

# PENGUIN HIGH SCHOOL

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Reference:

**To - The Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations.**

**Re - Inquiry into the education of boys**

Submission from a group of staff at Penguin High School, North West Coast, Tasmania.

The members of staff (13) who considered the terms of reference of this inquiry noted the following in regard to the education of boys.

## **1 (a) Factors impacting on the social, cultural and educational development of boys.**

- A changing understanding of what it means to be a man. There is often tension between traditional views of masculinity especially in country areas like ours and the culture being transmitted through the media especially television.
- There is a lack of positive male role models in many families. There is a general lack of fathering in our society where family breakdown is becoming common. In early childhood and primary classrooms the majority of teachers are female rather than male. Boys are often bereft of positive male modeling.
- In the light of theory on different learning styles it appears that many schools struggle to provide learning situations that suit the preferred learning styles of many boys.
- Cultural factors that influence men's attitudes to communicating especially about feelings are not generally well developed.
- In employment females have been encouraged to take on traditionally male roles. Boys have not been encouraged in the same way to take on female roles.
- Academic achievement in school is not seen by boys as cool, whereas sporting achievement is. Boys are aware that if they are seen as being academic they will be regarded as being "different" and the risk of bullying is high. Peer pressure impacts greatly and while being good at sport is acceptable, being good at school work is not as highly regarded. From an early age boys' gross motor skills are more developed so they get positive reinforcement for being good at physical activities whereas girls' fine motor

skills are more developed so they get positive reinforcement for drawing and writing activities.

- Boys mature later than girls so boys are often lagging in physical and mental development by as much as two years.
- Boys can have an impoverished emotional development because of the way they are socialized. Girls tend to group together and interact with each other as "people". Boys often interact to share an activity such as playing a sport. Girls tend to read novels where a richer range of emotions are explored.

### **1(b) What evidence do we have to support each of these perceptions?**

- Observation of problem boys in our school who have no father at home.
- Academic results especially in the field of literacy boys find reading "boring" and inactive. Boys don't like being singled out for praise.  
Boys are more likely to take short cuts and work to a lower level.  
Boys have more inflated views on how they are going or the amount of work they've done than girls.
- Participation in school activities other than sport. Boys tend not to volunteer for high profile positions in the school. Boys tend not to want to represent others in positions such as Student Representative Council.
- Boys' transition to adulthood is often fraught with risk taking e.g. getting drunk, fast driving.
- Negative treatment of others, especially girls; bullying to assert their status.
- Boys find it increasingly difficult to break away from the peer culture.

### **2. What strategies have we used to help address these factors?**

- Teachers being aware of the differences e.g. physical, learning styles, emotional development
- A range of strategies, options to cater for boys' area of interest e.g. small engines
- Use of cooperative learning which involves communication, teamwork, responsibility
- Peer tutoring: Grade 10 roles models for junior school low achievers.
- Grade 10 social committee is half boys
- Encouragement for boys to participate in all aspects of school
- Celebrating achievement in academic as well as sporting fields

- Use of "boy type" literature e.g. computer games for studying good versus evil leading on to other texts. Using novels to do with boys growing up e.g. *Lockie Leonard - Human Torpedo*

**3. What ideas have we used that might be valuable in other schools?**

- All of the above
- Ideas we've heard from other schools.
- Gender specific classes for certain subjects e.g. PE, English, Mathematics 1 Science.
- Boys start school later than girls
- Making specific invitations for fathers to come into the school.
- Parent workshops

**4. What resources would we need to extend these strategies or to implement new (describe) strategies to overcome negative factors in regard to boys education?**

- Money/people to support programs
  - Male guest speakers, visiting artists, mentors
  - Publicity campaign
  - Increased staffing for male oriented programs
  - More male teachers in primary schools
- Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Alan Larcombe,  
For the staff at Penguin High School.

22 August 2000