

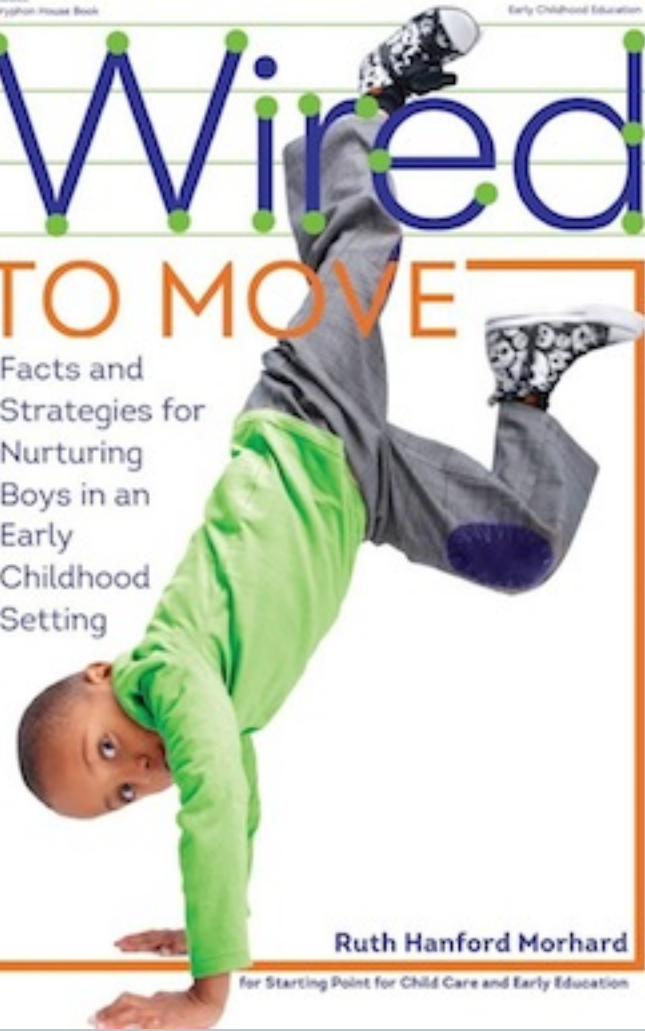
A Gryphon House Book

Early Childhood Education

Wired

TO MOVE

Facts and
Strategies for
Nurturing
Boys in an
Early
Childhood
Setting



Ruth Hanford Morhard

for Starting Point for Child Care and Early Education



Introducing



Constance Walker

Special Needs and The Boys' Project Manager
Starting Point, Cleveland, Ohio

Starting Point

The Early Childhood Resource and Referral Agency
For Northeast Ohio

The Boys' Project

Inspiration for the book
*Wired to Move: Facts and Strategies for Nurturing Boys
in an Early Childhood Setting*



A Question



What do **YOU** know about Boys?

What We Found



National Statistics about Boys

- 80% of discipline and behavioral problems
- 80% of children on Ritalin
- 4 1/2 times more likely to be expelled from preschool than girls
- Lag 1 to 1½ years behind girls in reading and writing skills

About African American Boys



Statistics on African American Boys

- Twice as likely to be expelled as Caucasians, Latinos, Asian-Americans
- 90% of all expelled African-American preschool children
- Cuyahoga County, Ohio, African-American boys with social–emotional problems increased nearly 20% in 10 years

And in Northeast Ohio



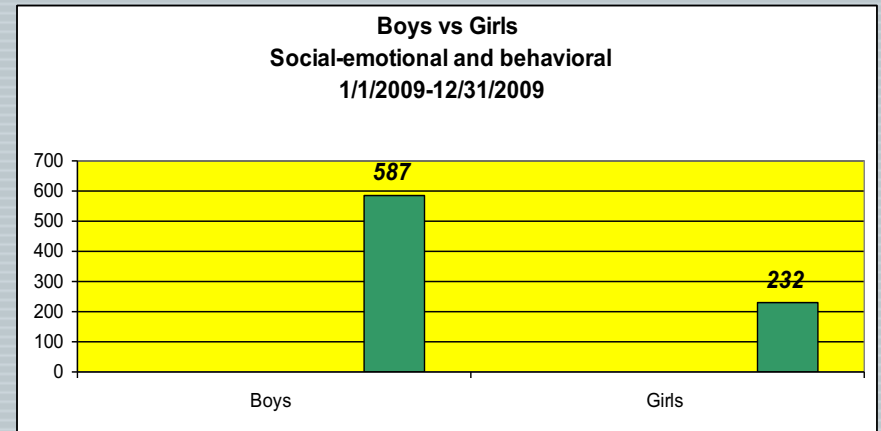
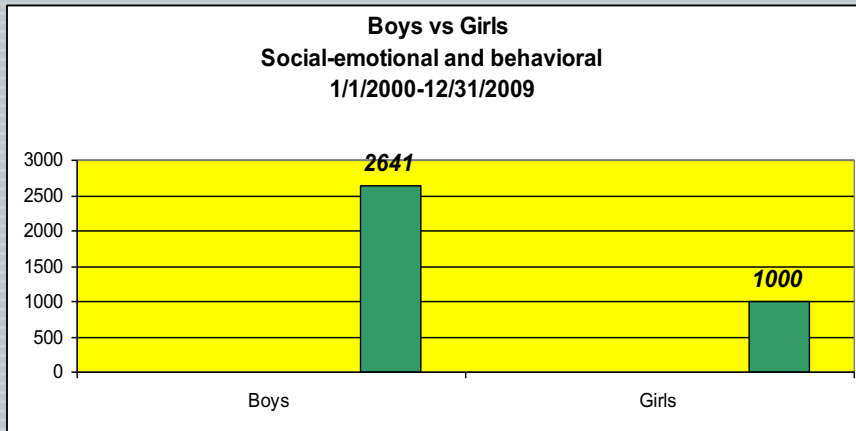
Northeast Ohio Statistics on Boys (2009)

- 72% of children ages 3-6 with social-emotional problems were boys
- Nearly 60% of these boys were African-American
- African-American boys with social-emotional problems increased 19% in 10 years

Taking a Closer Look



Gender Differences

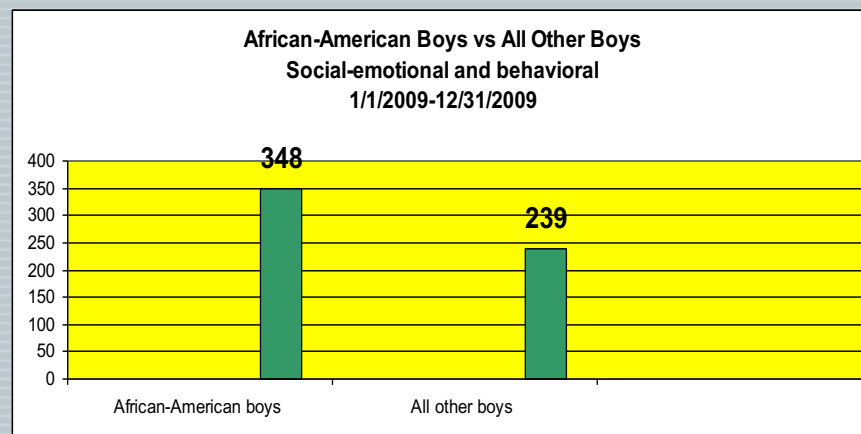
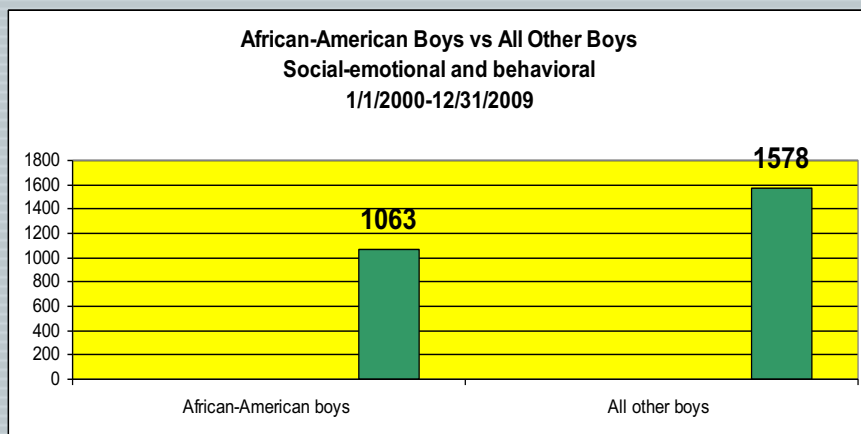


**Boys represent 72% of all children served
for social and emotional concerns**

Taking a Closer Look



African-American Vs. All Other Boys



Over the past 10 years 40% of boys served were African-American

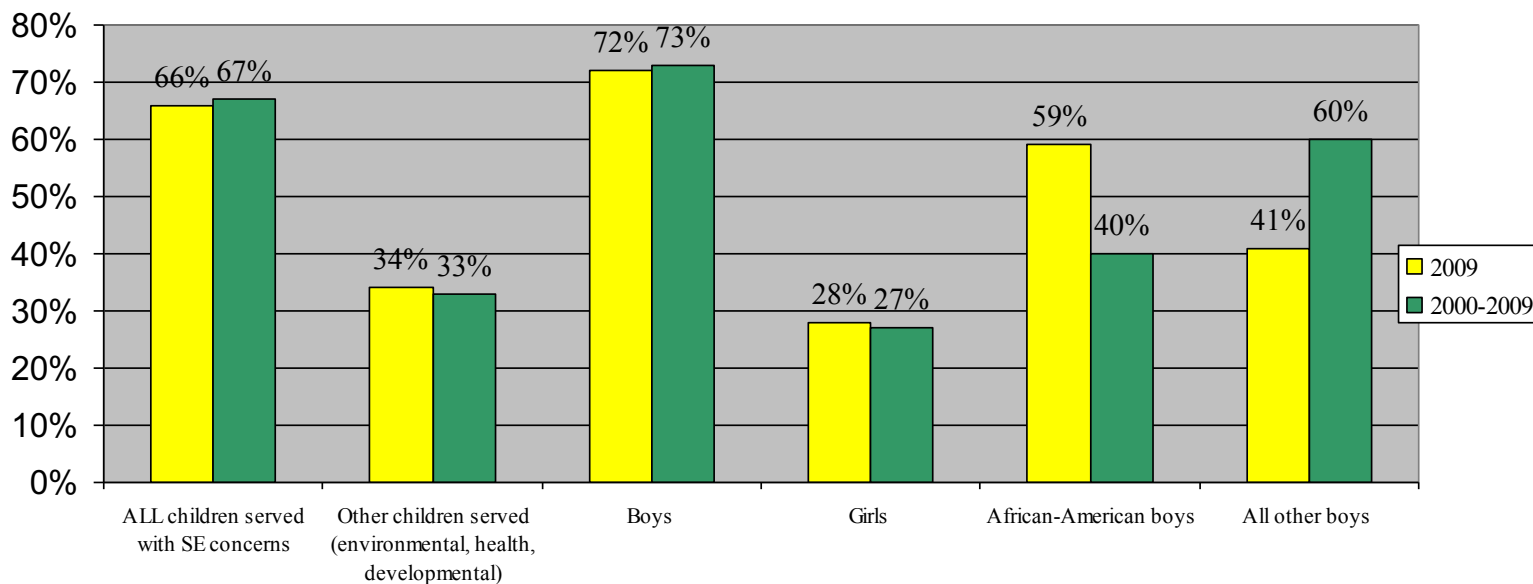
For 2009 the percentage of African-American boys served was 60% compared to other boys

Taking a Closer Look



Overall Data

**Children Served with Social-Emotional and Behavioral Concerns
2009 and 2000-2009 Data**



We Had Many Questions



- Why are so many boys struggling?
- Why are there so many differences in boys' and girls' development?
- Why are the problems more acute among African-American and Latino boys?
- What can we do to make a difference?

What We Found



- Boys learn differently
- Early childhood classrooms are not designed for the ways boys' learn—or for the special needs of African-American, Latino boys
- Most teachers are female and are more attuned to the way girls learn
- We need to alter curricula, classrooms and teaching strategies to accommodate boys' learning

What We Did



The Boys' Project

- Developed a team
- Created pilot programs
- Developed a manual
- Trained technical assistants to work with staff
- Conducted Professional Development seminars on working with boys
- Developed *Boy Friendly Classroom Checklist*
- Determined Assessment Tool
- Evaluated results

Boys' Pilot



- Met with parents and explained pilot and the rules
- All parents signed parental consents
- Purchased boy-friendly toys for sites
- Trained teachers on *Wired to Move* strategies
- National education expert provided observation and technical assistance
- Teachers made physical changes in their classrooms to accommodate boys
- Kaplan donated blocks and books
- Developed “Superhero Corner” at sites

Boys' Pilot

Continued



- Teachers receive technical assistance at each site twice weekly
 - Eight hours a week per site
- Administered assessment to all children three times during school year
 - Teachers (three times: pre, mid, and post)
 - Parents (two times: pre and post)
- Initiated special boy-friendly programs at each site

Pilot Program Results



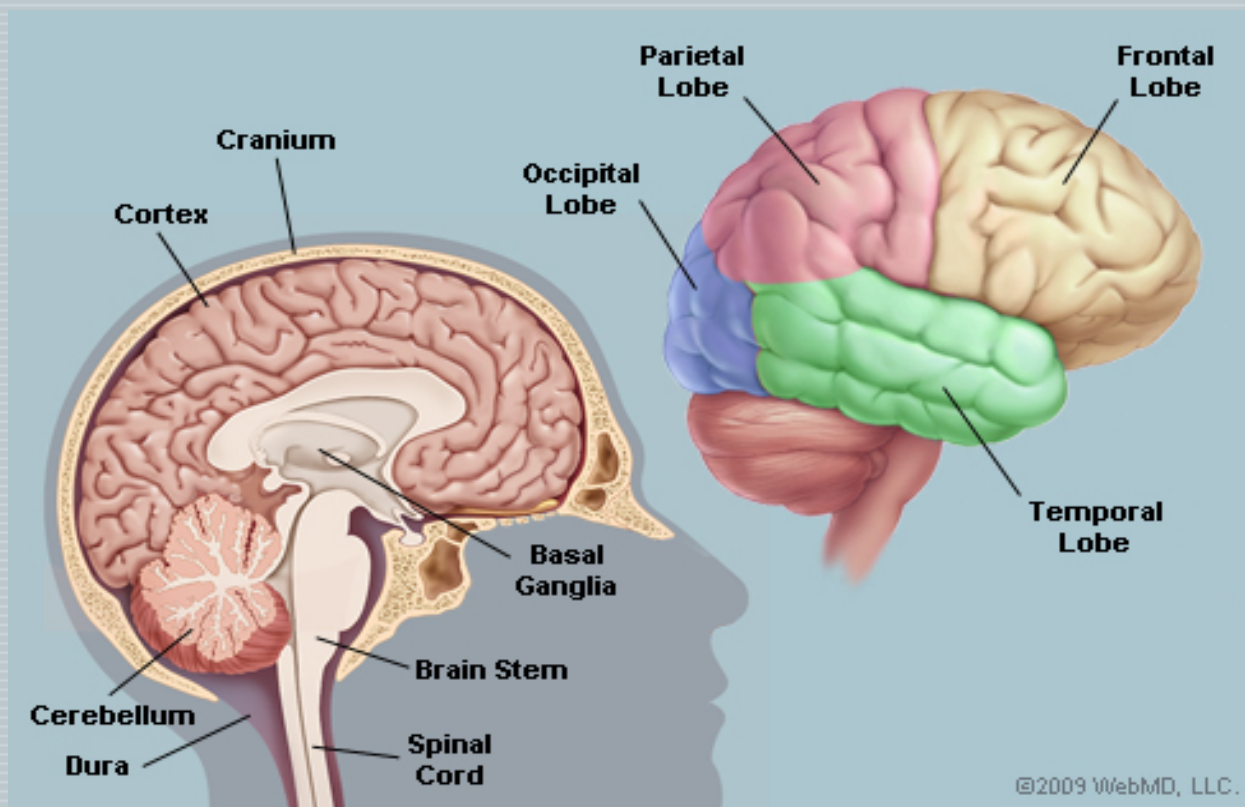
Using Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Tool

- Percent of boys identified with self-control concerns cut in half
- Percent of boys with strengths in initiative rose from 6 to 41 %
- Percent of boys with strengths in self control rose from 12 to 41 %
- Percent of boys with strengths in attachment rose from 12 to 47%
- Girls' performance also improved

A Look at the Brain



Each Section of the Brain Has a Specific Function



Boys' and Girls' Brain Differences



| Section of Brain | Function | More Active in |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Left Hemisphere | Verbal Abilities | Female |
| Right Hemisphere | Spatial-/Mechanical Abilities | Male |
| Brain Stem, Cerebellum | Physical responses, action | Male |
| Cerebral cortex | Judgment, impulse control, attention | Female |
| Limbic System | Emotion, bonding | Female |
| Parietal lobe | Spatial processing, tracking | Male |
| Corpus callosum | Cross-talk between hemispheres | Female |
| Gray Matter | Project Focus | Male |
| White Matter | Multitasking | Female |
| Occipital Lobe | Vision | Male |



Boys' and Girls' Brain Differences *(Continued)*



| Section of Brain | Function | More Active in |
|---|------------------------------|----------------|
| Amygdala | Aggressive responses | Male |
| Temporal Lobes | Speaking, listening, reading | Female |
| Basal Ganglia System | Sense of calm, well-being | Female |
| Hippocampus | Memory | Female |
| From Daniel Amen, <i>A Brain Science Approach</i> and Michael Gurian, <i>Boys and Girls Learn Differently</i> | | |

Hormones Make a Difference , too



More Active in Males

TESTOSTERONE

- Male Physical Characteristics
- Aggressiveness
- Territoriality
- Competitiveness
- Sex Drive
- Exploratory Behavior

VASOPRESSIN, CORTISOL, MIS

- Risk-taking
- Roughhousing, large muscle development

More Active in Females

ESTROGEN, PROGSTERONE

- Female physical characteristics
- Bonding, attachment
- Cooperation, collaboration

OXYTOCIN, SERATONIN

- Reproduction,
- Pair bonding
- Empathy
- Maternal behavior
- Feeling good

Questions



- Do these brain differences match what you know about boys?
- How do you think they affect boys' learning and behavior in the classroom?

Brain-based Facts and Strategies



Boys Are Wired to Move

- Boys are physical beings
- When a boy is active, his brain is active
- When his brain is at rest, as much as 70% shuts down. In contrast, 90% of a female brain remains active.

What to Do

- Find ways for boys to move during sedentary activities
- Alternate quiet and active activities
- Increase time for indoor and outdoor large muscle activities

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Excel at Spatial and Mechanical Tasks

- Boys see and track moving objects better than girls
- They can imagine objects in three-dimensional space
- They can construct complex structures
- They have superior eye-hand coordination

What to Do

- Have lots of block and building materials
- Allow space for building activities
- Have indoor/outdoor activities where boys can manipulate balls, sand, water, boats, vehicles

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Develop Verbal Abilities Later than Girls

- Boys speak first words later than girls
- Their speech may not be fully comprehensible before 4 years old—a year later than girls
- Girls have larger vocabularies, better grammar, form longer sentences

What to Do

- Use visual aids and manipulatives in lessons
- Keep verbal instructions to under a minute
- Use music to stimulate boys' verbal abilities
- Have boys act out stories

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Learn by Doing (Not by Listening)

- Boys learn by moving, climbing, touching, building and taking things apart
- Their brains have less activity in listening and language areas
- Boys are hands-on learners

What to Do

- Have pull-apart toys and puzzles
- Teach ABCs and 123s with manipulation and movement
- Have boys make up stories and create artwork to aid learning

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Need Lots of Space

- Boys need space to move, explore, spread things out
- When they don't have enough space, they can become frustrated, which can lead to behavior issues

What to Do

- Limit the number of children at tables to 4
- Allow more elbow room between children during sitting activities
- Limit the number of children in each activity area

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Do One Thing at a Time

- Boys are best at concentrating on a single project
- They're not as good at multitasking
- It's often difficult for them to understand more than one instruction at a time

What to Do

- Let boys stay with activities longer
- Before giving an instruction, touch him lightly to get his attention
- Give boys one instruction at a time

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Need Time to Make Transitions

- Boys' single focus makes it more difficult to change activities
- When asked to change quickly, they can get frustrated and angry, even aggressive

What to Do

- Give 5 minute, 3 minute, 1 minute warnings before changing activities
- Use sounds or music as cues

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys are Visual Learners

- A boy's eyes are his best way of acquiring information
- Boys can see detail better than girls
- Boys like bright colors best

What to Do

- Use pictures to reinforce learning
- Use primary colors where possible
- Enhance classroom lighting

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Are Louder-Don't Hear as Well as Girls

- The male auditory system limits some background noise, softer and repetitious sounds
- Boys hear better through their right ears
- Boys hear animal noises and loud sounds better; girls are better at hearing what people say

What to Do

- Speak loudly enough to be heard
- Keep boys near the front of the room or the circle
- Speak into their right ears when possible

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Look at Things; Girls Look at People

- Boys don't make eye contact as readily as girls
- If forced to make eye contact, boys may not process what they're being told. They can become aggressive

What to Do

- Give them a light touch to get their attention
- Then look them in the eye so they get used to it
- Understand that boys can pay attention without eye contact

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Remember Facts

- Boys' memory centers are smaller than girls
- Girls remember more random information, connect emotional experiences and pick up social cues
- Boys look for patterns, remember logical sequences and like information organized

What to Do

- Give boys time to memorize
- Repeat information
- Use charts, lists and symbols

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Need Physical Play

- Boys bond through physical play rather than words and facial expressions
- They prefer high fives to hugs
- Roughhousing and wrestling gives them a “high”

What to Do

- Give them time for rough-and-tumble activities
- Have indoor as well as outdoor spaces for physical play
- Set rules and supervise activities

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys are Naturally Aggressive, Competitive

- Boys' brains and the hormone testosterone foster aggressiveness, territoriality and hierarchy
- • They spend around 65% of their time in competitive games; compared to girls' 35%

What to Do

- Make sure boys have vigorous, competitive activities
- Have an “angry place” where boys can release frustration
- Have children discuss the effect aggressive actions have on others
- Redirect inappropriate behavior before it gets out of control

Brain-Based Facts and Strategies



Boys Are Risk-Takers

- The “judgment” part of the brain is less active in boys than in girls
- Boys often persist in risky behavior despite warnings
- Risky physical actions can give boys a dopamine “high” that makes them want to do it again

What to Do

- Make sure the environment is safe
- Give boys choices
- Allow boys to explore safely

Helping At-Risk African-American Boys



- Focus on strengths and abilities
- Promote a positive racial identity
- Involve African–American men in programs
- Set high expectations
- Use constructive approaches to discipline

Helping At-Risk Hispanic/Latino Boys



- Help with English language skills
- Learn about, talk about, celebrate Hispanic/Latino culture
- Connect with the boys' families
- Be welcoming and foster warm relationships
- Set high expectations
- Create a sense of community

Other Boy-Friendly Strategies



- Partnering with Parents
- Involving Male Role Models
- Superhero Play
- Read2Me
- Information on Limiting Media Influences

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Goals and Objectives – Goal 1

- Teachers will gain the skills and understanding to meet the developmental and educational needs of preschool boys
- Teachers will receive a copy of the strategies
- Teachers will complete a full-day training on facts and strategies for nurturing boys
- Teachers will receive initial observation/consultation from expert on boys
- Teachers will receive additional consultation
- On-going technical assistance will be provided to further support strategy implementation

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments

Goals and Objectives – Goal 2

- Parents of children in classrooms will gain understanding of the unique developmental and learning needs of their children to promote consistency between practices at home and in the classroom
- Parents will give consent to participate in the pilot
- Parents will participate in an informational session
- Parents will participate in a community-wide training
- Parents can elect to participate in home visits and team meetings conducted by the TA consultant

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments

Goals and Objectives – Goal 3

- Boys in the classrooms will improve social-emotional and behavioral functioning
- Preschool boys will participate in a daily classroom plan that reflects strategies outlined in *Wired to Move*
- Preschool boys will participate in Technical Assistance sessions

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Boy Friendly Inventory

11 self-rated items:

1 – Never 2 – Rarely 3 – Occasionally

4 – Frequently 5 – Consistently

1. Significant portion of the daily routine provides opportunities for physical activity
2. Incorporate physical cues when instructing or redirecting
3. Utilize multiple strategies for transition preparation (i.e., time warnings, verbal and visual cues, physical activity)



TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Boy-Friendly Inventory *(Continued)*

1. Provide opportunities for emotional expression through action or physical activity
9. Display positive models of different races and ethnicities and opportunities for real life interactions
10. Superhero and other forms of dramatic play are encouraged daily
11. Prioritize for one-on-one time with each child at least five minutes per day

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Boy-Friendly Inventory *(Continued)*

4. Clear and concise one to two step directions are given using repetition
5. Include musical/movement activities on a daily basis
6. Both positive and negative consequences are used in the classroom (i.e., immediate praise, share positive feelings, describe the mistake or problem, show the impact of negative behavior)
7. Choices are used to promote a sense of ownership and control

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Boy-Friendly Checklist

- A quick reference list of things you can do to make your classroom more boy-friendly

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)

- Strength-Based Assessment & Planning

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Make Programs Father-Friendly

Why?

- Children benefit from a father's involvement in their lives and a new statistical study shows that fathers—even those who don't live with their children—are taking on more than just the role of playmate
- Most research focused on the negative impact the absence of fathers has on the development and lives of their children
- Unique influence fathers may have on their children

TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Make Programs Father-Friendly

What We Have Done

- Determined community need
 - Data
 - Feedback
 - Formed collaborative community partnerships
- Developed a father-friendly checklist
 - 12 specific strategies on involving fathers in the early childhood setting
 - Tested strategies in a pilot with child care centers (voluntary)
 - Involved collaborative partners and special needs contractors who provide technical assistance
- Developed a father-friendly manual
- Created an incentive for early care/education programs



TOOLS

for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Make Programs Father-Friendly

What We Have Done (Continued)

- Integrated our work with father-friendly strategies:
 - Men in Early Childhood
 - Supporting Boys in the Early Childhood Setting
- Results and Outcomes
 - Early childhood programs have expanded their work
 - More mindful outreach and planning to fathers and father figures
- Recommendations

TOOLS for Creating Boy-Friendly Environments



Men in Early Childhood

What We Have Done

- Created *Men in Early Childhood* as a support and advisory group
- Developed additional boy-friendly strategies, training needs and resources to support teachers on how to implement boy-friendly strategies in their early childhood classroom

Workshop



Now It's **YOUR** Turn!

