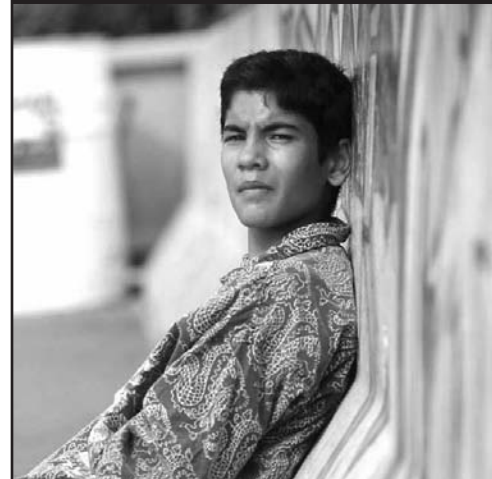




# **Raising and Educating Healthy Boys**

**A Report on the Growing  
Crisis in Boys' Education**

**A Publication of the  
Educational Equity Center at the  
Academy for Educational Development**



## Dedication

We would like to dedicate this report in memory of Barbara D. Finberg, who died on March 5, 2005. Barbara was a life-long advocate for social justice and educational equity, with a special expertise in early childhood education. She was a staunch supporter of our work over many years, serving on Educational Equity Concepts' Board of Directors and, after EEC merged with AED, on the EEC/AED Leadership Council. Barbara was a participant in the meeting on Raising and Educating Healthy Boys and, as always, her contributions were well thought out, insightful and reflected her commitment to the well-being of children.

## Acknowledgments

The Raising and Educating Healthy Boys Project would not have been possible without the support of two visionary funders who recognize the importance of addressing this critical issue beginning in early childhood. For this foresight we are grateful to the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation, Luba Lynch, Executive Director and the Ms. Foundation for Women, Susan Wefald, Director of Institutional Planning. We are also grateful for their generous support of the invitational meeting and this report.

The Project is indebted to Craig Flood who, as a father and equity professional, has been concerned with the negative effect of gender socialization on young boys since the 1980s. Craig's Concept Paper and early work on the issue helped to launch the Raising and Educating Healthy Boys Project. We also want to acknowledge Dr. Nancy Gropper, the Project's evaluator, who helped to conceptualize the project and developed the focus group protocol; and Susan Shaffer, who helped in the development of the Project and assisted in conducting the focus groups in Washington, DC.

We would like to thank all the teachers and parents who participated in the focus groups for sharing their ideas and strategies. We also appreciate the schools who helped to organize the focus groups and served as focus group sites: In Washington, DC, we thank Dr. Marta Palacios Principal, Bruce Monroe Elementary School. In Croton-on-Hudson, New York, our thanks go to Judith Stein Coleman, parent, Dr. Marjorie E. Castro, Superintendent of Schools, and Diana Bowers, Principal, Carrie E. Thompson Elementary School. In New York City, we thank Françoise Jacobsohn and Dorothy Essendoh, two activist parents who arranged focus groups with teachers and parents at Midtown West Elementary School. And, we thank Cecilia Blewer, parent at PS 163 in New York City, for arranging to have other parents devote time in their café 163 program to a focus group. We also extend our thanks to Dr. Blythe Hinitz, Professor, Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education, The College of New Jersey, who arranged for us to conduct two focus groups with her students.

We also extend our appreciation to the participants who attended the invitational meeting and contributed their ideas and expertise. Their names appear on the Participants List in the Appendices of this report. Finally, we wish to acknowledge Stacy Silverstein and Elayne Archer for their contributions to this report: Stacy for her intrepid note-taking at the meeting and Elayne for her skillful editing.



# Raising and Educating Healthy Boys

**A Report on the Growing  
Crisis in Boys' Education**

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Co-Directors  
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Academy for  
Educational Development

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## Introduction

Raising and educating healthy boys is an area of increasing concern among educators, child development experts, and parents across the country. It was the focus of an invitational meeting convened by the Educational Equity Center at the Academy for Educational Development (EEC/AED) in November 2004. The impetus came from EEC/AED's longstanding concern about ensuring equity for all children beginning at the earliest levels of education.

***Children as young as three and four are really good at observing and they see the inequities. We are sanctioning this in our practices and everyone is absorbing it.***

***-- Luba Lynch***

***Executive Director***

***A.L. Mailman Family Foundation***

The meeting brought together a national group of researchers and educators to analyze the current situation in terms of boys' development and school performance and to create an action plan to focus national attention on the well-being of boys in school and in society. Funding was provided by the A. L. Mailman Family Fund and the Ms. Foundation for Women, foundations that had supported earlier work on the issue.

Participants brought a range of national and international perspectives to the meeting. Recurring themes included examining the prevailing stereotypes about boys; the growing gap in boys' literacy skills; the viewing of boys as "problems" in school, leading to suspension and expulsion beginning in preschool; and the current trends in education toward mandated curriculum and high-stakes testing, which negatively affect the important relational aspects of teaching.

***Why is a women's organization interested in boys? The lives and futures of women and girls are interwoven with those of men and boys. Unless we engage men and boys in our work, we cannot end violence against women.***

***-- Susan Wefald***

***Director of Institutional Planning***

***Ms. Foundation for Women***



## Background

Educational Equity Concepts (EEC) developed the Raising and Educating Healthy Boys project in 2000<sup>1</sup> in response to a growing body of research raising concerns about boys' social/emotional development and school performance, particularly in terms of literacy.

EEC had always been concerned with freeing both girls and boys from the limiting effects of sex-role stereotyping, beginning at the earliest levels of education. As the body of research documenting the difficulties boys were experiencing in school grew, EEC became interested in looking at the issue of young boys' healthy development and education and determining the role of gender socialization in boys' academic and social success.

***We need to start addressing issues of gender socialization of boys and girls at the preschool level. At stake is the full potential of each individual child's cognitive, social, and emotional development.***

***-- Barbara Sprung***

***Co-Director***

***Educational Equity Center at AED***

As a first step, the project conducted a series of focus groups with preK-3 teachers and parents to learn how boys are perceived

and to explore strategies for change. During the focus groups, adults were asked to address questions in two boxes:

- Box one asked: What does it mean to be male in our society?
- Box two asked: What happens to boys who don't fit into box one?<sup>2</sup>

Participants had no trouble identifying the characteristics for the ideal male—instrumental competence, physical power, moral principles, and character. They also were well aware of the pain and suffering that could result from not fitting in—e.g., anti-social behavior, being teased and bullied, hardships and pressures, and a negative effect on instrumental competence. As discussed in the project evaluator's report of the focus groups, boys seem to be in a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation (Gropner, 2004).

The focus groups made it clear that, although teachers and parents are aware and concerned that boys are not faring well in school, strategies for change were scattered at best. Teachers and parents felt constrained by the current climate in school fostered by the "pushdown" and mandated curriculum affecting preK and the early primary grades and the high-stakes testing that typically begins in grade 4. Given this environment, teachers and parents are at a loss about how to address

<sup>1</sup> Educational Equity Concepts has since merged with the Academy for Educational Development to form the Educational Equity Center at AED. During its 22 years before joining AED, EEC's mission was—and as the Educational Equity Center at AED remains—to promote equality of opportunity regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, disability, or family income.

<sup>2</sup> The box activity was developed for the focus groups by Craig Flood. It was adapted from the "Act Like a Man Box" published in 1992 in *Helping Teens Stop Violence: A Practical Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents* by Allan Creighton with Paul Kivel and *Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence That Tears Our lives Apart* by Judy Chu.

issues of boys' physical, social/emotional, and cognitive needs.

EEC came away from the focus groups convinced of the need to raise national attention to the alarming statistics about young boys' emotional well-being and academic achievement, and the implications for their future education and careers. This does not mean that attention is turned away from girls' needs; it means that gender issues in the pre-school years, as always, are addressed in terms of all children. Effective gender equity benefits both boys and girls. Attention to gender socialization is essential in order to prepare all students, girls and boys, for academic success and healthy adult lives.

***Ideas about how boys and girls are "supposed to be" are planted early. The messages boys receive about what it means to be male in this society are connected to their social-emotional and academic development. If we focus on boys' school experience early on, we will improve education for all children.***

***-- Merle Froschl***

***Co-Director  
Educational Equity Center at AED***

## **Gender Socialization: The "Boy Code"**

William Pollack (1998) has coined the phrase, "the boy code," to express the constraints on boys' emotional development and the resulting inner emotional pain that many boys carry around under the façade of being "normal" and "fine." Kindlon and Thompson call it "emotional illiteracy" (1999).

Basically, these researchers are speaking to the way boys are socialized from early childhood to conform to a societal conception of what it means to be a man. While acceptable boundaries for girls' choices and behaviors have greatly expanded over the past several decades, boys remain in a "box," an ideal of masculinity that limits their emotional and relational development. As the focus groups described earlier made clear, teachers and parents are well aware that the consequences of operating outside the "box" are severe. Boys who do so are labeled in ways that leave them feeling isolated, shamed, and vulnerable to teasing and bullying.



***Male socialization is an issue not just in the USA, but worldwide. In every society, two things that are most important are 1) the ability to support your family and 2) to be tough and able to defend your family, your community and your country. Both have a power orientation and have implications on relationships with women, attitudes about sexuality, community and country.***

***-- Barbara D. Finberg***

***Vice President  
MEM Associates***

At the meeting, Judy Chu, research scientist and lecturer, Stanford University, and Susan Shaffer, deputy director and director of gender equity programs, Mid-Atlantic Equity Center, presented a point of view about boys' relational development that looked behind the stereotypes of the "unemotional" boy. Both Chu and Shaffer noted that boys are capable and desirous of relational attachments but learn early on how to mask them or fit them around "the boy code."

In her ethnographic studies of boys during two time periods—early childhood (ages 4-5) and adolescence (ages 12-18)—Chu found evidence that relational capabilities detected at infancy carry through early childhood and into

adolescence. She reconsidered boys' development through a relational framework, building from Gilligan's research (1996) highlighting the centrality of relationships in human development and from Piaget's research (1929/1979) emphasizing children's active participation in learning and development. Chu examined boys' experiences of gender socialization from the boys' perspectives, and explored how boys negotiate their senses of self, behaviors, and relationships in light of cultural constructions of masculinity.

***We have to start very young with boys. Sometimes adolescent boys communicate with silence. We know that boys crave connection and, if we can find ways to make it safe, they can expand themselves.***

***-- Denise Glyn Borders***

***Senior VP & Group Director  
U.S. Education Workforce Development  
Academy for Educational Development***

Chu noted that there is a shift in boys' presence in relationships during early childhood that reflects how they are actively reading, taking in, and responding to their culture, particularly constructions of masculinity. Through their everyday experiences with peers and adults,



boys learn what is considered appropriate and desirable behavior for boys, and also the consequences of deviating from accepted norms. As boys adapt to society and culture, they seem to go from “presence to pretense via posturing.” They learn to anticipate how others will respond to them and accordingly modify their self-expression and styles of relating to others. They become more selective and strategic about what they reveal of themselves and to whom. They begin to shield their relational capabilities in order to protect their vulnerability. She emphasized, however, that boys’ “relational” capabilities are not “lost.”

***At adolescence, boys’ relational capabilities may be more difficult to detect, but they persist nonetheless. Contrary to stereotypes that tend to depict adolescent boys as emotionally deficient and relationally defunct, adolescent boys are very capable of thoughtful self-reflection and deep interpersonal understanding.***

***-- Judy Chu  
Research Scientist & Lecturer  
Stanford University***

Chu suggested the need to distinguish compromise from over-compromise. Compromise

implies a conscious decision to alter one’s behavior (e.g., in order to fit in or get along with others), and is necessary and common in most social interactions. Boys may compromise their behaviors without losing their sense of self or jeopardizing their integrity. Over-compromise implies an unconscious, or automatic and socialized, accommodation of societal norms and expectations. Boys who have over-compromised themselves may feel disconnected from their own thoughts, feelings, and desires such that it is easier for them (and sometimes a point of pride) to be what others expect than to figure out what they want for themselves. Over-compromise can have psychological costs and social consequences to the extent that boys subsequently become unaccountable to themselves and to others. Most of the boys in Chu’s study were primarily struggling with compromise and, in their interviews simply wanted to know, “Am I okay? Am I normal?”

While conducting research for her book, *Why Boys Don’t Talk and Why We Care: A Mother’s Guide to Connection*, Susan Shaffer found that despite boys’ apparent disengagement and separation at the onset of adolescence, they want to stay connected to school and family but in a different way than girls. In conducting focus groups with adolescent boys

aged 14-16, Shaffer noted that at first the boys said nothing, and then they started to open up and commented, "No one ever asks us these questions."

She described the limited definition of masculinity that boys have available to them, namely physical strength and competition, with boys of color having even fewer options. Boys tend to define themselves in opposition to others and see anything female as not acceptable.

***We don't help boys develop the language of feelings. The culture demeans their inner lives. If you have feelings or are sensitive you are not an authentic boy, you don't fit in. Boys halve themselves by disavowing qualities as they get older; anything that is feminine is not a boy. Mothers feel that they can't rely on their own instincts on what is good for their sons.***

***-- Susan Shaffer***

*Deputy Director & Director of Gender Equity Programs  
Mid-Atlantic Equity Center*

## **The Growing Crisis in Boys' Education**

In the late 1990s, books began to appear that illuminated concerns about boys' social/emotional development and school performance. Books such as *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Masculinity* (Pollack, 1998); *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999); and *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* (Ferguson, 2000) raised questions about the impact of gender expectations on boys' social and academic well-being. In 1998, Gallas, and others earlier (Paley, 1984; Best 1983), noted that, while boys may dominate the classroom, they are lost to the community of learning (Koch & Irby, 2002).

***Gender and equity issues cross every major area in education. As an educator for over 30 years, I have sat in every seat and seen how gender issues play out in classrooms.***

***--- Denise Glyn Borders***

*Senior VP & Group Director  
U.S. Education Workforce Development  
Academy for Educational Development*

A concept paper written in preparation for EEC's initiative on Raising and Educating Healthy Boys (Flood, 2001), cites the disturbing facts that boys:

- lag behind girls in reading and writing (Newkirk, 2000);
- are more likely to be referred to a school psychologist (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999);
- are more likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit disorder/attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity (Diller, 1998);
- represent 70% of students with learning disabilities and 80% of those with social/emotional disturbances (Sadker & Sadker, 1994);
- represent 70% of school suspensions, particularly minority males in urban schools (Ferguson, 2000); and
- commit 85% of the school violence and comprise the majority of victims of that violence (Katz, 1999).

The remainder of this report discusses this crisis in boys' education in the following areas:

- ✓ Gender and Literacy
- ✓ Viewing Boys as "Problems" in School
- ✓ Viewing Rates of Early Expulsion Affecting Young Boys

- ✓ The Effect of Educational Policy on School Culture and the Relational Aspects of Teacher's Work

### *Gender and Literacy*

Recently, stories about the widening literacy gap between boys and girls have appeared in both the popular and educational press. A report issued in fall 2004 by the U.S. Department of Education cites findings that boys score 16 points lower in reading and 24 points lower in writing than girls. The National Assessment of Educational Progress writing tests revealed that three-fourths of the gap has opened up by grade 4 (Newkirk, 2003).

*Reading at Risk*, a study released by the National Endowment of the Arts in summer 2004, found that while overall book reading for young women is down 4 percent, the gap for males plunged 12 points in the decade between 1992 and 2002. In 2003 and 2004, *USA Today* ran end-of-year editorials on boys' academic struggles and their lack of involvement in many aspects of school life. In its editorials, *USA Today* stresses the need for more research into the causes of boys' achievement gap and puts out a clarion call for raising awareness. "Closing this gender

gap," they state, "first requires awareness—by teachers, principals and parents. Only then can targeted solutions be developed. Among them: reading interventions that start early enough to reverse boys' academic slide" (*USA Today*, December 22, 2003).

***I'd like to start a campaign called "Read Like a Girl." Until the things that girls are good at are not denigrated, we're not going to have boys reading. Just as girls are not naturally deficient at science and math, boys are not naturally bad readers. It's a matter of attitude and perception.***

***-- Michelle Porche  
Research Scientist  
Wellesley Centers for Women***

At the invitational meeting, Michelle Porche, a researcher at the Wellesley Centers for Women, noted that there are both race and class dimensions to school achievement where disadvantaged boys and boys of color are in the lowest achievement group in regards to literacy. Porche, in collaboration with colleagues at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is exploring gendered aspects of academic achievement in a sample

of low-income students. The boys and girls in the sample were evenly matched in reading ability at the beginning of the study, and aptitude as measured on standardized literacy tests tended to remain constant from preschool through middle school. Over time, however, boys' literacy attitudes and practices fell behind those of the girls.

The research team analyzed results of observations of story-reading to pre-school-age children, finding that, in this study, mothers took a more serious approach in reading to daughters. Mothers tended to have higher expectations for girls, asking them more challenging questions and working with girls to understand the meaning conveyed by the words. The research team identified mothers' subtle messages that reading was for girls and rough and tumble play for boys. In interviews, boys talked about their own reading practices and revealed that they were more interested in non-school reading materials. Their attitude was, "Reading is for girls" and "I'm a boy and no one tells me what to do." Porche plans to explore ways to address reading difficulties through the use of high-interest reading materials that are gender-specific in their audience.

In another gender equity study in which Porche participated, urban seventh graders documented their attitudes towards school

through questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and classroom observations. Both boys and girls said that boys need more help, and that girls are more responsible. Unlike girls who talked about having many responsibilities, boys were not concerned about “being smart,” and were not “plan-ful” about how they would succeed. Boys said that they liked to do group work with girls because girls would listen to the teacher and knew the instructions. Boys said that they always knew there was someone else who would take responsibility. They could ask the teacher to repeat the instructions a few more times, and the teacher would do it because their attitude is “boys don’t listen.”

Oralia Puente, a consultant for MSI-Management Systems, reported on a gender-based research study looking at the under-achievement of boys in Jamaica, where research showed boys’ low literacy rate and high rates of learning disabilities to be major problems, similar to the United States. In Jamaica, Puente noted that boys and girls have very definite gender roles perpetuated from a very young age, and by sixth-grade boys start to score very low on literacy tests. Girls are encouraged to stay in school and go on to college but upon entering the workforce, boys are more likely to get the jobs.

***There are stages of development toward gender equality that were used in the study – gender, gender parity, equity, and equality. Equity is the means to get there. Equality is the result.***

***-- Oralia Puente  
Senior Associate  
MSI - Management Systems, Inc.***

### *Viewing Boys as “Problems” in School*

At the meeting, Shaffer described her findings that teachers perceive boys as “problems, difficult, and taking up more than their share of room in the classroom.” Part of the reason behind these perceptions, she explained, is that students are forced to sit in a chair for the majority of the day. Shaffer states that boys at the age of 10 need five recess periods per day, but the typical punishment when a boy misbehaves is taking away recess, and, with the increasing academic pressure to perform well on tests, many schools are doing away with recess altogether.

Another way schools deal with “problems” is through special education, which results in a disproportionate over-representation of

African-American and Latino males enrolled in those classes (Conference on Minorities in Special Education, 2001). In an article in *Education Week*, Rosa Smith calls this issue "the litmus test for No Child Left Behind" (October 30, 2002). In *The American Prospect*, Smith reports that in 2000-01, African-American boys made up 8.6 percent of the national public-school enrollments, but 20 percent of those classified as mentally retarded, 21 percent of those classified as emotionally disturbed, 22 percent of those expelled from school, and 23 percent of those suspended.

***The predominance of African-American and Latino boys placed in special education, primarily for reasons of discipline, makes them unmotivated and dispirited, and few of them earn a high school diploma. The system perpetuates generations of youth with low self-esteem and poor basic skills who turn to gang membership for the sense of belonging that the larger society doesn't provide.***

***-- Nancy Nevárez  
Program Officer  
Academy for Educational Development***

Constantly seeing boys as problems affects attitudes toward literacy as well. As Shaffer noted at the meeting, "On average, boys learn their letters later than girls, but we don't look at this as a development issue but as a problem." Thomas Newkirk discusses "developmental delay" in his *Education Week* article, "The Quiet Crisis in Boys' Literacy." Although it is accepted knowledge that boys generally develop the skills necessary for reading and writing later than girls, no accommodation is made. Instead, the early childhood curriculum grows ever more academic and pays less attention to critical issues of child development (Newkirk, 2003).

Shaffer asks, "What happens to boys when they don't do well in school?" They feel shame, and when they feel shame they disengage. As a result, she says, boys become less emotionally connected to their families and schools.

### *High Rates of Early Expulsion Affecting Young Boys*

It is well known that detention, suspension, expulsion and drop-out rates of boys at the high school level are very high, especially for African-American and Latino boys from low-

income families (Smith, 2004). What is not well-known is that the problem begins as early as the preschool level.

***One of our research questions was, "Have you ever expelled a student from preschool in the last 12 months?" We defined expelled as "told to leave the program forever, never to come back, not part of a planned transition to other class or program." The answers were quite startling and reveal that many boys are never even given a chance.***

***-- Walter Gilliam  
Assistant Professor of Child Psychiatry  
and Psychology  
Yale University Child Study center***

At the meeting, Walter Gilliam, assistant professor of child psychiatry & psychology at the Yale University Child Study Center, presented shocking statistics from his national pre-K study. Data from 4,000 randomly selected classrooms showed a national average of 60 students expelled for every 10,000 students enrolled in pre-K programs—three times the average of K-12 expulsion rate nationally. When the pre-K data was disaggregated by income, race and gender, it showed that

African-American children were expelled at a rate of 112 per 10,000 children enrolled; White children at a rate of 50 per 10,000; and Latino children at a rate of 45 per 10,000 children. African-American boys were expelled at a rate of 160 per 10,000 children, and boys were five times more likely to be expelled than girls.

The number of expelled or suspended preschool children was higher than Gilliam expected and much higher than expulsion rates for K-12. In Massachusetts, the pilot state for the study, 8 out of 10,000 K-12 students were expelled, while a random sample of child care and preschool programs in Massachusetts expelled 274 per 10,000 students.

Gilliam offered a number of reasons for this high rate. Massachusetts pre-school programs are targeted to low-income, at-risk children and are taught by teachers without academic degrees (pre-school teachers rarely have a bachelor or associate degree). Teachers and students have no access to support services and, unlike K-12th grades, school attendance is not compulsory. In addition, in K-12, it is the state's responsibility to provide a free education, but it is the parent's legal responsibility to keep their children in school. The state's responsibility, however, does not extend to preschool.



### *The Effect of Educational Policy on School Culture and Relational Aspects of Teaching*

The importance of relational teaching as the key to creating a community of learners was a topic that participants returned to many times during the meeting. They also discussed the barriers to teachers' understanding and addressing students' individual needs in the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) test-driven and standardized environment. Participants maintained that NCLB has led to a "push down" of the academic curriculum and a focus on high-stakes testing:

- A "top down" approach to education is the prevailing mode. (For example, the U.S. Department of Education mandates specific literacy models. Funding can be withdrawn if a school chooses a different approach.)
- Increasingly, the "corporate model" of education is prevailing, which de-professionalizes the teaching profession by creating "teacher proof" programs and de-emphasizes the relational aspect of teaching.

- One of the consequences of increased standardization and the emphasis on quantitative assessment measures is the narrowing of curriculum to fit the standardized tests; teachers are "teaching to the test."
- Measurement is driving the culture of schools and having a negative impact on the community.
- The disappearance of certain content areas like social studies and physical education is a symptom of the pressures to standardize and teach to the test.

***Teachers are under pressure in terms of academics being pushed down into kindergarten—in some kindergarten classrooms, children are now expected to read and write for more than one hour a day, and recess is being eliminated in many places. In the current climate, many teachers feel they cannot adequately attend to social-emotional issues.***

***-- Nancy Gropper***

***Director  
Preservice Program in Early Childhood &  
Childhood Education  
Bank Street Graduate School of Education***

Miriam Raider-Roth, assistant professor, SUNY Albany, discussed her research on how the relational life of a classroom shapes learning. She described a study group of teachers, pre-K through high school, who came together for one year on a monthly basis. At each meeting they described individual boys in their classes, using a case study method called the Descriptive Review process. The research focused on three central questions:

- How do teachers understand the ways their relationships with boys shape learning?
- How do teachers see themselves when considering their relationships with boys?
- How do notions of gender shape the teachers' conceptions of relationships?

Three themes arose out of the teachers' observations and descriptions: 1) locating, appreciating, and preserving boys' individuality while at the same time confronting pressures teachers face to act as a force of enculturation; 2) Considering how teachers integrate the influence of gender on their identity and practice; 3) Investigating why and how teachers express certainty and confidence in relation to the research questions, and why

and how they express uncertainty or confusion about the issues.

***At first, teachers experienced resistance to seeing the boys as gendered because when you start seeing the boy as gendered, then you have to see yourself, the teacher, as gendered and it is difficult to do that in a school setting.***

**-- Miriam Raider-Roth**  
*Assistant Professor*  
*University at Albany, SUNY*

As the teachers began to see the boys as gendered, the notion of resistance came forward. As the teachers' relationships with each other developed, the resistance subsided and they confronted key issues, such as the strong emotions that boys can elicit and their own resistance to their school's definitions of gender for themselves and for their students. Teachers reported that there was an overall shift in their relationship with the observed student. Their understanding of boys had changed.

Participants agreed that teacher education programs were not doing a good job of fostering teacher awareness of the important relational aspects of their work and helping them

learn to form positive relationships with students. They also agreed that, while many boys have learned that to be “out” of a relationship with a teacher is safer, “students learn best when they have a relationship with a teacher.”

***A learning environment should encourage all students to take responsibility – to be a witness to themselves as a learner. Yes, literacy is very important, but acknowledgment of each individual child is what matters.***

***-- Jane Andrias  
Educational Consultant***

### **Call to Action**

The consensus at the meeting was that there is, indeed, a growing crisis in boys’ education, and that early childhood, a high-risk time for boys, is an opportune time to intervene. A two-pronged strategy was recommended that would combine a research-action agenda and a broad communications campaign with the goal of applying lessons learned to teacher training, educational practice, and continuing research. Participants noted that changes in attitudes

and beliefs most likely will take place incrementally over several years, and that it is necessary to reach a diverse community in order to do so. It is the aim of this report to provide a call to action for policy makers, educators, researchers and the general public. A concerted effort is needed on several fronts if we are to create the changes necessary in order to raise and educate healthy boys.

***My 13-year-old son wears his heart on his sleeve. I see him trying on different roles, especially the “tough guy” role, which is so out-of-character for him. I think about what boys go through at different stages, struggling to fit it in.***

***-- Linda Colón  
Program Manager  
Educational Equity Center at AED***



### *Research Agenda*

- Conduct a literature review/meta-analysis of existing research, including a bibliography of existing references and resources, in order to provide educators, researchers and policy-makers with an overview of the issues and the particular areas that need to be addressed.
- Identify new research questions and undertake a research-focused agenda with the goal of creating a more holistic approach to evaluating cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

### *Communications Campaign*

- Pursue a social marketing approach to help communicate research results to diverse audiences. Possibilities include tapping into pop culture and media; creating public service announcements and billboards; and reaching out to parents through websites, pediatrician offices and federal programs serving low-income mothers.
- Develop a website to reach out to a broad audience, including day care providers, after-school programs, counselors, teachers, and parents.

- Hold a National Learning Institute on Raising and Educating Healthy Boys that would bring key constituents together including researchers, teachers, and teacher and parent educators.
- Build strategic partnerships with other organizations including the medical, legal, business, media, children's television and public relations communities; and co-present at educational and research conferences.
- Produce a publication for a general audience that would draw upon already published materials in the form of an anthology or a sourcebook.

***We believe that boys can be passionate, strong, and connected. Our job as teachers and parents is to help boys develop the connection. Developing empathy in boys is the best antidote to violence.***

***-- Susan Shaffer***

***Deputy Director & Director of Gender Equity Programs  
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# Appendices

Meeting Agenda

Meeting Participants



**Raising and Educating Healthy Boys  
Strategic Planning Meeting  
November 4-5, 2004, New York City  
Agenda**

**Thursday, November 4th**

- 3:00 Welcome and Introductions  
Denise Borders, U.S. Education and Workforce Development Group, AED  
Merle Froschl and Barbara Sprung, Educational Equity Center at AED
- Introductory Remarks  
Luba Lynch, A. L. Mailman Family Foundation  
Susan Wefald, Ms. Foundation for Women
- Program Overview  
Merle Froschl and Barbara Sprung
- 3:45 Raising and Educating Healthy Boys – Focus Group Findings  
Dr. Nancy Gropper, Bank Street College of Education
- 4:00 Participant Presentations
- 5:30 Summary of Key Points
- 6:00 Reception and Dinner
- 6:45 Recent Trends – Small Group Discussion & Report Back
- Educational policy
  - Teacher education
  - School culture/curriculum
- 7:30 -8:00 Summary of Recent Trends

**Friday, November 5th**

- 8:30 Breakfast
- 9:00 Creating an Optimal Vision for Raising and Educating Healthy Boys – Small Group Discussion & Report Back
- In school
  - In the family
  - In the community
- 10:45 Break
- 11:00 Barriers to Reaching the Vision
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 - 1:30 Summary of Barriers
- 1:30 - 3:30 Creating an Action Plan – Small Group Discussion & Report Back
- 3:30 - 4:00 Next Steps

**Raising and Educating Health Boys – Strategic Planning Meeting  
November 4-5, 2004  
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### **The Academy for Educational Development (AED)**

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### **The Educational Equity Center at AED (EEC/AED)**

EEC, a national, nonprofit organization founded in 1982, joined AED in 2004 to form the Educational Equity Center. The mission of the Center is to eliminate inequalities that create barriers to children's learning. The Center offers professional development and curricular materials for educators, parents, and community organizations serving students PreK-grade 8 in school and afterschool settings. EEC/AED also designs and implements research, technical assistance and dissemination projects to further public understanding of the need for equal opportunity for all children regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, disability or level of family income. EEC at AED is located within AED's Center for School and Community Services in New York City.

[www.edequity.org](http://www.edequity.org)





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