

Dear 6th grade parent or guardian,

Your 6th grader just participated in two days of prevention programming with WISE through their health class. For decades, WISE has worked with Upper Valley school districts to facilitate education with the shared goal of ending gender-based violence. WISE programs are research-based, aligned with state statutes for sexual violence prevention education in schools, and informed by over 50 years of advocacy for survivors in the Upper Valley.

The two days of programming emphasized the harmful impact of gender stereotypes. WISE focuses on gender stereotypes as a central strategy for preventing gender-based violence. This approach is backed by research that shows how adherence to traditional gender norms is a significant risk factor for dating and sexual violence (Zurbruggen, E.L., 2010 & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

During the first day of programming, students spent time building a critical lens to analyze how the media informs our sense of self and others in stereotypical and limiting ways. Students were split into small groups and worked together to identify gender stereotypes in media images. On the second day, students worked collectively to create posters with the goal of challenging commonly-held gender stereotypes.

Parenting for Prevention

Keep the conversation going. The media is great tool for talking about gender stereotypes and relationships.

- Ask about the relationships between characters in TV shows and movies.
- Point out examples where one person is making assumptions about how to treat another person based on gender stereotypes.
- Ask your child what qualities they value in people, regardless of gender.

Counter harmful messages about the expectations for people based on gender.

- When boys are told to be aggressive and dominant and discouraged from showing emotions outside of anger, it limits their ability to express themselves in healthy ways. It also hurts others if this anger is misdirected.
- When girls are told that they should strive to be pretty and soft spoken, it limits their ability to live up to their full potential.

For more information about combatting the impacts of gender stereotypes:

- Watch *The Mask You Live In* & *Miss Representation*, www.therepresentationproject.org
*check your streaming service or visit the website to view the films
- Refer to *Challenging Gender Stereotypes in the Early Years: The Power of Prevention*
www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/e42fe5ce-8902-4efc-8cd9-799fd2f316d7/OUR0042-Parenting-and-Early-Years-AA.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf