

## Which problem spoke straight to our hearts

While researching the UN's 17 goals to pick one that we can really brainstorm and work towards its solutions our eye was caught by the following statement on one of the goals' introductory pages **"Gender bias is undermining our social fabric and devalues all of us. It is not just a human rights issue; it is a tremendous waste of the world's human potential. By denying women equal rights, we deny half the population a chance to live life at its fullest. Political, economic and social equality for women will benefit all the world's citizens. Together we can eradicate prejudice and work for equal rights and respect for all."** Such powerful words! They immediately grabbed our hearts and minds and haven't let go ever since. As you can clearly understand, we have wholeheartedly decided to educate our students, to discuss with them, and to encourage their critical thinking on the **Gender Equality** Goal.

Women from the beginning of times have always been considered as the weaker sex, resulting in them having fewer rights or even none, in some cases until recently, to almost all the important aspects in their lives. Coming from Greece, a country with deep roots in democracy, does not really mean that every male and female citizen have equally the same rights on certain paths of their lives, even in the year 2018. The **Gender Equality** index for 2017 issued by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in October, 2017 has ranked Greece last at a 50%, compared to Sweden that got 82.6. This is very sad indeed. When one first hears of **Gender Equality** the first thing that comes to his mind is physical violence, but it is an issue bigger than that. It's an issue with many aspects, all of which are equally important. There is the physical violence of course, the verbal and psychological abuse, the different wage ceiling each sex is offered for the same job, the stereotypes our society has created for each one of us, man or woman. We feel that it is vital this problem be exposed, so that everyone can understand its gravity. We want to urge everyone realize that it is a real problem that must be faced in our modern societies.

We want to show all the people that both sexes have equal rights, that no one is superior and that we can live in this world, without one sex ruling the other. First, we will search it among us and our students, we will understand the problem's span and then we will show it to the older ones, parents, friends, acquaintances and will try to make them understand that what they stereotypically have in their minds is not necessarily correct.

## Which STEPS we will follow

We want all our students of all ages to participate in this visionary project so we planned as to include every level in our activities.

1. Our *Pre-Junior* and *ABjunior* classes had lessons on certain professions that are very easily considered stereotyped ones. The teacher presented the job-titles ie. doctor, surgeon, firefighter, teacher, dancer, nurse, etc. explained the words in mother tongue and after a small discussion on each person's needed qualities for the job, she asked the students to draw some of these professionals and give them a name.

2. Our next class was shown a PowerPoint presentation which actually targeted the standardized preferences kids have during childhood, by originally asking them which toy they would prefer between the option of a doll and a sword. The results were obvious as all boys picked the sword and all girls picked the doll. Then we proceeded in showing them the same toys but in reverse colors. The doll was painted with Spiderman colors and had a mask on while the sword was pink and had extra colorful ribbons hanging from it. Again, when they had to pick a toy, we noticed some of them worrying too much over picking the “wrong” color on the “right” toy. In the end, we discussed in class the importance of all colors in our lives and that a color doesn’t determine who we really are.
3. One class has written a small paragraph on Gender Equality and they are in the process of making a small video with clips of the students reading their thoughts on camera.
4. Two students of ours were so kind as to write two different plays encouraging equality, so we are going to stage them and video them, too.
5. We are also going to make a poster with all our thoughts on the project’s issues that have been raised in our lessons.
6. Last but not least, a group of students want to conduct a social experiment on physical violence.
7. From our side, we are holding a talk at our school by professionals who DO have stereotypical professions. We have sent invites to lots of them but unfortunately due to the deadlines we have to keep, not many could manage to re-arrange their schedule in such short notice. So far, a female Firefighter Chief, a female Soldier, a male Chef, a male Military Nurse, and a female Car Mechanic have agreed to come and talk to our kids about their experiences in discriminations based on sex, while they were rising in their professional fields.
8. We have compiled a set of 10 Gender Equality related questions in a questionnaire and the high students will take to task to go around their schools interviewing both teaching personnel and fellow classmates. All results will then be discussed in class.
9. We are also hoping to manage to arrange a visit to a shelter for women, and have a talk about the aspect of physical violence.

### What would the DIFFICULTIES be

Classroom wise, as the project spans only through a 4-week period, it is very tiring and time consuming for the teachers to coordinate all the ideas of what we should/could do and teach ESL at the same time. Teachers have to allocate extra time in their classes to finish up their presentations and talks, and at the same time move on with their course syllabus.

Project wise, we saw lots of professionals not being able to make our short notice to participate in our talk. This doesn’t mean that it will stop us. When we thought of the social experiment, we saw that when we go to the city centre to film a young couple argue and then the boy will hit the girl a couple of times, there is a chance some people might intervene violently so we risk a chance of getting injured. It is something we will discuss with the kids’ parents to first take permission and then try to work out the best way to run it safe.