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'Feminist bias' impedes reforms to aid boys

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You'll never get feminists to agree to help boys better prepare for college. They'd first have to acknowledge there are fundamental differences between men and women and boys and girls ("[As boys slip behind, some feminists reject helping them](#)," Our view, Education debate, Monday).

As an example of some feminists' narrow-mindedness in this regard, consider how former Harvard president Lawrence Summers was lambasted for having the temerity to suggest that it is important to *consider the possibility* that the relative lack of successful women in the fields of math and science might stem from biological differences between the sexes.

This feminist bias is so firmly entrenched that one cannot imply, suggest or even investigate whether there is a possibility that men and women, boys and girls, think or learn differently. Such moves will be rejected out of hand as inherently sexist. Period.

Now, how are we supposed to make any progress with our heads thrust so deeply in the sand?

Michael Pologruto, Montpelier, Vt.

Try active learning

USA TODAY suggests that the reasons boys slip behind in school appear to be rooted in literacy skills. I would suggest that the reasons are also rooted in the inappropriate instruction that boys, and girls, are subjected to in the elementary grades that lead to poor literacy skills.

Elementary classrooms are becoming more and more like adult education, in which young kids are expected to sit still and listen and then work passively on paper/pencil textbook activities. Young boys, especially, rebel at this kind of instruction, and they are often labeled as problems and failures. Thus, they live down to these low expectations for the rest of their schooling.

The research that we have conducted for nearly two decades at the Institute for School Innovation has shown that boys especially thrive in classrooms where technology and active learning are integral to the learning process. Compared with students who are taught through traditional methods, children in the active learning classrooms have far greater success in school and can pass the state reading tests with flying colors.

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It's time to start in first grade to give our boys a better chance to succeed and lead meaningful lives.

Dr. Sarah M. Butzin, executive director

Institute for School Innovation

Tallahassee, Fla.

Bias beyond classroom

USA TODAY's editorial on boys and education touches only the tip of the iceberg. Female chauvinism is rife in our culture. It is only through the gender discrimination classes I was forced to take because I am male that I can now see women exhibiting the same mean-spirited narrow-mindedness once thought to be solely a male affliction.

The most obvious signs of this are a woman's refusal to pick up and carry anything in an integrated work place. Other signs are frequent crying to get sympathy, groin hits considered to be a comic staple, inequity in child sex-abuse cases, and even openly making unkind statements about men — such as, "There are no good men around anymore."

This can go to the extreme of misandry where violent or non-violent abuse is leveled at a man's sense of self. Something must be done.

Michael Miller, Gaston, S.C.

Boys need to wake up

Having been a teacher for 40-plus years, here are some of my thoughts as to why there are now more women enrolled in colleges.

First, as I remember my own schooling, girls seemed to take education more seriously than the guys did. But there were very few, if any, positions for female lawyers, doctors, architects or executives.

Typical work available to women consisted of being a secretary, a nurse, a teacher or a waitress. It was commonly thought that many women went to college to pursue a husband and a career as a homemaker. When the doors opened to more prestigious careers, women jumped at the opportunity.

Second, many of us guys seem to place more emphasis on being cool than on being smart. As a result, we do a lot of dumb things — such as thinking being cool is going to earn us a good living.

We also envision pipe-dream careers, such as becoming a professional athlete or musician. We spend countless hours pursuing such hopes, not realizing that the odds of achieving them are enormously long.

Some of us even envision a career in dealing drugs. That doesn't seem as if it's very hard work, and it sure doesn't require a knowledge of geometry or English literature. Actually, none of these high paying "occupations" requires much education. So why bother studying?

For many of us, this is our way of thinking and some of the pitfalls we encounter. Meanwhile, our female counterparts are studying and plotting their future.

So guys, if you like handing over the good-paying jobs to the girls, keep going down the path that you are on. In a few years, you will be working for a woman or having one repair your bum knee. Just don't complain that the women are getting all the good jobs because they are female. They will be getting them because they earned them.

Wake up; the world is passing you by.


John Gorham, Brentwood, Tenn.

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