

GOT EQUAL PAY?

This is a 45-55 minute lesson plan, with optional instructional supports, prepared by the State of Connecticut's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, with the help of 9to5 Bay Area, National Association of Working Women, for Pay Equity Day, April 22, 2008.

Applicable CT State Education Dept. History-Social Sciences Content Standards:

For K-12

Content Standard #2

Students will use historical thinking skills to develop an understanding of the major historical periods, issues and trends in the United States history, world history, and Connecticut and local history.

For 9-12

Content Standard # 3

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ways race, gender, ethnicity and class issues have affected individuals and societies in the past.

Content Standard #5

Students will learn historical and contemporary conflicts over Constitutional principles

Content Standard #6

Students will take a position on a current policy issue and attempt to influence its formation, development and implementation.

JOURNAL TOPICS (Optional)

1) "Change the Workplace, Change the World."

(This is the slogan of 9to5, National Association of Working Women.)

2) "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Martin Luther King, Jr.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to define equal pay and the wage gap as economic terms.

Students will be able to identify three social benefits to both men and women, of equal pay for women.

Students will transfer this learning to their individual career plans.

MOTIVATIONAL IDEA

Pass out 3/4 cookies (cut away a piece of each cookie) in sandwich bags.

Ask students where they think the missing 1/4 cookie is. The day's lesson aims to help them find out.

OPENING QUESTION

What can we learn from our own work experiences?

Directions: Go around the room and ask each person to tell about a current or former job.

List job titles and pay rates by gender on the board – see examples.

Note: this activity may bring out some interesting conversations! It is open-ended and a way to start students thinking. It will start the ball rolling!

<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Male Entry-Level Pay Rate</u>	<u>Female Entry-Level Pay Rate</u>
Cashier		
Stock Worker		
Construction Helper		
Wait Person		
Receptionist		

VOCABULARY

After discussion (optional), write definitions on the board for students to copy.

(See Definitions below)

What is Equal Pay?

What is the Wage Gap?

What is Equal Pay Day?

(Optional) What is Pay Equity?

Vocabulary List and Definitions

Equal Pay: Equal wages (including benefits) paid for equal work, to people holding the same job, regardless of sex. Equal pay is a top concern of women in the workforce.

Why do we care? According to Alexis Herman, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, we care because

- (1) Equal pay is a family issue. Nearly three out of four women with children work. [Studies have shown that the more women and people of color work in an occupation, the less that occupation pays.]
- (2) Women are half of the work force and help keep America competitive.
- (3) It is a simple issue of right and wrong. Women pay the same as men for goods and services and pay the same [percentages] in taxes.

Wage Gap: The difference between men's earnings and women's earnings. The wage gap between the median wages paid to men and the median wages paid to women in 2004 was 23 percent, based on fulltime, year-round work. Another way to talk about it is to generalize that for each dollar an average man earned, an average woman made 77 cents.

Pay Equity Day (also known as Equal Pay Day): The day chosen to reflect (symbolically) the point into the New Year to which a woman must work to be paid the wages paid to a man in the previous year. In other words, because most women are paid less, they must work longer for their wages in order to "catch up" to what men are paid for the same work or for work that requires comparable levels of skills, training, and responsibility. Tuesday is used because it takes into Tuesday for women to "catch up" from the week before – but they never do catch up, of course.

Pay Equity: Paying equally for "women's work" and "men's work" requiring comparable levels of skills, training, and responsibility. Several states and many cities and counties have at least partially implemented pay equity (sometimes known as comparable worth) for government employees' salary-setting. The federal Fair Pay Act has been introduced in Congress for several years to modify the 1963 Equal Pay Act to include pay equity (nationwide, in the private sector as well as regarding public sector jobs) more clearly than has already been interpreted by the courts.

ACTIVITIES

1) Read Case Studies from the Workplace (see next page):

Instructor will either read aloud or give to students to read. For each reading, students will be asked to think about and answer the following question:

What is the problem (the wage gap) in this story? What is being done about it?

- a) Female Custodians Settle Lawsuit (federal government)
- b) Female Workers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories
- c) Wal-Mart Class Action Lawsuit for Equal Pay

2) Play the "Guess the Wage Gap" game! (see www.equalpay.info/equalpayday.html)

3) Discussion: Divide class into small groups (3-4/group maximum); give each group one of the following assignments; facilitate a "report back." Students have to come up with their own answers.

- a) Name three benefits to women of equal pay;
- b) Name three benefits to men/families of equal pay for women;
- c) Name three reasons that explain why women workers, as women, still face discrimination and unequal pay in the workplace;
- d) Name three things that women can do to protect themselves and their pay.

4) Another discussion idea: Students are asked to stand next to the one of the posted wall signs that represents their choice of pay. Each cluster then has to explain to the class its reasons for its choice. Possible signs are: Same Pay for All; Equal Pay for Equal Work; Better Pay for Hard Workers.

Readings/Case Studies from the Workplace

a) **Female Custodians Settle Lawsuit against the U.S. for \$2.5 Million**

In November 2001, more than 300 current and former female custodians won a \$2.5 million settlement resulting from a pay equity lawsuit filed against AOC (Architect of the Capitol, Inc.) in 1997 by a group of African American female custodians on Capitol Hill. The lawsuit alleged violations of the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It charged that female custodial workers were paid significantly less than their male co-workers for performing essentially the same work.

Custodians working at the Capitol, Washington, DC, are federal civil servants. At the time the suit was filed, the highest pay possible for a female custodian to earn was \$10.08 per hour. For male custodians, the highest pay possible to earn was \$11.10 per hour. The disparity was due to discriminatory federal Wage Grade classifications. Women were classified under WG-2 and men under WG-3.

Under the settlement, all custodians, male and female, were to receive upgrades to WG-3.

Lump-sum payments of approximately \$1000 to \$8000 were to be paid to each female represented. The federal government, which had contracted with the AOC as a private firm to clean the Capitol, defended the firm through the U.S. Justice Department. As a result of the settlement, the government was required to pay not only the \$2.5 million, but also the attorneys' fees and costs of class counsel for the plaintiffs.

www.afscme.org/press/2001/pr011108.htm

b) **Female Workers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories – Sex Discrimination Suit**

In 1998, six women members of the Society of Professional Scientists and Engineers at Lawrence Livermore Lab filed a class action sex discrimination lawsuit on behalf of 3,000 current and former female employees of the Lab. It alleged a pattern and practice of discrimination and unequal pay across several decades. The lead plaintiff was Mary

Singleton, a chemist who worked 22 years at the Lab until retirement. The Women's Association at the Lab had studied salary pay scales and found women's salaries significantly lower than men's for most of the 100 classifications. Women were also not being equally represented in the higher ranking, higher paying classifications, although there were more women in the pool to choose among for promotions.

According to the attorney for the plaintiffs, Mark Johnson, "women have been misled for years that something would be done about gender bias, so many women didn't file lawsuits." The lawsuit covered only women who worked at the lab from 1997 to the present. The lawsuit was settled successfully for the women, as of Fall 2003.

For more information: www.spse.org/issues.htm www.spse.org/NL_2_02.html
www.awis.org/pubs/magarchivehowto.html (Mary Singleton article)

c) **Wal-Mart Class Action Lawsuit for Equal Pay**

In June 2001, six current and former Wal-Mart women employees filed a lawsuit against the nation's largest private employer, charging discrimination in pay, promotions, training, and job assignments. It also charges that Wal-Mart retaliates against women who complain against such practices. The class action suit represents more than 500,000 female workers. The suit was filed in San Francisco's U.S. District Court. It alleges that male Wal-Mart workers get higher pay than women for the same duties and that Wal-Mart passes over women for promotion and training. Of the company's 1 million employees, about 2/3 are female but women hold less than 1/3 of managerial positions.

Women bringing the suit said they were routinely denied the chance to move up in the company because they were not made aware of openings or given the training needed to advance. Betty Dukes said she also had been rebuffed in attempts to be promoted. Jobs became available that were never posted, and were then filled by men. Women were routinely assigned to certain areas of the store, like selling baby clothes, as opposed to goods like hardware. "I can mix a can of paint," she said. "I want a chance to do it." (See NY Times, June 20, 2001 "6 Women Sue Wal-Mart, Charging Bias" and *Selling Women Short*, by Liza Featherstone, 2004)

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1) Students might research their career/occupational interests re pay scales, using information from the U.S. Department of Labor and put together a chart that compares and contrasts different job choices.

RESOURCES

Websites:

www.equalpay.info

www.aauw.org

www.wageproject.org

www.cga.ct.gov/pcsw

Recommended Books:

Studs Terkel – Working

Barbara Ehrenreich – Nickel and Dimed: on not getting by in America

Liza Featherstone – Selling Women Short: the landmark battle for workers’ rights at Wal-Mart

Evelyn Murphy – Getting Even: why women aren’t paid like men and what to do about it (c2005)

For more information contact Michelle Noehren at the PCSW

Michelle.Noehren@cga.ct.gov or (860) 240-0016