

# The Trouble With Boys



**A LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING:  
THE TROUBLE WITH BOYS BY PEG TYRE  
THE MIND OF BOYS BY GURIAN  
BOYS AND GIRLS LEARN DIFFERENTLY BY  
GURIAN**

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# What Does The Data Say



- [www.newsweek.com/id/157898-video](http://www.newsweek.com/id/157898-video) Peg
- See Handout
- According to the Center for Labor Market Studies, this generation of young men will:
  - Be increasingly under and unemployed
  - Earn significantly lower lifetime earnings
  - Pay less Social Security Tax and Federal Income Taxes over their lifetime
  - Depend more on Social Services, Public Health Care, Food Stamps, etc.
  - Be likely to father children out of wedlock and not support or live with their offspring

# Academic Woes of Data



- Boys get the majority of D's and F's in schools and in some cases as high as 70 percent
- Boys make up 80 percent of our discipline problems
- Of children diagnosed with learning disabilities, 70 percent are boys
- Of children diagnosed with behavioral problems, 80 percent are boys
- 80 percent of the children on Ritalin are boys
- As of 2004 the number of boys on Ritalin approached five million
- Boys are a year and one-half behind girls in reading and writing
- Young men make up less than 44 percent of our college population

# More Data



- Boys are more likely to be the targets of bullying
- [www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/masculinity03.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/masculinity03.html)
- Though girls report that they are more likely to be depressed, boys are more likely to kill themselves than girls
- Currently between the ages of 5 and 14, boys are three times more likely to kill themselves
- Between the ages of 15 and 19, they are four times more likely
- <http://www.pbs.org/opb/raisingcain/message.html>

# Some Honest Questions



- What students most challenge teachers?
- What students for the most part don't do their homework?
- What students are less likely to read?
- What students dislike writing?
- What students have the hardest time focusing?
- Does teacher gender matter?
- What kinds of books do boys like to read?
- What kinds of things do boys like to write about?
- Why do boys like to play video games more than girls?

# Do We Really Have Boy Trouble?



- Study at an Advantaged School
- Currently some colleges are secretly practicing affirmative action to get more boys to their campuses
- Not many educators are willing to talk about boy's underachievement
- Some feminists believe that girls have been oppressed by men since the dawn of time. Women are on top for awhile and maybe it is about time
- There is a big gap between what we think will help boys and what has been proven effective

# What The Statistics Say



- The longer boys stay in school, the farther they fall behind (see charts. P 27)
- In elementary grades, schools can improve reading levels of students
- Why don't we continue that in middle and high school?
- Boys start behind in writing and never catch up
- Boys start faltering in fourth grade
- Here is the pattern: Boys and girls start off about the same
- Around fourth grade, boys fall behind in reading and writing
- By sixth grade, the gap increases
- By middle school, girls spend more time doing homework and more girls were in the top ten percent of their class

# The Three Myths



- 1. For boys, school achievement does not matter
- 2. School has always done it this way so no need to do it any different
- 3. Boys who struggle early on will catch up
  - ✦ May be true for boys of high income
  - ✦ Not true for children of middle and low income homes

# It Is A Global Problem



- In 1998, Britain made the problem of boys a top priority
- One headmaster is quoted as, “We should not accept with a shrug of our shoulders that boys will be boys.”
- For the first time in history, girls are better educated than boys. In 2005, 57.2 percent of undergraduates enrolled in college and universities in America were women
- Currently women between the ages of 25 and 29, 33 percent have college degrees and men of the same age interval only 26 percent have college degrees
- Are girls and boys really different
- [www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/school.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/school.html)

# Where Does It Start?

## Let's Take A Look At Preschool



- Read Article, “Preschool and Boys”
- Video-PBS-Social and Emotional Development
- [www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/emotion01.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/emotion01.html)
- Lack of Movement
- Lack of Play
- Being a loud, active, playful boy is not acceptable
- [www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/aggression.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/aggression.html)
- In 1960- 500,000 children attended preschool
- Today over 5 million attend
- Need play-based, child centered curricula
- Stymies a love of learning
- Societies fears have changed the way we let kids play
- Do Page 59 from “The Minds of Boys”

# Is Formal Schooling Robbing Kids of Rich Learning?



- Kids do not play outside like they used to
- In the 70's a passerby would see kids riding bikes, kids walking uptown, play tag in the front yard, etc.
- Kids who are coddled, hugged, loved, treated kindly, spoken to kindly, and cared for properly do better in school
- The profession is female dominated
- Many classrooms are female focused
- Some have little tolerance for kinetic, spirited, busy, active and irrepressible boys
- Zero tolerance toward boisterous behavior is hurting boys
- The demands of an academic preschool classroom can outpace a boy's natural development
- Boys who fail at preschool and at elementary school often have female teachers
- Boys are 4.5 times more likely to be expelled than girls

# Parental Anxiety



- Is driving sales of things like “Hooked on Phonics”
- Has overemphasized the importance of the “Birth to Three” period and misinterpreted the true meaning of the research
- Has increased a parent’s appetite for early academic learning
- While we are ratcheting up academic expectations, boy’s brains are the same
- At 18 months, boys speak 0-220 words while girls speak 2-318
- While mothers speak the same amount to their boys and girls, boys speak less
- Research does show that parents offer less exposure to books to their boys
- Research shows that boys see reading as masculine and often usually the mothers are the primary readers
- Unfortunately, parenting is becoming a competitive sport
- Many parents are starting their children too early on academic tasks
- Children thrive early on a walk in the park, seeing a toad in the pond as opposed to seeing one online, living in a rich language environment and having everyday experiences a child should have

# Some Scary Research



- Children who attend preschools that emphasize direct instruction experience more stress at school.
- At age 5-6, those children knew more letters and numbers than their non-academic peers but by first grade they don't know any more than the children who attend non-academic preschools
- Children from academic preschools are also found to be less creative and less enthusiastic about their learning
- Kids who attend academic preschools, in the long run, do more poorly in school thus handicapping boys in a way we did not anticipate
- By 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, children who attended academic preschools earned lower grades and behaved worse
- Kids experiences with learning are more important than the learning
- Kids who touch, see, smell, feel, and experience learning will be the better learners

# Is Kindergarten Any Different?



- What did a kindergarten classroom look like 30 years ago?
- Article- “Are Today’s Kindergartens Anti-Boy?”
- An observant observer-kindergarten is not developmentally appropriate for boys
- Most classrooms do not have enough space
- No games like hoops, building blocks and balls that boys like. Boys need lots of active play
- Fix the environment, not the boy
- Curriculum continues to pace ahead of where all children are developmentally
- Acceleration of curriculum stresses boys and makes them unhappy (the new first grade)
- By third and fourth grade the boy moves from frustration, to the class clown at fifth grade to being aggressive in middle school
- By high school, he is either in special ed or labeled ADHD
- Boys are 60 percent more likely to be held back in kindergarten

# Why Are We In Such A Hurry?



- Starting in the 60's- national test scores began to fall, SAT scores, and one quarter of the Navy's new enlistments could not read at a ninth grade level
- A Nation at Risk-1983 Reagan's committee on Excellence in Education warned of the mediocrity in school, the economy and in our culture
- Clinton-Goals 2000 began the development of state standards and assessments
- 2001-NCLB-accelerates school curriculum
- Does testing desensitize us to the needs of children?
- It continues to disengage boys from what interests them
- Some parents are "Red-shirting" but costs money
- Boys and girls have different learning styles
- School reform is not bad-but filling out so many worksheets is
- Real learning takes engagement, experiments, discovery, and movement
- Engagement in learning is crucial for boys
- Boy Friendly Learning Environment-p. 92 The Mind of Boys

# Recess From What



- Raising Cain-When asked what part of school boys liked best, they said, “recess.”
- Twenty years ago, students usually received recess 2x a day
- “I need to move around more.”
- Boys need more time to move. When they don’t get, they begin to dread coming to school.
- Recess was originally designed to move around, help kids tone muscles, increase blood flow and improve social skills
- Even when recess is given, rough housing and body interaction is frowned upon
- Even at some schools, tag, touch football, soccer and such games are being banned
- These type games are needed as they bring out aggression and pent up energy

# Recess Benefits Academics



- In one school, a boy was arrested for pointing a chicken strip as a gun
- We do want to find a way to make all kids comfortable in recess, but not at the cost of making boys play like girls
- In one study done by Anthony Pelligrini, he found that carefree time is a critical component for the educational experience
- His study found that successful peer interaction at recess was an excellent predictor of success on standardized tests
- Recess also helps children experience mastery
- Cutting short recess cuts boys off from success
- He also found that all children were less attentive before recess than after recess, but recess was especially crucial for boys
- Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, an associate professor of pediatrics says play, especially for young males is a public health issue
- Movement actually helps boys focus
- At any school, recess should not be optional, nor should it be used as a reward or punishment to be taken away

# A Medical Crisis-ADHD



- Did You Know p. 215, 219
- My own case study
- There is no medical test for ADHD
- The diagnosis comes from a series of highly subjective tests
- In 2003, 14 percent of all boys in America have been diagnosed with ADHD
- From 2000 to 2005 the number of boys being given ADHD drugs has increased to 48 percent
- Either we have an epidemic or many boys are being misdiagnosed
- We already know that boys are more prone to genetic anomalies
- According to one study, affluent white boys who attend schools with high academic expectations and poor black boys who attend poor schools with a high proportion of inexperienced teachers are more likely to be identified as having attention problems
- Because so many schools were pressuring parents to diagnose their boys, a law was passed in 2003 that makes it illegal for schools to discuss ADHD medication with families

# Make Classroom Changes



- For most kids, motivation to learn decreases as they progress in age
- When girls are under stress, they become quiet. When boys are under pressure they become a behavior problem
- It's time to change the routines of schooling
- Further studies show that in private schools and conservative schools where classroom order is important, they also report the highest rates of ADHD diagnoses
- If a boy is wiggling, let him stand
- If a boy is struggling with his pencil, give him a bigger or fatter pencil
- Boys struggle more with handwriting than girls

# One School's Attack on The Trouble With Boys



- In this upper middle class school, the data showed that their upper-middle-class boys were not thriving in school
- They were the source of the majority problems
- They were 70 percent of the special education population
- Boys were trailing girls in almost every measure
- Challenge-implement boy friendly strategies but not at the expense of educating girls
- Reach out to willing teachers
- Offered all male enrichment classes
- Offer boy friendly reading materials
- Create projects that incorporate topics that interest boys
- They are making progress

# Does Teacher Gender Matter



- Is there teacher bias in the sex of children
- Boys are affected more by book choice not the sex of the teacher
- Boys see reading as feminine
- Boys need books with action, good and evil, war, or content oriented
- Why are there not more male teachers in education?

# Boys and Reading



- Share the information on articles on reading
- The data already shows us that boys fall behind girls in reading and writing
- And they continue to do worse in reading and writing the longer they stay in school
- But today, high-level reading and writing skills are needed for economic success
- There are few high paying jobs for poor readers
- Girls do so much better in writing, that nationally twice as many girls as boys score higher in advanced courses
- Reality is that all children are reading less
- Today, boys do worse than they did 30 years ago on national reading tests
- Boys poor reading habits, levels affects all economic levels

# Why Aren't Boys Reading?



- Very little research has been done to answer this question
- Reading failure breeds school failure
- The better a child reads, the better the probability that a child will do well in school and stay in school
- Children who hear and speak plenty of words tend to learn to read more readily
- All children need a language rich environment
- Children who are raised in a middle income home have a larger vocabulary by kindergarten than an adult in a home of poverty
- Boys see reading as feminine
- Boys don't think that men read

# Data About Reading



- Fourth grade is the grade where students move from learning to read to reading to learn
- In fourth grade, good readers take a leap forward as they make this move
- By the end of fifth grade, boys who are poor readers are at a disadvantage from which they will never recover
- The fourth, fifth grade slump hits boys harder than girls
- By eighth grade it becomes a cliff
- The more kids read, the better readers they become and the inverse is true
- By middle school a poor reader reads about 100,000 words, an average reader about one million and a voracious reader about 10 million

# Boy Friendly Instruction



- Poor boys don't read because of their poverty, middle school boys because they are wired differently and affluent boys because they have "too many distractions"
- A new reading program in Scotland-Synthetic Phonics
- Used now in England and in 2006 the data still holds. With this program, boys read better than girls.
- Check out site [guysread.com](http://guysread.com)
- Let boys read boy's books
- Make reading and vocab instruction fun-[vocabcentral.com](http://vocabcentral.com)
- Research shows there is no link between how a boy is raised and the kind of books he likes
- Boys like books about stuff, science books, pyramids, grasshoppers, and books about facts
- We should not make boys wrong for the kinds of books they like to read
- At home, men need to read more to their children

# Tips for Writing



- Read “Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices”
- Let boys with bad handwriting type on a keyboard
- Allow boys plenty of choices about what they have to write about
- Allow students to use visual cues when they are transition from drawing to writing
- Teachers may have to develop an appreciation for the way in which boys write
- Girls write for the teacher, boys write for each other. Boy use kid language, not classroom language. Boys like to tell “fish stories”
- Be tolerant-be prepared for boys to tackle dangerous topics replete with violence and gore
- Too often teachers look at boy’s writing as if it were a problem that needs to be managed
- Let them write about Star Wars, Harry Potter, etc.

# The Anatomy of a Boy's Brain



- Girl's brains mature quicker than boy's
- Through the use of MRI's, boys and girls use different neural pathways to read
- MRI's of boys and girls brains doing same tasks show different pathways in their brains
- Did you know page 48
- Rule # 11 – John Medina
- Girls can take in more sensory data than boys
- The corpus callosum is 20 percent larger in girl's brains and is the part of the brain that connects the two hemispheres and perhaps why girls can multitask and do more cross talk across the two hemispheres
- Boys have more development in the right side of the brain giving them more spatial insight and such as measuring, geometry, three dimensional objects
- Boys are usually better at abstract reasoning

# More Grey Matter



- Hormonal differences account for boys being more aggressive, and more sexual
- Boys move more emotive material down to the limbic system which is the fight or flight response and girls move it more to the upper part of the brain where complex thinking occurs
- Learning music is harder for boys
- Girls generally have better memory long term
- The male brain is not at its optimal size until age 30. For girls it happens in their teenage years

# The Brain Rules



- The X Factor
- The X chromosome has 1500 genes. Many of those involve brain functioning
- If a man's X chromosome gets damaged, he has to live with the consequences
- Women have two X chromosomes so if one gets damaged she can ignore the consequences
- The cortex is fatter in women's brains
- The amygdala is larger in men's brains
- While at rest the amygdala in women's brains talks to the left hemisphere and the opposite is true for men's brains
- Men can synthesize serotonin 52 percent quicker than women can (may be why women suffer from anxiety more)
- How girls communicate – the ball experience
- How boys communicate

# What About Video Games and TV



- Engages boys more than girls
- Boys sit sedentary for hours-negative effects are related to how long they sit
- Attention span decreases and grows weaker
- Boys who game need more and more instant, immediate gratification
- Boys receive challenges, rewards, knowledge, and competency in gaming
- Seen as masculine and full of aggression, fighting, good and evil, and violence
- Children who play violent video games are more aggressive and violent in school
- But in the last ten years, murders are down 68 percent, rape 25 percent, robbery down 43 percent and assaults are down 26 percent????
- Gaming is addictive and by boy's brain's makeup, boys are more prone to addiction than girls
- Can we use gaming to teach boys to read-some schools are
- Gaming makes our boy's lives poorer, not richer

# Some Points To Ponder



- Boys like commotion and rough play, that is the glue that holds them together
- Girls like relationship and bond them through verbal cues
- When boys do start to speak, it is to negotiate their place in the hierarchy of their culture
- Boys who give orders are leaders
- Boys communicate to one up each other (true in class also)
- Girls who give orders are bossy
- Closing the gap-same sex class-in one experiment, a teacher chose to teach science in a same gender setting-within two weeks, the girls caught up to the boys
- Women's brains have more data to share because of the way they store it. They like to give details but boys just want the gist of the situation
- Summary of rule # 11 p. 260

# How Do We Begin?



- Begin to raise awareness
- [www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/masculinity05.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/masculinity05.html)- connecting
- Begin to train teachers in gender issues
- Try single gender classes (this is a whole workshop in itself) to improve education for boys and girls
- Be aware when and why a boy's brain moves into a "rest state" (looks like when boys are looking out the window, staring off in space, etc.)
- When we want the boy to come out of rest state, it may be in a way that does not please the teacher
- Begin to educate parents
- Boys need one special person in their life and it is a big predictor of their future success
- Help with organizational skills-the lawyer who became a teacher
- Collaboration seen as less productive for boys-in labs, boys will play with the equipment but they will let the girls write the report
- Teacher's grading requirements-Are we grading neatness, compliance, organization, and regurgitation of real facts rather than real learning (in either case we aren't helping students period)
- Handout p. 272 from "The Minds of Boys" in groups

# Recommendations From the Field



- Elementary School from “Boys and Girls Learn Differently”
- Middle School
- High School
- Brain Breaks
- Five Ways to Connect Boys To School-White Paper

# Some Tough Issues



- More funding for boys in trouble
- More aid-although a boy in a middle socioeconomic status will not need as much aid as an African –American boy living in the inner city
- More reports on how girls are doing are not needed
- Boys are more and more growing up with no male role-model in the home
- Are schools biased against boys (but not deliberately)
  - Boys have poor motor skills more than girls
  - Boys are less organized
  - Boys usually aren't as artistic
- One lawsuit has been filed against a school in Mass. claiming that boys are being discriminated against
- The new way of teaching English started with the NCTE council in 1966-the issue was that studying English should be about self-discovery, reading is less, and there is more informal classroom talk, music, books from other cultures, and less reading of well-established literary classics. But standardized test scores from this new curriculum is devastating for boys
- Young Women's Leadership School NYC (2006 law for Dept of Ed-single sex schools are legal)
- One single gender report page 215-216 Peg Tyre

# Recommended Readings and Resources



- Einstein Never Use Flashcards: How Our Children Really Learn
- The Mind of Boys- Michael Gurian
- Boys and Girls Learn Differently- Michael Gurian
- Boys Adrift-Leonard Sax
- [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)
- The Trouble With Boys-Peg Tyre
- Raising Cain-Michael Thompson
- Lost Boys- Garbarino
- The Wonder of Boys-Pollock
- Boy Writers: