

# ROOTS OF EQUALITY

## RESOURCES

Kids Help Phone:  
<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca>

Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies:  
*How and When to Report Abuse or Neglect.*  
<http://www.oacas.org/resources/whentoreport.htm>

Ontario Women's Directorate:  
[www.ontariowomensdirectorate.gov.on.ca](http://www.ontariowomensdirectorate.gov.on.ca)

Springtide Resources:  
[www.springtideresources.org](http://www.springtideresources.org)

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario:  
[www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca)

# TIPS FOR EDUCATORS



# ROOTS OF EQUALITY

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) undertook this project in partnership with Springtide Resources and the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD).



*Relationships in the lives of children can be complex. Many people influence what children learn about relationships – family, friends, teachers, coaches, and others. There are many media influences as well – movies, videos, television, internet, magazines, and so on.*

*Educators understand that students need positive role models. Teachers can play an active role in helping young people build the confidence and skills needed for equal, healthy, meaningful, and balanced relationships. You can make a difference that will last a lifetime.*

**Model What You Want Your Students To Become.** Lead by example. Demonstrate to others your ability to resolve conflict in calm, rational ways without yelling or name-calling. Model respect by treating all males and females equally and with dignity.

**Check your assumptions.** Children from any family background may be experiencing violence and abuse, regardless of race, religion, culture, abilities, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, country of origin, or socioeconomic status. Violence in more affluent families is often hidden because more supports are available to them. Remember that children hold multiple social identities so that sexism is often compounded with racism, heterosexism, classism and ableism, which can increase the risk for abuse and exacerbate its impacts.

**Create Safe Spaces.** Create a classroom and school environment where girls and boys can excel to their fullest potential. Ensure that girls and boys have equal access to opportunities and responsibilities. Value listening and ensure that everyone has a voice, and that no one gender is dominating another. Celebrate diversity in your classroom while being aware of the multiple identities students hold.

**Start Early.** Most young children come to school with strong gender stereotypes. Provide opportunities in primary education for students to become aware of gender bias and discrimination based on whether one is a girl or a boy. Replace the harmful messages about what it means to be a “real man” or a “real woman” with positive messages about opportunities available to boys and girls. Start discussing the importance of equality in friendships and relationships. Engage young students in learning about topics and professions that have traditionally been gender-specific so that all pupils learn about cooking, cleaning, cars, and playing sports.

**Develop Healthy Relationships.** Talk to younger children about the importance of treating their friends and family members with respect. Teach all children, especially girls, that they have the right to be treated fairly and equally. Make social skills a focus in your classroom program so that all students understand what respectful, healthy relationships and behaviours look like and sound like.

**Keep Talking.** Look for opportunities to engage boys and girls in discussions about healthy, equal relationships. Turn everyday activities into learning opportunities. Encourage children to critically think about the lyrics of popular songs and figure out together what they are saying about women, men, and relationships. Have students draw pictures or cut them out from magazines and discuss how genders are represented.

**Practice, Practice.** Engage students in exercises that build the skills they need to have healthy, equal relationships, for example, how to deal with anger or hurt feelings. Encourage participation in activities that provide students with outlets for their emotions, such as music, art, dance, and sports. Use drama and role-play to practice conflict resolution in a respectful, non-violent manner. Help students work together to create codes of conduct for their classroom and working environments. Use literature and drama to

confront stereotypes and bias and to develop an understanding of different cultures and perspectives. Have students write about times they were subjected to sexism and engage in a discussion about how this influenced them.

**Be Proactive.** Look for warning signs that may indicate a young person is in an abusive friendship, relationship or situation. Listen for indicators of controlling behaviour, criticism, and jealousy. Pay attention to significant changes in a student’s behaviour: a girl who becomes anxious or depressed or a boy who becomes easily angry and unpredictable. Be an attentive listener: listen without judgment and focus on the young person’s feelings.

**Seek Out Supports.** In homes where there is domestic violence, children are often aware that it is going on and may be witness to the violence or abuse. Exposure to woman abuse can have devastating effects on children’s lives. Studies show that girls have an increased risk of becoming victims of abuse later in life while boys have an increased chance of becoming abusers. Have supportive materials in your classroom (e.g., Kids Help Phone number) that students can access.

**Be Ready To Help – Know Your Responsibilities.** Ontario teachers are in a position of trust and have a legal obligation to report promptly and personally to a Children’s Aid Society (CAS) if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child under the age of sixteen is or may be in need of protection from abuse or neglect.

**Be An Advocate.** Share your passion for a violence-free environment and encourage others to do their part to stop violence against girls and women. Tell others why you think it is important to help children break free from harmful ideas that limit females’ and males’ full potential. Organize an awareness event during Sexual Assault Prevention Month in May and Woman Abuse Prevention Month in November for your staff and school communities.