

FAIR PLAY FOR GIRLS & BOYS

Sport

in National Schools



This pamphlet aims to encourage equal opportunities for girls and boys in P.E. and games in national schools.

It contains:

1. Observations on gender bias in the Physical Education Curriculum for National Schools.
2. Suggestions for good classroom/school practice and
3. An Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality in sport.

INTO Policy On Equality

"The INTO will act as an agent for change working to correct the recognised imbalance and to foster the achievement of equality between the sexes".

INTO Congress 1984



**Irish National
Teachers'
Organisation**

Women in Sport ... Historical Context

When the Olympic games were revived in Athens in 1896, women were excluded from participation and their place was clearly defined by the founder Baron Pierre de Coubertin, when he said:

"Women have but one task, that of crowning the winner with garlands".

(Howe 1978).

Women in Sport ... Attitudes

Such attitudes towards the partici-

pation of women and girls in sport no longer exist but the Irish sportsfield is still a predominantly male domain.

Women's involvement in sport is still often sidelined in a supportive role as spectators, preparing refreshments for participants or washing sports wear and providing transport.

A survey of national newspapers conducted during a two week period found that 94.5% of space in the sports section was allocated to the coverage of male sports.

Children in Sport ... Role Models

Irish children learn at an early age that society places a higher value on male sport than on female sport. This is illustrated by the lack of coverage given to female sport in the media, by the network of facilities available exclusively for men and boys and the range and extent of organised sport for boys both inside and outside school. Girls sometimes have less space in school playgrounds and often don't have equal access to sports facilities and playing fields.

P.E. and the Curriculum . . .

. . . Reinforcing Stereotypes.

The primary school curriculum states that physical education makes a valuable contribution towards the aesthetic, emotional and moral development of the child. It sets out the aims of physical education as follows:

- (i) to promote the organic well-being of the child;
- (ii) to develop a suitable range of motor skills;
- (iii) to cultivate desirable social attitudes.

It further states

"to deny a pupil the opportunity of expressing himself in movement and general physical activity is to neglect an essential aspect of the growth of his personality and character".

However the handbook then moves from these positive statements to subjective observations based on perceived gender differences e.g.

"Where boys and girls are taught in the same group, differences in movement and in imaginative expression are evident. Girls tend to choose light delicate movements and retain longer a love of fantasy, whereas boys generally move with strength and tend to be more realistic".

This type of statement in the curriculum presupposes that significant differences exist between the abilities and aspirations of boys and girls in sport and encourages stereotyping. For example, the 6th class programme states;

'In these classes, separate arrangements in movement training may be made for boys and girls. Boys now can acquire a wide variety of skills and techniques and girls often become more aware of style and grace" also "many boys will participate enthusiastically in combat sports, such as wrestling, judo etc.

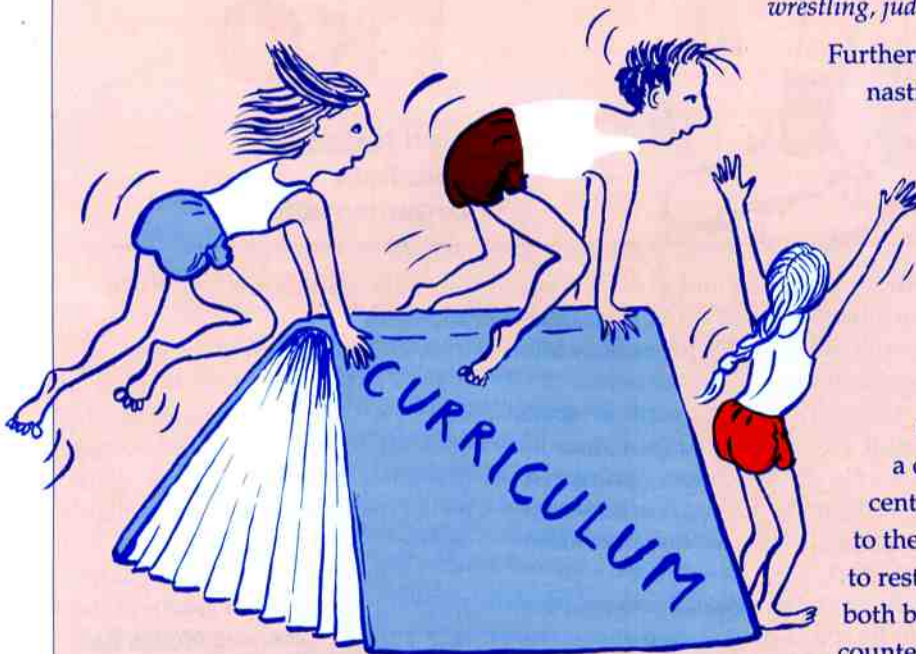
Furthermore, in the area of educational gymnastics, the syllabus for senior classes is divided into two sections with a different syllabus for each sex. Research has shown that such gender differentiation at this age cannot be justified on physical or biological grounds. It is most likely based on an outdated perception of what are appropriate P.E. activities for girls and boys and has no place in a curriculum which claims to be child-centred and aims to develop all children to their full potential. Such practices serve to restrict the individual development of both boys and girls and, therefore, run counter to the aims of physical education as set out in the curriculum.

"Girls tend to choose light delicate movements and retain longer a love of fantasy"

Curaclam na Bunscoile

"Boys generally move with strength and tend to be more realistic"

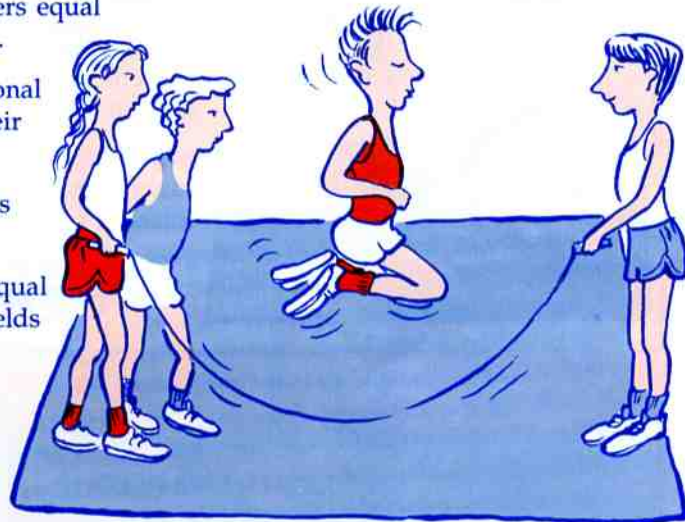
Curaclam na Bunscoile



Fair Play in Practice

This checklist of good school practice is intended as a help to teachers in the important task of promoting equal opportunity for girls and boys in sport and P.E.

SKILLS	Treat boys and girls equally in teaching games' skills.
SEGREGATION	Avoid segregation by gender for sport/craft activities, e.g. boys playing football or hurling while girls are knitting or weaving.
COMPETITION	The Mini Sport philosophy that 'playing' is more important than 'winning' should be encouraged.
SPORT FOR ALL	Encourage the "sport for all" concept amongst children.
DANCE	Encourage boys to participate in dance classes and in games traditionally associated with girls e.g. skipping, rounders, netball and volleyball.
ACHIEVEMENT	Draw attention to the achievements of girls and women in sport as well as boys and men.
FOOTBALL	Encourage girls to play games traditionally associated with boys e.g. gaelic football, rugby and soccer.
SPORTS STARS	Invite successful women sports personalities as well as male sports personalities to visit the school.
BODY IMAGE	Encourage a positive body image among girls and boys and an acceptance that all children can participate in sport.
PLEAN SCOILE	Ensure that the 'Plean Scoile' covers equal opportunity in Physical Education.
SPORTS GEAR	Encourage all children to take personal responsibility for the care of their sports gear and equipment.
ATHLETICS	Ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys in games and athletics.
PLAYING FIELDS	Ensure that girls and boys have equal access to playgrounds, playing fields and all P.E. facilities.
CHANGING ROOMS	Ensure that girls have access to changing facilities where necessary.



Don't sideline the Girls

The results of a survey on Gender and P.E. in post-primary schools published in 1991 by the Physical Education Association of Ireland revealed the following:

- Boys perceived themselves as more involved, talented, intelligent, good-looking, co-ordinated, free from stress and achievement orientated than girls.
- Girls were significantly more unhappy than boys in relation to their weight and shape.

- Gaelic football, hurling, weight training, soccer, golf and karate were perceived as "male" activities.

- Yoga, dance, gymnastics and netball were strongly associated with females.

- Boys and girls felt that physical education classes should be mixed.

- Boys were seen by respondents to have the most influence in determining class activities in P.E.

- Girls were perceived by respon-

dents as excusing themselves from physical education class more often than boys.

- Boys were seen to be more demanding of attention during P.E. class than girls.

- Ninety per cent of the role models identified by the sample surveyed were male and ten per cent were female.

"Girls and Boys come out to play"
A study by the P.E.A.I.

Goals for the Future

AN ACTION PLAN



Education:

- There should be a major revision of the Physical Education Chapter in the Primary School Curriculum.
- All school posters, videos, coaching manuals and magazines used in national schools should feature girls as well as boys in the full range of P.E. activities.
- A circular promoting equal participation in sport in primary schools should be issued by the Department of Education.
- Appropriate P.E. facilities and resources should be made available in all schools.
- Pre-service education should take account of past gender bias in sport and should provide special compensatory programmes for student teachers.
- Inservice Education should be provided to assist teachers to promote equal opportunity in sport in National Schools.

General:

- Government funding for sport, access to clubs and club rules should be based on the principle of equality of access and opportunity for women and men.
- A working party representative of the relevant education, equality, media and sporting agencies should address the poor media portrayal of women in sport.
- All sporting organisations should have an equality policy and should implement positive action programmes to encourage participation by women in sport.
- Sporting organisations should sponsor competitions for schools to encourage female participation and should provide coaching for women teachers.
- Cuspoir should develop a positive action programme to encourage greater participation by women in sport.

Girls' self-image lowest: survey

Latest Score

Did You Know? ...

- Less than 40% of Irish women participate in any sport.
- The Cuspoir 'Women in Sport Annual Awards' introduced in 1982 to highlight the contribution and achievement of women in sport ceased in 1988.
- 8,000 girls participate annually in the INTO/GAA Skill Awards.
- A Women's judo competition will be introduced for the first time to the Olympics in 1992.
- The Dublin Girls' Football league final was held in Croke Park for the first time in 1990.
- Swimming is the most popular sport amongst Irish women.

This pamphlet is the third in a series of INTO equality publications prepared by the INTO Equality Committee, and published by the Central Executive Committee. The others deal with equality of opportunity in promotion in primary teaching and gender equality in the curriculum.



Irish National Teachers' Organisation

Head Office: Ard Oifig:
35 Parnell Square, 35 Cearnóg Parnell
Dublin 1 Baile Átha Cliath 1
E.G. Quigley E.G. ÓCoigligh,
General Secretary Ard Rúnaí

Telephone Telefón
(01)722533/ (01)722533/
732502 732502

Girls trying hard to show their class on the rugby field

Girl player (9) aims for equality win on FAI

Girls big day out

Rugby schoolgirls make their mark

Glory for boys in fitness