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# Gender in Schools

Meeting the Needs of Girls AND Boys

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# Girl Fact or Fiction?

- o Girls are less intelligent in math and science.
- o Girls are expected to mother others.
- o Girls are punished harder than boys.
- o Girls are given more praise and criticism than boys over the same problems.
- o Teachers are less inclined to work with girls.
- o Body image and self esteem become paramount in girls at age 13 (the perceived starting point of puberty)

# FICTION

## Girl Fact or Fiction?

- o Girls are less intelligent in math and science.
  - o This is one of the ridiculously fabricated notions out there.
  - o Girls are testing better than boys in all areas of academia including Math and Science. However, boys are more inclined to choose Math and Science career paths than girls. Why?
  - o Only 20% of engineering students are women.

# FACT

## Girl Fact or Fiction?

- o Girls are expected to mother others.
  - o The gender bias for girls is to be quiet, neat, and calm and that they will assume mothering based on instinct and will want to do it for every student if possible.
  - o Teachers, unknowingly, place undisciplined boys next to girls in the hope that the girls will calm the boy and act “motherly” to the boy.

# FACT

## Girl Fact or Fiction?

- o Girls are punished harder than boys.
  - o Girls are punished less frequently than boys, but harsher.
  - o If girls break out of the “quiet, neat, and calm” stereotype teachers will come down on girls much harder.
  - o Girls are meant to be passive is the notion.

# FICTION

## Girl Fact or Fiction?

- o Girls are given more praise and criticism than boys over the same problems.
  - o Girls are given less meaningful and critical praise than boys.
  - o Girls are naturally perceived as intellectually inferior to boys, so if a girl answers a question correctly the thought is that she got “lucky,” but the boy is reconfirming his natural intellectual superiority.

# FACT

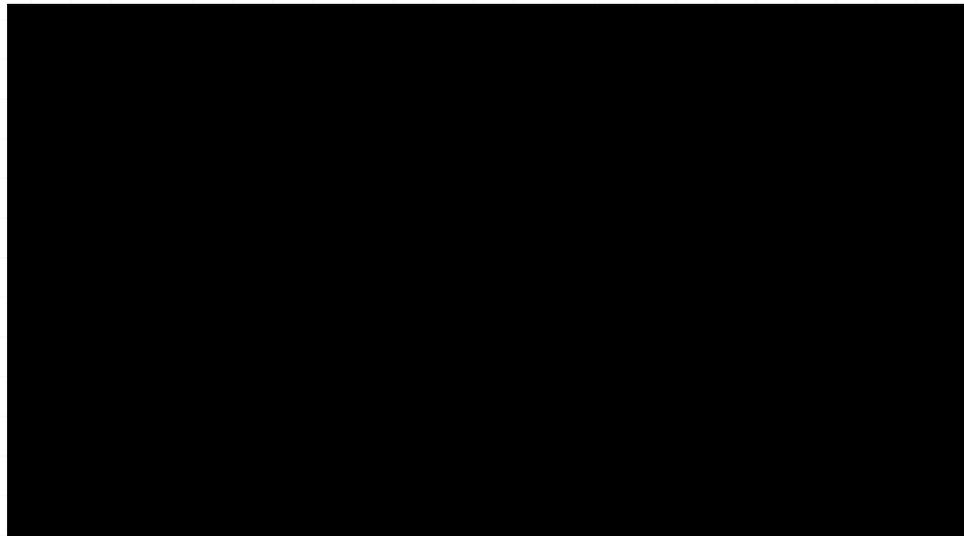
## Girl Fact or Fiction?

- o Teachers are less inclined to work with girls.
  - o Teachers have lower expectations of girls and so if they answer a question wrong they will ask someone else to answer the question (most likely a boy). However, if a boy incorrectly states the answer, the teacher will try and re-explain the problem in another way so that the boy can understand and then she will give him another opportunity to answer.
  - o There are fewer opportunities for girls and most times the boys will shout out answer and not be proper. This seems to reaffirm the passivity of girls.
  - o Textbooks also do not help with girls. They are underrepresented and not friendly with their descriptions to women (e.g. sex organ descriptions)

# FICTION

## Girl Fact or Fiction?

- o Body image and self esteem become paramount in girls at age 13 (the perceived starting point of puberty)
  - o This begins with most girls at age 9.
  - o Girls begin to hide qualities that are “unattractive” or butt up against the gender stereotype (i.e. hide their intelligence).



# School Recommendations

## o Language

- o Use gender neutral and inclusive language.

(Watch for gender bias in referring to the class [e.g., “you guys”], conducting discussions [e.g., disproportionate use of male examples], and describing roles [e.g., referring to occupations in male-female terms].)

## o Curriculum

- o Be certain that materials and activities are inclusive, representative, and appropriately gender-affirmative, sensitive, and balanced. That is, monitor and revise curriculum to promote full development and avoid perpetuating stereotypes.
- o Encourage males and females to work together cooperatively
- o Avoid gender specific assignments and groupings.

# School Recommendations

## o **Equity of Participation**

- o Monitor and ensure that everyone is encouraged to participate and actually does so (e.g., all are asked questions, encouraged to speak up, provided equal time, attention, and assistance).

## o **Socialization and Feedback**

- o Encourage the same positive behaviors from girls and boys.
- o Avoid assigning tasks that involve stereotyped gender roles (e.g., boys carry, girls clean). Promoting gender stereotypical behaviors can contribute to both personal and social problems (e.g., praising girls mainly for being neat, orderly, and working nicely together, while encouraging boys mainly to speak out assertively and be competitive).
- o Quickly address all acts of that make negative gender comparisons or that involve gender name calling, teasing, and harassment; as feasible, use them as teachable moments.
- o Ensure that feedback about learning and behavior is comparable for all.

# Parental Suggestions

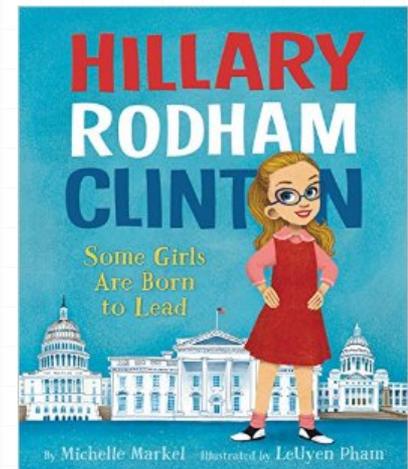
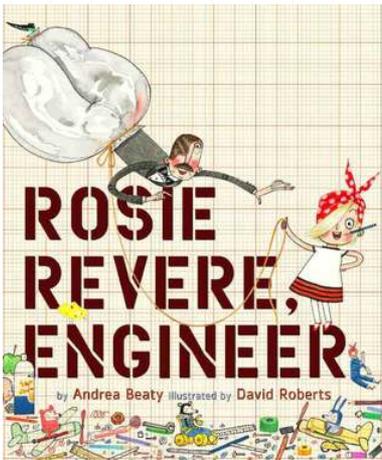
- o Parents should help girls build resistance to gender bias and its negative impact by working against stereotypes (e.g., by involving daughters in tasks and activities that traditionally have been thought of as gender-specific)
- o Encouraging girls to voice their opinions and thoughts
- o Avoid overprotecting girls (Overprotection may make them feel incapable of doing certain things. Let them try; let them explore.)

# Parental Suggestions

- o Pointing out and discussing common biases against girls in media and culture (e.g., It is common and probably inevitable that girls will watch certain TV shows that contains stereotypes, such as Desperate Housewives or Gossip Girls. Discussion of such shows can help children distinguish between what is

presented and what is true in real life.)

- o Read books that empower young girls to do anything they want



# The Trouble with Boys

- Get 70% of D's and F's.
- Make up 80% of discipline problems
- Make up 70% of learning disabilities
- Make up 80% of those on Ritalin
- Are 1 to 1 ½ years behind girls in reading and writing
- Make up 80% of HS dropouts

“Girl behavior is the gold standard in schools. Boys are treated like defective girls.”  
-Dr. Michael Thompson

# Boys Fact or Fiction

- Video games lead to aggressive behavior, violence, or even Columbine like actions.
- Boys brains are different then girls.
- There is a lack of role models for boys.
- Boys are less emotional then girls.
- Violent play is ok for at home but not at school.

# FICTION

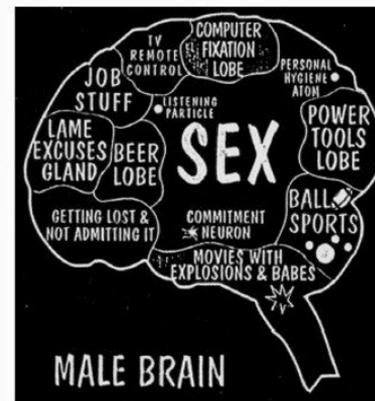
## Boys Fact or Fiction

- o Video games lead to aggressive behavior, violence, or even Columbine like actions.
  - o There has been zero correlation between video games and actual violence.
  - o Male violence in the U.S. makes us scared of our boys. Columbine is the bottom line. Though only a small minority of boys grow up to be violent, because the U.S. has the highest rates of murder and rape in the industrialized world, the possibility that a boy *could* grow up to be violent affects how we understand boys' play, their fantasies, and their "aggressive behavior." Zero tolerance hasn't helped.

# FACT

## Boys Fact or Fiction

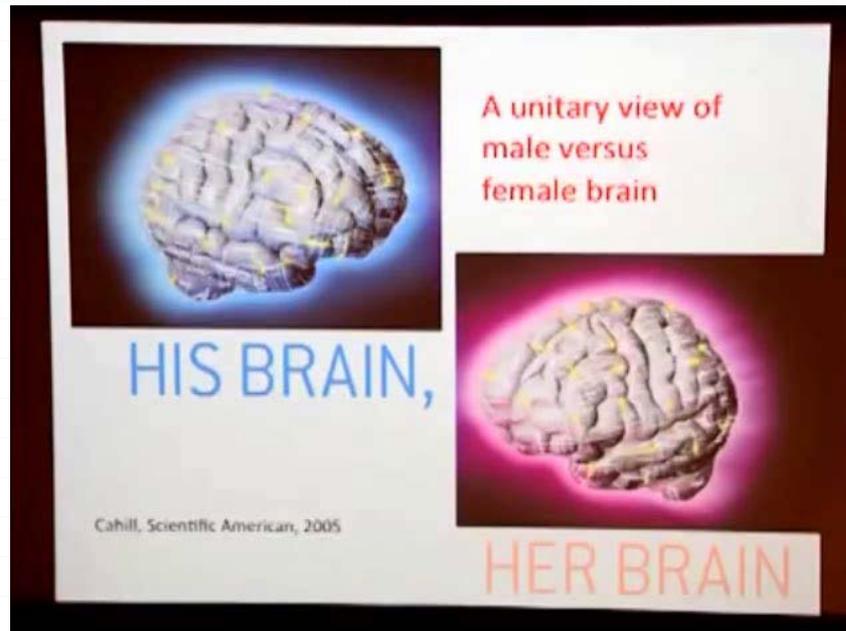
- Boys brains are different then girls.
- The emerging science of gender brain differences reaffirms some of our oldest wisdom about boys and challenges the way we teach boys and girls, especially in coeducational settings.



**FACT**

# Boys Fact or Fiction

- o Boys brains are different then girls.



# FACT

## Boys Fact or Fiction

- o There is a lack of role models for boys.
  - o The enduring problem of “fatherlessness” and lack of male role models in America.
  - o 35% of American boys are not being raised by their biological fathers; many mothers are choosing not to marry.
  - o We are losing male teachers, especially in middle schools.

# FICTION

## Boys Fact or Fiction

- o Boys are less emotional than girls.
  - o They are just different.
  - o Teach boys that emotional courage is courage, and that courage and empathy are the sources of real strength in life.
  - o Popular movies aimed at boys seem to prize only one kind of courage: standing up to a physically larger opponent.
  - o Most important, boys need models of emotional courage in their own lives, not just in the media. We need to recognize and identify for them emotional courage in the lives of women and men, in our families and in the lives of children and others around us.
  - o In life and art, we need to provide boys models of male heroism that go beyond the muscular, the self-absorbed, and the simplistically heroic.

# FICTION

## Boys Fact or Fiction

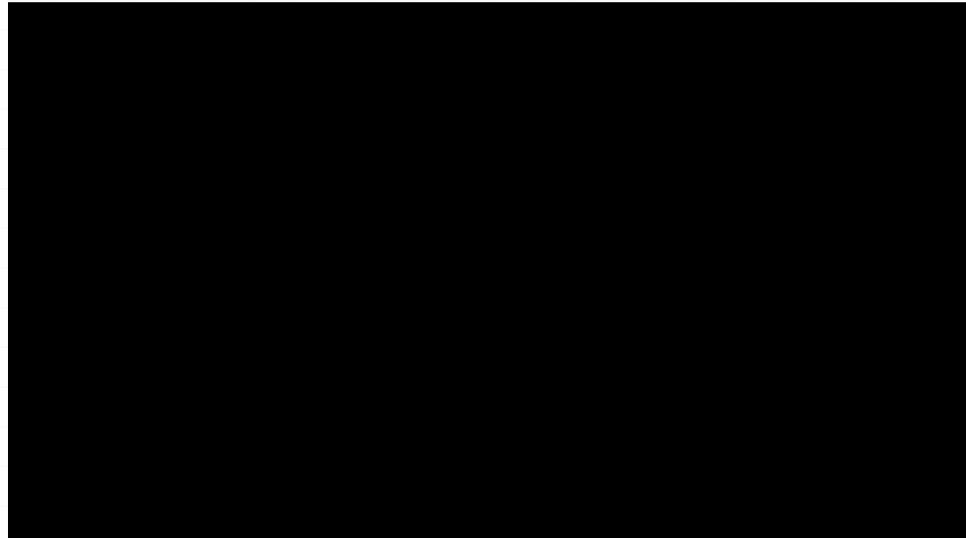
- o Boys are less emotional than girls.
  - o Many adults display emotional courage in their work or personal lives, but rarely do we allow our children to witness our private moments of conscience or bravery. We need to speak of it, and we need to recognize out loud the emotional courage of those people around us who, in small ways daily, exhibit personal courage – to make a class speech, to be active despite handicaps, to learn a new language, to step forward to help when it would be easier to look the other way.
  - o When we give emotional courage a face and a form – our own or someone else's – we leave an indelible impression. Boys can and will respond to the complexity of real courage.
  - o Boys imitate what they see. If what they see is emotional distance, guardedness, and coldness between men, they grow up to emulate that behavior.
  - o Boys need to be encouraged to initiate friendships, maintain them, and experience the conflicts that arise in male friendships from different levels of athletic skill, from teasing, and from competition for the attention of girls. Too often boys lack both the resources and the will to resolve those conflicts and preserve friendships.

# FICTION

## Boys Fact or Fiction

- o Violent play is ok for at home but not at school.
  - o It is ok for both home and school. WHAT?!?!?
  - o Intentions and effect are everything
  - o Boys like super-powers, science fiction, conflict, violence and facts. Teachers prefer realistic fiction,
  - o Captain Underpants, Pokemon, Ninja Turtles, Power Rangers and the Guinness Book of Records
  - o Zero tolerance policies are stunting boys growth.
  - o Would you stop allowing girls to play house and princesses?

# School Recommendations



# School Recommendations

## o **Bring Back Recess**

- o Schools everywhere have cut back on breaks.
- o According to a research summary by Science Daily, since the 1970s, schoolchildren have lost close to 50% of their unstructured outdoor playtime.
- o 39% of first-graders today get 20 minutes of recess each day — or less. (By contrast, children in Japan get 10 minutes of play each hour.)
- o Prolonged confinement in classrooms diminishes children's concentration and leads to squirming and restlessness.
- o Boys are more seriously affected by recess deprivation than girls.

## o **Turn Boys Into Readers**

- o "Not for me," is a common male reaction to reading, and it shows up in test scores. Year after year, in all age groups, across all ethnic lines, in every state in the union, boys score lower than girls on national reading tests. Good reading skills are critical to academic and workplace success.
- o The British, faced with a similar literacy gap, launched a national campaign to engage boys with the written word. In a major report released last year by the British Parliament's Boys' Reading Commission, the authors openly acknowledge sex differences and use a color-coded chart to illustrate boys' and girls' different reading preferences: girls prefer fiction, magazines, blogs and poetry; boys like comics, nonfiction and newspapers. It is hard to imagine the U.S. Department of Education producing such a report. So far, the plight of boys is nowhere on its agenda.

# School Recommendations

## o Turn Boys Into Readers (Continued)

- o Every teacher should have an up-to-date knowledge of reading materials that will appeal to disengaged boys.
- o Every boy should have weekly support from a male reading role model.
- o Boys will read when they find material they like.
- o [Guysread.com](http://Guysread.com) is the place to go for lists of books that have proved irresistible to boys.

## o Work With the Young Male Imagination

- o Too many writing teachers, he says, take the “confessional poet” as the classroom ideal. Personal narratives full of emotion and self-disclosure are prized; stories describing video games, skateboard competitions or a monster devouring a city are not.
- o Teachers have to come to terms with the young male spirit.
- o If we want boys to flourish, we are going to have to encourage their distinctive reading, writing, drawing and even joke-telling propensities.
- o Teachers need to permit fantasy, horror, spoofs, humor, war, conflict and, yes, even lurid sword fights.
- o If boys are constantly subject to disapproval for their interests and enthusiasms, they are likely to become disengaged and lag further behind.
- o Schools need to work with, not against, the kinetic imaginations of boys to move them toward becoming educated young men.

# Parental Suggestions

## o **Demonstrate a positive attitude about education to your children**

- o What we say and do in our daily lives can help them to develop positive attitudes toward school and learning and to build confidence in themselves as learners. Showing our children that we both value education and use it in our daily lives provides them with powerful models and contributes greatly to their success in school. In addition, by showing interest in their children's education, parents and families can spark enthusiasm in them and lead them to a very important understanding-that learning can be enjoyable as well as rewarding and is well worth the effort required.

## o **Monitor your child's television, video game, and Internet use**

- o American children on average spend far more time watching TV, playing video games and using the Internet than they do completing homework or other school-related activities.

## o **Encourage your child to read**

- o Helping your child become a reader is the single most important thing that you can do to help the child to succeed in school-and in life. The importance of reading simply can't be overstated. Reading helps children in all school subjects. More important, it is the key to lifelong learning.

# Parental Suggestions

## o **Talk with your child**

- o Talking and listening play major roles in children's school success. It's through hearing parents and family members talk and through responding to that talk that young children begin to pick up the language skills they will need if they are to do well. For example, children who don't hear a lot of talk and who aren't encouraged to talk themselves often have problems learning to read, which can lead to other school problems. In addition, children who haven't learned to listen carefully often have trouble following directions and paying attention in class. It's also important for you to show your child that you're interested in what he has to say.

## o **Encourage your child to use the library**

- o Libraries are places of learning and discovery for everyone. Helping your child find out about libraries will set him on the road to being an independent learner. Remember that libraries also offer a quiet place for students to complete homework projects, and are often open in the evening.

# Parental Suggestions

## o **Encourage your child to be responsible and work independently**

- o Taking responsibility and working independently are important qualities for school success. You can help your child to develop these qualities by establish reasonable rules that you enforce consistently, making it clear to your child that he has to take responsibility for what he does, both at home and at school, showing your child how to break a job down into small steps, and monitor what your child does after school, in the evenings and on weekends.

## o **Encourage active learning**

- o Children need active learning as well as quiet learning such as reading and doing homework projects. Active learning involves asking and answering questions, solving problems and exploring interests. Active learning also can take place when your child plays sports, spends time with friends, acts in a school play, plays a musical instrument or visits museums and bookstores. To promote active learning, listen to your child's ideas and respond to them. Let him jump in with questions and opinions when you read books together. When you encourage this type of give-and-take at home, your child's participation and interest in school is likely to increase.

# Suggested Reading

- o The Fear Equation, written by Michael Thompson for the spring 2006 edition of *Independent School Magazine*.
- o Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make-Believe Violence, Gerard Jones
- o Girls on the Edge, Leonard Sax
- o Under Deadman's Skin: Discovering the Meaning of Children's Violent Play, Jane Katch
- o Self-Reg: How to help Your Child (and You) Break the Stress Cycle and Successfully Engage with Life, Stuart Shanker
- o Preschool in Three Cultures: Japan, China, and the United States, Joseph Tobin and David Wu
- o The War-Play Dilemma, What Every Parent and Teacher Needs to Know, Diane Levin
- o Boys and Girls: Superheroes in the Doll Corner, Vivian Paley
- o Raising Cain, Dr. Michael Thompson

# Sources

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- o <http://michaelthompson-phd.com/>