

SANTA FE BOYS

A PUBLICATION ABOUT THE SITUATION OF BOYS IN SANTA FE & NEW MEXICO

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Who Speaks for Boys' Interests in New Mexico?

By Paul Golding, PhD, Editor, Santa Fe Boys Newsletter

Unlike their girl counterparts, boys and young men in New Mexico have no New Mexico Commission on the Status of Men to worry about their growing numbers in correctional institutions; nor is there a New Mexico Chapter of the American Association of University Men who will demand attention for boys' falling performance in reading and writing; and Mr. Richardson has yet to create his New Mexico Governor's Men's Health Advisory Council to become preoccupied with the alarming rates of young male obesity, the questionable diagnoses of ADHD and its medication, and suicide.

Yet boys are doing badly, and in most measurable ways, worse than girls. Fewer boys make it through high school and an alarmingly low percent of them attends college in New Mexico. Young males, instead, predominate in our prisons. Does anyone care? The institutions responsible, like the Public Education Department or the Department of Higher Education say they are worried about the achievement gap, not the gender gap.

Would they maintain this hands-off-gender position and continue to look the other way if young women predominated on the bottom rungs of the achievement gap instead of young men? Wouldn't it make good sense to look at who languishes at the base of all the gaps—mostly Hispanic males—and attempt some special effort to understand what they need to raise their achievement?

What might be the cause of this indifference? Does it reflect a lack of awareness of the meaning of gender differences, i.e. that we can only see one sex as needy and the other able to get along in spite of what our data, and our eyes, tell us? Does the term "gender-specific" even apply to boys? Does this help to explain why in schools and in juvenile justice, the young male's behavior is more likely to be simply punished or ignored or medicated than the object of curiosity or understanding? In short, why do boys so seldom elicit the sympathy or concern for their well-being that girls do?



Or might it be the "adorable" factor? As the poet E. Ethelbert Miller mused on NPR about the image of the Obama family at the inauguration: "I do at times wonder how responsive the American public would be if the Obama girls were little black boys. Would they still be called adorable?" Does this help to account for the President's establishing a White House Council on Women and Girls when he knows that more African American males are in prison than in college? What does it take to gain sympathy as a sex?

In his 2006 book, *Manliness*, Harvard professor Harvey C. Mansfield spends the first chapter pondering the gender-neutral society. He argues, critically, that these days it is not enough to show we are indifferent to sexual differences; rather, men and women must demonstrate that we are doing away with such differences.

But there is a contradiction. While many lean over backwards to deny the difference when it comes to the young male, we have institutionalized concern for the young female. Now the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women receives government funding for its Girl's Institute, and the Governor's Roundhouse-Supported

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Women's Health Advisory Council concerns itself with the unique health needs of NM girls, and non-profits like the American Association of University Women, famous for its 1993 charge that schools shortchange girls, cannot even begin to acknowledge that schools might be doing the same to boys in spite of overwhelming evidence.

The issue is NOT that we should be unconcerned for the gender needs of the young female, but rather that the same type of proactive, sympathetic energy needs to go into understanding boys. And perhaps it can only properly come, as it often does in the case of girls, from adults of the same sex. Perhaps the necessary speaking up for boys needs a reawakened cadre of men to take some interest in their young sons, students and others.

Men can perhaps understand that for many or most boys, school is a major turn off. Classrooms decorated for girls, behavior codes that favor girls and reading and writing assignments with

little youthful male appeal send the message that school is not for boys.

But where are the men who in the ancient past had their societies to initiate the young men into adulthood and prepared the way for constructive male development with guilds and apprenticeships, who helped to harness the instinctual aggressive and sexual energies for the benefit of the group in the context of the sacred teachings of the tribe? Where are the fathers, the men teachers and mentors, and men who want to see the next generation of boys with a purpose greater than themselves?

Having spent the last four years attempting to bring some attention to this issue, I try to temper my hopefulness. I fear that we are in the midst of a cultural change that will ignore the needs of boys for decades, as they were previously ignored for girls. One optimistic sign is the newly formed New Mexico Men's Council for Boys and Young Men described elsewhere in this issue of SFB. 

Pojoaque Single Gender Classes Get Innovative

In their third year of teaching all-boy and all-girl fifth grade classes at the Pojoaque Intermediate school, Paul Ortiz and Charlene Abeyta are able to try out some new approaches that would probably not work with their coed class counterparts.

Team competition with the boys. Ortiz, for example, formed teams of 5 or 6 boys. The teams work for points. For instance, when everyone has his homework done, the team gets 5 points. The team with the most points at the end of the month wins a pizza party.

These days Ortiz observes the team captains checking the other team members in the cafeteria before class to make sure everyone has his homework completed. When a team member falls short, the other members gather round and make sure it gets done.

Ortiz got this idea from Leonard Sax, the author of *Why Gender Matters* and *Boys Adrift*. When Sax was last in New Mexico giving a workshop on how to teach to boys and girls, Ortiz asked what to do about boys who do not usually work together. Sax suggested this team approach to take advantage of many boys' natural affinity for competition. It allows Mr. Ortiz to rein in the peer pressure of the students, not so they will show how cool they can be by disrupting the class, but rather by aligning their desire to please their teammates with his



own academic goals. As Paul Ortiz puts it, "that peer pressure works for my benefit, rather than against me where the normal situation is when a boy does not do his homework, it is the rebel in him challenging me. Now when they do not do the homework in their classroom they are hurting their teammates and the team gets on their case."

Has he noticed more homework getting done?

"Absolutely. In a classroom of 23 boys, if I get maybe one a day who does not do his homework, I think that is pretty good and it is typical. In my old coed classes, I'd get 4 or 5 who would not do it. Sometimes even more."

Would it work in a coed class? Ortiz thinks that the girls would not enjoy the structure or the follow-the-leader approach needed to make it happen. Further, he has found that the girls are more averse to competition. "It's pretty strict," he says. "The teams stay the same from the beginning. It is the responsibility of the captain to make sure each

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Boys Still in the Lower Rungs of the Achievement Gap

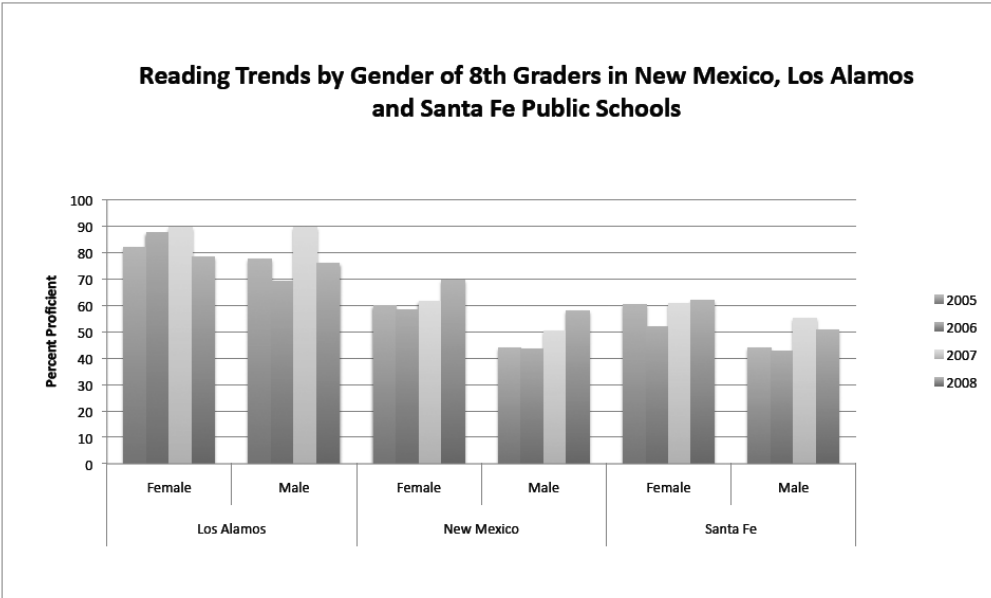
For the last 4 years SFB has been following the gender gap as measured by New Mexico's No Child Left Behind test, the Standards Based Achievement tests (SBA). The gender gap over this time has remained much the same for Santa Fe Public Schools: boys behind in reading and girls and boys about equal in math, as the two tables below show. The most recent data demonstrate that this situation continues. Looking at the percent of students who score at the proficient or above level in reading, slightly over 50 percent of the boys continue to perform at proficient compared to 62 percent of the girls. In math, 2.8 percent more of the boys than girls score proficient or better.

In order to provide some measure of how the rest of New Mexico public schools do, SFB has also summarized trend data for the entire state. The situation is almost identical to that in Santa Fe. The difference in math between boys and girls achieving proficient was merely a tenth of one percent in 2008. In reading, the difference was that 11.5 percent fewer boys achieved proficiency.

To capture an impression of the role of the achievement gap within the gender gap, we have also provided data for the Los Alamos Public Schools. LAPS is usually considered among the most affluent school districts in the state, with no students participating in free and reduced lunch programs. The results for LAPS show that the

reading gap has been closed over the last two years but that boys' achievement in math lags girls.

In short, local and state school systems continue to claim that closing the achievement gap based on income and race/ethnicity is their priority, but they evince little or no interest in closing the gender gap. With little to show by way of closing the achievement gap, the NM Public Education Department might start to concentrate on those who are doing the most poorly in the schools, those who are at the bottom in terms of special education and also failing to achieve proficiency levels. The data tell us that these are much more likely to be boys than girls. **SFB**



Source: NM Public Education Department.

Math SBA Results by Gender for 8 th Grade in New Mexico, Los Alamos and Santa Fe Public Schools, 2007-08					
		2005	2006	2007	2008
Los Alamos	Female	55.6	53.8	72.6	70.3
	Male	59.1	54.1	68	66.9
New Mexico	Female	23.5	26.5	30.9	36.5
	Male	24.3	26	29.1	36.6
Santa Fe	Female	16.4	15.6	18.1	17.8
	Male	18.3	16.1	20.7	20.4

Reading SBA Results by Gender for 8 th Grade in New Mexico, Los Alamos and Santa Fe Public Schools, 2007-08					
		2005	2006	2007	2008
Los Alamos	Female	81.7	87.6	89.6	78.3
	Male	77.4	68.9	89.5	75.7
New Mexico	Female	59.8	58.4	61.4	69.4
	Male	43.9	43.6	50.4	57.9
Santa Fe	Female	60.1	52	60.5	62
	Male	43.8	42.6	55	50.8

Gender Differences in Boys' and Girls' Emotions

This article is reprinted from Education.com, *Gender Difference Special Edition* (All Rights Reserved) www.education.com/topic/gender-differences/.

by Tom Golden, MSW



Finding a Safe Place When Stressed—Boys and girls often process emotions differently. When my daughter was young and in need of support she had a special technique. She would come to me and say “Daddy, I need special time,” and I knew just what that meant. We needed to face two chairs towards each other and she would talk about what was bothering her. She might complain that her friend had said she talked too much and I would respond with a supportive “Ah, Julia.” She might

then tell me that another friend had told her that she didn’t want to play with her ever again and I would again offer support through a simple, “Ah, Julia.”

After about 5-7 cycles of “Ah, Julia,” she was ready to go! Her cup was full and, she would say “Thanks, Dad” and off she would go outside to play. What was Julia doing? She was creating a “safe place” for herself. One important aspect in healing is that when people are in trouble psychologically they will first look for a safe place. Julia went a step farther. Once she had the safe place she used it to tell her story. Combining these two elements is the outline of the common path that most of us use in healing ourselves. Finding safety and then telling our personal story.

Julia arranged for me to steward that safe place and then talked about what was bothering her. Through this story-telling process done in a safe place she began to find healing. One other common example of this process is attending a support group which acts as a safe place for people to tell their story and through the repeated telling, balance is found.

My son, however, would not come to me and say, “Daddy, I need special time.” Absolutely not. Why not? The reason is that sitting face to face is simply not safe for him. Where do men and boys like my son feel safe? More often, it is not when they are face to face, but rather when they are shoulder-to-shoulder taking action. Think of the places where men feel close to other men. It is most often when they are taking action and working on a common goal. The more dangerous the goal, the closer the men feel to each other. Wartime, police departments, fire departments, and sports teams at a championship are all examples of this. Through working together, shoulder to shoulder, the men feel close to other men. Here lasting friendships

are forged within that safety. Would Luke ask for special time? No. He would come to me and say, “I wanna wrestle!” Keep in mind that he was in first or second grade, and I am 6’2” and far from tiny. I would say, “Okay, but you better be ready for me!” Then the wrestling would commence. At first he would have me down, then I would have him down. Back and forth it would go. At some point during the battle, Luke would stick his little head up and say, “Jimmy got beat up at school today,” and I would ask if it was bad and he would say “Oh yeah, there was blood coming from his nose.” Then the interlude abruptly ceased, and he growled loudly and attacked me with all his might. A minute or two later, Luke might stick his head up again and say, “I miss Granddaddy.” He was referring to my father who had died just a few months before. My heart cracked open, and I responded that I missed him too. In a flash, he would growl and attack again and was on top of me with all his might.

Gender Differences in the Experience of Stress—Luke was doing the same thing as his sister but was using the wrestling as a safe place to tell his story. Boys and girls often find safety in different places. The general rule (not true for every child of course) is that girls will more often tend to seek out safety in INTERACTION while boys will more often seek out a safe place through ACTION [2]. Dr. Shelly Taylor, professor of psychology at UCLA, has spent many years investigating the possible neural substrate for these sex differences. She began by observing that most of the research on stress published before 2000 had been conducted on men [1]. Women had been left out for a variety of reasons, such as the concern that hormonal variations associated with the menstrual cycle might skew the results. Taylor has now conducted many studies using only women as subjects. What she found has changed our understanding of stress and the role of sex differences. She found that most women do not engage the “fight or flight” system as readily as men; instead, they engage a different system, which Dr. Taylor calls “tend and befriend.” Women, when stressed, will (according to Professor Taylor) tend to move towards others and move towards interaction. This is very different from the masculine habit of moving toward action when stressed (fight), or moving towards inaction (flight). Professor Taylor’s findings brought to mind what I had seen in Luke and Julia and started to make sense of these different strategies.

Dr. Taylor believes that these differences in the biobehavioral response to stress may be due, at least in part, to underlying hormonal differences between men and women. She cites research suggesting that oxytocin plays a key role in the “tend and befriend” system in women. Some have called oxytocin the “cuddle hormone”. What Taylor found was that though both men and women release oxytocin after stress, a women’s estrogen amplifies the effects of the oxytocin which increases her urge to affiliate (tend and befriend). The higher testosterone levels in men appear to blunt the effects of oxytocin, reducing the inclination to move towards others when stressed. Dr. Taylor suggests that there are two basic strategies in response to stress: action (“fight or flight”) or interaction (“tend and befriend”). Luke and Julia followed the expected path based on their biological sex, with Luke preferring the more male strategy of action and Julia preferring the female strategy of interaction. Importantly,

while this is common, it is not always the case. Each child is different and our challenge is to evaluate them individually based on their unique approach. Boys and girls often process emotions differently. Being aware of each child's unique way of finding safety and telling their story can only help in facilitating their growth and healing. **SB**

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2. Golden, T.R. (2000). *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing* (2nd Ed.). Gaithersburg, MD: G H Publishing.

New Book Looks at What is What is Happening to America's Boys

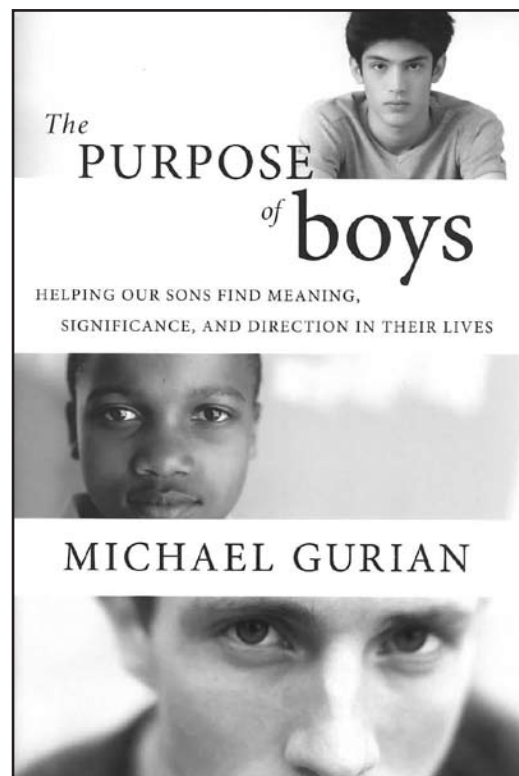
Author Michael Gurian has spent more than two decades advocating for boys, examining and explaining how they learn and develop differently from girls and how parents and teachers can help them succeed. In *The Purpose Of Boys*, the final installment of his boys trilogy, Gurian explains that there has been a significant shift in the development of male purpose in America – boys no longer understand what their social roles should be, and communities, families, and schools do not understand how to give them the direction they need.

“As an advocate for boys,” he explains, “I see a world in which boys are asking us every day, and mainly through their actions, ‘What is the purpose of boys?’ and for the most part, our culture is answering, ‘We don’t know.’ This is not an ideal situation, neither for male development nor human development. *The Purpose Of Boys* is about finding a better answer to that question.”

The Purpose Of Boys discusses the numerous causes for the collapse of male purpose development in America. In the past, young men learned strategies for success through the efforts of their parents, grandparents, faith communities, and role development within their culture. According to Michael Gurian, all of these formerly positive influences are breaking down, and a perfect storm is brewing in the culture of boyhood: males don’t know what their social roles should be, families are deteriorating around them, and communities and schools don’t understand boys’ natural needs.

Gurian attempts to remedy this breakdown in *The Purpose Of Boys* by giving parents a map for guiding their sons through childhood and young adulthood, tackling such issues as the roles of status, respect, and social rejection in adolescent male development; the importance of teaching boys about sexuality in a way that is values-oriented and purposeful; the unique struggles that boys from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds face; the dangers of overexposure to electronic media for all boys; and the critical function of education in a boy’s life, including suggestions for matching a school’s teaching style to the male brain. Gurian also provides a detailed rite of passage program for early to mid-adolescent boys, which can be used by families and communities to guide boys through the confusing transition from boyhood to manhood.

Based on the latest scientific research regarding how boys develop neurologically, *The Purpose Of Boys* offers an understanding of what is happening inside a boy’s brain as he grows up, from birth through early adulthood. For each stage of development, Gurian shares anecdotes and solutions from parents, successful childrearing techniques



from other cultures, and proven strategies for guiding boys on their personal paths toward building purposeful lives. He includes information about the biological realities of male development, as well as questions to ask and levels of support to offer based on individual levels of maturity. Each chapter closes with suggested “Questions of Purpose” that parents can ask their sons in order to gain a better understanding of their natural talents, strengths, weaknesses, fears, and goals so that they are better equipped to guide them on their journeys.


In this final book of his program for molding happy and successful boys, Michael Gurian identifies the causes and dangers of the loss of purpose in American boyhood. He offers clear, practical solutions for building motivation, character, and personal responsibility, providing parents, teachers, and communities with an in-depth tool kit for shaping the men of the future. **SB**

Pojoaque, continued from page 2

teammate does his part. So I put the responsibility on the leader of each team. They are also the ones who chose the captain and the lieutenant. That is what really helps me out with the math. If we as a class are doing math assignments and there is in-class work that needs to be done I put that responsibility on the leaders. In a coed classroom I don't know if I would be able to do that because the girls do not work as effectively in that system."

The girls' checkbooks. Charlene Abeyta agrees that the team approach does not work with her girls. Nonetheless she has noticed that the girls in her single-gender class become more interested in math as the year moves on when she uses her "checkbook" system. Each girl in her class gets imaginary money and needs to keep a checkbook. The girls have to "rent" their desks and buy certain necessities during the month, but they can also earn money by scoring high on tests and other achievements. They can lose money, for example, when they do not have their homework. If they save a lot of money, a girl can get a privilege like time on the computer or being able to visit the "prize box."

Not only does this help the girls with math and especially with decimals, but they learn a little about budgeting and paying rent. Abeyta notices a different pattern of leadership with the girls than Ortiz sees with the boys: "Sometimes there is an individual girl who might help the other girls. I encourage peer tutoring. They may be the leader in the sense that they help the other girls, but it is not a leader in the sense that 'I am the leader and everyone knows it.' Rather it has to do with looking for a friend or someone to help them out.

Research on learning differences. Research on how boys and girls learn differently helps to support the approaches that these two teachers have chosen. In *Why Gender Matters* (2005), Leonard Sax cites studies to support his statement that, "Stress improves learning in males while it impairs learning in females" (p. 89). Another researcher, Simon Baron-Cohen, in *The Essential Difference* (2003) has found that "Girls tend to be more preoccupied with the emotional aspects of relationships . . . In contrast, boys are more preoccupied with . . . competitive aspects" (p. 44). On the other hand, people have noted that for girls the sense of developing a competence or mastery over an adult skill, such as check keeping, is a great motivator. 

Male Teachers Discuss Attractions/Stigmas of Job

The following letter exchange is taken from the website:
www.menteach.org

Nothing Else I Would Rather Do

by Joseph David Nowakowski Jr

I am a elementary education major (1-5) at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Currently I am a junior and have completed my Praxis I exam. I will be graduating in the Spring of 2010 and simply cannot wait to teach young children. I heard about your organization from the article on msn.com "Percentage of Male Teachers Hits 40-year Low" and being as I am currently in college to become exactly that, I was hoping your organization could help or assist me.

I had many of the same questions myself, and have encountered some rather rude people who ask me why I would want to teach at the elementary grade level; it's discouraging at times. However, I've wanted to be a teacher and help children and people for a long time. Not only do I realize we lack in the male teachers but I also realize that it can be so beneficial for children to see a successful man teaching at their level.

Recently I taught at Dodson Elementary in New Iberia, Louisiana as part of my requirements for Health 300 where I designed and taught a unit on Drugs, Alcohol and Other Dangerous Drugs. After I taught for the week I had been given, I knew that there was nothing else in the world that I would want to do except teach. It's terribly sad that more males are not going into the lower grade levels.

For me, it was awkward at first going into the Elementary Education major because I was the only male in my classes. People, and even some of the teachers, would tell me "I know why you picked this major" and give me that little smirk I have grown accustomed to. More or less they were saying I picked my major based on the fact that I would be around all females. Shame on them for telling me this.


Gotta Keep Goin'

By Elliott W. Adams, M. Ed. 1st Grade Teacher

I am a current male 1st grade teacher in Florida. This year makes my 5th year of teaching; 4 of the 5 years in 1st grade. I wanted to encourage you to keep your enthusiasm for teaching elementary students as you will surely need it. You will receive a mix of reactions from people; good and bad. Don't let it deter you from this profession.

I remember my undergraduate days of riding the city bus from my apartment complex to my College of Education. Sometimes it was discouraging as I passed the Colleges of Pharmacy, Medicine, Physics and other colleges where I knew the starting salaries of these graduates would be higher than mine. This was an unavoidable, daily routine as the College of Education, on the outskirts of campus, was the last stop of the colleges before the bus hit downtown. I, too, at times, felt just like the location of my school: an outsider. I always thought to myself, "How many little ones would go without me as their teacher? Gotta keep goin'."

The challenges, frustrations, and stigma you might face do not end in undergrad. You will have groups of individuals praising your efforts or questioning your motives. Stay focused no matter what. Research your craft in your spare time. Ask smart and dumb questions. Learn how to do everything in the classroom better everyday. Tell your children you love and care for them and do not be afraid to, either. You never know if you'll be the only person expressing your love for them; be that person for your children.

I hope you stay motivated in your dreams and aspirations in pursuing this wonderful profession. 

New Mexico Men's Council for Boys and Young Men Forms in Albuquerque

Concerned about the absence of a statewide voice for young males, 10 men have formed a Council whose aim is to bring more policy focus to boys' needs in the state. This effort follows on the heels of the NM Men's Conference on Boys and Young Men held at the Hilton of Albuquerque on November 18, 2008. At the conference, various panels discussed issues about the education, social welfare and health of boys and young men. Several panels dealt with issues of criminality, gangs and incarceration. All of these concerns have been brought into the new Council, which will also deal with issues of boys

One of the guiding principles in forming the Council is that statistics on boys and young men show that their condition in the state is, on average, unfavorable. The Council notes that, "We see this in declining academic performance, rising levels of violence (perpetuated by and against young men), lawlessness, gang involvement, incarceration, health problems such as suicide and fatal accidents, alcohol and drug use, and in the fall of other indicators of social well-being."

Another principle of the Council notes that men are largely absent from the lives of boys and that this leads to an absence of initiatory energy for young men as they approach adulthood. Behind this statement is the concern that too few men are showing the next generation of males the way to be in the world. The Council declares that it is organized to speak out on issues that will bring men closer to children as parents, teachers, and mentors and to promote a role of speaking out for young male interests as a part of our responsibility to support the healthy development of boys and young men.

The Council envisions the creation of a new narrative on positive male role development in an environment where the uniqueness of boys and men is acknowledged and celebrated, leading to a respectful and nurturing society that positively supports boys and young men in a comprehensive manner.

The mission of the Council is to promote positive male development through forums that inform and advocate for policy, practice and research to support integrated systems change in the areas of health, education and social well-being.

More information about the New Mexico Council for Boys and Young Men can be obtained at their website, www.nmboys.org.



The New Mexico Men's Council for Boys and Young Men



*Nurturing and celebrating the
uniqueness of boys and young men*



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New Mexico Men's Conference on Boys and Young Men, November 2008

Keynote Speaker Luis Rodriguez with conference participant



Panel discussion



State Sen. Jerry Ortiz y Pino



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