

# WHAT'S GOING ON

*with boys in school?*



i can't  
sit  
still

why am I always  
in trouble?

stupid

My teachers  
don't like me



## **Disclaimer**

**Not all boys are created equal. However, this is a summary of the data presented by the National Association of Independent Schools.**

# Picture it.



Picture a “good student” in your mind.

What do you see?

What are they doing?

What are they not doing?

How is their behavior?

How do they interact with their classmates?

**Turn and talk**

**1:00**

# Boys

- **Boys make up  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the top 10% GPAs in high school and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the lowest 10% of GPAs.**
- **Compared to girls, boys are...**
  - **Twice as likely to say that school is a waste of time.**
  - **Three times more likely to be expelled.**
  - **Two times more likely to be suspended.**
- **Boys are less likely to do their homework, by about an hour less per week.**
- **Girls are ahead of boys by one grade level in reading.**
- **Young men attend and graduate from college much less often than young women.**
- **Middle school boys were written up 34% more often than girls.**
- **Upper school boys were written up 50% more often than girls.**

# Development

- There is a significant differences in the timing of brain development of boys and girls.
- The first major gap in brain development occurs around kindergarten.
  - At age 5, girls are 14% more likely to be school-ready than boys.
- Typical young boys are described as having “high activity, impulsivity, and physicality.” Unfortunately, this behavior is “often seen by teachers as something that must be overcome for a boy to succeed in school.”
- A typical girl’s prefrontal cortex matures about two years before a typical boy’s.
  - The prefrontal cortex plays a role in planning, strategy, and executive decisions, inhibiting primal survival responses, and regulating emotional states.
- The cerebellum—which modulates the emotional, cognitive, and regulatory capacities that we might commonly refer to as executive function—reaches full size at age 11 for girls and age 15 in boys.



# Teacher Viewpoints

- On average, female teachers are more likely than male teachers to view boys in their class as disruptive, while male teachers tend to have a more positive view of boys and their capabilities.
- The percentage of male teachers has been trending downward, and the teacher gender gap is particularly acute in early education, exactly when it would be beneficial for boys to have male teachers.



# More Causes



- There are two other sources of boys' recent struggles in school:
  - Diminishing independence and free play
  - Massive amounts of time online, playing video games, consuming pornography, using social media, and learning about masculinity from what is called "the manosphere"—an atmosphere of bloggers and influencers often hostile to women and feminism.
- 1 in 13 boys are suffering substantial impairment in the real world because of heavy engagement with video games, and boys consume porn to the point of impairing daily function more than five to 10 times more often than girls.
- Compounding the harms of these activities, time spent online crowds out healthier, more constructive uses of time.





# “Good Students”

- According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “Study after study suggests that the best-performing students are ‘good’ students ... who have high levels of self-regulation,” which is exactly the area where boys display, on average, a deficit compared to girls during adolescence.

**Let’s go back to your vision of a  
“good student.”**





## **Parents of boys AND girls**

**What differences have you noticed between raising boys versus girls?**

# What can we do?



# Solutions

- A 2008 study of teaching and learning in boys' independent schools concluded that teachers must cultivate a positive relationship with boys. Even when boys make this challenging, it is crucial that educators overcome their own frustration and remind themselves that the relationship is their responsibility, not the boys'.

**CDS is working toward this goal.**

**How can you apply this strategy as parents?**

**1:00**



# Solutions

- Share a common interest.
- Accommodate a measure of opposition.
- Be willing to reveal vulnerability.
- Hold boys to high standards.
- Talk to boys in ways that honor their pride.
- Be direct with them; cast them as partners in problem-solving.
- Teach them emotional courage and let them show their emotions.
- Use discipline to build character, not to alienate or humiliate.
- Be consistent in disciplining your child.
- Praise the positive.
- Teach boys that there are many ways to be a man.



**What other solutions  
have you found to be successful?**

# Resources

- **The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt**
- **The Emotional Lives of Teenagers, Lisa Damour**
- **Decoding Boys: New science behind the art of raising sons, Cara Natterson**
- **Untangled: Guiding teenage girls into adulthood, Lisa Damour**
- **Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain, David Siegel**
- **No More Mean Girls, Katie Hurley**
- **How to raise a boy: The power of connection to build good men, Michael Reichert**
- **<https://www.educatingboys.com/resources>**





**THANK YOU!**

<https://www.nais.org/learn/independent-ideas/september-2024/whats-going-on-with-boys-in-schools/>