Lesson Title: Mapping the Media

Lesson Summary:
We receive messages about gender from many different places. Popular media (such as films, YouTube and other online media, books, magazines, television, etc.) is one of the most influential sources. What messages are being sent? What do they tell us about how our society thinks about gender? How can we make sure they don’t create gender stereotypes?

Grade Level: 4 – 8
Time required: 45 – 55 Minutes plus homework

Materials:
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Markers

Goals:
- To review various forms of media and identify messages being conveyed about gender
- To become aware of the degree to which various messages about gender that either reflect or interrupt common gender stereotypes

Objectives:
- Students will be able to define and identify multiple examples of gender expression
- Students will be able to distinguish binary vs. non-binary representations of gender in various forms of media
- Students will be able to analyze the degree to which forms of media convey messages about gender that either reflect or interrupt common gender stereotypes

Key Terms:
- Binary: when there are only two possibilities - yes or no; big or small.
- Gender expression: the way we sometimes show our gender to the world. It can also be how the world thinks we should act because of our gender
- Gender stereotype: Expectations about people based on gender. Stereotypes might be about toys, colors, activities, abilities, interests, behavior and many other things

Lesson Plan
Framing the Activity:
The images we see in magazines, movies, and music videos often send messages about gender. They can try to tell us what it means to be a girl or a boy and how we are expected to look and behave. Today, we are going to look and talk about some examples of media images and the messages they send us. (5 minutes)

1. Write the phrase “Gender Expression” on the board. Discuss examples of gender expression (clothing, hairstyle, shoes, jewelry...). Gender expression is the way we sometimes show our
gender to the world. It can also be how the world thinks we should act because of our gender (i.e. boys shouldn’t cry or girls are always soft and gentle) and what the world thinks we should like because of gender (i.e. boys like sports and girls like cooking). (5 minutes)

2. Journal: What are your expectations about your own gender expression? Have they ever been challenged? How and by whom? How did you feel? How did you respond? (5-10 minutes)

3. Activity: Working in pairs and using the various media materials, students will identify images and words that in their opinion send a clear message about gender. These will be used to create a collage. Students should identify at least 4 images and be able to explain why they are messages about gender. (20 minutes)

4. Gallery Walk: when students finish their collages, have them post them around the room and then do a gallery walk to look at each other’s work. (12 minutes).

Discussion and/or Written Reflections

a. What observations do you have about the images and words you saw as you walked around?

b. What role do you think popular media plays in shaping people’s understandings of gender?

c. Are there positive aspects to this influence? Are there negative aspects?

d. Can popular media create stereotypes? Or does popular media simply reflect them? Can popular media “interrupt” stereotypes?

My Gender Journal Question:
Identify at least one additional gender message you see or hear between the end of school and bedtime. Describe where you saw it, what the message was, and how it made you feel.

Be sure to note that media is not the only way that receive messages about gender; our family members, friends, and classmates also communicate their expectations of gender expression in ways that may affect us.