For your consideration – BOYS

From the book, “Why Boys Fail,” by Richard Whitmire:
1. The average high school GPA is 3.09 for girls and 2.86 for boys. Boys are almost twice as likely to repeat a grade.
2. Boys are twice as likely to get suspended, three times as likely to get expelled and 25% higher dropout rate.
3. Among whites, women earn 57% of the bachelor’s degrees and 62% of master’s degrees. Among blacks, figures are 66% and 72%.
4. Federal writing test results, 32% of girls were considered “proficient” or better. Boys- 16%.
5. Boys still beat girls at the top of the curve. High school class of 2009 a total of 297 students scored a perfect triple-800 on the SAT. 62% of those were boys. Of the 10,052 who scored an 800 on math section, 69% were boys.
6. Boys are also lagging in Scandinavia, Canada, Britain, and throughout the industrialized world.
7. Theories
   a. Difference in hard wiring in brain
      i. Lise Elliot, neuroscientist – “boys are no less hard-wired to perform in school than girls”
   b. Increased emphasis on verbal skills often taught in sedate ways that bore boys.
   c. Reading materials for boys
   d. Writing topics for boys

1. Now it is time to do the same for boys…. Beyond improving verbal skills, schools can take other steps to make boys feel more engaged and motivated. First, we have to back off on some of the hyper-academic expectations of early elementary school. Young children learn through play, and must have the opportunity for make-believe, artistic creation, and lots of physical exercise through frequent breaks outside the classroom.
2. While early literacy is crucial, it must be taught in a developmentally appropriate, meaningful way, without the drill and kill approach that has descended of late to kindergarten and even preschool.
3. As academic expectations have intensified, some teachers may be less tolerant of boys’ more boisterous ways. Such anti-boy attitudes must be rooted out, just as any kind of sexism is no longer tolerated.


1. The percentage of boys that said they didn't like school rose 71 percent between 1980 and 2001.
2. Thirty years ago men represented 58% of the undergraduate student body on college campuses. Today it is 44%. This widening achievement gap, says Margaret Spellings, former U.S. Secretary of Education, “has profound implications for the economy, society, families and democracy.”
3. Arthur Arnold, professor of physiological science at UCLA states that male brain chemistry is a factor. Male sex hormones produced beginning in first trimester of pregnancy, bathe brain in testosterone for the rest of gestation. That prenatal exposure to male sex hormones directly affects the way children play.
4. In elementary school classrooms – where teachers increasingly put an emphasis on language and a premium on sitting quietly and speaking in turn—the mismatch between boys and school can become painfully obvious. “Girl behavior becomes the gold standard,” says “Raising Cain’ coauthor Thompson. “Boys are treated like defective girls.”


1. Boys make up ¾ of all children categorized as learning disabled today and they are put in special education at a much higher rate.
2. From kindergarten on, the education system rewards self-control, obedience, and concentration- qualities that, any teacher can tell you, are much more common among girls than boys, particularly at young ages. Boys fidget, fool around, fight, and worse. Thirty years ago teachers may have accommodated and managed this behavior, in part by devoting more attention to boys than to girls. But as girls have come to attract equal attention, as an inability to sit still has been medicalized, and as the options for curbing
student misbehavior have been ever more curtailed, boys may have suffered.


1. Peg Tyre: “According to the Center for Disease Control, in 2003, 14 percent of boys across the nation were identified as having ADHS by the time they reached their sixteenth birthday... Either we are witnessing the largest pandemic in our country since influenza struck in United States in 1918, or school-age boys are being overidentified and overdiagnosed.”

2. If you are teaching in the lower grades, you might want to revisit the way you teach reading. It turns out that there is good research from the U.K. that suggests if you use phonics you can actually improve the achievement of all kids and buck the national trend by keeping boys from falling behind girls in reading. For example, in the U.K. they have begun to use an amped-up phonics program that involves manipulating refrigerator magnet letters on a magnet board, which has shown to be successful for boys.

3. Secondly, you can sustain these achievements by getting more boy-friendly reading material in the classroom—humor, non-fiction, action, Captain Underpants, Sports Illustrated.

4. You can also help boys become better writers by opening up the parameters of what is an acceptable topic to write about. Many boys don’t tend to spin out narratives in their heads about relationships. Often, they’re oriented around plot and action.