers:

- promote gender equity as central to excellence in education
- participate in professional development about organisational and management practices which are consistent with gender equity principles
- provide resources and teacher professional development to support system and school-level gender initiatives
- support an environment in which the concept of gender equity is articulated and integrated into all policies, curriculum and school procedures
- incorporate demonstrated understandings of, and commitment to, gender equity in specifications for all positions
- provide training and development for all staff about the relationship between the construction of gender and educational processes and outcomes
- include issues of gender equity in performance management processes.

Support change by extending partnerships with parents, industry and the wider community to:

- explore the implications for education and employment of Commonwealth and state anti-discrimination legislation
- develop mutual understandings of gender equity and of the changing needs and concerns of girls and boys
- provide opportunities for collaborative action to achieve gender equity
- understand how the media can support and influence knowledge of gender issues
- ensure that cross-agency responses are sensitive to gender and its relationships to risk factors

- position high-risk activities such as drug, alcohol and substance abuse within the framework of gender construction
- design and deliver specific service support in ways which are mindful of the different needs and circumstances of girls and boys.

Support change by developing adequate data gathering and information systems which:

- provide data on girls' and boys' participation and achievement, from a wide range of sources, as a basis for whole-school planning
- incorporate qualitative and quantitative processes
- enable systems to interpret data on the intersection of gender and other factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability and rural/urban location
- enable systems and schools to report on gender equity as an integral part of any accountability or quality assurance mechanisms
- enable the monitoring of community and parental support for, and involvement in, gender equity initiatives.

Indicators of improvement

- gender equity criteria are included in teacher selection processes and quality assurance reviews
- teachers, parents and students are increasingly aware of how the construction of gender influences educational outcomes
- teachers, parents and students are increasingly willing to take responsibility for change in attitudes and outcomes
- more parents participate with schools in developing gender equity initiatives
- more resources are allocated within schools to support gender equity initiatives
- educational leaders and managers are increasingly accountable and responsible for promoting and supporting gender equity.

For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Supporting Change', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.
