



**IN REACH, INC.**  
*helping young people  
reach their potential*

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# REVEALED!

Community-based organizations, educators, county officials and others helping students pursue and achieve academic excellence in Prince George's County, Maryland

## It's All About Boys

Lately, there has been an increase or at least more air-time on research about girls and while there is room for more—what about boys? Are they meaner to each other now more than years ago? Academically, where could they use more help? How is the portrayal of them in the media affecting their self-esteem and interactions with peers, their families, in their communities and with, dare I say, girls?

In Prince George's County, boys 5-18 years old make up a little over half of the public school student population, yet their graduation rate is lower and drop out rate higher than that of girls. In fact, academically in most categories regardless of ethnicity, girls outperform boys.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this issue can provide some insight into why, and hopefully spark interest into action on behalf of boys.

Through my experience as an occasional substitute teacher in the classroom and in after-school settings, it has become very clear to me that while girls and boys are obviously equal in their ability to learn, boys certainly learn and interact differently than girls. The boys I have worked and continue to work with demand far more of my attention and unless the girls are outspoken, I find myself spending most of my time communicating with them. They ask more questions and find ways (though not always pleasant) to engage me in their world. From this perspective, I am particularly interested in learning how the needs



of boys could be better met.

Echoed throughout all of the interviews in this issue are three clear thoughts: parents need to spend more time getting to know their children, there needs to be increased male leadership, and communities need to provide more opportunities for boys to become employed or engaged in meaningful training.

While I am certain that boys are more prepared to deal with me as a female in an authoritative position than I am of them in a classroom setting, I am convinced that the one thing that they need—and perhaps want more of—is the one thing I am not, a man.

# IN OUR SCHOOLS

## PERSPECTIVES: THE PRINCIPAL AND THE PEDAGOGUE

In late winter 2003, IN REACH's (IR) president sat down to talk to an administrator and teacher at Hyattsville Middle School (HMS) about working with boys.

Mr. Mark King is an assistant principal and has been at HMS for six years. He has been in education for ten years and started teaching 5-8th grades while in Florida. Later he taught 9th grade. Mr. King prefers working in the middle school environment.

Mr. Dwan Jordan is in his sixth year of teaching at HMS. He serves as the Advisor for Student Government, a Team Leader, and chair of the Language Arts Department. Mr. Jordan coaches at Northwestern High School. A native Washingtonian, Mr. Jordan attended Paul Junior High School and graduated from Coolidge High School.

**IR:** How is working with boys during the middle school years different than during the elementary and high school years?

**King:** In middle school boys are adults one day and children the next. There are fluctuations and inconsistencies in their maturity level.

High school boys think that they are grown (driving, etc) and act older than they really are.

**IR:** Lately, there has been an increase in research about how (adolescent) girls relate to each other, what about boys? How are they relating to each other?

**King:** In seventh grade, from September to December, boys are more introverted and attracted to individuals from elementary school, they are more conservative about friendships. In January, they have had time to begin to accept other boys for what they have in common, they widen their peer group and become more extroverted.

In eighth grade it's all about being cool. Perception carries more weight at the top of the class. Boys want to blend in more and are experiencing a growth spurt. There is a high dropout rate in ninth grade. To keep more students in school, I would go back to the structure of junior high school (7-9 grades) versus the current middle school (7-8 grades in Prince George's County) structure.

**Jordan:** Material things are more important to males. African American guys with more are the cool guys. Kids with lower self-esteem look up to these and the more aggressive and outspoken boys. I do not see a lot of jealousy or anger toward each other. [There are] more worries that boys who have more are the ones being looked up to. Kids value image more than education. Boys with low self-esteem are quieter and have less interaction. It takes longer for them to open up. This is reflected in their work habits. I have to spend more time pulling them in.

**IR:** Currently, are you implementing any strategies and/or best practices to enhance the educational experience for boys?

**King:** Yes. One of our teachers operates a male mentoring program, the Young Male Achievers. This is the second year. Last year, Mr. Jordan and I met with boys every other Monday in-school and during an after-school program.

**Jordan:** I try to correlate the curriculum to what's going on in society. I stay up on the music to stay in touch with students and be able to make suggestions. Structure is very important. Kids need structure and personal connections. This makes it easier to work with them. Teachers need to learn how to build connections with students.

*Continued on next page*

**IR:** In your opinion, how could our communities better support boys in this age group?

**King:** Spend more time listening to them. It's frustrating for young people. Help them build self-confidence and let them know that someone actually values their opinion.

**Jordan:** We need more after-school programs. Children need to stay active and involved in something. This is very important. I don't think a lot of people understand how important after-school programs are for children. Adults need to listen to kids more. A lot of kids want to have something to do.

**IR:** What are your thoughts on single sex education?

**King:** Interesting question. I think it's better on the high school level where there are limited distractions for students. Otherwise, classes need to be blended. Boys need to learn how to deal with the opposite sex. They need to learn how to deal with girls as equals not just as authority figures.

**Jordan:** I am open to it. I have not been in a situation to see this. I think it would be beneficial to the boys more than the girls. The less amount of distractions the better. When I worked with a boys only group last year, I think it was more productive.

**IR:** Where do you think parents are in dealing with their sons during these challenging years. Do you think they understand what is going on and what the needs are of their sons?

**King:** Parents have begun believing their children over adults. Women raise their daughters and spoil their sons which is a disservice. Younger parents are growing up with their children and grandparents are raising children. Ideally, parents need to spend more time with their children and stop giving them things (xbox, etc.). They need to stop trying to buy their children as a result of the less interaction they have

with them. They need to spend more time with them and listen to them. I think parents have a clue about the development of their children, but do not know how to effectively deal with it.

**Jordan:** I think parents are very disconnected. They try to make the kid comfortable, not understanding the damage, especially single parents. Parents need to push kids to do what they need to instead of making them feel comfortable. Parents are not taking enough time to listen to or understand what is going on with their kids. Kids want to open up, but adults won't listen.

**IR:** Is there anything else we can do, besides increase income, to encourage more men to teach middle school?

**King:** Bottom line, money would do it.

**Jordan:** Give them the opportunity to be around young people in this age group. If they could see the impact they could have on young people maybe they would consider teaching as a career option. This is what keeps me going.

I did an internship just working with kids this age and after I saw the impact I had, I was persuaded to pursue this field.

**IR:** What is your typical day like?

**King:** Madness. [There is] no such things as [a typical day]. Every day is different and that is typical. ■

“Parents need to spend time getting to know their children.”

# RECOGNIZE THIS!

## Jorge Bustamante

Prince George's First  
Most Gorgeous Youth Volunteer Award Recipient 2003  
Class of 2004 Bladensburg High School



### ***How has your experience as the first Prince George's Most Gorgeous Youth Volunteer Award Recipient been?***

I was surprised. My mentor nominated me. I was really excited! I did not know I was being nominated. Now I have a title, but I keep doing what I had already been doing (staying involved in the community). I do volunteer work because I enjoy it.

### ***Where are you going to school in the fall? What will your major be?***

I am going to attend Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania. My major will be Political Science/International Diplomacy. I am thinking about law school and hope to be a supreme court justice.

### ***Who are your role models and why?***

My mom taught that morals and principals are very important. My grandmother taught that hard work pays off. I have many other mentors and they have been a blessing. Dr. David Stofa (principal of Bladensburg) has supported me in everything that I have done and pushed me to be strong leader.

### ***What were your most challenging years in school?***

Not so much challenging years, but learning how to balance everything in high school. I truly grasped leadership when I joined the Port Town Youth Council and became more involved in school activities.

### ***What is missing in the community and county for boys?***

Male leadership. You hear about it, but never really see it. This is why I admire Councilman Harrington (District 5) for his leadership, involvement and en-

couragement in the community.

### ***Do you think your experiences are more similar or different from boys of other ethnic backgrounds? How?***

More different. I am usually the only Hispanic male in a leadership position. I rarely see other Hispanic males in leadership roles.

### ***How do you think schools can make the learning environment more engaging for boys?***

Adults need to understand that guys are different from girls and their reactions in leadership positions will be different.

### ***Do you think boys and girls would perform better in single sex classrooms?***

Not really. We learn so much from each other. For example, I am better at speaking, not writing, but I have a female friend who is better at writing and typing so we can work together. By separating us, you break the opportunity for this type of teamwork. In the real world, males and females work together. We have to become accustomed to working with each other.

### ***Any advice for parents on helping their sons reach their potential?***

My favorite quote is by Confucius, "Greatest glory consist not in never falling, but in rising every time." We are going to fail in some stuff, but will succeed in other things, so provide support and help us get back on our feet. ■

# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

## Millenium Therapeutic Care, Ltd.

### Interview with Lovern J. Louis, Ph.D. President

Millenium Therapeutic Care, Ltd. provides community-based residential programs for boys ages 12-18 and seeks to provide children equal rights and services that will enable them to achieve their potential for independence and productivity while furthering their empowerment and integration into the society.

Lovern J. Louis is a former Prince George's County Public School teacher and administrator. He worked as an elementary school teacher at Chillum Elementary School in Hyattsville for three years where he also served as director of the Black Male Achievement Program.

In addition to his commitment to education, Louis is also committed to the community. He has been president of two local civic associations and was instrumental in helping to lay the foundation for the Metro Blue Line coming to Suitland.

#### **Q: What are the most important ways you are helping boys?**

**A:** Giving boys hope for a better future and in doing so helping them to realize that despite hardships, their backgrounds, and other challenges, through continuing self-development, guidance and therapeutic counseling, I can offer them hope and help them to stay out of trouble.

#### **Q: Any partnerships?**

**A:** At this time there are no formal partnerships, but we do have relationships with different churches that help us meet various needs such as the purchase of supplies and providing mentors.

#### **Q: What are the biggest 3 issues facing boys in the county today?**

**A:** 1. Education: The inability of public education to focus on the unique needs of black males in our communities contributes to them falling through the cracks.  
2. Employment (economics): Our young men do not have the skills they need to successfully compete. They need to (be able to) sharpen their skills. Their backgrounds make it hard for them to procure employment that will allow them to feel and maintain **self-worth**.  
3. The social and recreational opportunities are not available to be conducive to positive life styles for young black men. It appears that young men have no voice or input in developing programs to help fulfill their needs.

#### **Q: What is your philosophy on serving boys?**

**A:** By working with young men, I can actually help shape and mold the future. This is a powerful opportunity. Knowing how to motivate young people to lift themselves up and help them overcome feeling of hopelessness, to help shape the future.

#### **Q: Where do you see the organization 3-5 years from now? What types of service will you be providing?**

**A:** I see Millenium as making a move to focus on providing social and more educational services. I see it becoming an institution that teaches academics and the skills needed for young men to be successful in their communities.

*(Continued on page 6)*

**Q: What can communities do to better embrace boys?**

**A:** Make young men feel like they are part of their community by reaching out to them. I believe communities know what they want to do, but the opportunities are not always there for them to do it. We need to offer more community outreach. Create more programs specifically targeted towards job training, social interaction, and interaction with perspective employers.

**Q: What do you think the school system can do to better prepare boys?**

**A:** Everyone needs to work together to improve the school system. Schools need to admit that they cannot carry the burden alone. Schools and communities need to forge **real** partnerships. It is a challenge to get these two to work together effectively. There is a greater demand on the needs for males and schools need to be able to meet these demands, but also be fair (how fair is it to give boys more attention to meet the demand). Time is so important.

**Q: How do you feel about single sex education?**

**A:** I am a strong supporter of single sex education. There is a school in Baltimore that has had success with this. It seems like, and according to research, males function better and are able to excel in this situation. I do not think it should be forced, but that educators should be allowed to identify and recommend students who may perform better in this type of environment.

Overall, schools need to understand, expect and accept differences in students. ■

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## THE NEW REVEALED!

**REVEALED!** will now be published quarterly (spring, summer, fall, winter) versus bi-monthly and has expanded from 5 pages up to 10 pages per issue. We are entering the second phase of our goal to become a local journal with articles written by individuals from the community, particularly young people.

We are looking to feature articles written by young people who live and attend a public school in Prince George's County in our new *Student Pulse* column. We are accepting students from middle school through college to write for us. Students will write articles on a variety of issues affecting education and out-of-school activities. If you know a student who may be interested in doing this, please have them contact us or forward us a recommendation.

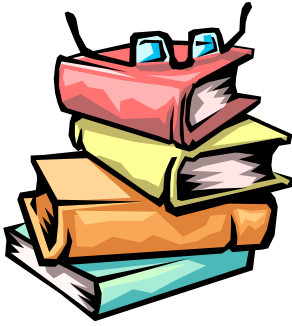
Students will have the opportunity to receive exposure, experience, credit for school, and to learn new skills. These are unpaid positions.

Interested individuals or individuals making recommendations should send an email expressing interest in writing for the *Student Pulse Column* and include general background information about themselves such as their school, grade, interests, and contact information to editor@inreachinc.org.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Maryland State Department of Education Report Card: Prince George's County, <http://msp.msde.state.md.us> and Prince George's County Public Schools Master Plan, 2001-2005, [www.pgcps.org](http://www.pgcps.org).

# ON OUR SHELVES



## **Young Men's Sexual and Reproductive Health: Toward A National Strategy Framework and Recommendations**, Freya L. Sonenstein, Editor,

Urban Institute, [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org).

This report documents the need for a broad new initiative to promote the sexual and reproductive health of young men, offer a comprehensive strategy to meet that need, and recommend specific actions that can and should be taken immediately by community service providers and others to implement new initiatives.

## **In Our Own Words: The Lives of Boys and Young Men in the District of Columbia**

DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, [www.teenpregnancydc.org](http://www.teenpregnancydc.org).

As described in its acknowledgements, this report is based on DC Campaign's work with boys and young men in the District of Columbia. It illuminates the perceptions of boys and young men about sex, love and relationships; about their motivations for performing risky behaviors or refraining from them; and about the conditions in their lives that influence their decisions. I believe the information found in this report is representative of the thoughts of boys from most, if not all, of the communities surrounding the District, particularly Prince George's County.

## Friendships, Cliques, and Gangs: Young Black Men Coming of Age in Urban American

By Greg Dimitriadis

Described by Carol Wright as a well documented look at the experiences of urban youth that avoids romanticizing or demonizing them, Greg Dimitriadis presents a story that challenges assumptions about "normal" and "good" successful Black youth. He begins the book by asking, "how do black youth construct meaning for their social and academic lives inside and outside of school?" He does this by analyzing the complex social lives of two young Black men in a small Midwestern urban city. Rather than focusing on the poor performance of urban youth in schools, this book highlights other sites of learning and black youth success in these alternatives learning spaces. The chapters are short and make for quick and accessible reading, yet offer new material for those already familiar with Black urban culture.

## Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity

By Ann Arnett Ferguson

How does it feel to be labeled "unsalvageable" by your teacher? How do you endure school when the educators predict your future as "a jail cell with your name on it?" Through interviews and participation with pre-adolescent African American boys in classrooms, playgrounds, movie theaters, and video arcades, Ferguson explores what "getting into trouble" means for the boys' themselves. The book has been described as a "powerful challenge to prevailing views on the problem of black males in our schools today."

## Bringing Up Boys: Practical advice and encouragement for those shaping the next generation of men

By Dr. James Dobson

Dr. Dobson provides a road map for raising healthy sons—for shaping the next generation of responsible, God-honoring men. Drawing on his many years of experience as a child psychologist and family counselor, as well as the latest research, Dr. Dobson offers practical advice and encouragement for parents, teachers, counselors, youth leaders, and others involved in shaping the lives of boys. The book is divided into seventeen chapters such as, "The Wonderful World of Boys," "The Essential Father," "The Origins of Homosexuality," and "Disciplining Boys." Each chapter leads the reader closer to answering the question, "What should we be doing to shape the next generation of men?"

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Adolescent Boys: Exploring Diverse Cultures of Boyhood

Edited by Niobe Way & Judy Y. Chu

Foreword by Michael Kimmel

This book presents theories based on the experiences of not just middle-class white boys, but also those from African American, Latino, and Asian backgrounds as they represent an increasingly large proportion of adolescent boys. It features distinctive, key studies of ethnic minority and low-income adolescent boys, and focuses on understanding boys' experiences from their own perspectives.

**Science Says: The Sexual Attitude and Behavior of Male Teens**, Number 6, October 2003

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

[www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)

This brief provides information on teen boys' sexual activity and contraceptive use, their attitudes toward both, and advice for parents and program leaders.

**Gender Equity for Males**

Equity Resource Center Digest, November 2000

[www.edc.org](http://www.edc.org)

This issue seeks to provoke thought and discussion about the importance of "gender equity" for boys. "Boys need to know that gender equity increases their options, and benefits them, too." The issue begins with "What About the Boys?" an article written by Michael Kimmel that introduces the concept of masculinity into the discussions and current debate about boys. The issue includes "Safe Boys, Safe Schools," "The Mythical African American Male," and provides a valuable list of resources on gender equity for males.

## PUBLISHER

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Toni A. Smith, Founder and President



**IN REACH** believes that young people should always be *in reach* of a quality education, opportunities in their community for development, and, ultimately, their dreams.

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