



# MO'NE DAVIS AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

Mo'Ne Davis, a 13 year old girl—the “most talked about baseball player on earth right now” according to many observers in the sports world—has made news headlines recently because of her distinction in Little League baseball. She plays baseball for the Taney Dragons of Philadelphia, PA and is the only girl on her team. This summer, Mo'Ne (pronounced Moh-nay) Davis became the first girl to ever pitch a shutout in the Little League World series. She is the first American girl to play in the Little League World Series since 2004 and is only the eighteenth girl to have played in the sixty-eight year history of the Little League World Series. She recently was on the cover of [Sports Illustrated](#), the most prominent sports magazine. She also plays basketball and her dream is to become a basketball player at the University of Connecticut.

This elementary lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about Mo'Ne Davis and, at the same time, explore gender stereotypes about sports and in other areas of their lives.

See these additional ADL resources: [Toys and Gender](#) (Current Events Classroom lesson, Grades K-2), [Stereotypes of Girls and Women in the Media](#) (Current Events Classroom lesson, Grades 6-12), [When I Grow Up I Want to Be A... Moving Beyond Gender Barriers In Our Lives](#) (Curriculum Connections lessons, Grades K-9) and Recommended Multicultural and Anti-Bias Books for Children: [Sexism](#) and [Biography/Women](#).

**Grade Level:** Grades 2-5

**Common Core Anchor Standards:** Reading, Speaking and Listening

## Learning Objectives:

- Students will explore their own unconscious bias about girls and sports.
- Students will understand the term stereotype and how it relates to gender.
- Students will reflect on the negative effects of gender stereotypes.
- Students will learn more about Mo'Ne Davis and her potential to dispel stereotypes.

## Material:

- Construction paper (one piece for each student)
- Crayons, markers (make sure to include colors that represent different skin complexions)
- Post-it notes (medium size, 2 per student)
- [Little League's Latest Star](#) (Time for Kids, August 15, 2014)—1 copy for each student

- Photo of Mo'Ne Davis (from Time for Kids article above)

**Vocabulary:**

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL's "[Glossary of Education Terms](#).")

- competition
- Major League
- role model
- discrimination
- pitcher
- sexism
- gender
- prejudice
- shutout
- Little League
- regional
- stereotype

**WARM-UP: PICTURE OF A BASEBALL PLAYER**

1. Distribute one piece of construction paper and crayons/magic markers to all students. Tell students to close their eyes and picture a baseball player. What does the baseball player look like? Then have them open their eyes and spend 5-10 minutes drawing a picture of the baseball player they envisioned.
2. When students complete their pictures, have them hold up their pictures at the same time or quickly tape them to one wall and have students do a "gallery walk" to see them all.

(Note: It is very likely that most, if not all, of these pictures will be of boys and/or men and many of them may be white; currently only 8.3% of Major League Baseball players are black).

3. Engage students in a discussion by asking:
  - What do you notice about the pictures?
  - What are the similarities? What are the differences?
  - What was the first picture that came into your mind?
  - Why do you think most of the pictures are of boys or men (if that is the case)?
4. Explain to students that all professional baseball players are male and most players in Little League baseball are boys. This may be one of the reasons they drew male players. Also, they may have a stereotyped view of what a baseball player (or a sports player) looks like. Hold up a picture of Mo'Ne Davis. Ask: Has anyone heard about Mo'Ne Davis? What do you know about her? Explain that Mo'Ne Davis plays Little League baseball, is the only girl on her team and just became the first girl player to pitch a shutout in the Little League World Series.
5. Ask: When you pictured a baseball player, did you picture someone that looks like Mo'Ne Davis? Why or why not? Explain that in this lesson, they will be learning more about gender stereotypes and Mo'Ne Davis.

**UNDERSTANDING STEREOTYPES**

1. Ask students: Does anyone know what a stereotype is? Come to a definition of stereotype as: *The false idea that all members of a group are the same and think and behave in the same way.* Explain that prejudice is often based on stereotypes.

2. Provide an example of a stereotype such as: Girls aren't good at sports. Ask: Is this statement true? Is it true for some girls but not all girls? Is the opposite true for boys (that they are *all* good at sports)? Do you know girls who are good at sports? Do you know any boys who aren't good at sports? Explain to students they just need to answer these questions "yes" or "no" and not name specific people.
3. Have students turn and talk with a person sitting next to them. They will spend 5 minutes generating a list (on paper) of stereotypes for both boys and girls. They should come up with at least two stereotypes for girls and two for boys. Stereotypes can include interests, behaviors or the way people think.

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**NOTE:** Some students may feel reluctant to express stereotypes for fear that others will think they believe those stereotypes. Emphasize that the words and ideas students share do not necessarily reflect their actual beliefs but they underscore how deeply ingrained stereotypical thinking is in all of us. Assure students that they should share without fear of judgment.

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After five minutes, have each pair share an example out loud and not duplicate a response that another pair shared. Record their responses on the board, which might look something like this:

#### **Stereotypes of Girls**

Girls aren't good at sports.  
 Girls like to play with dolls.  
 Girls like to make jewelry.  
 Girls are interested in their appearance.  
 Girls like art and reading.

#### **Stereotypes of Boys**

Boys love sports.  
 Boys like to play with action figures.  
 Boys like videogames.  
 Boys are stronger than girls.  
 Boys like sci-fi and math.

4. Engage the students in a class discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What do you notice about the stereotypes?
  - How do these stereotypes make you feel?
  - Are the stereotypes true for all girls or all boys?
  - How do stereotypes hurt boys and girls?
  - Where do stereotypes come from?
5. As students respond to the last question about where stereotypes come from, generate a list of ideas on the board/smartboard, eliciting suggestions from the students. The list might look something like this:
  - Products: toys, colors, bed sheeting, school supplies, clothes, backpacks, etc.
  - Media: ads, video games, TV shows, movies, websites, etc.
  - People: friends, family members, teachers, other adults
  - Books and magazines
  - Personal experiences
6. Explain that stereotypes are harmful because they can be the foundation for prejudice which can lead to discrimination. Stereotypes can also be hurtful because sometimes people believe the stereotypes about themselves (as in girls and sports) and don't explore things they may be interested in and not take advantage of certain opportunities. Ask: Can anyone think of an example of how this has happened?

## READING ACTIVITY: WHO IS MO'NE DAVIS?

1. Distribute a copy of the article, [Little League's Latest Star](#) as well as two post-it notes to each student. Give students 10 minutes to read the article silently.
2. After reading the article, have students write something they learned or a fact about Mo'Ne Davis on one post-it. On the other post-it, have them write one question they have about Mo'Ne Davis or girls and baseball. Have them put all their fact post-its on one wall (or side of the board) and their question on the other side. Read the post-its aloud and summarize everything they know about Mo'Ne Davis and use their questions as an opportunity for further research on this subject as a homework assignment or extension activity.
3. Engage students in a discussion by asking:
  - Do you think it was difficult for Mo'Ne Davis being the only girl on her team? Why or why not?
  - How does Mo'Ne Davis challenge stereotypes?
  - Do you think she had to be a better baseball player than the boys?
  - How can she be a role model to other girls? How can she be a role model for all kids?
  - How do gender stereotypes hurt both boys and girls?

## PROVIDING CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

If time allows, provide some contextual information for students about Title IX legislation as well as about girls and baseball. Here is some information to share:

- In 1972, a law called Title IX was passed, which banned discrimination based on gender in education programs. Before Title IX, a girl would not have been able to play baseball with boys. One of the most important impacts of the law was girls' ability to play sports. For example, before Title IX, one in 27 girls played varsity high school sports. By 2001, one in every 2.5 girls played. The year before Title IX was enacted, there were about 310,000 girls and women in America playing high school and college sports; today, there are more than 3,373,000.
- Despite Mo'Ne Davis' success, there are still limitations. Currently 100,000 girls play youth baseball but only 1,259 girls played high school baseball during the 2012-2013 academic year and all of them were competing against boys. According to Justine Siegal, founder of Baseball for All, "Girls are not encouraged to play baseball. And if you tell a girl she's not encouraged to play baseball, what else won't she be encouraged to do?"
- Just 0.27% of high school baseball players are girls. Some of them do succeed against boys, and if an exceptional talent like Mo'Ne does decide to stick with the sport in high school, she certainly could keep thriving. But she'd most likely be the exception. "So many girls are bullied off of teams," says Siegal. "Sometimes it's the players, but mostly it's coaches and other parents doing the damage. Usually it's the adults."

## CLOSING

Have students think about what they learned in today's lesson and do a go-round with each student completing this sentence: I used to think \_\_\_\_\_ but now I think \_\_\_\_\_.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Have students learn more about Title IX and its impact on girls and women, doing research on statistics and gains made over the years. In addition, they can create a survey or conduct interviews with girls and women in different generations (friends/cousins, mothers/aunts, grandmothers) to find out what their experiences was as girls and draw conclusions as to how things have changed over the years.
- Have students collect photos, online pictures, headlines/titles and advertisements that both perpetuate and dispel stereotypes. After collecting the pictures and words, create a class bulletin board or an online exhibit (using Tumblr) with these pictures to share with others. Write captions on the pictures that describe what the stereotype is or how it challenges current stereotypes.
- Learn more about Mo'Ne Davis, including who she is as a person and more about her experience in sports. Compile all the information in order to create a baseball card (using cardboard cut into pieces of approximately 4" x 5"). Have students imagine her as a professional Major League Baseball player, taking into consideration what the baseball card would say about her. They can also anticipate what her baseball statistics might be and include those on the back of the baseball card.

## ADDITIONAL READING

- [Sports Illustrated and, Maybe in a Few Years, a Driver's License](#) (New York Times, August 19, 2014)
- [Baseball's Demographic Shifts Bring Cultural Complexities](#) (NPR, April 18, 2014)
- [67 years after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier, Major League Baseball looks very different](#) (Pew Research Center, April 16, 2014)
- [Baseball sensation Mo'ne Davis' impact on girls and boys](#) (CNN Living, August 20, 2014)
- [Why Can't Girls Play Baseball?](#) (Time, August 19, 2014)
- [Mo'Ne Davis Documentary](#) (40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks, 2014)

## COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively..