



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Jann Mirchandani
AAUW, Westchester Branch
914-245-8568
jann@aauw-eyhconference.com
For Immediate Release: Wednesday, November 02, 2005

It's Still A Pink And Blue World: Cosmetology For Girls, Carpentry For Boys

Girls' Opportunities Severely Limited in High School Technical Education Programs

Westchester County — High school career and technical education programs haven't progressed much since the days when girls were required to take home economics and boys were required to enroll in shop, according to Tools of the Trade, a report released last week by the National Women's Law Center. (To view the report, including state-specific fact sheets, visit: <http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=2462§ion=education>.)

The comprehensive report – and 12 state-specific toolkits – examines girls' participation in career and technical education (CTE) programs that are nontraditional for their gender. The report finds that, in spite of the 33-year-old Title IX law that prohibits sex discrimination in education, girls still represent the vast majority of students in traditionally female fields and boys are nearly all the students enrolled in traditionally male programs – a pattern virtually unchanged over the last three decades.

For example, a 1977 study by the federal Office for Civil Rights found that girls made up 14 percent of students in trade and industrial courses. Today, girls represent only 15 percent of students taking classes in traditionally male fields such as carpentry, automotive, masonry and welding.

"The hard truth is that most carpenters and electricians simply earn much more than health care workers and cosmetologists," said Marcia D. Greenberger, Co-President of the National Women's Law Center and report contributor. "Breaking down the barriers that prevent girls from enrolling in nontraditional courses is not just a fairness issue, it's an issue of dollars and cents."

The dollars-and-cents difference in payoff is startling: girls who take up traditionally female occupations can expect to earn half (or less) of what they could make if they went into traditionally male fields. Although child care providers play a crucial role in society, for example, they are woefully under-compensated. In 2004, the average hourly wage of a child care worker was \$8.06, while the average engineer earned \$22.06 per hour. In fact, the highest median wage for a traditionally female category (\$14.63 for health professions) was lower than the lowest median wage in a traditionally male field (\$16.63 for agricultural management).

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) has long worked to create equity for women and girls in education. The Westchester and New York City Branches have teamed with Barnard College to host "Expanding Your Horizons™ in Math and Science," a conference for 7th grade girls.

"Our mission is to encourage girls to continue taking math, science and technology classes so that all career options remain open to them," says Jann Mirchandani, one of the three conference Co-Chairs. "We work to achieve this by having the girls participate in hands-on workshops led by women professionals working in math, science and technology related fields. Girls are also given the opportunity to talk to women role models by playing our "Mystery Women" game."

Now in its third year, the conference draws 150 girls and 50 adults from across the county and Manhattan. In its first year, the conference sold-out, demonstrating the need – and interest – in such programs.

"This conference ties in directly with AAUW's theme: Education is the Gateway to Women's Economic Security" says Mirchandani. "The recent study by the NWLS only underscores that we are on the right track."

Volunteers are still needed. There are many ways in which community members can become involved in this important conference—even those without a math/science/technology background. Mirchandani encourages anyone interested in helping with the conference to contact her at jann@aauw-eyhconference.org, or visit their website at www.aauw-eyhconference.com.

###

The American Association of University Women, with its nationwide network of more than 100,000 bipartisan members and 1,300 branches, has been a leading advocate for equity for women and girls since 1881.

AAUW: Because Equity is Still An Issue