

# PRINCIPAL SABBATICAL REPORT

## FOCUS: THE PERFORMANCE OF BOYS

*Mr Salvatore Gargiulo QSO*

**PRINCIPAL, NELSON COLLEGE**

*THIS REPORT IS AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF MALES WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM. IT ALSO PROVIDES AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE GENDER GAP WITHIN NEW ZEALAND AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE PERFORMANCE OF BOYS.*

### **SECTION ONE - ESTABLISHING THE EXISTENCE OF A GENDER GAP IN NEW ZEALAND** **2**

National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Information	2
University of Otago Research	3

### **SECTION TWO - SUMMARIZING INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON GENDER GAP** **3**

Lingard et al – Australia	3
The Lighthouse Program – Australia	5
Office for Standards in Education Report (Ofsted) – United Kingdom	7
Cambridge University – United Kingdom	10
The Gurian Institute – United States of America	111

### **SECTION THREE - THE NEW ZEALAND SITUATION** **13**

Influential Individuals	13
Experiences with Nelson College	14
The Ten Guiding Principles for Success in Educating Boys	18
The Way Forward	23

### **SECTION FOUR – THE POTENTIAL FOR NEW ZEALAND FUTURE** **23**

The Project on the Performance of Boys for New Zealand Schools	23
Aim	23
The Process	24
Additional Information	26

The research methodology of this report is based on both primary and secondary sourced information. This report is based on my experiences as a teacher, deputy principal and headmaster in New Zealand, and my time spent within schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Lebanon. It is supported with my attendance at the Melbourne conference ‘Working with Boys, Building Fine Men Conference’ in 2005. I have also spent time interviewing principals from England and Australia. I furthered this experience with database searches of international research on boys’ education. This is the broad research base from which this report is founded.

This report is presented in four sections. This report is a reflection on the New Zealand educational gender gap. The first two sections clarify the position of male education in

New Zealand within the international context, and provide a literature review of the international research of male education. In the third section I present the relevant information for New Zealand. The final section concludes with a proposal for a potential project in New Zealand to address the highlighted shortcomings in education.

## Section One - Establishing the existence of a gender gap in New Zealand

### National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Information

The existence of a gender gap in New Zealand schools is well established. This is reflected in the NECA results. Females on average scored 10% higher in their results over males in the 2004 and 2005. This disparity occurred consistently through level 1, 2 and 3 and from year 11 to year 13. This is depicted in figure one below.

Level 1						
Year	Met Literacy requirements			Gained level 1 in Year 11		
	Male	Female	Difference	Male	Female	Difference
2004	65.2%	74.4%	<b>9.2%</b>	50.4%	60.4%	<b>10.0%</b>
2005	68.4%	77.2%	<b>8.8%</b>	51.7%	61.7%	<b>10.0%</b>

Level 2			
Year	Gained level 2 in Year 12		
	Male	Female	Difference
2004	52.4%	61.9%	<b>9.5%</b>
2005	55.4%	65.7%	<b>10.3%</b>

Level 3			
Year	Gained level 3 in Year 13		
	Male	Female	Difference
2004	41.9%	54.4%	<b>12.5%</b>
2005	44.6%	56.4%	<b>11.8%</b>

(figure 1, NECA)

An analysis of the gender gap by individual subjects is difficult because there is no information on internally assessed achievement standards or unit standards in terms of percentage of passes by student. Therefore this analysis relates to external achievement standards and below is a table depicting the percentage of non-achievement within different genders from 2005 in New Zealand.

Subject	Year 11 % Not Achieved Gender Difference in Level 1	Year 12 % Not Achieved Gender Difference in Level 2	Year 13 % Not Achieved Gender Difference in Level 3
English	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	8.5%
Te Reo	<b>12.1%</b>	7.3%	2.3%
Mathematics	2.3%	3.9%	2.1%
Science	3.2%	3.8%	1.0%
Technology	5.2%	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>19.0%</b>
Social Sciences	* - 0.4%	3.6%	2.4%
Art	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>12.1%</b>	7.5%
PE/Health	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>14.1%</b>

\* The only area where there where boys are outperforming girls is level 1 Social Sciences where there boys' non achievement is 0.4% less than girls.

(figure 2, NECA)

Figure 2 supports the statement that in New Zealand males are achieving lower results than females. Over 40%<sup>1</sup> of the subject categories have females achieving over 10% higher than males, and over 60%<sup>2</sup> of the subject categories have females achieving over 5% higher than males. Therefore evidence of a gap in the results between genders, in different years and subjects is firmly established within New Zealand NCEA data.

## **University of Otago Research**

Dr Terry Crooks from University of Otago has researched the New Zealand gender gap. The results from his research support the outcomes of the NCEA data. Dr Crooks analysed different ages of student results from 2002 and the development and implications from this gender gap. In Year four level Dr Crooks found that girls scored higher in most subjects. This gap and the potential implications increased in the Year eight level. The implications for the gender gap were the effects on the average student boy being 16% behind the average student girl over the long term. Between 2001 and 2005 boys on average achieved 5% less than girls across a broad range of subjects. The gender gap was greater in reading, writing and listening. The gap was less significant in subjects such as social studies, graphs tables and maps, and visual art. The tables of National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) assessments<sup>3</sup> are supplied in Appendix I. outperforming males in mathematics.

## **Section Two - Summarizing International Research on Gender Gap**

### **Lingard et al – Australia**

In 2002 the Australian Government commissioned Lingard et al<sup>4</sup> to research male education. The publication from this research was a report titled, “Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys”. The aim of the report was to investigate how systemic factors<sup>5</sup> affect the educational performance and outcomes of boys and how these can be addressed within the school environment. The authors performed a literature review and supplemented the findings with case studies of nineteen individual schools, with surveys of teachers and students. From the authors’ research, seven specific themes emerged as

---

<sup>1</sup> Ten of the twenty four categories

<sup>2</sup> Fourteen of the twenty four categories

<sup>3</sup> NEMP is undertaken for the Ministry of Education by the Educational Assessment Research Unit at Otago University. In 2003 it involved the assessment of more than 2,800 Year 4 (ages 8-9) and Year 8 (ages 12-13) students from 254 schools.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Bob Lingard, Dr Wayne Martino, Dr Martin Mills and Dr Mark Bahr of the Centre for Learning Change and Development at Murdoch University.

<sup>5</sup> Systemic factors include family, school and community environments, peer culture, student-teacher relationships, and teacher classroom practices.

being significant to the attitudes and experiences of boys at school. These are the following:

1. The influence of school environment and the peer group,
2. The influence of teachers and their pedagogies,
3. The impact and effect of masculinity or specific gender concepts,
4. The need for professional development,
5. Moving beyond the narrow focus on boys' educational strategies to a broader focus on pedagogies and critical reflective practice,
6. The need for systemic and school based gender policies,
7. The need for longitudinal data collection regarding differential gender-based subject choices and academic and social performance at the system and school levels.

This report confirms the existence of gender related issues in schools and explores the avenues for future directions. The problem for some boys' is the level of engagement and involvement in schooling. The authors identify several points to address these issues and determine which strategies are effective in enhancing academic and social outcomes for all students. The two key areas I will explore are at the school and teachers level.

This report identifies the need for a comprehensive school wide approach in boys' education. The issues with boys' education are complex; therefore a dynamic and holistic approach that moves beyond the 'tips for teachers'<sup>6</sup> frame of thought is required. The best method to address boys' education is with a deep knowledge of best teaching practices and utilizing the research-based knowledge. This can be achieved at a school level with the development of a unified school policy on gender. This policy requires the incorporation of action-based research<sup>7</sup>. Utilizing this form of research provides a deeper understanding of the issues impacting boys at the local school level. The development of this policy incorporates appropriate pedagogies and provides opportunity for assessment of the success and potential developments over time. Therefore within the school level, an action-based researched gender policy that is applicable school wide would be a step towards the addressing of some of the gender issues that we currently face.

The teachers and their practices are also integral to the success of boys' education. This is particularly true in relation with disengaged males. The students studied identified the following attributes of the 'ideal teacher':

- A 'caring' attitude and spending time with students,
- A commitment to teaching,
- A sense of responsibility to students (e.g. returning assessment promptly),
- A teacher who makes the work interesting and relevant,
- A relationship of mutual respect,
- Taking an interest in the students' lives beyond the classroom,

---

<sup>6</sup> This phrase is referring to the providing of suggestions for teachers rather than the requirement of professional development.

<sup>7</sup> Action based research enables schools to decide on the research in accordance of the individual requirements of the school.

- Recognizing and supporting difference amongst students,
- Ability to control the classroom, balanced with fairness and enjoyment,
- A broad knowledge base.

The above concept of the ‘ideal teacher’ suggested by the students is also reflected in the authors’ description of high quality teaching and assessment practices. However, the report extends this further with the inclusion of the requirements for a high degree of intellectual quality of teachers, the need for the teacher to have a high level of familiarity with the curriculum content and its application to the students’ lives outside of school. Teachers also need to understand the value of supportive environments where students are encouraged to challenge their limits with their learning. The authors recommend that an enthusiastic recognition of the difference in students contributes positively to the achievement levels for both boys and girls. The success of a teacher to incorporate the above characteristics, suggested by the students and supplemented by the authors, is vital in the success of students within the school environment.

Lingard et al established the relevance of gender in the outcome and experiences of boys’ education. To successfully address these issues, a multifaceted approach on both the school and teacher levels are required. At the school level the development of a gender policy would be beneficial. This policy would need to be developed with a researched understanding of the gender implications in education. Lingard et al found schools that encouraged professional development within the learning communities<sup>8</sup> achieved the best outcomes for both girls and boys. At the teacher level the classroom practices need to acknowledge the different pedagogies and assessment methods to maximise boys’ experiences and potential. Lingard et al recommend further research into the implications of classroom practices. This is to increase understanding and awareness of the gender implications of different methods. This research can supplement the existing knowledge to underpin classroom practises to provide an environment within the classroom and the school that supports and encourages male performance.

## **The Lighthouse Program – Australia**

An Australian initiative to address the educational needs of males is the Lighthouse program. The program is part of the 2003 Australia Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP) and the schools’ within AGQTP worked together in ‘clusters’<sup>9</sup>. The Lighthouse program is staged in two parts. Part one supplies schools with funding of up to five thousand dollars to document and present successful practices in male education. Part two introduces and promotes the more successful practices of educating boys to thirty clusters of schools. I will present the results from the implementation of the theory behind encouraging male performance within education.

The results of the first stage were extensive and substantial. The awareness of gender issues amongst teachers greatly improved. The dialogue within the teacher and school communities also increased. New pedagogical approaches designed to improve male

---

<sup>8</sup> Learning Communities is the method of learning, the method of teaching, the students, the teachers and the school in its entirety.

<sup>9</sup> A ‘cluster’ is a group of schools working together on the issues identified

learning, in particular in literacy, were attempted. Schools' achieved effective implementation of positive role modelling and mentor programmes. This resulted in the improved educational outcomes of male students and in many instances this was coupled in the levels of attendance and engagement. The sectors that showed the most significant results were; pedagogy, curriculum and assessment methods, the literacy and communication skills, the student engagement and motivation levels, the behaviour management programs, and the positive role models for students. I will explore further these results of these areas below.

### **Pedagogy, curriculum and assessment**

The schools in the Lighthouse program found that 'hands on' learning encouraged participation. 'Hands on' learning provided practical, visual and tactile activities that emphasised physical movement and interaction. Another successful method was to broaden the learning styles and teaching practice to better match the needs of boys. Therefore the features of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment methods, the broadening of methods and the 'hands on' learning encouraged males' participation in the classroom.

### **Literacy and communications skills**

The Lighthouse group found that literacy programs for boys had positive results. Programs were structured to make literacy more appealing and therefore engaging for the male students. The programs success increased with structured approaches that included the teaching of phonics. The result of these programs was an improvement of boys' literacy. This was from an increase in the boys' engagement with learning, in self-motivation, enthusiasm and resulted in an enhanced self-esteem from the majority of the students. The indirect benefit of the program was the reduction in negative behaviour. Schools found lower levels of non-attendance, lateness and suspensions. Therefore literacy programs that were structured towards males' learning increased literacy and communications skills of the students.

### **Student Engagement and Motivation**

Two successful programs that increased the engagement and motivation of male students, were the 'Adventure and Outdoor Challenge' and the 'Personal Development Program for Boys'. The 'Adventure and Outdoor Challenge' aimed at the development of boys' self esteem. This was through the organisation of adventure activities, camps and other outdoor events. This challenge encouraged the development of personal characteristics such as responsibility, accountability, commitment, creativity, courage and generosity. The 'Personal Development Programs for Boys' aimed to break down the masculine culture stereotype. This was by using such programs as the 'Rock and Water'<sup>10</sup>. The outcome of nurturing the personal development of the male students increased their self-confidence, self-awareness and improved their self-image. These two programs influenced male students positively. They became easier to manage within the classroom and their engagement and motivation also increased.

---

<sup>10</sup> The Rock and Water concept is associated with the tough, immovable rock attitude versus the mobile, communicative water attitude. This is transferred into aspects of life.

## **Behaviour Management Programs**

The programs were developed to address challenging behaviour. This was by increasing the understanding of impacts on student behaviour, such as peer pressure and masculine sub-cultures. Methods to address these impacts were peer mediation and peer support programs. These programs used student mentoring by older students supporting younger students in their school. The result of the behaviour management programs was a significant improvement in the boys' attitude to school and to each other.

## **Positive role models for students**

To be able to address male education requirements in a meaningful manner, the community and wider stakeholders needed to be involved. Schools achieved this by linking students to community mentors and including role modelling by fathers and other adult males. This was a key element in encouraging male students to develop a positive attitude towards schooling requirements.

The Lighthouse program stage one found a great amount of success in the application of the theory. There was a strong correlation between what teachers considered best practice in boys' education and the accepted body of knowledge based on research. The applications of these practices had impressive and successful results. The communication of findings between schools increased and the awareness amongst teachers improved. The enhancing of male education both in the school and in the community was vital for addressing some of the issues surrounding boys' schooling.

## **Office for Standards in Education Report (Ofsted) – United Kingdom**

This Ofsted report contributes to the growing international debate and inquiry surrounding the gender gap. The report explores this gender gap, the effects and the influences of this gap. It provides an analysis of the importance of the schools' organization and the processes of development and culture within the agenda of school. Also how this manifests itself in the gender gap. The report also provides recommendations based on the information explored.

The gender gap in the United Kingdom (UK) is similar to that found in New Zealand. This gender gap emerged at the end of the 1980s and within four years the position had changed from one of rough equity between the sexes to clear disparity. The report researched the core subjects from between the ages of five to over sixteen years. Figure three below states the gap is wider in reading and core subjects. The gender gap is less pronounced in mathematics. The 10% gap that has been identified in New Zealand secondary students also occurs in the results in reading in UK. The research undertaken in UK shows this gap exists at Key Stage One reading for five to seven year old students.

Area of consideration	% achieved by boys	% achieved by girls
Key Stage 1 – reaching expected level in Reading ( 5 - 7 years old)	73	83
Key Stage 1 – reaching expected level in mathematics ( 5 - 7years old)	77	81
Key Stage 2 – reaching expected level in Reading ( 8 – 10 years old)	85	91
Key Stage 2 – reaching expected level in mathematics	81	84

(Figure 3 – Ofsted Report)

The aspect of the schools the report explores is the teaching and classroom processes, the content of the curriculum, the images of gender and the modes of assessment. These factors are identified in the establishment and continuation of the gender gap in UK schools.

The report identified within the classroom that gender plays a significant part of the behaviour. The report found that boys contributed prominently both physically and verbally during classroom interactions. However females are more likely to request assistance. Boys were more likely to have their contributions evaluated during classroom interaction by teachers and peers, both negatively and positively. These patterns were established at a very early age in pre-school, nursery and infant classrooms, and continued throughout the schooling experience.

The interrelationship of gender images and the curriculum content presented in the Ofsted report are significant. There are several reasons that Ofsted attributes to the gender gap that occurs in schools: attentiveness, the changes in the methods and content of what is to be learned, males' method of learning and the classroom dynamics. Traditionally the level of attentiveness applied by different genders was thought to be the most consistent and salient factor in explaining the relative performance of girls and boys' in education. However this is debatable and other factors contribute significantly. The curriculum content is believed to now place a greater premium on attentiveness by the students. Male students appear to be more willing to sacrifice deep understanding, which requires sustained effort, for correct answers achieved at speed. Therefore some researchers suggest that the shift from 'knowledge of facts' to 'knowledge of application' has contributed to the relative performance of male and female students.

The report also found that boys often perceived literacy as a female trait. Therefore the content of the curriculum and the gender issues of this are a notable factor in the gender gap formation.

The methods of assessment are also applicable to the gender gap development. Boys consistently perform significantly better than girls in multiple-choice methods. This is regardless of the subject. The report also found that females consider timed end of course examinations less congenial than males. Therefore in an effort to be equitable, the report

suggests that a variety of assessment modes should be used. The mode of assessment contributes both positively and negatively to the gender gap.

The development of male and female identity within the classroom is another significant contributor to the emergence of the gender gap. The difference between the biology of females and males is unable to be conclusively identified. There is ample evidence confirming children receive different patterns of gender identity in pre-school years, although to what extent is variable in later education experiences. Two major reviews into sex differences reported little or no evidence in a gender difference in self-esteem. However both genders are sensitive to gender biases in the way that teachers treat pupils. The notion that males are louder and more badly behaved than females is one that males particularly resented within the classroom setting. This is especially true if the boys identified the same behaviour occurring in females without the teacher acknowledging it. Therefore gender behaviour could have a negative impact on both genders within the classroom.

The impact of bullying and harassment on both male and female performance requires further research. This is significant both for the comparison and the performance of both genders. The cultural patterns of behaviour emphasised in the classroom were found to be notably different by Ofsted<sup>11</sup>. The definition of masculinity and femininity within different peer groups and cultures is important in disaffection and underachievement of pupils. The capacity of schools to challenge or reduce the impact of gender images on performance requires further investigation. Therefore the development of gender identification within different cultures is relevant in the addressing of the gender gap within the educational system.

The methods within the school to address the gender gap are:

- Single sex groupings in subject areas
- Single sex grouping across all curriculum
- Role Modelling by mentors or outsiders
- Whole school policy development
- Performance data analysis

The results from these methods are not conclusive. Some schools have considerable experience on the gender gap from individual initiative. This and the high profile attached to the gender gap have encouraged other schools to monitor progress and prevention within their own setting. The report found that teachers were particularly committed to understanding the situation within their own classrooms. This resulted in independent classroom initiatives. However, these are short term and small in scale therefore limited in the results over time. There is a need for more longitudinal studies in accessing how particular strategies affect pupil performance over time.

The Ofsted report concludes with the complexity of the issues surrounding the gender gap. This complexity applies to both the cause and solution. There are a multitude of

---

<sup>11</sup> Please see recent research section in appendix IV for the negative potential of cultural assumptions by teachers within the New Zealand context

variables that contribute to the size and nature of the gender gap. However to successfully address the disparities the identification of when they emerge is required. Identification needs monitoring of pupils' progress according to gender. Particular attention should be paid to identifying patterns within these results. Analysing variables such as behaviour, attendance, schools, localities should occur in the assessment of these results over time.

To address the males' perception of literacy as a feminised subject may need focus within the national framework on teaching practices. Schools should consider developing their own policies on gender individually. This would highlight achievement issues and encourage staff to consider gender issues as a professional responsibility. For such a policy to be sustainable it would require monitoring and evaluation alongside careful implementation. However, the central objective should be for the improvement of the academic performance of all pupils.

## **Cambridge University – United Kingdom**

The Department for Education and Skills funded the Faculty of Education (FoE) at the University of Cambridge to perform a four year project (2000–2004) to research the apparent differential academic achievement of boys and girls at key stage two<sup>12</sup> and key stage four<sup>13</sup> in schools in England. FoE worked with fifty primary, secondary and special schools throughout England. The project aimed to learn which strategies that have the potential to make a difference to boys' (and girls') learning, motivation and engagement with their schooling. These strategies were analysed in different schools over time. The objective was to identify their essential characteristics to transfer this knowledge to other schools of similar socio-economical situations. This was performed in a method of 'learning triads'. Each triad consisted of one originator school, and two partner schools. The triads in the study adopted the strategies suggested by FoE and the schools worked together in the introduction, refining and consolidating of these strategies. FoE worked with the triads throughout the process. The project team supported, explored and analysed the process of 'innovation transfer'. The report titled "Raising Boy's Achievement" (Younger & Warrington 2003) was based on this project. The report outlines the implemented four different intervention strategies. Pedagogical, Individual, Organisational and Social/Cultural.

### **Pedagogical Strategy**

This focused on classroom approaches and mainly the teaching and learning methods. The strategy was to increase literacy with introducing more creativity and variety into the classroom. The linking of writing and reading in both public and private situations and the utilisation of the importance of verbal language and companionable writing proved to be successful with the students. FoE found that there was little evidence to support the notion that the dominant literacy learning style of boys differs from girls. However exploring learning styles was difficult to analyse conclusively.

---

<sup>12</sup> 8 – 10 years old

<sup>13</sup> 14 – 16 years old

### **Individual Strategy**

This focused on individual target and goal setting coupled with a mentoring program. The strategy was found to be considerably more successful when understanding and commitment to the process were found within the school staff. Both teachers and students required a common belief in the system. If these factors were found within a school boys were found to achieve higher results than predicted. This was thought to be associated with increased self-belief and the encouragement of the connection between the boys' desired self-image and academic work.

### **Organizational Strategy**

This explored the organisation of learning at the whole school level. This strategy was the introduction of single sexed classes. This was successful in general however some issues arose. The stereotyping of a 'macho regime' alienated some boys and some 'male only' classes were difficult to teach. The results also suggested that females benefited more from this strategy than males. The schools consistently found that neither gender wanted to be divided into single sexed classes for all lessons. Therefore this strategy was successful, but limited.

### **Social/Cultural Strategy**

This was the introduction of approaches that created an environment in which the learning aims and aspirations of the school and the students are unified. It included a range of methods to increase the diversity within the school. Initiatives to increase school citizenship of the students such as the introduction of more poetry, dance, art and readings were attempted. The 'key leader scheme' identified key students who were influential to their peer group and supported them was also introduced. This strategy was found to have positive results both in the confidence levels of the students and their academic achievements.

The report "Raising Boy's Achievement" (Younger & Warrington 2003) stated the solution to address the gender gap issues is complex. FoE found that gender images and status were significant in boys' notions of masculinity and contributed to the academic success of males. The results of the study found that the gender literacy gap increased as students continued through the educational system. FoE also found that the males were more likely to not enjoy school, to be excluded, have poor attendance and lower teaching grading. The triad structure encouraged positive action from the stimulation of ideas and the support the schools provided each other. In addressing the gender gap issues, strategies introduced need to address the students' attitudes, self-image, expectations and aspirations. The addressing of the under achievement of males is complex as some of the strategies also raise females success, therefore the gender gap is perpetuated. However these practises also characterise quality teaching, therefore are both suitable and desirable.

### **The Gurian Institute – United States of America**

In 1997 Michael Gurian founded The Gurian Institute. The aim of this institute was to support parents, educational institutions and other professionals to understand the educational needs of boys, girls, women and men. The institute has been very influential in the identification of the issues of surrounding male education. In particular highlighting the need to understand why girls succeed higher than boys in the same educational system. The institute acknowledges gender learning differences and has conducted extensive research to explore the significance of this in education. The outcome of this research is the best seller “The Wonder of Boys” written by Michael Gurian (1997). This was in 2005 followed by “The Mind of Boys – Saving our sons from falling behind in school and life”. The Gurian Institute has conducted on site training seminars throughout the United States, Canada and also in Australia. The schools and communities that have utilized these resources have featured in many prestigious public and professional media sources.

The content covered and the information provided in Gurian (2005) “The Mind of Boys – Saving our sons from falling behind in school and life” is integral to the development of male education. The book presents a wide range of the institutes strategies in male education and addressing the shortcomings.

Strategies that are promoted include:

- Increasing movement and kinaesthetic learning opportunities;
- Expanding the selection of reading materials to interest boys in the classrooms;
- Teaching and encouraging visual-spatial representations of thinking, especially during the planning stages of writing;
- Creating a greater sense of purpose by offering expanded audiences for writing;
- Creating a greater sense of relevancy through more freedom with topic choice in writing;
- Increasing the use of male role models in the classroom, especially in reading and writing;
- Offering some opportunities for single-sex activities within a classroom (i.e. all-boy literature circle);
- Offering real-life simulations, such as re-enactments and debates, to engage boys emotionally.

The book presents scientifically researched, field tested programs that help boys learn the academic basics of reading, writing, math and science. Gurian (2005) has sectioned the book into five parts. Part one explores current situation surrounding boys’ education. Part one also presents the learning styles of boys and dispenses some of the current myths. Part two presents the younger phases of male development and explores emotional development, gross motor development, and attachment issues before boys’ enter the schooling system. Part two also explores the way to make preschool and early learning environments ‘boy-friendly’. This is by utilizing the outdoor area, understanding the male sensory issues, and using music for brain development. This section also discusses ensuring that environmental stressors are minimised. The promotion of ‘brain health’ is central to this. The limits on ‘screen time’ and the dietary requirements of growing boys for total health are also explored in this second part.

The third part explores methods of teaching the school curriculum, for both parents and teachers, in a way to stimulate boy involvement. This section provides methods for parents and teachers in the core subject areas. Part three also provides strategies to utilize single gender classrooms effectively and how this can aid the continuous search for equality in gender achievements. The fourth section explains and explores some of the limits on the achievement of boys' and what parents and teachers can do to address these. Some of the limits are: learning disabilities, behavioural disorders, under motivation and under performance. A full description of the contents of this book is provided in appendix II.

The book presents programs to lessen the educational gender gap. It emphasizes that our schools cannot fix the problems our boys face without families contributing in the solution. The book details how the community and schools can work together to improve the educational achievement of boys. The programs are based on brain, health and educational research. The material in this book provides a sound base from which programs aimed at boys' performance can develop.

## **Section Three - The New Zealand Situation**

### **Influential Individuals**

There are three New Zealanders that have instigated significant development in the knowledge surrounding the learning requirements of boys: Celia Lashlie, Nigel Latta, and Kevin Knight. In this section I will provide information on their accomplishments for male education.

Celia Lashlie has had extensive experience with the education of young men. Ms Lashlie was highly involved in 2003 and 2004 with Good Man Project. This project involved twenty-four schools throughout New Zealand and aimed to informally analyse the current situation surrounding male students. Ms Lashlie's work on the developing fine young men has lead to her presenting information throughout New Zealand and in Australia. Celia Lashlie has also published over thirty thousand copies of her book "He'll Be Okay. Growing Gorgeous Boys into Good Men" (Lashlie, 2006) which is based on the Good Man Project. Ms Lashlie contributes successfully to the discussion surrounding boys' performance. Some of the key factors that Celia helped develop were the recognition of the role of parents and the challenges that they face. Ms Lashlie provided discussion on the definition of being male, and the role that they play within a modern society. Celia Lashlie's work with the Good Man Project and the subsequent presentations on the performance of males has contributed positively to the national discussion.

Dr Nigel Latta has sixteen years experience as a Clinical Psychologist throughout New Zealand. He is the author of "Before Your Kids Drive You Crazy Read This" (Latta, 2006). This book has proved very successful and is currently in its second print. The expertise of Dr Latta is reflected in the frequency that he is called upon for contributions to radio, television and parenting media. Dr Latta provides information on methods to

support and encourage males in learning. In particular he provides four essential components. These four components, although in different format, are consistent with what students identify as essential in a 'good teacher'.

### **1. Humour**

The use of humour ensures the creation of workable atmosphere in the classroom. This is by sharing of enjoyment associated with the curriculum, with learning, with situations and with the environment. The use of humour stimulates boys' learning.

### **2. Economy**

The economic use of time spent talking is integral in boys learning processes. This is particularly relevant in times of discipline. Utilising classroom time efficiently is important to ensure that the learning capacity of the students is maximised

### **3. Strength**

Teachers must show that they are in charge of the classroom. They need the ability to ensure the rules of the classroom are well communicated to the students. This is because often there is a struggle between teachers and students for who is in control.

### **4. Compassion**

Teachers show compassion by taking an interest in boys' activities, in lives and interests. This shows that teachers care about students' progress and learning. This encourages students within the classroom.

Dr Latta formulates these four components for the emotional encouragement and support of boys' learning. It is particularly relevant to teachers' development and the dynamics of the classroom. To develop these two factors will aid in the encouragement and nurturing of male education in New Zealand.

Kevin Knight is the founding director of New Zealand Graduate School of Education (NZGSE) and an experienced teacher educator. Kevin is also experienced in the educational sector, as a teacher, a principal and an educational psychologist. Kevin overviews the professional development programme for schools and this is in high demand throughout New Zealand. Mr Knight's presentations are founded within the theory that the move from traditional learning to the more constructive style has impacted negatively on male education. Boys' inability to multitask has the effect of boys losing concentration in certain teaching methods. Kevin does not believe this is reason to revert to traditional learning. The program endorses methods of behavioural management that captures and maintains boys focus on tasks.

## **Experiences with Nelson College**

Nelson College is a male secondary institution in Nelson, New Zealand. The number of students is approximately 1200. Due to the schools preparatory department the school

educates males from year seven to year thirteen. I was deputy at Nelson College from 1989 and in 1995 I was appointed to the role of principal. I held this position for eleven years. The areas that Nelson College chose to focus on were selected to ensure that males were supported in their learning environment. This was by addressing male development in the classroom, emotionally and academically, with the support of teachers, family and their peers.

### **Bridge of Adolescence**

The bridge of adolescence is a term relating to the process of young boys growing into young men. Secondary institutions have the potential to support males during this development. Celia Lashlie's research identified the importance for male parental figures to be involved in this bridge. Nelson College encouraged this involvement with methods such as the 'Dads and Lads Functions' and ensuring fathers' attendance at school meetings. 'Dads and Lads Functions' are held twice a year. These functions are specifically for fathers to bring their sons. To ensure that students without a father figure were incorporated, the invitations included the option for boys to bring a male who had provided them significant support. The purpose of these functions was to encourage fathers and sons to enjoy activities together, to meet with the 'lads' friends. The events at these functions included breakfasts, biking trips, car rallies and cricket matches. A guest speaker was always invited to the functions. The speaker reinforced the importance of the relationship between father and son, usually through their personal experience. Nelson College also had Celia Lashlie presenting to both the staff and mothers to ensure the understanding of the requirements of boys during the bridge of adolescence. Therefore involving male parental figures on the bridge of adolescence is considered paramount for the development of boys'.

### **Strict Guidelines**

Boys' require strict guidelines in their learning environment. When the students know the limits in a classroom it provides security with their learning. Nelson College provided this security by the use of the transfer system and the rules on drugs in the schools. The transfer system was the removal of students that disturbed the classroom. The student would then be required to document the situation and meet with the teacher involved at the end of the lesson. To support this school wide policy all the teachers attended the Kevin Knight programme. This ensured teachers understood the importance of the guidelines and the methods to implement them.

### **Boys' Emotional Literacy and Self-Awareness**

Year 10 Social Studies unit introduces the issues of what it is to be a male. The class discusses the challenges and the positive characteristics of being a male. Social Studies is compulsory for all year 10 students, therefore this unit provides a building block for all Nelson College boys to discuss abstract concepts within a classroom setting. This unit stimulates the process of self-awareness in the students through discussion.

An outdoor education program at Matakiki Lodge in Murchison takes these year 10 students away from the routine of regular life. This program provides the students with

some physical challenges outside the normal experiences. This is to promote the students knowledge of themselves and each other in circumstances that are unique.

### **Communication and Relationships**

Nelson College nurtures the development and communications between students, staff and families. The mentoring program encourages communication and relationship between students. Year thirteen students are given a training program on the definition and responsibilities of being a mentor. During the enrolment of year nine students, Deans identify students that could potentially benefit from having the support of a mentor. The benefits that have emerged from this program have been extensive. One of the strongest outcomes has been the establishment of good relationships between the two levels of students.

To support the relationship between fathers and their sons we provided a training booklet to introduce some of the concepts that Nelson College supports. This booklet is provided in appendix IV. Nelson College management reinforced the importance of positive student relationships with staff by several methods. Management modelling for the staff the standard expected of these relationships, by supporting the staff that demonstrated these relationships and challenging those that did not.

Nigel Latta presented information to the Nelson College staff. The content of his presentation is explored in section three of this report and provided all staff at Nelson College the value of communication and relationships in the development of males.

### **Encouraging Attendance**

For students to be able to perform at school attendance is required. Nelson College worked with several different techniques to encourage attendance in the students. These techniques were:

- Extending the range of courses available to the students

Nelson College introduced a wide range of subjects, such as cooking, art, drama, trade building, two levels of technology, three levels of English and mathematics. The relationship with Nelson College for Girls provided wider options such as typing, hospitably and media studies.

- Increasing the relevancy of school with a career advice program

Year ten students were given this program to assist them in selecting their future careers. This program coincided with the students selecting their options for the year. The aim of this is to help students refine the goals for their future. It is also to encouraged attendance through increasing the reality of the relationship between school and the chosen career of the student.

- Widening the methods of achievement in core subjects

Nelson College provided course levels in core subjects. This broadened the scope for students' achievements.

These methods encouraged the attendance of the students to daily school. However the indirect benefits of these methods are immense. An example of this is the broadening of courses available. The indirect effect of this is the encouragement of diversity amongst the students. This is another feature of good teaching methods that supports boys' education.

### **Specific Learning Needs of Boys**

Nelson College has the advantage of being a boys' only school. Therefore to angle the learning methods towards male friendly methods is not complicated with catering for females also. The methods that Nelson College used to specify learning and teaching methods needs of boys were the following:

- Professional Development of Teachers

This ensured that teachers were up-to-date with the developments in boys' education. This also encouraged teachers to remain dynamic in their thought processes and therefore their teaching practices.

- A range of assessment methods

By diversifying the assessment methods of students, the College caters for different methods of learning styles. An example of this is rather than the traditional end of year recall examination, there is now a combination of short end of topic assessments, projects, folders and assignments.

- Support with time management

It is important to help the students improve the methods of their learning. Supporting the students in time management abilities is one way to do this. By breaking long-term assessments into short-term achievable milestones assists the students with learning methods of time management. Nelson College also worked to encourage students in learning time management by providing year nine students with a school diary and training students in their use.

- Use of advance organizers

This provides direction and orientation for students in their learning.

### **Challenging the Stereotypical Masculine Roles**

Stereotypical masculine roles restrict males in their development. This is because as boys cross the bridge of adolescence, they are in a process of self-identification. At

Nelson College, we aimed to support the boys in this process by encouraging them to decide for themselves the identity of males, rather than conforming to the generalised male role. This was achieved by the promotion of courses such as dance, drama and cooking<sup>14</sup>. By having male guidance counsellors, Deans and mentors encouraged students to identify with males in guidance roles. Another method that Nelson College employed to challenge the stereotypical masculine roles was within the Health Programs. In this program the students look specifically at the role of males and the attributes traditionally associated with males. This encourages the students to look critically at the role of males and how this is formed.

### **Revelling in the World of Boys**

Nelson College has revelled in the world of boys. The supporting of males as they move through the rites of passage from young boys into young men is vital in the forming of a positive future for New Zealand. Providing boys with the opportunity and the situation to reflect on what it is to be male, and how this is accomplished is the first step towards this future. Secondary institutions can assist with this development by identifying and sharing with the interests of boys and most importantly by providing positive images to the students of the world of men.

Nelson College is a decile seven college. The college has been focusing on the specialisation of male education for a significant period of time. There are still many areas that require further development. The knowledge and research of males' education is dynamic and secondary institutions need to reflect this. Nelson College 2005 results shown in figure four below reflect the effort that the college has invested into male education.

Group	Males achieved	Females achieved	Difference
Year 11 Level 1 National	51.7 %	61.9 %	10.2 %
Year 11 Level 1 Nelson College	74.0 %		
Year 12 Level 2 National	57.3 %	65.7 %	8.4 %
Year 12 Level 2 Nelson College	88.9 %		
Year 13 Level 3 National	44.6 %	56.4 %	11.8 %
Year 13 Level 3 Nelson College	66.2 %		
Level 1 Literacy requirements National	68.4 %	77.2 %	8.8 %
Level 1 Literacy requirements Nelson College	81.5 %		

(figure 4 2005 NCEA results)

<sup>14</sup> These courses also encouraged male learning methods. For example the cooking class entered culinary competitions

# The Ten Guiding Principles for Success in Educating Boys<sup>15</sup>

## 1. Long term research including monitoring and evaluation

The existence of a gender gap in education is firmly established. Boys' education is an issue of concern in New Zealand. Schools have the potential to address this problem and support boys' education as shown by some of the accomplishments at Nelson College. Schools require an understanding of their own situation. To achieve this, schools should gather student achievement records and other relevant data<sup>16</sup>. This information can then be analysed focusing on gender and students 'at risk'<sup>17</sup>. From this analysis the school can develop and implement policies and strategies that will combat the negative and encourage the positive trends found. These policies and strategies should be reflective of the local information and be based within the national and international research. To ensure the success of these actions sustained monitoring and evaluation is required. The monitoring validates the results of the actions, and the evaluation provides opportunity to amend the strategies by reassessing and redirecting the focus towards the specific requirements of the students.

## 2. Adopt a flexible, whole school approach with a person and team responsible

For the improvement of the educational outcomes to be meaningful, the policies and strategies require a school wide approach based on a common vision. This approach is based on a coherent, integrated set of programmes and includes the multiple of factors involved in education<sup>18</sup>. The school also requires a degree of structural flexibility to support the programmes adopted<sup>19</sup>. This broad approach requires an individual to be responsible to ensure effectiveness is achieved. The individual oversees the implementation of the approach, and identifies an appropriate team to support this implementation. This approach should be integrated within school improvement strategies to ensure the coherency and unification. The involvement of the broader school community is also necessary to full support of the policies and strategies.

## 3. Ensure good teaching for all students in all classes

Improved education relies solidly on good teaching. This applies to both genders and all students. The definition of good teaching is debatable; however there are some characteristics that are consistent.

- Expectations

---

<sup>15</sup> In no particular order

<sup>16</sup> E.g. attendance, behaviour incidents, student opinion survey data

<sup>17</sup> The term at risk is variable. It is a context only phrase

<sup>18</sup> Pedagogy, curriculum and assessment; literacy and communication skills; student engagement and motivation; behaviour management programmes; and positive role models for students

<sup>19</sup> E.g. single-sex classes and activities, withdrawal programmes

Students respond well if the teacher shows interests in them individually. This interest includes expectations for them to perform to their capacity, to knowing their students personalities, and to listening and responding to the students' requests.

- Contemporary

Good teaching requires teachers to be informed in the developments within education, developments both within the school and in the research. Teachers also require reflection on these developments within the current teaching practises.

- Using a range of teaching techniques

The learning potential of students is maximised when teachers utilise a wide range of teaching methods, such as lecturing, group work, video presentation, computer research and cooperative learning. This increases engagement of the students and therefore the amount of information transferred to the students.

- The teaching is structured to support the students learning

It is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that the knowledge is transferred from the teacher to the student. Teachers need to ensure connections are made to the students, that the messages relayed are understood, the information is built upon and finally, the information is reinforced. The structure of the teaching methods needs to support the students learning.

- Involving students in learning activities and encouraging their participation

Traditional methods of teaching, such as showing and explaining, are complemented with students 'doing'. Teachers need to actively involve students in the process of problem solving. This often requires group work, therefore has the indirect benefit of improving the social and cooperative skills of the students. This form of learning activities also encourages participation.

- Providing positive feedback and praise

An important part of teaching young people is providing feedback on their work. This is important for students to familiarise themselves with their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback provides the students with a direction to improve in and praise gives the students the confidence to do so.

- Teaching Technique

Good teaching requires teachers to be open, flexible, fair and consistent in dealing with students. The teaching technique also requires a ready sense of humour in teachers to stimulate learning. The ability to negotiate and discuss teaching and learning with students is also a required style in good teaching.

- Making connections with the community

Good teaching involves the students' parents and other community members. This demonstrates to the students the importance the teacher attaches to the student and college.

#### **4. Be clear about the kinds of support particular boys require**

Boys are heterogeneous and accordingly boys cannot be treated uniformly. Gender intersects with a range of other factors, including developmental and sub cultural, to uniquely affect each student's experience of school. The notion of being 'masculine' can cause tension in a boy's education. This is because for some males the demonstrating of their masculinity can conflict and inhibit their performance and participation in class. This makes school for these males a negative experience. However there are many boys that successfully integrate success in schooling and the self identification as males. Therefore schools need to clarify how best to support each boy and his particular learning requirements within the educational system.

#### **5. Cater for different learning styles preferred by boys.**

Catering for the diverse learning styles of students benefits both boys and girls. As previously stated in this report boys commonly respond more positively to learning experiences that:

- Have a practical focus and physical or hands-on dimension,
- That are seen as relevant and having a real world connection,
- Use thinking skills focused on actual problems,
- Challenge them by requiring higher order and conceptual thinking,
- Provide clear instructions and structured sessions in manageable chunks,
- Enable them to work with others as well as individually,
- Provide for a range of ways in which work can be presented,
- Provide them with a degree of involvement in decisions about content and opportunities to negotiate their learning as a valued stakeholder.

It is important in boys' education to broaden the way in the students view their learning and the strategies they adopt to learn.

#### **6. Recognise that gender matters and stereotypes should be challenged**

The acceptance and value of gender identity is important for all students. However this acceptance is coupled with negative and positive aspects that are often stereotypical. The negative aspects of stereotypical masculinity are often manifested in bullying, aggressive and physical responses to conflict and difference, or a conscious disengagement from school. These negative aspects in particular need to be challenged. Schools and teachers are in a position to be able to start this process. Policies and strategies that broaden the

way that boys relate to others is an example of the potential that schools hold in the maturing process of males. Enabling boys to mature through the educational system with development of their ability to exercise power, control, competition, cooperation, freedom, responsibility and choice. The encouragement for positive male aspects to develop within our young males in New Zealand schools will have a positive flow on effect on all of New Zealand society as those young men become adult males.

### **7. Develop positive relationships as they are crucial to success**

Relationships are critical in students' schooling experience. This is especially related to the teacher and student relationship within the classroom. The success of a student is stimulated by the support he receives from the teacher and the school. It is vital that each student should feel that he and his development are important to the school and its representatives. The importance of relationships also applies to the parents and the school. Boys' benefit if there is a consistent approach between the home and the school. Parents that actively engage in the education of their children can contribute to the development of 'shared values' between themselves and the school.

### **8. Provide opportunities for boys to benefit from positive male role models from within and beyond the school**

Boys in school want and require positive relationships with significant males. The most obvious significant male are fathers and teachers, however this title also applies to older male students and members of the wider community. These role models provide inspiration for young boys developing their understanding of how to become an effective adult male. The benefits of this relationship can also assist in the development of clear goals and pathways to future learning and personal development. Therefore the value of a positive male role model for students is immense.

### **9. Focus on literacy**

Literacy is critical for educational success and subsequent successful participation in the community. Males' comparatively weaker performance in literacy than females has been one of the catalyst factors in the focus on improving boys' education. Schools require the development of a process that identifies students at risk of underperformance in the early stages<sup>20</sup>. These students can be provided with the appropriate support<sup>21</sup>. Effective literacy for boys requires a balanced approach that includes whole language teaching, direct instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness to improve general male literacy. Teaching and assessment should include the capacity to incorporate different forms of literacy. This includes multimedia and boys' have already achieved success in this area. This is a strength that should be developed and encouraged further. However, this should be supportive of the primary focus of assisting males achieve literacy.

### **10. Use information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a valuable tool**

---

<sup>20</sup> Primarily but not limited to literacy

<sup>21</sup> E.g. One-to-one or small tutoring

Boys respond favourably to the use of ICTs as a means of engaging them in learning activities. This is especially true of boys who are under-achieving at school. This is supported within the Lighthouse program. The schools within this programme found that ICTs were motivational and educational for the students. This is supported in the use of such programs at Nelson College and Sabis Schools. The interactive method of many new technologies creates a learning environment where boys learn by doing. The students receive immediate feedback and continually build new knowledge and enhance their level of understanding. The use of ICTs can encourage the active participation of boys in the learning process, rather than the passive absorption of knowledge. By responding to the technological requirements of the students and the society, schools have the potential to develop male education.

## **The Way Forward**

There has been extensive research internationally into boys' educational requirements. This is because of the consistent underachievement of males throughout the OECD. There have been successful projects implemented to counteract this trend<sup>22</sup>. New Zealand is in a strong position to follow this trend to develop and research our boys' education. The strength is reflected in the enthusiasm response shown in the work presented by the three significant contributors presented in this section.

## **Section Four – The Potential for New Zealand Future**

New Zealand has the educational atmosphere to contribute significantly to the growing research addressing the gender gap. The people of New Zealand have a history of identifying and solving problems; the 'number 8 wire' mentality. Therefore there is potential to develop innovative and unique methods to address the gender gap in New Zealand. However for us to be able to fulfil this potential we need to change the focus of our educators from immediate acute issues to a wider overview of the chronic situation. Education has the position to shape and form our future generations. We are obliged to address the gender gap, not only for our male students, but also to develop New Zealand's future men. To do this I propose a project on the Performance of Boys for New Zealand Schools.

### **The Project on the Performance of Boys for New Zealand Schools**

We are at the infancy stage in our research surrounding boys' education. Because of this we require a school-by-school approach to formulate our understanding and to stimulate discussion. However to accumulate the information we require a transfer of knowledge between schools and the Ministry of Education. This can be achieved with appropriate report submissions and the 'cluster' school technique utilised in the Lighthouse programme. The project that I propose is based on the findings from this report and my personal experience. Therefore I will insert 'case studies' in the relevant areas. This is to provide explanation of some of the educational methods and examples for the reader.

---

<sup>22</sup> E.g. The Lighthouse Program presented in section two of this report

The project that I propose is implemented in six steps. After presenting this project, I explore some of the concepts introduced in depth. In this section I have provided a suggested project that will assist schools in tackling the gender gap problem in New Zealand.

## **Aim**

### **To initiate the debate and stimulate action for addressing the shortfalls in males education**

The aim of this project is firstly to increase the knowledge and stimulate the discussion on the performance of boys in New Zealand schools. This project also aims at moving New Zealand from a passive position to an active one. This needs the establishment of baseline information from which we can develop. To do this we require the identification of the current levels of boys' general schooling achievement<sup>23</sup>. This project also aims at increasing communication between different schooling levels. This communication would be encouraged with the cluster technique. From this relationship the development of best practise methods and strategies can be implemented and the results of these can be transferred within the schools. Therefore with this project a resource can develop from which Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres, primary and secondary schools can utilise. This resource can provide examples of pedagogically appropriate strategies for improving literacy, academic achievements, interpersonal relationship skills and attitudes. This is also a means for it to be transferred nationwide and to build upon the information base. I believe this project is the first step in addressing the educational requirements of New Zealand males. Although the direct aim of this project is to counteract the negative trend in males' achievement, the indirect effect is the improvement in education for both genders and the increase of communication and long-term evaluation of our educational direction.

## **The Process**

### **Step One – Identification of a Coordinator**

A person from within the school should be identified to conduct the research. This person should have the following attributes

- An ability to work with boys,
- An interest in the performance of male students,
- A natural inclination towards the methods of improving the performance of boys,
- The ability to gather and interpret statistical data,
- The skills and social ability to negotiate and liaise with groups of staff to achieve an ideal outcome,
- A high level of communication skills.

---

<sup>23</sup> Achievement applies to literacy, academic achievements and interpersonal relationship skills and attitudes

It is essential this coordinator become familiar with the contemporary research surrounding male education. I recommend the following literature for the coordinator to read prior to commencing the research.

- Michael Gurian (1997) *The Wonder of Boys*, Jeremy P. Tarcher, New York
- Michael Gurian & Kathy Stevens (2005) *The Minds of Boys – saving our sons from falling behind in school and life*, Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, New York
- Michael Thompson and Dan Kindlon (2000) *Raising Cain*, Random House Publishing Group, New York
- Celia Lashlie (2005) *He'll Be Ok: Growing Gorgeous Boys Into Good Men*, Harper Collins, New Zealand

### **Step Two – Baseline Report**

The coordinator needs to utilise both qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods. The information the coordinator researches should be presented in report form. The information in this report should consist of relevant data in relation to the performance of boys and the current patterns of achievement within the school.

Some suggested areas for analysis on the performance of boy are:

#### Qualitative Research

- Classroom and playground observations,
- In-depth interviews with principals, deputy principals, counsellors, heads of departments, teachers and parents,
- In-depth interviews with students, especially those in their final year,
- Focus group interviews with single sex groups,
- Focus group interviews with mixed sex groups,
- Focus group interviews with teachers.

#### Quantitative Research

- Classroom assessments and term reports,
- Attendance records,
- Detention records,
- Literacy records,
- Suspension and stand down records,
- Early exemption from school records,
- National Certificate of Educational Achievement results (NCEA)
- Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (AsTTle)

The literacy data requires suitable collection methods that can be compared cross cluster in both primary and secondary levels. Additionally literacy also requires analysis controlling for gender. It would also be essential for the coordinator to acquire information surrounding learning at the Early Childhood Education level.

Once the coordinator has compiled the extensive report, the school then has a baseline from which to develop. This report also provides the school with a snapshot of the educational profile of the students. The school can then isolate problem issues. This report is also beneficial in opening the lines of communication between schools in the cluster, as a point of discussion and comparison.

### **Step Three – Assessment Stage**

The coordinator then forms small groups of teachers. These groups need to analyse the situation of the boys in their schools. This analysis should involve the statistical information presented in the Baseline Report and the recent research on boys' education. The group should then select the strategies and methods they consider to be suitable to improve boys' performance. This analysis should be performed under the supervision of the coordinator.

In order to make this analysis manageable, I have comprised three areas for focus.

1. Literacy
2. Pedagogy
3. Culture of Maleness

These are explored further in the 'Additional Information' paragraph later in this section. In this paragraph, I also include some potential strategies that assist with improving boys performances within the particular focus areas.

### **Step Four – Implementation of the Strategies**

The first requirement of this step is the identification of the target group<sup>24</sup>. The identification of the appropriate strategy is then reflected of the target group. The possible type of strategies is further explored in the Additional Information paragraph. The selected strategies require input and consultation with the fathers, mentors and male caregivers. This is beneficial to ensure family support of the projects and to also increase dialogue in the educational issues. This group will need to define aspects of the project. These aspects include the goals of the strategies and the method of measuring the achievements. The methods of measurements will reflect the goals of the strategies. It is important however that the methods are diverse to ensure the results capture the situation accurately. The measurements methods also need to be able to comparable with other projects. These aspects will be dependant on the strategies established.

### **Step Five – Monitoring and Evaluation Stage**

Information is gathered and assessed in the beginning, midpoint and completion of the projects. The groups report back to the coordinator with the results from these assessments.

### **Step Six – Reporting Stage**

---

<sup>24</sup> E.g. A group of boys who have good academic records but poor behaviour records, a group of boys whose performance has been at a good level and is starting to decrease, or a whole class as the control group in order to measure any difference in performance and outcomes.

The coordinators from the different schools meet together and present the findings from their projects. This is when the cluster relationships can be formed between the schools. The identification of successful strategies and possible improvements can then be discussed. The methods of improving the performance of boys can be formulated and implemented.

## **Additional Information**

### **Focus Areas**

In this section I present some experiences that I have had in male education. These case studies are for reflection and points of discussion. The teacher groups can use these focus areas when developing strategies for their schools. I also present some of the potential strategies from which the teachers can develop some suitable methods to improve boys' performances. Other strategies are outlined in the earlier sections of this report. I would also expect the teacher groups to draw on their own experiences and knowledge in education to develop strategies and complement this with further research.

### **Literacy**

Literacy is often a reason that is focussed on when explaining the underachievement of males. New Zealand holds one of the most significant literacy differences in the OECD countries. This is an area of concern, however is not the sole reason for the underachievement of males.

### ***Case Study One***

*Nelson College is involved in the Future Problem Solving competition. It is based in USA. It uses problem solving and requires a very high level of literacy skills. The college has consistently performed at the top of New Zealand schools. It requires boys to produce a very high level of literacy. There are factors in this program that explain why the boys excel in the Future Problem Solving scenario:*

- *Writing in a competitive program,*
- *Setting literacy tasks which have a short time line requirement and put some pressure on the boys to complete,*
- *Developing and writing their own solutions to problems.*

### ***Potential Strategies***

- Strategies exhibited in *case study one,*
- Increasing movement and kinaesthetic learning opportunities,
- Teaching and encouraging visual-spatial representations of thinking, especially during the planning stages of writing,
- Creating a greater sense of purpose by offering expanded audiences for writing,
- Creating a greater sense of relevancy through more freedom with topic choice in writing,

- Increasing the use of male role models in the classroom, especially in reading and writing,
- Offering some opportunities for single-sex activities within a classroom (e.g. all-boy literature circle),
- Offering real-life simulations, such as re-enactments and debates, to engage boys emotionally,
- Developing aspects seen as particularly beneficial or appealing to boys
  - Short structured tasks
  - A fast pace
  - A wide range of texts
  - Focusing on the technicalities of language
- A shared reading initiative, with less confident readers paired as tutors for younger pupils,
- Channelling resources towards the provision of books seen particularly to appeal to boys (e.g. hobby, non-fiction, or mechanical subject books),
- Organizing groups to engender collaborative learning, helping and cooperating with each other (e.g. encouraging pupils to “Ask 3 before me”),
- Learning intentions and attainment targets communicated to children in language they understand. Utilising boards in classrooms displaying learning objectives and aims of lessons,
- A focus on literacy through Information technology (e.g. Lexus),
- Paired classroom observation of teaching to raise awareness of teaching styles and classroom interactions and to develop strategies to improve the quality of work for lower achievers,
- Allow and celebrate achievement of small success leading to confidence and self worth.

## **Pedagogy**

Exploring the impacts of the ways that boys are taught and assessed is under researched in New Zealand. There is currently no training provided on this topic. This requires investigation because good teaching practices would obviously improve boys’ performance. The teaching practices that are tailored towards male education require research and identification.

### ***Case Study Two***

*Sabis Schools. This is a schooling system used in over forty schools mainly throughout the Middle East, but also in Germany and USA.*

*The approach of this system is for*

- *The provision of a pacing chart which dictates to teachers what they must teach each period of the day,*
- *Weekly tests which are marked electronically and give immediate feedback,*
- *There are consequences for not passing these tests such as being required to attend school on the weekend,*
- *End of term periodical tests, failure in which will result in attending school in the holidays,*
- *A very rigorous pace in each lesson,*
- *Each lesson is divided into short sequences called points; after each point the students are to work or write in their workbooks,*

*There is not to be any presentations which involve extended teacher only input*

### ***Potential Strategies***

- The strategies present in *case study two*,
- Time management techniques such as:
  - Establishment of diary
  - Wall planner
  - Setting deadlines for research projects
  - Study timetables
  - Working towards project completion
  - Test preparation
- Presenting the curriculum with an emphasis on practical activities,
- Advanced organizers where the teacher outlines what the students will learn at the start of the lesson,
- Firm discipline to establish a working atmosphere in the classroom,
- Single sex classes,
- Careful consideration of seating plans such as:
  - Where boys sit
  - Who boys sit with
  - Configuration of the seating

### **The Culture of Maleness**

The culture of maleness requires definition and dialogue in New Zealand. This is a complex concept to examine, especially due to New Zealand being home to two base cultures, Maori and European/Pakeha. This complexity increases with the inclusion of wider cultural influences in New Zealand. The culture of maleness is a reflection of New Zealand's history. The Maori society, the colonial past, the policies of our government, the impacts of wars and women recently in leadership positions are some of the history that is relevant to this culture. Some of the topics that require investigation to explore the culture of maleness are:

- What is means to be a New Zealand male?
- What it means to be a good male?
- What is the current role of Dad's in New Zealand society?
- What should be the role of males in New Zealand society?
- What are the roles of males in providing a focus when working with boys and their academic performances?

### ***Discussion Point***

*New Zealand males are often portrayed in the media negatively. This is significant in our societies opinions of males, and those males that are growing up under this negative press. The impact of this on our students is unknown. Men have higher rates in:*

- *Suicide,*
- *Imprisonment,*
- *Road crashes,*
- *Alcoholism,*
- *Mental Illness*
- *Assault*
- *Murder*

*Lower rates in*

- *Academic achievement*

*What are the potential ways that the New Zealand nation can develop to counteract these statistics to help our men? They are killing and being killed at a rate that requires urgent attention.*

### **Case Study Three**

*Ken Ross a Social Studies teacher at Nelson College introduced a unit in the year 10 Social Studies program: “Unit Planning Guide 10.5 Young Men taking their place”.*

*It is at level 5 – 6 with the objectives being on Social Organization Students to understand*

- *People’s organisation in groups*
- *The rights, roles and responsibilities of people as they interact as a group*

*The unit is based on a set of focusing questions:*

- *What does it mean to be a young man?*
- *What are the origins of our identity, values, and prejudices?*
- *Who are you?*
- *What are you?*
- *What broad categories could describe the you?*
- *What influences have been important in forming you?*
- *What are certainties in life?*
- *What attributes make a good person?*
- *What is meant by my values; character, morals and identity?*
- *From where do we receive our values?*
- *Are the values of girls different?*
- *How do we develop a sense of identity in relations to gender?*
- *Other than appearance and clothes, how do males identify themselves? What influences your identity, decisions, behavior and choices? How does peer pressure work?*
- *Are we really individuals or conformists?*
- *Are there people who are not conforming?*
- *What are prejudices?*
- *Do you have any prejudices?*
- *What groups in society are often the victims of prejudice by others?*
- *What does it mean “Young Men taking Their Place in the World”*
- *What is this place?*
- *what are the skills you need to take this place?*
- 

*The unit continues to be developed by staff using it and adding their own input.*

*Recourses are being added such as videos like “Teen Species”.*

*Having observed it being taught, I believe it has the potential to be an effective strategy in addressing boys’ attitudes and understanding of the male culture.*

## **Case Study Four**

*When working in the field of boys and considering their situation it is easy to become negative about the performance of boys. Often we look at a situation we move towards a 'banner' that can be taken as the general truth. However this can be detrimental to boys' education. This is true with boys performance, the banner of boys are failing should not be expanded to ALL boys failing. We know the normal distribution which graphs boys' performance has a higher standard deviation than girls. This gives us far more boys present in the bottom 20% of the combined distribution. This is often the basis for the statistics for the negative performance of boys. However there are also a lot of boys who perform very well at the highest level.*

*These two observations of generalized negativity towards boys and boys performing well at the highest level are combined in a situation I was involved with at the start of 2006:*

*I had been invited to Government House to attend the 2005 year 13 high achievers prize giving. The Governor General was recognizing the top 14 students. To achieve this honour the student had to achieve 3 outstanding awards in their 5 scholarship grades. This is an incredible achievement.*

*During the ceremony, I noted the gender split of these 14 students. I found 9 of the 14 were boys. After the ceremony an education reporter from TV3 interviewed me because she had seen me making notes through the ceremony. I told her the result I had recorded to which she said "That's amazing - you would not expect that". I challenged her why she would say that. We both agreed that it was due to the amount of media coverage we are giving to poor boys performance. I was pleased to see that TV3 reported the incident on the news that evening.*

*We must look to provide examples of boys doing well to create a more balanced overview.*

## **Potential Strategies**

- Strategies that could be developed from the *discussion points, case studies three and four,*
- Implementation of boy friendly initiatives such as:
  - A carefully designed leadership system giving responsibility and status to students,
  - Emphasis on high quality physical environment with displays highlighting students' achievement,
  - Assemblies with boys' achievements as the theme,
  - Emphasis on good interpersonal relationships between staff and students, based on mutual respect, with senior staff being highly visible, supporting and encouraging students, knowing them by name, taking an interest in their activities,
  - Lunchtime and twilight support clubs and holiday schools,
  - Allowing targeted support,
  - Emphasizing one-off events such as "success days" which challenge boys to buck the trend,

- Wide ranging merit systems which reward improvement and progress as well as actual attainment,
- Implementing single-sex groups to encourage boys' interest and involvement.
- Identification of behaviour patterns that are considered to be disruptive to learning and strategies for handling these patterns,
- Identify target groups of boys exhibiting poor behaviour. Inclusion of an assessment of their engagement and achievement,
- Interviewing boys and parents to explore attitudes and the causations,
- Including positive role models for boys at school/ECE,
- Development of programs for improving engagement and achievement (e.g. exposing boys to a range of positive role models – visitors and voluntary helpers)
- Working with parents to set parameters in relation to monitoring behaviour,
- Formal or informal behaviour management schemes. These are implemented to modify the 'macho' role model. This is to channel the anti-social behaviour of some boys to create more positive role models,
- Taking boys on outdoor trips such as camps in the bush. These events remove students from modernity, for example the computer games, cell phones, television. This then requires them to reflect on the world and their place in it with the benefit of being removed from the situation.

## **Conclusion**

The existence of an international gender gap is well established. Unfortunately New Zealand's males are performing at the lowest level in the OECD countries. I have presented some of the research and strategies to combat this negative trend, however New Zealand has yet to contribute significantly to the dialogue on this issue. I believe New Zealand is in the position to develop and counteract this trend within our schools.

I have proposed a framework from which schools can develop strategies that reflect their unique character. This framework also provides the capacity for cluster groups to communicate and exchange ideas and results. Under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education there is the potential to stimulate discussion and action throughout New Zealand. This is with the communication of ideas within the cluster groups and the presentation of the reports from which other schools can select appropriate strategies to implement within their own schools.

The current underachievement of males requires urgent attention. These students contribute to the future of New Zealand's public, work force and decision makers. In our educational system we have the potential to assist our young males develop into good men.

*APPENDIX I*

**Average Effect Sizes for Each Subject, NEMP Year 4 Assessments  
2001 to 2005**

<b>Subject &amp; Year</b>	<b>Boys/Girls</b>
Information Skills 2001	-.06
Social Studies 2001	+.06
Mathematics 2001	+.10
Listening 2002	-.13
Viewing 2002	-.05
Health 2002	-.09
Physical Education 2002	+.15
Writing 2002	-.24
Science 2003	+.08
Visual Art 2003	-.01
Graphs, Tables, & Maps 2003	0.00
Music 2004	-.08
Technology 2004	+.01
Reading (English) 2004	-.22
Speaking 2004	-.15
Information Skills 2005	-.14
Social Studies 2005	-.01
Mathematics 2005	+.08
<b>Average of all above</b>	<b>-.05</b>

**Effect Size Examples (using 2002 Y8 NEMP Writing data)**

**0.48**

<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
12-15	19	39
9-11	19	22
6-8	25	16
3-5	16	10
0-2	21	13

**0.69**

<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
10-17	16	37
7-9	43	43
4-6	29	19
0-3	12	1

*APPENDIX II*

Part one – Protecting the minds of boys

1. The Current Crisis
  - Is there really a crisis
  - Understanding and fixing the Crisis
  - The Next Step
2. How Boys Learn
  - A new Science
  - Boy energy
  - The Mismatch between boys and conventional education
  - Confronting an educational myth
  - Ending the myth of Gender Plasticity and Supporting the way boys actually learn
  - Becoming practical

Part two – Starting Boys out in boy-friendly learning environments

3. Helping boys learn before they begin school
  - Protecting the learning potential of a young brain
  - Building bonding and attachment
  - Boys' special attachment issues
  - Ten strategies to promote attachment
  - The importance of emotions in a boy's early education
  - The core philosophy of choice making
  - Promoting verbal development in a young boy
  - Balancing a Boy's fine and gross motor development
  - Calming the hidden stressors in a boys life
4. Effective Preschool and early learning environments for boys
  - Providing a boy-friendly learning environment
  - Boys and sensory issues
  - Music and the brain
  - The outdoor classroom
  - Do you have to use your words to use your brain?
5. Removing key environmental stressors from boys' lives
  - Promoting brain health
  - Brain injuries
  - Screen time; TVs, videos, video games, computers
  - What boy eats and drinks

- The beauty of brain health

Part three – Teaching school curricula in boy-friendly ways

6. Helping boys learn reading, writing and language arts
  - What parents can do
  - What teachers can do
  - Do Heroes read and write?
7. Helping boys learn math and science
  - Relevance!
  - What Parents can do to help boys learn math
  - What teachers can do to help boys learn math
  - What Parents can do to help boys learn science
  - What teachers can do to help boys learn science
  - The importance of the arts and athletics in academics
8. Using single –gender classrooms effectively
  - The essential search for equality
  - The success of single-gender classes
  - The importance of teacher and parent buy-in
  - Single –gender sex education
  - Bringing single-gender innovations to your school

Part Four – Helping boys who need extra help

9. A new vision of learning disabilities, add/adh, and behavioural disorder
  - The inherent fragility of the male brain
  - Changing our course
  - Getting the right diagnosis
  - Treatment
  - Moving to optimism
10. Confronting under motivation and underperformance in boys' learning
  - Under motivated, Underperforming
  - Some causes of under motivation – and some cures
  - When gifted boys are underachieving
  - Motivating our sons
11. What parents and teaches can do to motivate boys to learn
  - What parents can do
  - What teachers can do
  - Helping gifted non achievers
  - The key role of men in motivating boys
  - Leaving no boy behind
12. Helping sensitive boys in our schools
  - Bridge brains
  - Fighting gender stereotypes
  - The emotional lives of sensitive boys
  - What parents can do to help sensitive boys
  - What teachers can do to help sensitive boys
  - Choosing to succeed

## Recent New Zealand Research

In New Zealand Māori are statistically disadvantaged in academic results. There has been some investment and research into increasing Māori performance within New Zealand schools. An example of this is a project launched by the Māori Education Research Unit (MERU) in the School of Education at the University of Waikato<sup>25</sup> and the Poutama Pounamu Research Centre<sup>26</sup>. In 2000, these two groups joined forces to commence a project to research and make active difference in Māori education in New Zealand. The project was founded with acknowledgement of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The strategies in the research methodology were also reflected in the international research into the educational gender gap. The results of the project are valuable to Māori education, however are can be used in the improvement of both Pakeha and Māori boys education.

The group investigated the “deficit theorizing” within the Māori education. Principals and parents of Māori students considered the major influence within Māori achievements were the quality of the in-class face-to-face relationships and interactions between the teachers and Māori students’. This is contrasted with the teachers that more often considered the children themselves and/or their family/whānau circumstances, or systemic/structural issues to be the cause of underachievement. This deficit theory of the teachers can severely impact in the ability for students to achieve. The low expectations of the teachers can cause a negative feedback effect on the students’ results.

The study found that professional development of the teachers was the best method to counteract this negative trend. The method was to place teachers in neutral non-confrontational situations and stimulate critical self-reflections alongside analysis on the Māori educational state. The results of this professional development equalized the cultural gap between Pakeha and Māori. From these results the project team developed an “Effective Teaching Profile”. In this profile the teachers rejects the deficit theorizing, and are professionally committed to implementing change to encourage Māori.

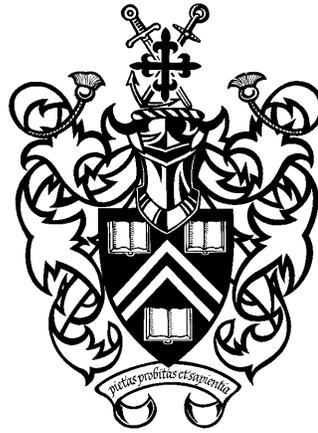
The ability for professional development to counteract ingrained patterns of behaviour provides evidence that this is possible. Maori males are the group that requires the most attention as a sector of society, they have the most statistical disadvantage.

---

<sup>25</sup> MERU is the research branch of Te Rānanga Mātauranga Māori

<sup>26</sup> This is the research whanau of Specialist Education Services Poutama Pounamu Research Centre based at Tauranga

*APPENDIX IV*



**N E L S O N  
C O L L E G E**



Photo Courtesy of "The Nelson Mail"

# **A Communication to Dads**

# and Mentors

## Background

I am an experienced teacher and have worked in schools for over 30 years as mathematics teacher, deputy principal and headmaster, both in boys' schools and in co-educational schools.

I was born in 1951; Dad was a tomato grower in Nelson. He left school to work in his father's garden after 3 years education at Nelson College. I went to Nelson College where I did well in cricket and mathematics and not much else. I went to university in Christchurch, spent two of the years at a University Hostel in town which unwisely was sited next to a hotel. Completed my degree and teacher training in 1972.

I got married to Trish in 1973 - without doubt, the best decision I made in life, although not necessarily Trish's best decision. We had three daughters, Jenny, Katie and Anna, three special young women. Anna, the youngest, was born in 1982, the year after Dad died. All four women have taught me a lot.

I was unaware of the existence of concepts such as emotional intelligence and emotional literacy. As Headmaster of Nelson College, I have thought a lot about the needs of males and developing the Good Man Project. I have read books like:

- *"Raising Cain"* by Dan Kindlon & Michael Thompson
- *"The Wonder of Boys"* by Michael Gurian
- *"How to Talk So Kids will Listen and Listen So Kids will Talk"* by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish
- *"200 Ways to Raise a Boy's Emotional Intelligence"* by Will Glennon

I have some ideas and thoughts which I hope will help you in dealing with the challenging project of growing young men. I am convinced that a powerful way to link in with young boys is to tell your story. This publication is to be seen as a model of telling your story.

I can offer this advice without living in regret that I did not do so as a father, but confident that this is the base of what I do now when I am in the role of mentor.

In 1995 I was appointed Headmaster of Nelson College. I was committed to the belief that the basis of having a good culture in the college was relationships. This was not achievable while we had 20 – 30 high status boys performing the traditional prefect's role. In addition, most Year 9 boys see Year 13 boys as their heroes or role models as they are in their more immediate future. The college now has a well developed mentor scheme as part of the

leadership programme where over 150 Year 13 boys take the role of mentor as part of their Year 13 course. The Year 13 boys' mentees will be Year 9 students who have been selected by the Dean as being someone who would benefit from mentoring.

One important term used in this publication is “reflective thinking” – reflective thinking requires an element of emotion to be included in thinking. It is therefore how a person is feeling, what led up to them thinking in that way and what the reason was, being an action or a thought.



Salvi Gargiulo

## 14 Ways to Raise the Emotional Intelligence of Boys

### HEADMASTER

1. Examine Gender Roles
2. Asking Good Questions
3. Set Limits
4. Use Sports As A Vehicle to Show Emotions
5. Develop Special Time
6. Teach Conflict Resolution
7. Mixed Message Of Manhood
8. Counteract Pack Mentality
9. 'Fess Up
10. What It Means To Be Strong and Courageous
11. Initiation Into Manhood
12. Importance Of Close Friendships
13. Define Respect
14. Emotional Literacy

#### **1. Examine Gender Roles**

*Our family was not of the traditional stereotype, ie Dad leaves the home to earn the money, doles out the punishment, does the “male” things around the house. Mum does the cooking and the housework and looks after the kids. In fact our family was the reverse - Dad was a tomato grower who worked out of the family property and Mum went into town to work as a receptionist. Dad would have the meal on the table when Mum got home from work. That traditional stereotype has left most homes now, with so many women in the workforce. There are still too many families though, where the old model operates and men have not taken the opportunity to expand their lives and take advantage of what a genuine partnership can provide.*

#### **Mentors**

In conversation, compare the roles of your parents with your mentees and discuss what sort of roles you want to have when you get married and have children. When I see the energy and skill being demonstrated in the Year 9 cooking classes, I am sure the boys will make great meals in later life.

## **Dads**

Consider how our role in society has changed, giving more opportunity for us to enrich our lives by taking on roles which were not traditionally part of the father job description. Analyse what part you are playing in the family and compare it with your father.

### **2. Asking Good Questions**

*A key to developing emotional links is by asking good questions. When I was being a sulky petulant adolescent and losing my temper in conversation with Mum, my Dad asked me a question, which I have never forgotten, in a very calm and non-judgemental way – “what was I thinking when I lost my cool”. I struggled for an answer and he helped me by suggesting that it was the process of working through my temper tantrum which was the best way to correct this behaviour- he made me think reflectively. Asking questions which require reflective thinking is a very strong way to develop emotional intelligence.*

## **Mentors**

Make use of opportunities to ask your mentees to reflect on what they have done or said. Boys do not always operate in this zone but benefit enormously by doing so.

## **Dads**

Ask questions on subjects such as fear, happiness, future, what was good, what was bad, what was the best thing that happened today. Your role is essential in doing the same; using opportunities to articulate what you are thinking when it comes to some of the decisions you are making, being a role model for reflective thinking and a good questioner. That is the most influential way to ensure your son develops these skills.

### **3. Set Limits**

*Like all growing boys, I thought I was not given enough freedom as I grew up. I was given quite strict guidelines as to what I could do and when I could go out. On reflection and when I see the lack of limits set around Year 9 and 10 boys these days, I am very grateful for the limits I was given.*

## **Mentors**

Boys will want to be given less limits; you can help them understand the need for them, give examples of boys you know who did not have any, the process for limits being expanded and the associated trust required.

## **Dads**

Often it appears that dads are not prepared to set limits, or let mums do it, for fear of losing their relationship with their son. Conversely, the only communication by dad is disciplining his son. Neither is going to result in a dad being able to develop and provide the relationship a boy needs as he grows through adolescence and is an issue for conflict. Provided you have established a good relationship with your son, he will accept them. In fact, in my experience, boys who have minimal set limits, interpret this as not being loved and cared for. As boys grow older, the rules are eased - engage your son in the setting of these limits. “What do you consider a reasonable bedtime?” “When do you think you should be home in the weekends?”

### **4. Use Sports As A Vehicle To Show Emotions**

*I have many childhood memories of playing, going to and watching different sporting activities. Dad would often leave the garden for the weekend and come down to Christchurch to watch a cricket test. He also played a lot of cricket with us on the front lawn. I can recall Dad showing a lot of emotion while we listened to rugby games. We had many discussions and debates on the selection of teams and the abilities of different players. It is obvious that boys are sports crazy. In sports, boys are expected to fully engage emotions. Hugs, high fives, sadness, support for others who have not done well, some emotional touching and expressions of sadness if a loss occurs during sport activities. Consider how this has developed over time when looking at rugby games, as recently as the 1990's, where no emotion was expressed even when the most significant try was scored. It was always the French who hugged and celebrated, and us who scoffed.*

### **Mentors**

Consider sports as a vehicle for the development of many emotional feelings and transfer them to the rest of life. By helping boys to develop skills in sports, playing mini games, and talking about a common interest in sports, there is significant opportunity for engagement.

### **Dads**

It is not possible to understate the importance of sharing your son's sporting endeavours. He might not be very good, he might have aspirations well above his abilities, he might be far too focused on sport but be with him on his journey. While boys often put far too much focus on sport, use this passion as a way to negotiate broader responsibilities. One Dad I know of exchanges time shooting baskets with time spent reading – both activities done together – special and effective.

## **5. Develop Special Time**

*On reflection the most special times I spent with Dad were after school when I would come home, get changed into working clothes and work with him in the glasshouse. It was during one such occasion that I set my life's future. I recall the conversation like it was yesterday - it was in fact nearly 40 years ago! "I want to grow tomatoes when I leave school." "You can take over the garden from me, but I want you to get a qualification so you have another option – if I had my time over again that is what I would want to do." We then talked a lot about what these other options might be. Unfortunately Dad and I did not realise at this stage how special this time was. If I could be back in the glasshouse now I would be asking better questions to find out more about Dad and how he felt about different things.*

### **Mentors**

Please understand how important the time you spend with your mentee is to him.

### **Dads**

This will require the use of your most precious commodity – time. Boys need one-to-one time with a father figure on a regular basis – even 15 minutes. If this is consistent, it is very valuable and is effective in continuing a good relationship with your son.

## **6. Teach Conflict Resolution**

*The skill to resolve conflicts has many long term benefits. Dad was not strong in this area. He avoided conflict as much as possible. I have found myself doing the same thing which has created problems for me both in my personal and professional life. I never saw Dad angry so I do not tend to get angry in conflicts but do tend to find myself doing a "shoulder shrug" which does not help in finding a resolution.*

### **Mentors**

One of the identified strengths of a male is his ability to get over a conflict. Conversely, this could detrimentally affect the need for some reflective thinking on what led to the conflict and whether there was an outcome or a consequence which would ensure it did not happen again. If your mentee has been in trouble in the classroom, he might find it beneficial to discuss it with you, as it could be some small matter which can be talked through. He won't want it blown up to a bigger issue with home being notified which would be inevitable if he was transferred again and did not sort out the problem. The problem may not be with him, but rather with the teacher. Such a conflict might require you to give him support by discussing the problem with another staff member. In your role of mentor you may well need to develop the skills of a mediator, which the school counsellor will provide.

### **Dads**

Examine how your son deals with conflict and compare that with how you do. You will often find a strong correlation. How do you handle conflicts and disagreements, do you want your son to do the same? A worthwhile topic for you both to reflect on.

## **7. Mixed Message of Manhood**

*Two questions which I believe we should be asking are - "what it means to be a man" and "when did I become a man." I never asked these questions as they were never topics of discussion either in our family or with friends.*

*How can we expect our young men to know what direction they are headed in if we do not recognise the existence of these questions? We can only talk about it.*

### "What does it mean to be a man?"

*The definition of manhood has changed from the sole role of hunter provider, the knight in shining armour, the macho male. What was once a clear definition is now in a tumultuous and confused transition.*

### **Mentors**

Allow the question to be discussed in conversation, including telling your mentee what sort of man you are working towards becoming, even if you allow yourself to be a bit optimistic in your thinking!

### **Dads**

Let your son know that he is an important part of the process. We may not have the answers; we may not be able to articulate exactly what a good man is; but we can all help put the pieces together and be part of an ongoing conversation.

### "When I became a man?"

*This is a useful question as a discussion point with boys and men. It was a question I never considered until I became involved with the Good Man project. It generates many varied responses. For me, the meaning of being a male keeps changing, as I grow older.*

*I think I would have considered myself to be a male when:*

- *I worked in the glasshouse*
- *Was taken into a bar*
- *The birth of my first daughter*

- *Being able to teach a class of budding mathematicians*
- *Being appointed the leader of a boys' school*

*The most powerful moment at the conference of schools involved with the Good Man Project was when we were asked this question. I learnt more about my friends and colleagues through their answers and we learnt something about ourselves at the same time.*

### **Mentors**

As you are also part of the journey into manhood, to talk about how this is done in different cultures might be useful. There are some very interesting rites of passage activities which exist in some cultures.

### **Dads**

The important part of the question is the process of asking and discussing it. Have the discussion with other males as well as with your son. We cannot expect our sons to become young men if we do not know when we became one ourselves.

## **8. Counteract Pack Mentality**

*While Dad spent a lot of time with me and encouraged and supported me to become involved with sports, he had no control over my choice of friends over the years. As they grow up, boys need to be part of a group. I often reflect on how my life would have been different if I had selected different groups than the ones I did through my life*

### **Mentors**

If you see your mentee associating with a bad group, it is often because they have low self esteem and do not want to be left with no friends. Analyse with them what this could lead to, give them examples from your peer group; tell them your story. It is often a big issue for Year 9 and 10 boys, which is a time when decisions they make can shape the rest of their lives.

### **Dads**

Sons who feel they are part of a family, have the advantage of already being part of a group. The creating and maintaining of a constant emotional connection, continual support and a compassionate environment where they know that every part of them belongs and is loved, is so important. There are many times when your son will have his confidence challenged while trying to understand and deal with his emotions – you are the key to his positive growth.

## **9. 'Fess Up**

*One characteristic that I value from my Dad was his honesty. He was confident in himself not to give me the impression he knew all the answers; he often told me of decisions he had to struggle with.*

### **Mentors**

The best mentoring you can give as a problem solver is to provide your mentee with processes and not just answers. The old adage of “*giving a boy a fish will feed him, teach him how to fish and he will be fed for the rest of his life*” can apply to many of the interactions you have with your mentee.

## **Dads**

Shed the mantle of all-knowing strength and wisdom and get down in the trenches with your son. Your experiences provide much to share with your son. Tell your story – it is a very powerful way to communicate. Being an adult is not about having all the answers but is about asking new questions.

### **10. What It Means To Be Strong And Courageous**

*I often struggle with terms like Strength and Courage. They need to be re-examined and analysed in a modern context. The courage it took for my Dad to lie about his age in order to go to war is more than I can conceive or understand. The definition of strength and courage I would like to promote is the ability to stand up for what you know is right even if it might put you off side with your friends or be seen as not being cool. Simple examples, such as:*

- *supporting a boy who does not seem to have any friends*
- *not wagging class when your friends are*
- *undertaking an academic challenge when your friends are not*
- *saying NO when your friends are experimenting with drugs*

## **Mentors**

Share with your mentee examples of when you were courageous or wish you had been in situations such as the ones outlined above.

## **Dads**

When you tell your son to be strong, what do you mean? What does he interpret this as being? It is a word to be wary of in communicating with your son. It needs to be discussed, explained, and talked through carefully and thoroughly.

### **11. Initiation Into Manhood**

*As the father of three daughters, I observed the physical transition from girl to woman which occurs through menses. My wife has on each occasion said, “welcome to the world of women”. In some cultures, boys are initiated into manhood by men in a formal ceremony. It was never a topic with my Dad; it was left in an unarticulated grey zone. These grey areas can lead to confusion, insecurity and probably leads to inappropriate efforts to prove with peers that we are men.*

## **Mentors**

Our school motto is about “Preparing Young Men To Take Their Place In The World”. Help explain what this means; where you are at in the journey. Your mentee needs to know – and maybe you as well, that when you leave at Year 13, you are a young man, with the ability to vote, fight wars and in some cases become fathers.

## **Dads**

As there is no clear demarcation lines, make up one you feel comfortable with and celebrate the occasion openly. I think a trip together which includes some physical challenge would be ideal.

### **12. Importance of Close Friendships**

*My parents were always very welcoming to my friends who came to our home. As I got older, they would host parties, providing food, friendship and relevant supervision. Dad really enjoyed coming to University and hanging out with my friends, watching sports, sitting in the bar. I was proud of the way he joined in with my friends in such a natural way. My friends really liked my Dad. As I grew up, these friends were so important in having people to hang out with, to drop defences, to talk with about anything and everything.*

### **Mentors**

Get to know the friends of your mentee. Even develop activities which include them.

### **Dads**

Treat your son's friends as if they were your own. Make them feel comfortable in your home; what they mean to your son is incalculable. What do you do if you do not like his friends and feel they are a bad influence? It is a difficult situation; a boy can go badly off "track" if he is influenced negatively. I think you must do all you can to connect with these friends – get to know their dads, get to know them, provide activities which include them. It is not easy but it can cause a significant breakdown with your son if he is forced to choose between you and his friends.

Boys will often not indicate that they have heard and taken on board some of your discussions. It does happen and you may see the results and feedback later on. "Dad, when you talked to me about....."

## **13. Define Respect**

*There is much confusion between respect and fear. I now realise, that while attending school, there were teachers I respected because they made the subject interesting, they engaged us in learning and they were interested in us as people. Then there were staff who I was scared of because they would either hit me or threaten to do so. At the time I did not know the difference. I had respect for my father but could not until recently articulate why. Often boys respect a person for their achievements or abilities. Real respect goes deeper than that and needs further discussion and analysis.*

### **Mentors**

You will feel that the Year 9 boys as a group do not respect you as a group. This will be based on the behaviour of some immature Year 9 students. The chances are that as a Year 9 student, you did respect the senior students and would not take liberties in your communications with Year 13 students.

### **Dads**

An important topic which can be summed up as follows – you must respect your teachers because of the position they hold; a teacher must gain your respect as a person.

## **14. Emotional Literacy**

*Defining emotional literacy is the ability to know your own emotions and be able to know how others are feeling. My Dad was very good at being able to tap into the feelings of others. It was a skill he had which I do not think he knew he had and he never advertised it.*

### **Mentors**

Help your mentee be aware of what emotional literacy is and how it can apply to different situations.

### **Dads**

There is a need for a word bank which you can help develop. Words such as:

Safe, relaxed, satisfied, undesirable, lethargic, needy, confident,  
optimistic, loved, insulted, resentful, ignored, excited, energized,  
connected, empty, trapped, obligated, amused, fortunate,  
effective, rotten, infuriated, idiotic, empowered, spirited, peaceful,  
puzzled, resigned, terrified, special, wonderful, vibrant, regretful,  
intolerant, gullible, respected, fantastic, elated, hesitant, horrible,  
hatred, eager, excellent, engaged, indifferent, inept, indivisible,  
tremendous, drunk, tingly, lonely, lousy, lost, forgiven, funny,  
fearless, grumpy, guilty, gullible, enthusiastic, enriched, empathetic



*Young men taking their place in the world*

Nelson College  
Private Bag 16, Nelson, New Zealand  
Telephone +64 3 548 3099 Fax +64 3 546 6932 Email: [enquiries@nelcollege.school.nz](mailto:enquiries@nelcollege.school.nz)  
[www.nelcollege.school.nz](http://www.nelcollege.school.nz)