

GENDER EQUITY

Preamble:

1. The AEU is committed to promoting gender equity in education settings to bring about a safe and challenging learning environment for all students. The AEU believes that gender equity in education is about improving the educational outcomes for both girls and boys. Gender equity focuses on the development of positive constructions of both masculinity and femininity. These positive constructions should redress the power dynamics, which traditionally exist between men and women, boys and girls.
2. Understanding of the process of gender construction is crucial if schools and systems are to work for equitable and improved 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.
3. 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 and 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.
4. This policy recognises that while positive achievements have been made in relation to gender issues by educators, educational settings and the Department, further work still needs to be carried out to ensure both sexes reach their potential as citizens. This policy builds on the AEU's long standing commitment to the education and training rights of women and girls.
5. The AEU recognises the need for increased support and resources to be focussed in preschools and the early childhood years for gender education. It is in these formative years that young children begin to form constructions of gender and it is critical that educators have support and professional development to assist young children in adopting positive constructions of both masculinity and femininity.
6. Educators and schools also need to form partnerships with parents, parent organisations and the community to raise awareness about gender equity and its place in education. Ongoing discussions need to occur between parents and educators at the school level about gender issues within the school and to raise parent awareness about the construction of gender.

Action by AEU Officers:

1. The Secretary of the AEU should ensure that all Officers of the Union have an appropriate understanding of gender issues and the construction of gender in education settings.
2. The AEU will work closely with the Department to ensure appropriate professional development about gender equity is conducted.
3. The AEU will work closely with the Department to ensure the positions of Staff Equity Contact Officers are maintained and adequately resourced and supported.

Action by AEU Members:

1. Members should ensure that all educational settings have Staff Equity Contact Officers elected to perform the tasks outlined in Departmental policy.
2. Members should ensure that there is equity of access for both boys and girls to all available curriculum options and school resources, including equipment, school space and teacher time.
3. Members should work to ensure that all education settings are free of sexual harassment and homophobia.