

Abstract

Gender based learning has become an acceptable facet of the differentiated classroom.

The female learner has unique needs that can be addressed through differentiated instruction. There are distinct differences between men and women. These differences effect how females approach learning as well as how they retain information. “A fundamental premise of differentiating instruction is that certain steps *must be taken to* guarantee students will learn what *they need* to learn in order to meet curriculum guidelines and state standards.” (Preszler 2006)

Differentiating Instruction for Girls

As you educate a woman, you educate the family. If you educate the girls, you educate the future.... Queen Rania

Female students encounter life experiences and challenges that their male counterparts will never face. Differentiated instruction reflects the distinct needs of students from varying ability levels. “A fundamental premise of differentiating instruction is that certain steps *must be taken to* guarantee students will learn what *they need to* learn in order to meet curriculum guidelines and state standards.” (Preszler 2006) However, the student’s gender is rarely considered when choosing appropriate instructional methods. The brains of boys and girls develop differently. Boys and girls are nurtured and learn differently. Curriculum and instruction should address gender based needs.

In her book “The Female Brain” Dr. Louann Brizendine writes that women use approximately 13,000 more words per day than men. Dr. Brizendine also discusses dissimilarities in the size and function of the male and female brains. These individual differences effect how females approach learning as well as how they retain information. “Gender-based learning has become an accepted reality, and has had profound implications on how classrooms are designed, built and utilized - from kindergarten to college.” (Gurian 2010) Instruction can be differentiated based on a student’s inclination and interest. The content, process, products, and learning environment should reflect the relational traits of the female learner. Dr. Brizendine writes that “Girls’ well-developed brain circuits for gathering meaning from faces and tone of voice also push them to comprehend the social approval of others very early.”

The curriculum should incorporate activities that utilize female students’ natural proclivities. Classroom activities should integrate group discussions in order for female learners to make meaning of the content. The learning environment should be a safe place for self-expression. The female learner has a strong grasp of emotions. The students should be allowed to make meaning through rehearsing and applying what they have learned. The female learner should also be given positive feedback for accomplishments.

Challenges and Experiences of the Female Learner

According to the U.S. Department of education “Women comprised 46.8 percent of the total U.S. labor force and are projected to account for 46.9 percent of the labor force

in 2018.” Despite the number of women in the workforce, “the median weekly earnings of women who were full-time wage and salary workers was \$657, or 80 percent of men’s \$819.” Female students generally perform lower in math and science than male students. The U.S. Department of Education reports that high tech jobs are among the fastest growing positions in the 21st century. The unique needs of female students must be addressed in order for them to complete in the educationally and job market.

According to the American Association of University Women (1992) “Girls suffer from a well-documented decline in self-esteem during their adolescent years. Low self-esteem can lead to poor academic performance and diminished ambitions.” Female students have the challenging job of dealing with “sexual harassment, substance abuse, pregnancy, violence and eating disorders.” (American Association of University Women 1992)

Specific Instruction for Girls

- Interpersonal connections when presenting material
- Consider their ideas and encourage them to verbally expand upon their thoughts
- Assign project based coursework
- Present curriculum with relevant connections to the real world and relationships
- Provide positive feedback whenever possible

Conclusion

As educators it is imperative to remain cognizant of the differences between all children regardless of their gender. All children learn differently and the classroom should be a place of enrichment and independent thinking for all children.

Differentiating instruction for girls is one way to insure that curriculum is individualized and relevant.

Resources

Tomlinson, C. (1999) *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD,

Preszler, June (2006) *On Target Strategy*.

http://www.sdesa6.org/content/docs/StrategiesThatDifferentiateInstructionK_4-080808.pdf

Gurian, Michael *et. al* (2010) *Boys and Girls Learn Differently a Guide for Teachers and Parent's*, Jossey Bass publishing

http://www.michaelgurian.com/boys_and_girl_learn_differently_parents_teachers.html

Brizendine, L. (2006) *The Female Brain*, Broadway publishing

U.S. Department of Education, Statistics and Data (2001, May)

<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm>

American Association of University Women Educational Foundation (1992)

<http://www.aauw.org/>