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**Boys in school: How do boys learn differently than girls?**

**And how do schools help boys learn?**

**Dawn Hallman**, Dallas Association for Parent Education

**Tim Kinard**, Texas State University

**Josh Thompson**, Texas A&M University–Commerce

**with consulting help from: Denise Collins**, University of Texas at Arlington and  
**Mike Huber**, Seward Childcare Center, Minneapolis

**Friday, October 23, 2015**

**1:45pm-3:15pm**

**Galleon 1, Galveston Convention Center, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

*Tags: Social Emotional #boysSchool*

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The boys in our schools and classrooms are wired to learn. They, unfortunately, are often not equipped to respond to the confines and restraints of many modern classrooms. What do we - mostly females - need to know about the Boy Code? How does the way we talk with young boys promote their strength, build their courage and confidence, and open their minds to learning - or does the way we speak shut them down, close them out, exclude them from the rules of school? What effective strategies work to reach them, to teach them? How can we better learn to love from working with boys in school?

<http://faculty.tamuc.edu/jthompson/boys>

<prezi.com/ks6r4ego13gy>



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# Boys in School

Texas AEYC Galveston October 23, 2015

Dawn Hallman, Tim Kinard, & Josh Thompson

with consulting help from Denise Collins & Mike Huber

How do boys learn differently than girls?  
And how do schools help boys learn?

## A. Introduction

1. Something about the boys we know ...

**notes...**

*Traits and Characteristics*  
*Instrumental and Expressive*  
*Masculine or Feminine*  
  
+ / -

2. Goals of This Talk

- Explore the boy code
- Consider what language rules boys use
- Explore strategies for helping boys in school achieve success

<http://prezi.com/ks6r4ego13gy>

## B. Boy Code

“... a social message, transmitted through parents and other caretakers, that one should stand on one's own two feet, cut Mama's apron strings, be a stoic little man and be emotionally independent, long before a child is developmentally ready to achieve that.” William Pollack. (1999). *Real Boys: Rescuing our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, p. 17. Owl Books.

Weidlinger. (2001). *Boys Will Be Men: A Documentary about Growing Up Male in America*. Moira Productions.

1. Whence?

- Some brain research background
  - stem, limbic, amygdala, cortex
  - corpus callosum
- Social learning
  - Home & School
  - Mothers & Fathers
  - Siblings & Peers
  - Culture & School

*“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”*  
—Fredrick Douglass

2. Whither?

- How much choice do boys have in their behavior?
- How do children, and boys specifically, gain executive function?

*The Pilot Light* 

## C. Language in Use

### 1. Status and Connection

“The same effort that the boys are putting into proving that they can top each other, the girls are putting an equal amount of effort into proving that they’re the same. Even if they’re not.” Deborah Tannen. (1999). *He Said, She Said: Gender, Language, & Communication*, p. 4. Classroom Media.

### 2. Extra-textual information – whence?

- Boys 55% facial to 28% for girls
- Boys 28% voice tone to 18% for girls
- Boys 7% to words alone compared to 54% for girls

### 3. Power and Relations in Teacher-talk

- Listening
- Gatekeepers

## D. Strategies

Yes, school is a place where we learn how to learn, where we change and grow ...  
... but who’s the grown-up in this situation?

- When stressed: Instrumental: Fight or flight, or Expressive: Tend and Befriend
- Show, don’t tell
- Help boys recognize, name, and label their feelings
  - What do you do with the Angry you feel?
- Mindfulness Skills
  - We define mindfulness as being aware of what you're feeling, thinking, & experiencing when it's happening, without judgment.
  - Uses the neural circuitry that allows us to pay attention, calm ourselves, & attune to others’ feelings
  - Relaxaon skills
- Visual routines

Learn and promote appropriate **Big-Body Play**

- Boys who play rough-and-tumble with each other are friendlier!

Carlson, Frances. (2009). *Rough and Tumble Play 101*. CCIE.

Use a boy's interests to teach Emotional Intelligence

- What they love, what they hate
- What scares them, what excites them

*To respect that fury or those giddy high spirits or a body that seems perpetually mobile is to respect nature, much as one respects the strength of a hurricane, the rush of a waterfall.*

—Sara Ruddick, author & mother

Don't Forbid Heroes!

- Boys want to protect, save others, be heroes, & provide
- Trading Power Cards

Pause state

- Girls' brains are usually always 'on'
- Boys' brains often go into a 'pause state' after completing a task
- Pause breakers: *loud voice, clapping, spinning, running, jumping*

How do boys learn best?

- Hands-on learning
- Touching, moving, climbing on, handling & building things
- Solving problems physically
- Give boys something to touch, chores, modeling clay, or encourage doodling
- Include movement in lessons – physical representations
- Take Breaks – stretch breaks – change locations in room
- Use fidget toys that involve squeezing and stretching, (e.g. soft foam ball, bendable wire toys, etc.)
- Provide an air cushion to sit on to reduce fidgeting & allow for some extra movement
- Charts and Scales
- Pictures and Graphs

Qs? Can women model manhood for children? Who are their real-life models?  
How do virtual models work? video, music & sports heroes, history

## *The Pilot Light*

- Boys: ever alert for danger!
  - On an adventure
  - Be a hero!
  - Rescue the beautiful

John Eldredge. (2011). *Wild at Heart*. Thomas Nelson.
- Girls: keep vigil to maintains social order & harmony
  - Is everyone cooperating?
  - Following rules
  - Does anyone need anything?
  - Sets up females to naturally have EI skills

### E. So what's next?

## Resources

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