

# SANTA FE BOYS

TRIENNIAL PUBLICATION ABOUT THE SITUATION OF BOYS IN SANTA FE

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## Boys Are Really Falling Behind, and in New Mexico It's Not Just Some Boys

By Paul Golding, Editor, SFB

In her recent study, *The Evidence Suggests Otherwise; The Truth about Boys and Girls*, Sara Mead of the Washington, DC think tank, Education Sector, raises two important questions:

- Are boys falling behind or are girls doing better?
- Is it all boys we need to be concerned about or just certain groups of boys?

In her research, Mead claims that boys by and large are really doing quite well in school and wonders what all the fuss is about. Without going into the strengths and weaknesses of her analysis for the situation in the United States, this article, and much of this issue of *Santa Fe Boys*, looks at these two questions for New Mexico.

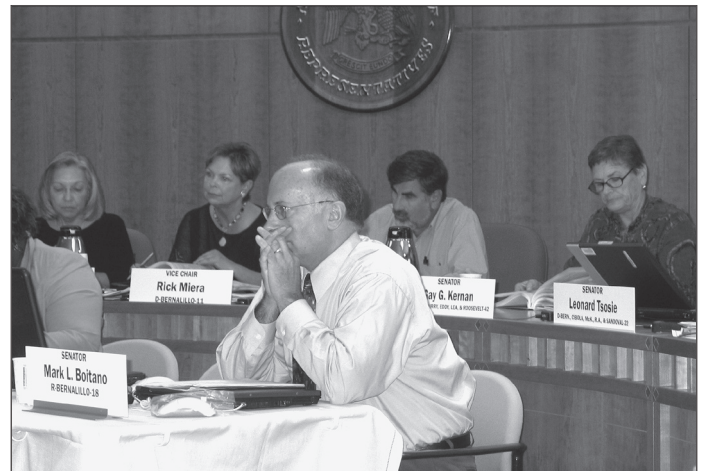
**In New Mexico, boys are falling behind and girls are doing better.**

Looking at high school graduations in New Mexico, fewer boys, as a proportion of all boys, are graduating from High School. As table 1 on page 6 shows, in this state we have witnessed a decline of about 2 percent in the proportion of males age 25-34 who have obtained high school degrees or equivalency between the years 1990 and 2000. For females in these age groups the comparable percentage for high school graduation has increased almost 4 percent, so that by 2000

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## NM Legislature to Consider Boys' Educational Decline

In its November 15-17 meeting, the NM Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) will hear a presentation regarding the gender gap in education in New Mexico. Usually a LESG presentation involves a staff briefing on a subject followed by comments and questions from state government officials, school personnel, the public and the state legislators who are committee members. In this case the committee will also hear from a representative of the Gurian Institute located in Denver.



The Legislative Education Study Committee, pictured above, will meet in November to discuss how boys are doing in NM public schools.

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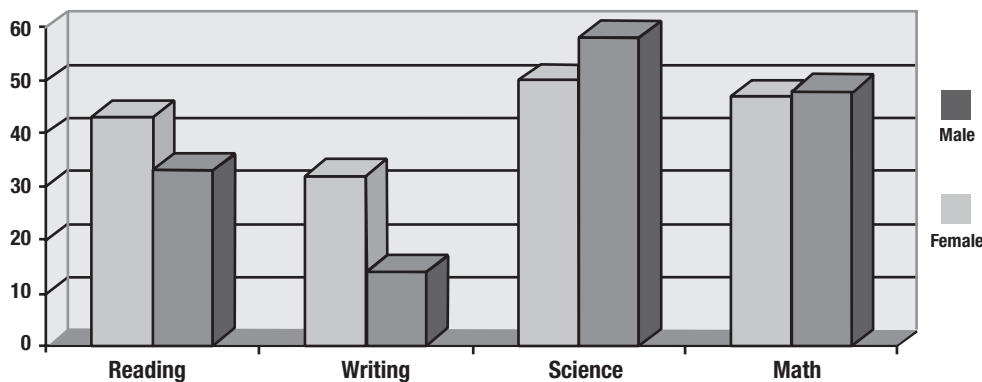
The Gurian Institute was founded by Michael Gurian, an educational psychologist and best selling author. In his most recent book, *The Minds of Boys; Saving Our Sons from Falling Behind in School and Life*, he writes about a pattern of difficulty that "creates a problem for boys that will afflict our civilization with increasing discomfort over many decades to come." Gurian himself is unable to attend the session.

This session of the LESG will be held in Santa Fe at the Roundhouse. To learn the day and time of the presentation and discussion, call 986-4591, or visit the committee's web site ([www.legis.state.nm.us/lcs/lesc/lescdefault.asp](http://www.legis.state.nm.us/lcs/lesc/lescdefault.asp)). Normally, the agenda is not announced until a few weeks before the meeting.

On the following page is a brief summary of the New Mexico gender gap.

continued on page 2

**National Assessment of Educational Progress for New Mexico Eighth Graders, 2005–  
Percentage of Students Performing Below Basic**



## New Mexico's Youth Gender Gap

### Standardized tests

Ten to eighteen percent more NM eighth grade boys than NM girls perform below nationally accepted standards for reading and writing ("below basic"). Differences in math for boys and girls are not statistically significant.<sup>[1]</sup> Half of NM boys and 58 percent of NM girls score below basic in Science.

### Commitment to learning

Fifty-six percent of NM high school boys registered a negative commitment to learning compared to 40.3 percent of NM girls on the state-wide Youth Risk and Resiliency Surveys.<sup>[2]</sup>

### Suicide

Eighty-seven percent of suicides in New Mexico under the age of 24 were committed by males in 2004 & 2005 (number: 147).<sup>[3]</sup>

### Obesity

Fifteen percent of males in NM High Schools reported themselves as obese compared to 6 percent of females.<sup>[4]</sup>

### High school completion rates

In 2002-2003, 53.5 percent of males and 60 percent of females completed high school.<sup>[5]</sup>

### University attendance rates

In 2005, in New Mexico Public Post-Secondary Institutions for every 100 females, there were 69 males.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Degrees from NM public colleges and universities

Male recipients of Bachelor's Degrees have fallen from 45 percent of the total awarded in 1995-96 to 41 percent of the total in 2004-05.<sup>[7]</sup>

### Special education

Sixty-six percent of students in special education in New Mexico public schools were males (N=33,645).<sup>[8]</sup>

### School discipline

In 2000, for every 100 girls suspended from NM public elementary and secondary schools 247 boys were suspended (N=21,935 students). For every 100 girls expelled from public elementary and secondary schools 416 boys were expelled (N=470).<sup>[9]</sup>

### Gender of NM Public School Teachers

Eleven percent of elementary school teachers in 2005-06 were men (N=1,330). Thirty-one percent of middle school teachers (N=1,515) and forty-four percent of high school teachers (N=2,743) were men.<sup>[10]</sup>

### Retained in Grade

Sixty percent of students retained in grade in 2005-06 were boys (N=4,296).<sup>[11]</sup>

[1] US Department of Education, *National Assessment of Education Progress Snapshot Reports*, 2005. (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/stt2005/2006454NM4.pdf>, retrieved August 14, 2006).

[2] NM Department of Health, 2003 *New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey*.

[3] Office of the Medical Investigator for the State of New Mexico (personal communication, August 16, 2006).

[4] NM Department of Health, 2003 *New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey*.

[5] *Education Week*. (2006, June 22). Diplomas count; an essential guide to graduation policy and rates. ([http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2006/nm\\_SGB06.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2006/nm_SGB06.pdf), retrieved, June 24, 2006).

[6] New Mexico Higher Education Department, Research and Planning Unit, personal communication, September 12, 2006.

[7] Office of Planning and Research, NM Higher Education Department, personal communication with director, dated August 25, 2006.

[8] New Mexico Public Education Department, personal written communication from the Custodian of Records dated September 11, 2006.

[9] [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d04/tables/dt04\\_144.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d04/tables/dt04_144.asp) (retrieved September 7, 2006).

[10] New Mexico Public Education Department, personal written communication from the Custodian of Records dated September 11, 2006.

[11] New Mexico Public Education Department, personal written communication from the Custodian of Records dated September 11, 2006.

## SANTA FE BOYS

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# Boy Issues in the Press: Graphomotor Dysfunction, Failure to Launch Syndrome, and the Benefits of Same Gender Teachers

We often see boys as invulnerable, but some recent research raises doubts about this assumption in particularly striking ways. One of these concerns an epidemic of boys with “graphomotor dysfunction” which is the disconnect between a child’s thoughts and the ability to write them down. Another deals with the notion of a “failure to launch syndrome” based upon the fact, according to US Census data, that one-third of young men ages 22-34 are still living at home with their parents, a 100 percent increase in the past 20 years. A third research finding shows boys learn better with male teachers and girls with female teachers.

## Graphomotor Dysfunction

Dr. Melvin D. Levine brought the first issue about the epidemic in little boys of graphomotor dysfunction to a recent pediatric conference in Vancouver, Canada. *Pediatric News* (July 2006) quotes Dr. Levine, who used to encounter one or two children in a single classroom with this problem, as saying that he now finds as many as 25% of boys experience it. In his book, *A Mind at a Time* (2002) Levine illustrates graphomotor dysfunction by describing the handwriting problems of third grader Raoul, who was always,

. . . more than willing to engage his magnificent verbal fluency to tell jokes and outlandish stories, but could get none of this down on paper. But what mystified everyone was the fact the he was a born graphic artist. From the age of two Raoul loved to draw. At nine his cartoon creations displayed precise fine motor control. But somehow Raoul could not engage in the rapid assignment and activation of his finger muscles required for letter formation (p. 173).

Hence graphomotor function is not the same as the fine motor function of writing and drawing, but rather has to do with the whole process of writing and the connection between the mind’s previsualization of letters and numbers and motor skills to produce them. Like Raoul, a child with this dysfunction has many ideas, but cannot transcribe them. They come to detest

writing, homework, and test taking. “Writing can be so humiliating. . . that their natural response is defiant refusal” Levine told *Pediatric News*.

Levine describes many ways to deal with the problem, but first a diagnosis is needed so that a child can be taught ways around it. Keyboarding, printing, smooth-flowing writing implements can all help. School accommodation, by allowing tape recorders for note-taking and surrogate hand writers for reports and important tests is also suggested.

What might be causing the epidemic? Levine, according to *Pediatric News*, isn’t certain. But some people believe that high levels of video game playing may have something to do with it.

## Failure to Launch Syndrome

In describing the “failure to launch” syndrome, Leonard Sax—a pediatrician, psychologist and the author of *Why Gender Matters* (2005)—notes the similarity between the main character in the *Failure to Launch* movie and the number of young men he is seeing in his office who are affable and intelligent, but completely unmotivated. He wonders, in a *Washington Post* article (March 31, 2006), if this generation of boys who don’t care about doing well in school, college, or having a productive career is the result of “changing school curriculums, environments that are less boy-oriented or a workforce that offers fewer blue-collar jobs.”

Sax, who is also the executive director of the Washington, D.C. based National Association for Single Sex Public Education, notes that this trend spans all demographics—rich, poor, black, white, urban and rural. However, it is not as true of young women as young men. Sax also says many young women are staying with their families into their 20s, but they are doing so in smaller numbers than men and also are using the time to save money or earn a degree. Unlike the young men, the young women are motivated to move on with life.

## The Why Chromosome

Economist Thomas Dee’s recent article (Fall, 2006) in *Education Next* ([www.educationnext.org](http://www.educationnext.org)) uses US Department of

Education data from over 21,000 eighth graders in 1988 to test whether the gender of the teacher matters. The data include not only student performance on standardized tests in reading, science, math and history, but also teacher opinions about how she/he viewed the behavior and performance of students. Teachers were asked to indicate whether a particular student was frequently disruptive, consistently inattentive, or rarely completed homework. Students were asked about their engagement with the subject including whether they were afraid to ask questions about it. Because the data for each student was paired, that is, it was possible to see how the same student’s performance varied with two different teachers, Dee was able to isolate the gender effect from other possible influences. These included whether the student shared the teacher’s race and ethnicity, size of the class, the number of years the teacher was in the profession and whether he/she was certified to teach the subject.

Dee’s results indicated that having a teacher of the same sex increased a student’s score on standardized tests significantly while having a teacher of the opposite sex decreased scores. Why this is the case is open to debate, but Dee notes that his research shows that when a class is headed by a woman, boys are more likely to be seen as disruptive, while girls are less likely to be seen as either disruptive or inattentive. Furthermore, when taught by a man, girls were more likely to report that they did not look forward to a subject, that it was not useful for their future, or that they were afraid to ask questions.

Perhaps Dee’s work is an argument for more single sex classrooms where males teach boys and females teach girls. Or perhaps simpler changes will suffice such as providing teachers with gender-specific training about the different learning styles of boys and girls. Mostly Dee’s work is a wake up call to schools of education that ideas about gender neutrality—that boys and girls learn the same way—need to give way to pedagogical practices recognizing that gender matters.

# An Interview with Family Court Judge Raymond Ortiz

Judge Raymond Z. Ortiz was appointed last December by Governor Richardson to be the Family Court Judge for Santa Fe, Los Alamos and Rio Arriba Counties. A native of Santa Fe, a poet, and writer of short stories, he received his BA from the University of Notre Dame and JD from the University of California in Berkeley. Judge Ortiz has a lengthy history of community service both in Costa Rica where he worked after graduating from college as a volunteer with an organization serving the rural poor of Central America and in Santa Fe where, among other contributions of time to non-profits, he was a founding board member of Children First, which provides counseling, guidance and support for children and parents in divorce situations. Judge Ortiz and his wife, Margaret Avila Storey, an MSW in private psychotherapy practice, have a son, Zach, who graduated in May from Notre Dame. This interview took place in July and was conducted by Paul Golding, editor of Santa Fe Boys.

**Santa Fe Boys:** To start, what do you do as the District I Family Court Judge? What kind of cases do you deal with in your courtroom?

**Judge Ortiz:** I deal with custody and child support disputes, alimony, property division, domestic violence, marriages, and paternity issues. Of course custody, child support and property division are all related to issues stemming from divorce. I also have a significant number of general civil cases which are really not part of the Family Court duties.

**SFB:** Have you observed anything different for the boys than the girls who are the children of divorcing parents in your court?

**Judge Ortiz:** If I can generalize on the basis of my limited six months' experience, what I see quite a bit of is children trying to weather the storm of divorce, with girls doing a little bit better job of it than boys. I don't know the full explanation for this; I'm not a psychologist. From my experiences as a judge, I would tender that at a certain age girls are perhaps more verbal and better at articulating their needs so those needs tend to be met more quickly. Boys tend to be somewhat less verbal and so at times it is more difficult to determine how to meet their needs. But their relative silence does not mean that boys are not taking in the tragedy of divorce every bit as deeply as girls. Some boys just don't manifest it as readily as some girls do.

This picture can get complicated because fathers and mothers are often so engaged in the conflict of divorce, in who's going to win and who's going to lose, that they occasionally don't see the plight of their children as clearly as they should. The result is that, for

example, property issues might become more important than custody issues. I'm not suggesting that this happens all the time or even most of the time, but it happens enough to be very troublesome. In these latter instances the debate can become so embroiled and engaged that the best interests of the children are sometimes not given due regard. It is important to keep this perspective in mind. It is not that property issues aren't important; they most certainly are, but where custody and time sharing issues are involved, I always have to keep my eye on how the children are doing.

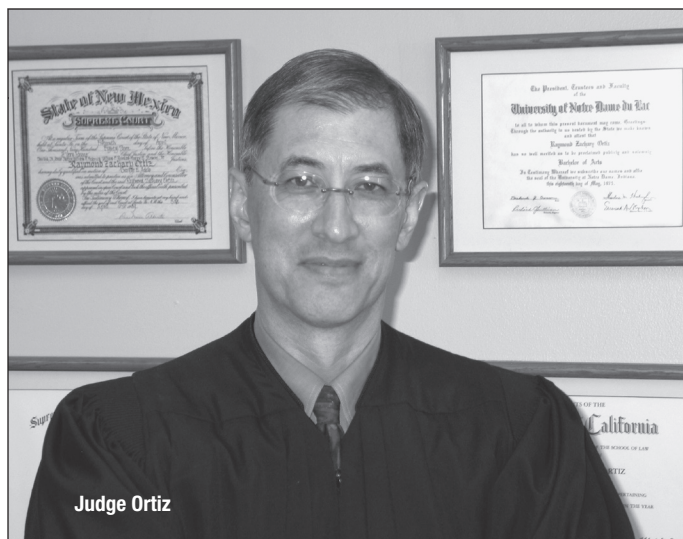
**SFB:** What do you see with regard to fathering in your court?

**Judge Ortiz:** Kids need both parents. I think boys as well as girls need their fathers to be involved in their lives. What I see is that in some families there's a legacy of inattentiveness so that maybe fathers who were themselves not fathered well tend not to be as attentive to their own children as much as fathers who had the benefit of being fathered and mothered in a better way. For example, a father who is not paying child support on a consistent basis may himself have been neglected by his father so there is a deficit in his understanding or willingness to provide as he should. In this example, the father has to change his perspective. Of course, I strictly enforce the law by, for example, imposing jail terms for parents who don't pay child support, which tends to

move the educational process along for reluctant parents. Sometimes I see a cycle of inattentiveness going through families, and part of my role is to try and break that cycle as much as possible. In cases where custody disputes are particularly heated, I order the parents and the children to therapy with the hope that this will help. As a founding board member of Children First, I am well aware of the extensive co-parenting program that organization provides and will include co-parenting classes as part of my orders where appropriate.

**SFB:** Are there other ways that you see the problems of boys in your courtroom?

**Judge Ortiz:** In my court I see plenty of report cards because they often get introduced as evidence on the issue as to how well kids are doing. Often I see the situation where a girl and a boy are in the same family, close in age, exposed to the same pressures and societal influences with the girl getting good marks and the boy languishing somewhat. Of course this is not the case all the time, but I see it often enough that a trend appears to be emerging. I'm by no means a statistician, but these types of occurrences appear to be more than



just random. And I am talking about a fairly large sample considering the substantial number of cases I deal with.

If girls at a certain age tend to be more relational than boys, more able to verbalize, that behavior would be more beneficial in the classroom. If there are students who are better able to articulate their thoughts and feelings, for the most part they will get good feedback from their teachers. I frequently hear evidence in cases that girls, because they tend to be more relational at certain ages, tend to reach out more to family and friends for help.

On the other had, if there are some students that aren't as verbal, we may have a problem. I have seen more adolescent boys who fall into this danger zone than girls. This is not to say that some girls don't experience this difficulty as well. It has clearly been the situation in some cases. My perspective is to try and get all children in need into the best possible program as quickly as possible.

**SFB:** What are some of the things that have most surprised you about this job?

**Judge Ortiz:** There are basically two things that I did not anticipate coming onto the bench—the general volume of cases and especially the number of domestic violence cases. When I was an attorney in private practice, I saw everything. By that I mean every type of case I have heard as a judge, I had previously presented in court as an advocate. What I didn't quite expect was the number of cases in terms of docket management. Attorneys in private practice basically have no exposure to the fine art of managing a heavy docket. As an attorney, I might have been involved in as many as 250 matters at any one time. Immediately after being sworn in, I stepped into a docket of approximately 2,500 cases with 250 additional new and re-opened cases on average coming into my division each month. That means in my division, 250 cases per month have to be resolved in order for my ship to avoid taking on water. I have two hearing officers who assist with some of that case load as it relates to domestic violence and child support areas. Even as to those areas I review the details of every case and approve or reject the recommendations reached by the hearing officer in each and every case. However, there are many, many more types of cases assigned to my division and the ultimate responsibility for resolving all of the cases falls on me as judge.

I also did not anticipate the amount of domestic violence (DV) that I would have to deal with. I was expecting perhaps 20 DV cases a week, but sometimes it can be as many as 20 cases a day. At times I feel as though I'm presiding over the disintegration of society. That volume of cases stuns me. I used to think that this volume is what would be expected in a much larger metropolitan area or one in which there was a more pronounced, more widespread set of societal problems. But right here in beautiful Santa Fe, viewed by many as one of the "Meccas" of our country, we have quite a lot of domestic violence. Of course, it's not just Santa Fe, but in all of the three counties that comprise the First Judicial District where I preside: Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, and Los Alamos.

**SFB:** You mention domestic violence. I wonder if you could say some more about who commits it. I assume it is mostly men.

**Judge Ortiz:** Yes, that's true. Although I think people would be

surprised to hear that perhaps 10-15 percent of the domestic violence is perpetrated by women. People have the idea that it is all men against women and while that is very largely true, there appears to be a small but growing amount of domestic violence committed by women.

**SFB:** What do you think there is in boys' lives that might, I emphasize might, lead them to be perpetrators of domestic violence as adult men?

**Judge Ortiz:** Part of the answer loops back to what I was talking about before about general parenting skills. Imagine a family system where there is an absence of good parenting skills, or worse, a complete absence of one or both parents, or worse still a parent who is a victim of domestic and/or sexual violence. A child growing up in that milieu, with that background, may well look at the world through that lens. A very significant number of domestic violence perpetrators are themselves past victims of domestic violence, usually from their fathers. Perhaps the father drank too much, or used drugs, or had this macho attitude and couldn't control his anger, or was beaten or sexually abused.

Violence begets violence. Such violence is often then directed against the children, their mother or both. Kids see this example of how men are in the world and how they resolve difficulties by violence instead of talking through things and other ways of resolving disputes. Imagine as well situations where it is the woman who is the perpetrator because of her own unfortunate history. In those instances, the impact on children is no less devastating.

There are additional levels to this extremely unfortunate cycle. Not all victims of domestic violence will themselves become perpetrators. Because of their history, some become targets due to their acceptance of domestic violence. Some just don't know any other way to be in the world so they become victims. When the abnormal becomes normal, the world is turned on its head.

**SFB:** What do you hope to accomplish in this job; how would you like to change it?

**Judge Ortiz:** Overall, to serve the people of the First Judicial District well, to render fair, honest and timely decisions, to allow people a full opportunity to be heard such that, win or lose, they feel they have had a fair day in court. In terms of more immediate goals, to implement some scheduling and procedural changes such that cases move more quickly. Finally, in terms of immediate crisis, to work through and reduce the backlog. One of the reasons Governor Richardson appointed me is to do precisely this. I am trying to reduce the 2,500 cases that were on my docket when I arrived so that people don't have to wait 6 to 8 months for a hearing. It's now down to about 1,800 and I want to cut it further so that people will only have to wait from 1 to 3 months for a hearing from the time of their request, which is a more standard amount of time.

Long delays mean that folks have their lives put on hold during a time of intense trauma and turmoil in their lives, which only means that their disputes will fester. (Reducing this backlog) is at least a two or three-year endeavor but I'm going to give it my best shot because I think it will make a difference. (I will also do it because) I love this job. It is what I was put on this earth to do.

approximately 6 percent more women, age 25-34, had received high school diplomas than men. This difference probably reflects the 6 percent greater high school drop out rates of males. These data come from surveys conducted by the US Census Bureau and the 1990 differences are not great enough to put them beyond the levels of statistical uncertainty. Nonetheless, these same trends of fewer men and more women as a proportion of all men and women in younger age groups receiving high school diplomas can be observed across the country and so there is an additional reason for believing they accurately reflect the situation.

Boys falling behind and girls moving ahead in high school graduation rates also become reflected in who receives bachelor's degrees from public colleges. In table 2 we can see that girls are making strides in higher graduation rates while boys are obtaining fewer bachelor's degrees than they used to.

Another aspect of this question has to do with what has happened to the value of a high school diploma over the past fifteen years; are we comparing apples to apples? Most people today think that the value of a high school diploma has decreased in the post-industrial society as manufacturing and blue collar jobs have shrunk along with wages for unskilled workers. At the same time, as greater numbers of men are dropping out of school and fewer graduating from college, a college education is more important for making a contribution to the economy and society in general. Given the increased necessity for a college education, the overall educational attainment of men in this state has not kept up with the demand for educated individuals as well as the educational attainment of women.

**In New Mexico, boys of color and low income are doing worse and they constitute the majority of boys.**

The second question Mead raises—the racial/income question, i.e. is it all boys we should be concerned about or just some specific groups of boys—is perhaps a more appropriate question for some other state. Here 65 percent of the high school population is Native American, Hispanic and African-American and the majority, 57 percent of the students, is low income.

Minority and low-income girls also face difficulties in schools; however, girls from

Table 1

Percentage of Males and Females, Age 25-34, with High School or Equivalency in New Mexico in 1990 and 2000		
Year	Male	Female
1990	81.4	82.8
2000	79.1	86.6

Source: US Census Bureau, New Mexico Education Attainment, 1990 Census [www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp3-3-4.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp3-3-4.pdf), retrieved August 13, 2006)  
US Census Bureau, New Mexico Educational Attainment, 2004 American Community Survey, ([http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=04000US35&-qr\\_name=ACS\\_2004\\_EST\\_G00\\_S1501&-ds\\_name=ACS\\_2004\\_EST\\_G00\\_](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US35&-qr_name=ACS_2004_EST_G00_S1501&-ds_name=ACS_2004_EST_G00_)), retrieved August 13, 2006).

Table 2

Recipients of Bachelor's Degrees from NM Public Colleges and Universities, by Gender, 1995-2005				
Year	Total Bachelor's Degrees Awarded	Female Recipients (Percent of total)	Male Recipients (Percent of total)	Gap
1995-96	5,577	3,093 (55)	2,484 (45)	609
1996-97	5,486	3,092 (56)	2,394 (44)	698
1997-98	5,659	3,265 (58)	2,394 (42)	871
1998-99	5,637	3,316 (59)	2,321 (41)	995
1999-2000	5,502	3,203 (58)	2,299 (42)	904
2000-01	5,319	3,150 (59)	2,169 (41)	981
2001-02	5,259	3,145 (60)	2,114 (40)	1,031
2002-03	5,698	3,388 (59)	2,310 (41)	1,078
2003-04	5,834	3,462 (59)	2,372 (41)	1,090
2004-05	5,970	3,535 (59)	2,435 (41)	1,100

Source: Office of Planning and Research, NM Higher Education Department, personal communication with director, dated August 25, 2006.

Table 3

High School Graduation Rates by Student Group in New Mexico, 2002-2003		
Student Group	Male (percent)	Female (percent)
All ethnicities	53.5	60.0
American Indian	45.8	52.1
Hispanic	46.8	54.7
Black (not Hispanic)	44.0	49.1
White (not Hispanic)	62.9	68.2

Source: *Education Week*. (2006, June 22). Diplomas count: an essential guide to graduation policy and rates. ([http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2006/nm\\_SGB06.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2006/nm_SGB06.pdf), retrieved, June 24, 2006).

these backgrounds do better in school than boys. Looking at high school graduation rates, for example, New Mexico boys on average are 6.5 percent less likely to graduate from high school than girls. This poorer male graduation rate is reflected among all ethnic groups in the state, including whites, as table 3 shows.

Not surprisingly, these discrepancies occur in college attendance as well. Among all students with Hispanic or Native American backgrounds attending public post-secondary schools in the state, only 39 and 37 percent, respectively, are males.

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## Conclusion

In this state, boys and young men are doing worse in education than in the past. Many reasons have been put forward for this decline. Some of these have to do with the ways boys are nurtured, some with the way that boys' natures are not accommodated in school and some have to do with more widespread societal problems of father absence and the way masculinity is portrayed in the media, for example.

A question that needs to be addressed, however, is why our school systems do not begin to do something about this decline? Why is there such a sense of indifference to the widespread difficulties of boys?

Consider how society responded in the 1970s when we found that schools were preventing girls from reaching their potential. Did it matter that schools hastened to improve things for girls, to re-educate teachers about girls' needs, to pay special attention to problematic areas in math and science? Does it matter today that boys are having trouble reading and writing? Does it matter that schools are not responding to these problems with the same concern that they did three and four decades earlier when it was girls who had the greater problems with school?

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue of *Santa Fe Boys*, the state legislature is to be commended for taking the first tentative steps in looking at gender in education during the November meeting of the Legislative Education Study Committee. This committee, consisting of members from both the House and the Senate, can do a great deal to set the tone for future corrective action by tackling this problem. It can also direct attention to data collection and availability so that we know as much about our "gender gap" as we do about our "achievement gaps." It can promote better education for our teachers about the different ways that boys and girls learn through in-service trainings and through the state's publicly-funded schools of education, and it can consider incentives to draw more male teachers into our elementary and secondary schools.

Should we start working out what is going wrong for boys and try to improve things for them?

# New Mexico Higher Education Should Consider the Gender Gaps and Achievement Gaps Together

In April the state Higher Education Department (NMHED) examined the records of 35,654 graduates of NM high schools—55 percent female and 45 percent male—who went on to public colleges in the period 2000-2004. The resulting Ready for College Report discovered that over half of these students (18,887) were not ready for college: they needed remedial education once they arrived on campus in their first or second years.

*Santa Fe Boys* requested gender data from NMHED on the 18,887 students who needed remedial education. The following table summarizes the data:

	Total sample size	Number needing remedial education
Male	16,104 (45%)	7,866 (42%)
Female	19,550 (55%)	11,021 (58%)
Total	35,654 (100%)	18,887 (100%)

Source: NMHED, et al, *Ready for College Report* (April 17, 2006, p. 14) & NMHED, Office of Planning and Research personal communication, August 25, 2006.

Males made up 45 percent of the population sampled and constituted 42 percent of those who needed remedial education. Females made up 55 percent of the population sampled and were 58 percent of those needing remedial education.

One conclusion that these discrepancies may indicate is that though males attend college in smaller numbers than females, those who do go to college are better prepared in the sense that they are less likely to need remedial classes once they get to college. To the extent this is correct, in its effort to fulfill some of its more important policy objectives, NMHED

might wish to consider the reasons males attend college in smaller numbers than females.

For example, the NM Higher Education Department has a goal of increasing the number of Hispanic and Native American students in

public colleges. Since the number of Hispanic and Native American females enrolled in post secondary institutions is more than proportional to their number in the population, this state agency may wish to consider ways to attract more Hispanic and Native American males who may be qualified to go to college but are not choosing to pursue higher education. In other words, in addition to focusing on the "achievement gap" between Hispanic and Native American students on the one hand, and Anglo students on the other, the NMHED should also consider the "gender gap" within the ethnic-based "achievement gap" as a way of ameliorating both.

A December 6, 2005 report by the NM Higher Education Department, Native American and Hispanic Students, states that to close the gap for Hispanic students in the state an additional 6,850 NM resident Hispanic students need to be recruited to college. In fall 2005, 9,648 fewer Hispanic males were in the system than females. In other words the Hispanic gender gap is almost one-and-a-half times greater than the achievement gap. The report also says that an additional 2,590 Native American resident undergraduates need to be participating in the system to close that achievement gap. For Native Americans there were 2,499 fewer males in colleges than females. Efforts to attract more minority males do not currently appear among the "Most Effective Strategies" pursued by NM institutions of higher education to recruit and retain Hispanic and Native American students (NMHED, *Native American and Hispanic Enrollment Report*, December 6, 2005, p. 8).

NM "Achievement Gap" Vs NM "Gender Gap" for Minority College Students		
Number of additional students needed to close each gap		
	Achievement Gap	Gender Gap: Number of fewer males
Hispanic	6,850	9,648
Native American	2,590	2,499

Source: NMHED reports.

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## New “Action/Research” Group to Study Boys’ Education

**S**anta Fe Boys newsletter is proposing to start a peer-led study group to consider the needs of boys in education. The group will meet once a month for three months for 90 minutes on Thursday, October 19, November 16 and December 14. Participants will be invited to read material relevant to the topics and share their experiences with the issues. Attendance is free and open to all in the community with an interest in boys.

This is an “action oriented” study group, meaning that ultimately the group may take the work into an applied area. This action orientation will be implicit in all that the group studies and in what the members inform one another about.

### Some of the topics to be considered are:

1. Do boys learn differently? What do research and experience tell us?
2. How might reading, writing and language arts be better taught to boys in elementary school?
3. How might math and science be better adapted for boys’ learning styles?
4. Punishment vs discipline; what are the issues of classroom management especially relevant to boys?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of boy-only classrooms and mixed-gender classrooms? Are boy-only classrooms desirable and should they be part of the public school system? What are the next steps?

The group will decide at the end of the last meeting whether to continue and what future topics might be.

Some important details: If you are interested in participating or have questions, please let us know at [santafeboys@comcast.net](mailto:santafeboys@comcast.net). We hope that some teachers and others associated with the schools will be able to participate and so we are scheduling the sessions from 4-5:30 PM. The first meeting on October 19 will take place at the Santa Fe Public Library (145 Washington Avenue), upstairs in the meeting room.

Two books which might be helpful throughout the sessions, and which participants are encouraged to read are Leonard Sax, *Why Gender Matters* (Random House) and Michael Gurian, *The Minds of Boys* (Jossey-Bass).

Signed,

Paul Golding Editor, *Santa Fe Boys*, Valerie Ingram, Mother, two boys