

**SA GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION TO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF BOYS**

SUBMISSION FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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October 2000

Government of South Australia

Executive Summary

The purpose of this submission is to identify the educational and associated factors impacting on boys' education from the perspective of school and society. This submission then goes on to describe what we believe are the most effective strategies that can be undertaken in schooling to address these.

We understand that some of the factors identified are outside schooling influences but that education can and is expected to contribute to the preparation of young people for participation in work, civic and domestic life.

The identification of these factors is informed by state, national and international research. The South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment submission is based on the understanding of gender as a social construction. This understanding supports educators and students to more effectively explore and challenge the limitations imposed by gender stereotypes on behaviours and life choices. It also makes clear the fact that boys and girls are actively engaged in the development of their own concept of what it means to be masculine or feminine. "As with other areas of human experience the construction of gender is able to be understood, and is capable of change." (*Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* pp4-5)

The strategies outlined in this submission are sometimes site specific while others are seen as successful across a range of sites with only small changes made to suit local needs. There is a consistent commitment amongst educators in this state system to ensure that curriculum assists all students to make informed choices at school and beyond. As well curriculum is seen as a major contributor to the quality of learning environments and relationships and this is clearly demonstrated in a number of the strategies described in this submission.

The key issues identified as having an effect on boys' educational outcomes are:

- Underachievement in particular learning areas
- Inappropriate behaviours at school leading to high levels of suspensions and exclusions.
- Mental health problems associated with a range of socio-cultural pressures that manifest as high levels of suicide, motor vehicle accidents, substance abuse and anti social behaviours resulting in incarceration and social isolation.
- Homophobia as a major contributor to violence between males.

The issues identified above illustrate the range of dilemmas posed for educators as they work with gender issues on a daily basis. Understanding and addressing these behaviours and attitudes exhibited by boys is an ongoing challenge for teachers at all levels of schooling.

The range of successful projects, programs and initiatives which have been developed to address these gender issues in education in South Australia are informed by principles of:

- Early intervention
- Whole school and interagency approaches that include communities

- Curriculum as a major vehicle for improving school culture and ethos
- Understanding of the complexity of gender as a historical, social and cultural construction and its relationship to other aspects of students' lives, for example constructions of socio-economic status, cultural and linguistic background, Aboriginality, disabilities and geographic isolation.

While some elements of students' lives are beyond the influence of schools there is no doubt that schools can improve educational and social outcomes for all groups of boys and girls

PART B

Term of reference 2: The strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors (social, cultural and educational), those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness.

Some of the most important features of work cited in Part B is the emphasis on early intervention and the links being made between school culture, curriculum, home and local community knowledge. This also includes the necessity of making the connections between the education of boys and the education of girls.

Underachievement and associated socio-cultural factors

In South Australian education there has been an increased focus on student learning outcomes and on accountability. This has meant closer analysis of data by group and by gender.

This state has always taken the lead in exploring issues about learning and educational disadvantage. The South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment is currently testing the latest understandings in the areas of improving groups of boys and girls' learning outcomes and achieving gender equity. A pilot project linking behaviour management issues and curriculum has been completed and a major project on gender, literacy and disadvantage is still in progress. Individual schools and preschools are also taking up programs and strategies to improve learning. Teachers grapple on a daily basis with what to do to challenge the differences between groups of boys and groups of girls' behaviours, attitudes and educational outcomes.

Literacy achievement

In 1999 there were a number of school sites where boys achieved significantly better or on a par with girls in the Years 3 and 5 Basic Skills Test (BST) literacy component. Some preliminary investigations have revealed the diversity of the sites in terms of socio-economic status. In the identified more affluent schools, both boys and girls were doing better than the state mean. In the identified disadvantaged schools, where the boys were doing as well as or better than the girls, both groups were achieving at a lower level than the state mean.

In a small sample of the schools, including both the affluent and disadvantaged, where boys were doing as well as girls, there were common key features:

- consistently held expectations that boys as well as girls required the skills and understandings to be literate in all learning areas.
- the firm belief that boys could learn that masculinity need not be at odds with being an engaged and successful school literacy learner.
- targeted and explicit teaching of literacy skills
- making links with home and community knowledge

- teachers undertaking ongoing professional development and focusing on the complexities of their experiences and the influence this has on learning

Further investigations including longitudinal studies could bring firmer ideas about practice and strategies that succeed with both boys and girls. In particular, more investigation is necessary to understand and respond to the significantly lower achievement levels of boys and girls from low socio-economic backgrounds. In any investigation this would mean also focusing on the need to improve the achievement levels of Aboriginal boys and girls.

Curriculum, Behaviour Management and Gender Project

The South Australian system has designed and implemented a range of curriculum materials to specifically address educational disadvantage. The teaching and learning materials set out to assist students from the early years to year 10 to identify and challenge the limiting aspects of expectations and assumptions around boys and girls' behaviours and to improve learning. The materials cited below also provided opportunities in a range of learning areas to practice the skills to contribute to more hopeful and just futures.

- *We will take part: Civics and citizenship and The ABC of being a critically literate citizen*
- *The Shopping maze for Girls and Boys: Technology and English Adapt Adopt Share series: (Draft)*
- *Girls and boys come out to play: teaching about gender construction and sexual harassment in English and Studies of Society and Environment*
- *Gender Perspectives: How the individual, school and society shape status and identity based on sex*
- *Integrated science and mathematics units for the middle years: House and garden chemicals and Home and away in space*
- *Australia Fair: teaching and learning for a more socially just Australia*
- *Texts the heart of the English curriculum, Boys will be boys: Teaching gender perspectives to young students*

The Curriculum, Behaviour Management and Gender Pilot Project was implemented as a pilot study in six schools and supported by gender equity curriculum officers in 1998-1999. The purpose of the study was to use schools' work with the curriculum materials and to consider the effectiveness of addressing issues of behaviour in the context of teaching and learning to promote better learning outcomes. (Details of the project are provided in Attachment No 9)

The pilot project was guided by advice from academics with wide experience in this area. Professor Valerie Walkerdine and Professor Bob Connell are recognised for their extensive research in this area. Bob Connell in his paper *Teaching the boys: New Research on Masculinity and Gender Strategies for schools* offers a useful reminder of the importance of this project.

“It is clear from responses to current debates about boys that many teachers and parents see these issues as urgent. Schools are launching “programs for boys” whether researchers or policy makers give them guidance or not. Some of the resulting efforts are, unfortunately, little informed by accurate knowledge or careful thinking about masculinity. Equally unfortunately, researchers have not done a great deal to help schools. It is time for this situation to change. It can change, because a new generation of social scientific research on masculinity allows a fresh understanding of the issues in education”

Teaching the Boys, Bob Connell, p 208

Similarly the issues for girls and the impact of masculinity on their experiences at school needs greater attention.

The project drew on the work of Professor R. W. Connell and in particular his workshop outline, ‘Developing school-based, research informed responses to issues about boys and masculinity’ (R. W. Connell, August 1999, unpublished – Attachment No 9).

Gender, Literacy and Disadvantage: A project examining gender and disadvantage through critical literacy approaches

The project arose out of expressed concerns about the literacy achievement of boys. At the time of the project’s inception there had been considerable media and community speculation as to whether schools were meeting the needs of boys. This project is concerned with the complex interaction between the social construction of gender, literacy and poverty. While the project is concerned with meeting the needs of *all* students who are not gaining the literacy outcomes needed to participate fully in school and the community, it is drawing on research and data collected specifically in relation to boys and schooling.

The project seeks to engage schools in exploring critical literacy approaches across learning areas. It was considered after many interviews with staff from declared disadvantaged schools, that these approaches should assist boys and girls to improve their literacy learning through an understanding of the social construction of gender. The social construction of gender was described as the ways in which masculinity and femininity are strongly associated with a range of behaviours for each sex that support or limit engagement with learning. This approach can assist teachers to promote the idea that literacy skills are just as relevant to the lives of boys and men as they are to the lives of girls and women.

(Details about the implementation of the project in school sites is available in Attachment No 20)

Learning to Learn Project

The South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment has established a \$3 million Learning to Learn Project 1999-2001. The seventy project preschool and schools are funded to explore models of best practice and to positively influence other schools to enhance students’ learning for the future.

The preschools and schools are looking at who their learners are and which strategies will support their diverse learning requirements.

The preschools and schools are examining:

- beliefs and assumptions put forward about children's learning in school
- school culture and connections to student learning outcomes
- the interdependence of emotional and intellectual learning.

One project school has aimed to foster resilience and optimism in all learners at all year levels.

Programs that are supporting the schools' work include the Boys and literacy teaching materials and a middle schooling approach. (More information about the project in Attachment No. 1i)

Early Years

To support the exciting and innovative work taking place in the early years of education in Department child care centres, preschools and schools (from 0 to 8 years) a number of significant initiatives are listed within the Early Years Strategy (Attachment No. 2). This strategy represents a practical theory-based approach and includes:

- Early Assistance
- First Steps
- Reading Recovery
- Pre-school assessment and reporting and curriculum support materials (for example, *Paraprofessionals and literacy support-training workshops, case studies and practical activities*)
- School Entry Assessment

There is also a school and centre action-research component. For example, a suburban junior primary school is supporting boys to broaden their range of play activities with planned intervention involving strategic use of single sex groupings and high expectations. A pre-school centre is assisting boys to understand themselves as literacy learners by strengthening the emphasis on literacy in the outside play areas and re-designing all active play areas to include literacy activities. For example, providing clipboards and chalkboards to record activity in the block and car play areas.

Another important feature in assisting boys as well as girls to connect with centre and school literacies is to work respectfully with their home and community's literacies. Connections are made with home literacies using a range of strategies such as persona toys or literacy tool kits. *Texts on Television* (DECS, 1997) presented the case for using the potential of much untapped popular and community knowledge boys and girls bring to school with them from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. Opportunities are provided to open up shared classroom discussion and assist boys and girls to examine the constructions of, for example,

masculinity and sport and the pleasures and the limitations involved. (Attachment No 21)

Early Years Curriculum materials

- ***Civics and citizenship: we will take part***

An example of work initiated following the implementation of the curriculum materials *Civics and citizenship: we will take part* (DETE, 1998) (Attachment No 22) is taken from a Reception to Year 7 school in the northern metropolitan area. The program *A fair place to live* is based on a whole school approach. *A fair place to live* (Attachment No 23) can be also used in conjunction with *Discovering Democracy* (Curriculum Corporation 1997).

The diagram below outlines some of the teaching structures and practices, which support girls' and boys' learning in civics and citizenship. These structures and practices embed civics and citizenship in a learning environment which values and promotes diversity, inclusivity and respectful relations between the girls and boys, girls and girls, boys and boys as well as between teachers and students.

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| <p>An integrated Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child protection programmes• Gender and violence• Construction of gender• Cultural perspectives• Aboriginal perspectives• Model and acknowledge positive |
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The teachers with the years one, two and three students recognised that there must be explicit and respectful teaching of the skills and understandings necessary for conducting social relations especially for many of the boys, to make the learning successful for all students. It was clear that many of the boys needed to be supported to change their behaviours and attitudes and take part in a broader range of classroom learning (eg drama, role-play, thinking, focused discussions with a partner and taking different roles and responsibilities in a group).

The teachers' work was based on the premise that respectful teacher/student relations and a civil, caring classroom climate was essential to effectively teaching a unit on civics and citizenship.

The teachers also held high expectations about both boys and girls. They supported all students to be researchers that is, thinkers, planners, communicators, analysts, and futurists.

Another key element in the work was the focus on understanding gender as a social construct and the limitations to be challenged and possibilities to be taken up by boys and by girls as they understand sense of identity and relations with others and what this could mean in terms of Australian society and citizenship.

The teachers said their purpose in working on this topic was to assist girls and boys to gain an increased understanding of the diversity of modern Australian society and its citizenry, which includes women and men, Indigenous Australians, people of diverse cultures and with different abilities.

- ***Girls and boys come out to play: teaching about gender construction and sexual harassment in English and society and environment for reception to year 3.***

The curriculum materials *Girls and boys come out to play* (DECS 1996) (Attachment No 24) were developed and trialed in six sites including a child care centre. The materials in English and society and environment with links to the arts and technology presented ways to connect the formal curriculum learning outcomes and behaviour management

The program includes a futures perspective which engages the students in playing with ideas about what a future might look like which is based on equal relationships between girls and boys and allows the possibilities of just and equitable learning outcomes for both sexes.

Strategies to support learning include an accompanying book 'Harry goes to school' allowing girls and boys to examine Harry's first days at school and how he had to prove he was a boy and not 'a girl'. Boys and girls have the opportunities to research gender in different places at school including the playground and in traditional school texts as well as popular cultural texts.

These materials have been adapted for use in many schools and centres, acting as a tool to activate effective learning about gender roles and relations and how both boys and girls can have positive academic and social experiences.

- ***It's Elementary: teaching about gay and lesbian issues***

As noted in Part A, South Australian government schools have been identified as recognising the impact of harassment on participation and learning outcomes and being successful in implementing sexual harassment grievance procedures to support improved learning (C.Collins et al). The over representation of boys in the statistics on behaviour management, including harassment, as perpetrators and victims is one of the features schools grapple with daily. A number of schools are working on the barriers to learning associated with homophobic harassment. Teachers have based work, for example, on the material It's Elementary: teaching about Gay and Lesbian Issues (Chasnoff, D. and Cohen, H. 1997 see Annotated bibliography).

The material aims to show that:

- ***the learning of all students can be affected by homophobia***
- ***all educators can be powerful role models to their students, demonstrating that in our society we believe in fairness and justice and treating everyone with respect***
- ***to prevent prejudice and violence, we must begin to address this issue in the early years, and continue through primary and secondary years. This will also include unlearning prejudice through ongoing intervention work.***

The schools worked with strategies such as examining language to assist their students to learn about difference and equality aiming for better learning outcomes

Middle Years

The Action Plan for the Middle Schooling Years was developed and implemented by the Department in 1994. The following programs build on the key features of the Plan (Attachment 1h)

Staff and students at a large Western suburbs high school have worked towards developing a supportive and challenging learning culture using a number of strategies.

This school has a gender imbalance. There are considerably more boys than girls in the student population. Initial data collection revealed significant gender issues requiring attention. The attention focused on improving relationships between students as a means of increasing participation and successful academic and social outcomes. Looking more closely into issues of sexual harassment and homophobia was fundamental to the work of improving the quality of relationships.

The school developed a specific specialised sport focus (baseball). Environmental studies were emphasised across the curriculum and a contemporary performing arts program has been introduced with a focus on dance and music.

An effective transition program has been introduced to all local primary schools which has increased enrolments of both girls and boys.

Concurrently a strong middle school focus provided staff with time to review and reform curriculum, integrate some units, develop multi level programming and use a range of methodologies and specific literacy strategies across all learning areas.

More recently the school has focused on developing thinking skills and strategies across the curriculum 8-12. The use of critical thinking within a literacy framework has supported ongoing work in understanding how gender works to limit or broaden learning.

The development of respectful relations between teachers and students, girls-girls, girls-boys, boys-boys has been approached from a variety of standpoints:

- review of behaviour management procedure and processes
- listening to and acting on student voice
- negotiation
- clear and high expectations of all boys and girls across the curriculum.

Boys and girls in the middle years openly voice their sense of enjoyment and engagement with achievements in the school.

A northern country high school consciously works to build effective relationships as the basis for learning. Strategies include:

- Smaller teams of teachers work with the student groups years 8-10 and the integration of some learning areas
- Parental involvement in school and class activities is encouraged
- Social skills and practices are explicitly taught in all learning areas
- Assessment tasks are rigorous, varied, negotiable and open ended to ensure achievement for all
- Counselling support is ongoing for individual groups and whole classes
- Students at risk identification and intervention is consistently monitored by a student support team
- All staff take on role modelling and mentoring roles for boys and girls

Year 10 intervention processes for students at risk and those with behavioural difficulties involve work in curriculum that encapsulate the following:

Futures planning, identification of blocks in learning eg literacy skills, work experience, conflict resolution training and at times withdrawal for particular organisational tasks.

The school is working towards supporting smaller classes for year 9 and 10, greater diversity in subject offerings, negotiated curriculum and community involvement leading to development of enterprise attributes.

Middle Years: curriculum materials

- ***Gender perspectives: how the individual, school and society shape identity and status based on sex (for years 7-10 in society and environment and English)***

This document was produced in 1995. It was developed to support teachers trying to include gender perspectives in learning areas. It provides lesson plans and professional development information for teachers. The lesson plans are designed to assist girls and boys to better understand the influence and impact of the construction of gender as it relates to areas of English and society and environment.

One North Eastern suburban secondary school adapted *Gender perspectives* to use as an integrated English and Language (Spanish) unit of work. One of the aims of the unit was to inform boys and girls about the impact of gender on the lives of young people and to do so from Australian and Spanish cultural perspectives. Sport and the arts were topics and included bull fighting and the artist Frida Kahlo. Another important aim was to keep boys interested in the learning areas of languages and English and access to exploring socio-cultural features of human experience. This endeavour was based on research showing that boys could expand their learning outcomes by expanding their attitudes and subject choices (Teese et al 1997, 1998, Collins et al 1996, 1998). While the school has the impression that the unit of work and the ongoing discussion assisted boys to move across narrow gender stereotypic views impacting on their learning, it will be at least two years before data about subject choice and performance are available. This example of work from a school site is a reminder of the need for longitudinal studies to explore theory into practice. It's also a reminder that changes in the experiences of and outcomes of girls and boys in schooling are not immediate and need sustained work. (Attachment No 25)

- **Countering Racism for Years 8-10**

A key focus of educating students for the 21st century is the development of critical thinking skills to analyse what is presented in a range of texts. These skills included reading, viewing and listening for bias and discrimination which help form a particular way of viewing issues. The portrayal of Aboriginal people in texts has contributed to stereotyping, generalisations and racism in Australian society.

This document supports teachers and students to engage with the complexity of racism issues. It takes the position that all people are influenced by racism, whether as perpetrators, victims or as members of a society which privileges some people over others. Racism against Aboriginal students, families and communities is a major block to access, attendance, participation retention, and the opportunity to increase learning outcomes for Aboriginal students.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment is committed to the development of racist-free centres and schools. This curriculum document address racism in its subtle and overt forms in texts in the learning areas of English, the art, health and physical education and society and environment. The connections are made with anti-discrimination legislation and school and centre grievance procedures. This initiative supports the implementation of the Department forward-looking documents, *The Plan for Aboriginal Education in Early Childhood and Schooling 1999 to 2003* and *Reconciliation Statement, Schools and Children's services*.

These materials which set out to support school communities to work towards a racism-free environment were trialed in a number of middle school settings in country and metropolitan areas. The trialing demonstrated the worth of this curriculum approach to a school culture building respect for difference and equality. The project manager reported that issues of gender were also addressed as learners worked through the issues.

- **Countering racism strategy: curriculum materials implementation plan**

As with the implementation of any new documents the critical factors are information for schools about the arrival of the materials on site and about the availability of familiarisation sessions to support implementation.

It is clear that experiences of racism of an institutional or personal nature for boys and girls affects their attitude to, and experience of, education. By taking part in implementing countering racism strategies the teachers are becoming better informed and hence are able to take a knowledgeable stance and act as positive role models. Boys need role models who take a strong stance against racism.

The purposes of the implementation workshops is to explore why racism exists, why people behave in racist ways, how Aboriginal people are constructed through all types of texts and how critical literacy can be used to deconstruct entrenched ideas. Legal acts and lodging complaints are also covered. Though the workshops are based on the new Countering Racism materials aimed at teachers of students in Years 8, 9 & 10, the session supplies valuable information for people who have not studied, or taught, facts about contact history and its effects.

The Department's countering racism policy is currently being reviewed. An implementation plan is also being developed to support the elimination of racism in all schools and pre-school centres.

- **Integrated science and mathematics units for the middle years: *Home and away in space* and *House and garden chemicals***

The two units of integrated science and mathematics were produced as an outcome of the Gender Equity Component of the National Equity Program conducted in South Australian Disadvantaged School Program Schools and Country Area Program Schools. The materials draw on the good practice developed in these schools to support a diverse range of boys and girls to achieve in science and mathematics in the middle years.

The materials provide opportunities for students to develop and practice a range of skills and understandings of literacy and numeracy learning in mathematics and science. The materials have been successfully implemented in a range of school settings. Qualitative information has revealed an increase in student participation and engagement in the learning using the methodologies and strategies detailed. (Attachment No 25)

- ***Breaking the silence: teaching and learning about domestic violence in the middle years.***

The materials were developed as part of the state implementation of the Students at Risk Program. The most successful practices undertaken to better support the social and academic needs of all students have been those in which the school have used the materials within structure of a multi-faceted approach of policy, professional development, curriculum, and community and inter-agency support. The schools have adapted the materials set out in the health and physical education and society and environment learning areas to suit their own local needs and integrated material into other learning areas such as the arts and English. (Attachment No 26)

- **Single sex teaching methodology**

Research on the use of single-sex as a strategy has identified the use of single sex classes or groups as a widely used teaching strategy in South Australia (The *Education of Girls Three Year Action Plan 1992-1994* implementation report). Further data collected in 1995 and 1996 confirmed consistent use of single sex groupings in conjunction with mixed groups. The data confirmed that all types of schools, reception to year 12, including special schools, regarded single sex methodology as a strategy to develop a supportive learning environment for girls and boys to improve their learning. The attitudes and behaviours of both girls and boys were seen as crucial to improving the education outcomes and participation of girls and boys as equal partners in schools and in society.

Schools report that use of single sex groupings in particular learning areas allow:

- opportunities to explore, understand and deal with the construction of gender and the range of behaviours associated with each sex which can place them or put others around them at risk
- boys to learn more skills about acting cooperatively and be more socially responsible as young males
- increased participation in learning areas because there is less harassment and disruption for example, for those groups of boys who are subjected to homophobic harassment
- boys to move from short, focussed tasks to more sustained work
- explicit teaching in the areas of oral and written communication for groups of boys
to broaden their participation in learning areas such as English, Arts and Languages

K Rowe (ACER) has recently confirmed the effectiveness of single sex teaching methodologies in the senior years through the study *VCE Data Project (1994 - 1999)*

A large southern area R-12 school which includes a middle years schooling approach has set up single sex classes for boys and for girls. Single sex classes are

used extensively for all year 8 and 9 students in the arts (dance, drama, music), technology, languages and health and physical education.

The teachers of the language, Japanese have high expectations for all students' achievement. They have built up a range of strategies to increase boys' success and decrease their resistance to a subject that is not compulsory in Year 9.

Within health and physical education classes boys experience a wide range of sports. 80% of girls and boys in year 8 participate in after school sports activities. These activities are varied eg touch football for girls and boys, girls in soccer, boys in netball and do not involve a competitive league table. Discussion and analysis of the ethics of sports and participation of students, parents and coaches is built in to the formal curriculum offerings.

Single sex in early intervention

Junior Primary and Primary schools diversified the morning program by allocating single sex sessions for various activities. This required constant monitoring and often teachers spend even more time with boys to encourage them to participate in activities other than 'blocks' and 'woodwork'. In single sex settings where for example only the blocks, woodwork and technical apparatus were available teachers found girls' participation and engagement increased but in the coeducational setting girls often retreated from these activities. The domination and control by the boys limited the girls' access to the materials. MacNaughton (1997) points out:

... we need to rethink why children act how they do in order to develop new and innovative ways of working with boys and girls. We need to understand how much of their play world is fundamentally about gender relations. We need to shift from a focus on how many boys and girls are in block play to questions of how they are playing and who benefits from the play that takes place. Such a shift in focus in this and other areas of children's play offer new challenges and new possibilities for gender equity strategies in early childhood programmes.

(MacNaughton p.66)

One of the support programs available for schools to improve boys' learning is *Boys-Talk: A Program for Young Men about Masculinity, Non-violence and Relationships* (MASA 1996). Schools that most successfully implement the program understand that a short course (10 – 11 sessions) is not enough and that the principles and strategies embedded in Boys-Talk need to be drawn on for whole school connected approaches (Attachment No 32).

Sport and masculinity

For some time, studies have shown that boys tend to dominate the playing fields and open spaces. They participate in competitive sport to a higher percentage than girls (35% to 23% at Year 6 level and 54% to 30% at Year 10 (Collins et al, 1996) and

games that involve more energetic use of their bodies (B Lingard and P Douglas, 1999), B Frank, 1995, L Fitzclarence et al, 1997-98).

The role of sport and physical activity in the development of masculine identity is one seen as paramount in much of Australian culture. This is reflected and enacted in school culture, evident in the early years. There is often a tension between being competitive which may involve body contact and high aggression in school sport and being a cooperative and calm student. Schools working productively with this issue have not banned all the popular male sports (like Australian Rules Football). They have worked to provide a balanced range of competitive and cooperative games in conjunction with activities that emphasised self-initiative and self worth without having to win at all costs. Programs designed to support schools in pursuing a broader approach to what boys are learning when they take part in sport include revised approaches to coaching in underage football. For example, sexist, racist and homophobic remarks are countered and understood as not part of the game. The role that Aboriginal players the Australian Football League (AFL) have taken to address racism in sport has been an example to draw on in school learning.

A Year 6 and Year 1-2 at a country area school are using the Sydney Olympics as a topic to promote civility and acceptance of difference. Some of the issues around values and dispositions and the Games are being explored in curriculum through activities based on topics and questions such as: codes of behaviour, discrimination in sport, and stereotyping.

Programs Focusing on Groups of Boys

Aboriginal boys

The smaller communities on the Anangu lands have strong connections with their schools. This supports the boys in schooling particularly until they are early adolescents. At this stage, initiation and cultural responsibilities can clash with participation in the Western European schooling approaches. To address the need to overcome the barriers and combine cultural responsibilities with schooling has been approached through one significant strategy. The initiation process is now a South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Community Studies Unit and supports connections between the cultures.

The Aboriginal communities are very concerned about their boys and girls having access to and achieving in Western schooling as well as maintaining their culture. Anangu Education strategies include mentoring (usually elders), a dedicated project officer and VET for Aboriginal students starting in Year 9 rather than Year 10 to support retention. A model is now being developed with Commonwealth funding to involve more Aboriginal students, mainly boys, in Vocational Education Training (VET).

Another program recently conducted in a group of districts in South Australia is the Aboriginal Boys Program facilitated by Aboriginal Services East Group of Districts. The program ran for eight weeks. Sessions were held weekly. The program

targeted Aboriginal boys aged between ten and twelve and addressed a range of issues for this group. The main issues were:

- Health
- Behaviours and relationships
- Careers
- Life choices and
- Cultural identity.

Each week a session focussed on a particular issue for the group who were targeted for the program. Student counsellors from the sites involved also contributed to aspects of the program. Details of the sessions and an evaluation of the program is attached (Attachment No 27). The Aboriginal Services East Group of Districts are keen to run further programs of this kind. This term an Aboriginal Girls' Program will be running.

Early years

Early childhood is a major focus in Aboriginal education in South Australia. One of the most successful strategies to engage Aboriginal boys and girls is having a meaningful cultural presence on site. 4.3% of early childhood staffing is Aboriginal. This becomes around 1% in junior primary and into the middle years. South Australia is hosting a major early years conference in 2001. All international, national and state workshop presenters have a requirement to focus on Aboriginal education as one of the four key areas.

Early Years and Rurality

The project, *Why Aboriginal people use early childhood education services, and why they don't* was conducted in three rural cities in South Australia in 1998-99. While the project did not extract gender issues as a focus, the expectations expressed though the recommendations were equally held for boys and girls' academic, social and cultural outcomes.

One of the key factors identified as essential to supporting Aboriginal boys and girls in early childhood settings was the explicit integration of Aboriginal culture that is the visible signs of the presence of Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal family members also strongly expect that their boys and their girls will successfully learn the skills and understandings they need to engage with schooling.

Recommendations from the project include:

- ensure that Aboriginal culture is obviously integrated in the centre and curriculum
- implement an active anti-bias curriculum and approach in the preschool setting
- ensure that the literacy and numeracy strengths of Aboriginal boys and girls are identified and their needs explicitly met in a play context. Individual learning plans for each Aboriginal learner should be a feature of the program
- discuss how literacy and numeracy strategies are incorporated in the preschool curriculum with the family and build upon the home literacies.

The positive and productive relations between the preschool centres and Aboriginal families established during the project indicate the need to identify the success factors and understand how to sustain and expand these.

Boys of Diverse Cultural and linguistic backgrounds

The Department of Education, Training and Employment is part of the state government's *Managing Diversity – People Mean Business* initiative. This means promoting an inclusive and vibrant organisational culture which recognises, values and fully develops the diversity of employees. *Managing Diversity* links with the aims of local school management (Partnerships 21), in that it has a focus on equity and leadership, and encourages responding flexibly to the needs of staff, clients and local communities.

Unity in Diversity: Building a culture of peace project

The Unity in Diversity is an important strategy undertaken by the Department of Education, Training and Employment in partnership with the SA Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission

“to implement a strategy that will affirm, promote, celebrate and reward exemplary multicultural educational practices and programs in schools and centres, and which will contribute to community harmony.”

The project has involved over 100 schools, and child care centres to develop projects/activities on the theme of 'Building a Culture of Peace' with a focus on cultural understanding and countering racism.

Over 60% of the schools involved are country schools, 25% of all projects are from child care, and 25% of the project schools are secondary schools.

The project supports the UNESCO *Building a Culture of Peace* initiative for the Year 2000 and schools will have an opportunity to link with the UNESCO associated schools project network in the Asia Pacific region.

Many of the projects involve teaching boys about the valuing of cultural and linguistic diversity, community harmony and cultural understandings that support development of socialisation skills especially in the early and middle years of schooling.

There is also a countering racism focus that teaches boys about racial harassment, grievance procedures and developing positive attitudes to diversity.

The boys learn many socialisation skills in the project through involvement in drama, art work, music, working on-line with Culture of Peace tutors, and direct curriculum work through a range of learning areas.

Boys' literacy needs are also being addressed through the project with many opportunities for literacy development through the activities developed at each school.

Newly arrived ESL boys are also involved in the project at several schools where the projects are linking with the ESL curriculum to assist in literacy development. Some boys are developing their literacy skills and cultural awareness through

working on-line and communicating with students from other countries through e-mail based intercultural classroom connections projects.

At the end of the project successful strategies and outcomes will be documented and disseminated to all schools with recommendations made for broader implementation.

Boys with learning difficulties

The Vacation Literacy Courses were a ministerial initiative introduced as a pilot in South Australia in 1997. The courses were set up as a literacy intervention strategy for middle school students experiencing learning difficulties. The programs are conducted three times a year in eight different metropolitan and country primary and secondary schools. The program is funded by Disadvantaged Schools Program component of the Commonwealth Literacy Program.

The students who take part in the voluntary program have been identified with learning difficulties by teachers by class teachers and other relevant school personnel. Students who have attended the courses are in the ratio 10 male to 7 female.

Strategies which schools have adopted to improve boys' with disabilities and behaviours include:

- ◆ Boys and relationship courses for students with disabilities and behaviour/social/emotional issues).
These have been conducted in many schools, early to middle years. Over 1000 staff have attended whole school sessions.
- ◆ Developing social/emotional intelligence through an exploration of risk-taking behaviours with a focus on boys courses. Sessions are conducted in classes (one lesson a week for six weeks). The aims of the programs include developing responsibility and enriching gender relationships.
- ◆ The inclusion of more outdoor education to promote self reliance and self worth.
- ◆ Increasing alliances with organisations such as Restless Dance, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Premier's Youth Challenge.
- ◆ Making the links between strategic use of programs and school curriculum, teaching and learning.

Schools consider that all of the above strategies can be further reviewed and reworked to provide a holistic approach to issues of masculinity, disabilities, learning and social relationships (Attachment No 28).

Boys from low socio-economic backgrounds

The socio-economic background of students is a significant influence on educational outcomes (J Kenway, C Collins & J McLeod 2000)

For schools with a high number of school cardholder boys and girls, the difficult issues of the social and emotional health of a significant number of students increases the complexity of working with the students to gain their full entitlements of schooling. The needs of young boys and girls in the social and emotional areas seem to appear at an earlier age. It is clear that there are issues in

the social and emotional health areas that are well beyond the capacities of any school to deal with.

In a Northern area school with a high percentage of school card holders and Aboriginal students the links are being made between local community, increasing globalisation and students requiring the learning to be good communicators and effective citizens.

The school's structures, curriculum, programs and strategies set out to promote student sense of self as a learner with a place in the community. This school has recently won an award for its project, Deadly writin', readin' and talking to improve the literacy learning outcomes of Indigenous students. (Attachment No 31)

Professional development

1 Literacy and disadvantage

During Term 3, 2000 a State Conference is being held to address issues such as gender construction, literacy learning and disadvantage in education. The conference also represents the culmination of the work of six schools that have been involved in the Gender, Literacy and Disadvantage Project. The Conference is called "Cracking the Code" and promotional information has been provided with this document. Some internationally renowned guest speakers will be presenting. These include Professor Blye Frank, Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, Professor Valerie Walkerdine the University of Western Sydney, Professor Jane Kenway Language and Literacy Research Centre at the University of South Australia and Professor Wayne Martino Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia.

Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools

From 1997 to 2000, over 4000 early years to senior years educators have taken part in conferences, seminars and workshops focused on the five strategic directions of *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*.

A very strong feature of how work was undertaken at different school and centre sites was strategic engagement with gender equity projects and curriculum and curriculum support materials as ongoing gender work. For example, a country school with a Reception to Year 7 student population in the Disadvantaged Schools Program and with a high Aboriginal enrolment was involved with both the Curriculum, Behaviour Management and Gender Project and Gender, Literacy and Disadvantage Project. This has provided the school staff and community with sustained and connected support. Across the two projects, most were working with curriculum materials designed to assist teachers and students to identify and examine attitudes and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity.

These included the Reception – Year 3 materials *Girls and boys come out to play* and *Boys will be boys: Teaching gender perspectives to young children* (see Reference list).

Two of the project schools, country, and metropolitan, which included early years and years 6 to 7 learners were also participants in developing and trialing *Girls and boys come out to play* and the metropolitan school also trialed *Civics and citizenship: we will take part*.

A wide range of system and school-based professional development continues to promote opportunities to expand understandings of the gender implications of teaching and learning. Further details of these programs can be viewed on the department's web site http://www.nexus.edu.au/t_d/

Other successful practice

Some of the work described in this submission is supported by research undertaken in the United Kingdom by Debbie Epstein (Visiting Fellow to the University of South Australia from the University of London).

The research "The violence – resilient school : A comparative study of schools and their environments includes the objective;

"To explore the effects of gender, race and class, as well as school culture and management, on the prevention of violence".

The research report reminds us of the importance of long term consistent approaches to improving school/site culture:

"The most violence-resilient schools were marked by the coherence of school policy and philosophy.

This was achieved in one case by an unusually stable staff. In another, a process of induction into the schools' unified approach was also a feature.

This description is firmly supported by the findings of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training in 'Sticks and stones – the report on violence in Australian schools, March 1994.

In the section 'Overview and Recommendations' the report states:

"Invariably these are schools where the principal shows strong leadership and where the principal and teachers recognise that violent behaviour can be changed, and are dedicated to affecting that change. These schools have developed a whole school approach to addressing school violence. These schools ensure that students are aware of their rights.

Importantly, however, emphasis is placed on students' responsibilities to themselves and others. Rules are applied consistently and fairly and have clearly stated consequences for positive and negative behaviours. The rules are developed jointly between parents, teachers and students to create a sense of ownership. Appropriate behaviour is taught, not as a separate curriculum item but as an integral part of the teaching process. Teachers are responsible for the pastoral care of students in their class, irrespective of the subjects that they teach" [page v, Sticks and Stones, 1994].

Current initiatives

Essential Learnings and the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework

In South Australia we are in the process of developing the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework to cover birth to year 12. The Framework builds on the existing eight areas of learning and the inclusion of five Essential Learnings. The Essential Learnings are understandings, dispositions and capabilities that are crucial to all learners and citizens and develop throughout a person's life.

The draft of the Framework has recently been through an intensive trialing process in over 120 sites across South Australian Government schools. A further 40 sites from Catholic Education have also participated in the trial.

Feedback from the trial process was strong in relation to the Essential Learnings, their usefulness and their capacity to make explicit for teachers, students and communities the importance of capabilities and understandings previously seen as implicit.

The five Essential Learnings at this stage are:

- Identity
- Interdependence
- Futures
- Thinking
- Communication

The Essential Learnings have been developed according to best practice in South Australian sites, interstate and overseas information and research and the increasing interest in and demand for more accountability for the social outcomes of schooling. (*Adelaide declaration on the national goals for schooling 1999*)

As a strategy to improve literacy learning and understanding of self and others through a greater emphasis on communication, the Essential Learnings will be significant. There is already widespread support for their implementation at all levels of education.

International Year for a Culture of Peace

This year is the International Year for a Culture of Peace followed by a Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non Violence. It is proposed that the Department will select a different theme each year during the Decade, with the theme for 2001 being developing emotional resilience. This will provide opportunities for work on the emotional and academic outcomes of schooling

The State Collaborative Approach for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

The State Collaborative Approach (SCA) is the policy position of the Ministerial Forum for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. It is based on a set of principles, for example, that all forms of domestic violence are unacceptable in any group, culture

and creed. The SCA pulls together a broad range of action across South Australia and promotes concerted government and non-government agency and community work for domestic violence prevention and the prevention of family violence in Indigenous communities. The Ministerial Forum is comprised of non-government representatives and the Ministers of Human Services, Education, Police, Status of Women, and Aboriginal Affairs and is chaired by the Attorney-General (Attachment No 29).

The Department of Education, Training and Employment has responsibility for primary and intervention work in assisting students to engage in non violent relations and to provide a safe and supportive learning environment.

Breaking the silence: teaching and learning about domestic violence is an example of curriculum materials developed to support students in the middle years to understand domestic violence issues and to work with the capacities required to develop relationships without violence. This is supported by other agency work such as the 'Violence in Relationships? – No Way' project in Community health services in Southern Adelaide and supported by the Department of Human Resources. This program includes young men acting as mentors for boys in secondary school whose behaviours are disrespectful towards girls and women. Schools also work with agencies to support students who are at risk because of domestic violence.

Drug Strategy

The Department is implementing a Drug Strategy over 2000 – 2002 that will support all schools, R-12 to develop their own drug strategy. The Strategy takes a holistic approach to the management of drug related issues and strongly emphasises the importance of connectedness to peers, family, community and school as a strong protective factor against the harmful use of drugs. Boys are a beneficiary of such a focus as school staff are engaged in professional development that highlights both this factor and the difference behaviours of boys and girls in relation to harmful drug use. One component of the Drug Strategy is the involvement of Port Power footballers in classroom programs for students in the middle years to promote learning about healthy lifestyles. Their involvement holds particular interest for boys.

The extension of strategies to contribute to greater effectiveness

Systems support for schools to assist boys to understand that stereotypic gender roles can limit their learning and life choices:

- The views of literacy and some key learning areas as not masculine for boys needs to be further interrogated with students (see Humanities information, page 2).
- More support for teachers to address these issues based on for example, the Gender Literacy and Disadvantage project
- More explicit teaching and learning materials around issues of gender and ways of supporting students to challenge limitations imposed by stereotypes

Further exploration of examples of successful practice:

- Successful achievement by groups of boys in certain sites, for example the BST results in some SA schools
- Extend the work on the pilot project *Curriculum, behaviour management and gender* focusing on a whole of school and community approach
- Using the connections between popular culture and school culture to understand the impact on understandings of gender
- Working on the importance of relationships on learning for example supporting girls and boys to engage in successful friendships and working in mixed groups (Collins et al 1996, Teese et al 1995, Ainley et al 1999.)

Current initiatives which can be successfully drawn on to enhance understanding of gender:

- Research into the effectiveness of the 'Essential Learnings' in the draft South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework as a means of having issues such as gender identity as part of valued teaching and learning in all sites.
- Collaborative interdepartmental approaches to issues of mental health, gender and teaching and learning.
- Specific investigation of issues for groups of boys to assist targeted program initiatives

Gender issues need to be given greater prominence in any new initiative. Consistent, considered approaches are essential to address these issues. There is some very important research and expertise available to give valuable direction for change to ensure such a fundamental issue in all students' lives is not overlooked. Schools are not merely reflections of our society; they can and do contribute to a better future for all members of society.

Part C

Attachments

Attachment No 1a	<i>The Early Years Strategy</i> 1999 DETE
Attachment No 1b	<i>The plan for Aboriginal education in early childhood and schooling 1999 to 2003</i> , 1999 DETE
Attachment No 1c	<i>Reconciliation Statement</i> 2000 DETE
Attachment No 1d	<i>Multiculturalism in schooling and children's services</i> . Policy Statement. 1995 DECS
Attachment No 1e	<i>Sexual harassment</i> . Policy Statement DECS
Attachment No 1f	<i>Partnerships 21 in local management in care, education and training</i> , 2000 DETE
Attachment No 1g	<i>Students with disabilities</i> . Policy Statement. 1991, Education Department of SA
Attachment No 1h	<i>Action plan for the middle schooling years</i> , 1994 DECS
Attachment No 1i	<i>Learning to learn</i> , 1999, DETE
Attachment No 1j	<i>Foundations for the future</i> , 1997, DECS
Attachment No 2	<i>Student participation in Stage 1 and 2 subjects by sex</i> , 1999, Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA
Attachment No 3	C Collins et al. <i>Gender and school Education: Executive Summary</i> , Equity perspectives on student achievement, No 2, 1998, DETE
Attachment No 4	<i>Basic skills tests: Literacy summary data by sex for South Australia</i> , 1997 – 1999.
Attachment No 5	<i>1998 & 1999 BST data: Like schools analysis</i>
Attachment No 6a	<i>Achievement of girls and boys: The South Australian profiles collection</i> , 1997-1998
Attachment No 6b	<i>Participation and achievement No 2</i> . 1997 profile data for English and science, Xpress DETE
Attachment No 7	Teese et al. <i>Who wins at school? Executive summary</i> . Equity perspectives on student achievement No 1, 1997, DECS
Attachment No 8	<i>Audit of suspensions, exclusions and expulsions</i> , Term 3, 1999, DETE
Attachment No 9	<i>Curriculum, Behaviour Management and Gender</i> , (in press), DETE, 2000
Attachment No 10	<i>What if a student is just different and Teaching for respect</i> Xpress, 2000, DETE
Attachment No 11	Alloway & Gilbert <i>Everything is dangerous. Working with the 'Boys and Literacy' agenda</i> .

Equity perspectives on student achievement No 3, 1998
DETE

Attachment No 12	Division of State Aboriginal Affairs – submission to the Commonwealth Standing Committee Inquiry into the Education of Boys
Attachment No 13	Students with disabilities data. 1999 mid year census
Attachment No 14	1996 Census data: Degree and diploma information by cultural background
Attachment No 15	<i>Men and mental health</i> , A.F. Jorm (ed), National Health & Medical Research Council
Attachment No 16	<i>Background on youth suicide in Australia: What are the causes and risk factors for suicide among young people?</i> 1997 National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, Commonwealth Government
Attachment No 17	Statistics on drug use in Australia 1998 A.I.H.W.
Attachment No 18	<i>Drug and alcohol use among South Australian school children: Bulletin on the SA School children's survey 1996</i>
Attachment No 19	<i>Juveniles as offenders. Juvenile crime and justice : Australia 1997</i> , Australian Institute of Criminology Canberra.
Attachment No 20	Gender, literacy and disadvantage. A project examining gender and disadvantage through critical literacy approaches
Attachment No 21	Texts on television : School literacies through viewing in the first years of school, 1997 DECS
Attachment No 22	Civics and citizenship : we will take part, 1998, DETE
Attachment No 23	<i>Civics and citizenship : a fair place to live</i> Adapt, adopt, share, Lindstrom, H & Paris P. Draft
Attachment No 24	Girls and boys come out to play: teaching about sexual harassment and gender construction, 1997, DETE
Attachment No 25	Integrated science and mathematics units for the middle years : House and garden chemical and Home and away in space, 1999 DETE and Gender perspectives: how the individual, school and society shape status and identity based on sex.,1995, DECS
Attachment No 26	Breaking the silence. Teaching and learning about domestic violence, 1997, DETE
Attachment No 27	Aboriginal boys program. Facilitated by Aboriginal Education Services. East Group of Districts 2000
Attachment No 28	Vacation literacy courses
Attachment No 29	State Collaborative approach to addressing domestic violence, August 2000.

Attachment No 30

Behaviour Support Services

Attachment No 31

Mental health, socio-economic disadvantage and learning and Deadly Write, Xpress Vol 3, No 13 August 2000

Attachment No 32

Boys talk: A Program for Young Men about masculinity, non-violence and relationships