

AlbertMohler.com

Boys in Class = Boys in Trouble

Monday, September 11, 2006



Gerry Garibaldi was in the movie business for 25 years, then he decided to become a teacher. That was a brave enough move in itself, but he has now written a courageous essay arguing that the schools seriously shortchange boys in the classroom. It is an essay that demands close attention.

Garibaldi's article, "[How the Schools Shortchange Boys](#)," is found in the Summer 2006 edition of the [Manhattan Institute's](#) fine periodical, *City Journal*.

While some now debate whether boys are actually doing so badly, those arguments discounting the crisis now look increasingly beside the point. Boys are doing poorly at every grade level, are graduating at levels far behind girls, and are much more likely to be put in special-education programs.

Those still unconvinced can simply make their way to the nation's college and university campuses, where female students outnumber males — and by increasing margins.

Consider these reflections from Garibaldi:

The notion of male ethical inferiority first arises in grammar school, where women make up the overwhelming majority of teachers. It's here that the alphabet soup of supposed male dysfunctions begins. And make no mistake: while girls occasionally exhibit symptoms of male-related disorders in this world, females diagnosed with learning disabilities simply don't exist.

For a generation now, many well-meaning parents, worn down by their boy's failure to flourish in school, his poor self-esteem and unhappiness, his discipline problems, decide to accept administration recommendations to have him tested for disabilities. The pitch sounds reasonable: admission into special ed qualifies him for tutoring, modified lessons, extra time on tests (including the SAT), and other supposed benefits. It's all a hustle, Mom and Dad privately advise their boy. Don't worry about it. We know there's nothing wrong with you.

To get into special ed, however, administrators must find something wrong. In my four years of teaching, I've never seen them fail. In the first IEP (Individualized Educational Program) meeting, the boy and his parents learn the results of disability testing. When the boy hears from three smiling adults that he does indeed have a learning disability, his young face quivers like Jell-O. For him, it was never a hustle. From then on, however, his expectations of himself—and those of his teachers—plummet.

Garibaldi reports that special-education programs — overwhelmingly populated by boys — have increased ten-fold in enrollments over just the past six years. That is staggering.

He also faults political correctness in the curriculum:

In today's politically correct textbooks, Nikki Giovanni and Toni Morrison stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Mark Twain, William Faulkner, and Charles Dickens, even though both women are second-raters at best. But even in their superficial aspects, the textbooks advertise publishers' intent to pander to the prevailing PC attitudes. The books feature page after page of healthy, exuberant young girls in winning portraits. Boys (white boys in particular) will more often than not be shunted to the background in photos or be absent entirely or appear sitting in wheelchairs.

This is an issue of real importance, especially for those who believe that differences between boys and girls are part of God's design and that boys are to be raised to assume leadership in the church, the home, and the larger society. We are sowing the seeds of our own destruction by shortchanging the nation's boys in the classroom.

We discussed Gerry Garibaldi's article on Friday's edition of The Albert Mohler Program. Listen [here](#).

Content Copyright © 2002-2010, R. Albert Mohler, Jr.