From Disengagement to Engagement: Educational Equity for Boys PreK-3

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Presenters

Merle Froschl and Barbara Sprung
Co-Directors
Educational Equity Center at AED

Principal Investigators
Raising and Educating Healthy Boys Project
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- Multi-level initiative grades preK-3
- Focus groups with teachers and parents
- Conference for researchers, practitioners and teacher educators
- Report on the Growing Crisis in Boys’ Education
- Working Group on teacher education

- All They Can Be: Classroom Strategies to Support Boys’ Learning PreK - Grade 3
THE ISSUES

- Boys are disengaging from school beginning at the earliest levels of education
- Problem is international in scope
- Deficit thinking views boys as liabilities
- Race and poverty combine to make some boys especially at risk
- Push-down curriculum/high stakes testing
- Reinforcing gender stereotypes through current brain research
VULNERABLE AREAS

- Stereotypes about masculinity
- Social emotional development
- Stigmatization
- Expulsion from preschool
- Referral to special education
- Literacy gap
- In U.S., African American and Latino boys most at risk
Stereotypes about Masculinity

- Need to conform to a societal conception of what it means to be man
- Constraints on emotional development
- Emotional illiteracy
- Limits relational development
Examining “The Boy Code”

BOX 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MALE IN OUR SOCIETY?

- Physically powerful
- Possess morals, principles
- Instrumentally competent

The box activity was developed for the focus groups by Craig Flood. It was adapted from the “Act Like a Man Box” (Creighton & Kivel, 1992; Chu, 1992).
Examining “The Boy Code” cont’d

**BOX 2: WHAT HAPPENS TO BOYS WHO DON’T FIT INTO BOX 1?**

- Anti-social behavior
- Negative effect on feelings
- Creates hardships & pressures
- Impact on sexuality, gender identity

Gropper, 2004
Social-Emotional Development

Ability to

- calm oneself when angry
- initiate friendships
- resolve conflicts respectfully
- make ethical and safe choices
- contribute constructively to the community

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2007
Stigmatization

- Boys are isolated and stigmatized as “trouble-makers” in preschool
- Classmates quickly pick up on the message that the “bad” boys are African American

Barbarin & Crawford, 2006
Expulsion from Preschool

Boys expelled and suspended at higher rates

- Preschool expulsions are three times the national K-12 rate
- Young boys are five times more likely to be expelled than girls
- Lack of teacher preparation and support services

Gilliam, 2005
Referral to Special Education

Boys overrepresented in special education

- Two-thirds of special education population (USDOE, 2003)
- Four times more likely to be referred to a school psychologist (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999)
- Two and half times as likely as girls to be diagnosed with ADHD (USDOE, 2003)
- 80 percent of those diagnosed with emotional disturbances or autism (USDOE, 2003)
Literacy

Boys lag behind girls in reading and writing

- Score 16 points lower in reading and 24 points lower in writing (U.S. Department of Education, 2004)
- In Kindergarten, the reading gap between boys and girls doubles (Tyre, 2008)
- Three-quarters of gap opened by fourth grade (Newkirk, 2003)
- The gap continues to grow as boys move on from elementary school (U.S. Department of Education, 2007)
Most at Risk

African-American Boys
- African-American boys make up 8.6% of national public school enrollment, but 20% of those classified as mentally retarded, 21% of those classified as emotionally disturbed, 22% of those expelled from school, and 23% of those suspended (Smith, 2002)

Latino Boys
- Have the highest high school drop-out rate (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-08)
STRATEGIES

- Pre-service/in-service Education
- Literacy
- Learning environment
- Involving families and community
- Role models and mentors
Pre-service/in-service Education

- Analyze how attitudes and expectations about boys influence teaching
- Engage in group and self-reflection
- Question traditional classroom practices (curriculum, room arrangement, schedule)
- Provide intensive/ongoing inservice models
Literacy

- Multiple media (film/video, storyboards, music, animation)
- Information and communication technology
- Personal interests and passions
- Reading clubs
- Library book selection
- Joy of reading
- Reading aloud
- Reading is “cool”
Learning Environment

- Art and music studios
- Well-equipped library
- High quality labs
- Strong curriculum
- High expectations
- Clear values
- Recess and exercise
- Active learning
- Project-based learning
Involving Families and Community

- Cultural respect
- Family involvement leads to school success
- Regard as assets
- Community as context
- Community as resource
Role Models and Mentors

- Diversity
- Range of options
- Caring adults
- Male teachers
- “Obama factor”
ENGAGEMENT!
References

References cont.

For information contact
Merle Froschl or Barbara Sprung
Co-Directors
Educational Equity Center at AED
mfroschl@aed.org  bsprung@aed.org
www.edequity.org