



Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education

Programming Guide

The findings of the new AAUW research report *Where the Girls Are: the Facts about Gender Equity in Education* refute the notion of a boys' crisis in schools. Girls' successes do not come at boys' expense. Rather, when girls do better in school, so do boys. While *Where the Girls Are* finds no evidence of a boys' crisis, it does uncover large disparities in educational achievement by race/ethnicity and family income.

AAUW member leaders at the state and branch level can play a key role in raising awareness about AAUW's latest report and its implications for educational equity. Some ideas about how to do this are included in this Programming Guide.

Members can download a free copy of *Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education* at www.aauw.org, or purchase copies of the report through ShopAAUW (800/225-9998).

Branch Programming

Familiarize AAUW members with the conclusions and implications of *Where the Girls Are* by holding a branch program. Once educated about the report, our membership will be well equipped to reach out to larger audiences and spread the word in their communities.

- Branch programming could take the form of a study-group discussion, where AAUW members read the report and gather to discuss what they've read. The report would also make an ideal selection for your branch's book club.
- AAUW will produce a PowerPoint presentation that will summarize the conclusions and implications of *Where the Girls Are*. The PowerPoint, together with its discussion questions, could be used as a presentation at a branch or state meeting; it will be available on the AAUW web site by late summer.
 - TIP: A branch program about the report and its findings would make a great "back to school" program in the fall.
- Include information about the report in state and branch newsletters. See the AAUW website for the report press release, executive summary and talking points. The press release could be used in whole or in part as a newsletter or blog article. Also, include announcements about the report on your state and branch web sites, with links back to the AAUW site so visitors can find the report.
- **ACTIVITY:** Once branch members understand the findings of the report, consider taking part in an "elevator speech" exercise. Using the report's talking points (attached), ask members to break up into groups of 3-5 people, and urge them to come up with 3-5 sentences that describe the heart of the report's findings. The

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result should be a short paragraph that can be spoken in about 30-45 seconds. Come back together as a whole, and have each group share their elevator speech. Then combine the best elements of each group's work to come up with your branch's elevator speech about the report. This useful conversation tool gives members a quick way to share the information -- because you never know when you'll have a moment to educate someone about the facts on gender equity in education.

Community Outreach

Equity in education is a serious issue. Education stakeholders will likely be receptive to knowing more about how to better serve their students, and new ways to look at the achievement gap.

Where the Girls Are presents a comprehensive look at girls' educational achievement during the past 35 years, paying special attention to the relationship between girls' and boys' progress.

Analyses of results from national standardized tests, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the SAT and ACT college entrance examinations, as well as other measures of educational achievement, provide an overall picture of trends in gender equity from elementary school to college and beyond. Use *Where the Girls Are* to reach out to the education community and inform the public's understanding of the state of equity in education.

- Plan joint programming with other education stakeholders in your community such as parent-teacher organizations and the local teachers union. The PowerPoint presentation, coming from AAUW late this summer, would be ideal for this purpose as well.
- Share *Where the Girls Are* directly with principals, school superintendents, and school board members. Make the PowerPoint presentation available to them, and remind them that the report is available as a free download on the web, in case they would like to use the information for a teacher in-service or other professional development program.
- Give a copy of the report to your public library, your school libraries, and the college libraries in your area.
- Colleges of Education should find *Where the Girls Are* a particularly important resource for faculty and future teachers alike. Set up a meeting with the dean of the College of Education or a receptive professor at a nearby university, present them with a copy of the report, and discuss the conclusions and implications. Invite the college to become an AAUW C/U partner if it isn't already.
 - TIP: Remind professors that the report is available as a free download on the web, and would make a great class text.
- As you come together with other education stakeholders to discuss the report, or as a topic for a branch activity, take advantage of the opportunity to discuss the many potentially replicable girl-centered projects that AAUW supports through our Community Action Grants program. It's a great opportunity to facilitate the development of partnerships and collaboration with other organizations to engage in

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hands-on programming in your local community. It's also one of the ways we put our research into practice.

- Visit the AAUW Online Directory of Fellowship and Grant Recipients at www.aauw.org/fga, which highlights innovative programs that promote education and equity for women and girls. Many programs target at-risk, single-parent and low-income households and girls of color.
- TIP: Putting a nameplate printed with “Gift of XXX Branch of AAUW” in the reports you distribute is a great way to get visibility for your branch or state. Slipping in a membership brochure is a great idea, too!

Informing the Public Debate

There has been a movement in recent years propagating the notion that there is a so-called boys’ crisis in education, and some have even ventured that civil rights laws like Title IX are no longer needed. *Where the Girls Are* is the most comprehensive analysis to date on trends by gender, race/ethnicity and income in education. This report shows that girls *and* boys from the fourth grade through the end of college are making steady educational gains. An analysis of all 50 states shows that girls are *not* succeeding at the expense of boys, and, in fact, family income is more closely associated with academics than gender. Use the conclusions of *Where the Girls Are* to refute these erroneous claims and set the record straight.

- Issue a press release about the new report after the national launch. Use the press release template (attached) to localize the release with a quote from your state or branch president, and send it out to local media outlets.
- Whenever a newspaper columnist makes the claim that there is a boys’ crisis, write your own op-ed using the conclusions found in *Where the Girls Are* to refute their claims. Save time *and* stay on message by using language from the attached talking points and the press release template for these purposes.
- When an elected official makes a claim of a so-called boys’ crisis, write an open letter using the conclusions found in *Where the Girls Are* to recommend education policies that target the real problem: the educational achievement gap by race/ethnicity and family income.
- TIP: Use the verbiage in AAUW’s press release template to construct a letter to the editor about the report. Keep it short! No more than 250-300 words, and sign the letter using your AAUW title. This is a great way to spread the word about the report, to stimulate public debate about the issue, and gain visibility for your branch in the process.

Work to Improve Education Policy

While the report finds no evidence of a boys’ crisis, it does uncover large disparities in educational achievement by race/ethnicity and family income. The availability of more detailed and standardized data would provide an even clearer picture of educational effectiveness and progress in the United States, as well as prompt more specific pedagogical and policy solutions

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aimed at closing the achievement gap. Below are two key policy recommendations tied specifically to the report's findings.

- **Cross-tabulate Data:** AAUW recommends that data be cross-tabulated for state assessment systems, state reporting requirements, adequate yearly progress (AYP), and graduation rate requirements. Having the most accessible, accurate, and detailed information will encourage action specifically tailored to improve outcomes for those falling behind.
 - Currently race/ethnicity, disability, and English language learner status are disaggregated for determining AYP. Gender, migratory status, and economically disadvantaged status are disaggregated only for state reporting requirements. While this is helpful, data also needs to be cross-tabulated. This would allow for detailed and accurate comparisons between various groups.
 - With cross-tabulated data, schools would be able to compare various subgroups of children. For example, schools could compare the test scores of African American girls to Hispanic girls in order to understand how these different groups of students are performing. With these data, schools could then tailor solutions accordingly to improve educational achievement. School districts, educators, and policy makers cannot create the right solutions if they do not have the right data to truly know what segments of the population need help.
- **Standardize Reporting of High School Graduation Rates:** AAUW recommends an accurate and standard method of calculating graduation rates. Standardized graduation rates will provide a more complete picture of the actual number of students graduating from different school districts across the country and shine a light on the high school dropout crisis.
 - Currently, there is not a standard way to calculate graduation rates. With states using different formulas, it is unclear how many students are truly graduating each year.
 - AAUW applauds the House Education and Labor Committee for including a high school graduation rate definition and provisions to address the dropout crisis in their No Child Left Behind reauthorization discussion draft, released in August 2007.
 - AAUW recommends the uniform calculation of graduation rates that is similar to that proposed by the National Governors Association and the Department of Education's April 2008 proposed regulations.
 - The graduation rate for a given year would be the number of students who graduate having earned a regular high school diploma within four years, divided by the number of students who entered the high school four years earlier. Adjustments would be made for students who transfer in and out during that time.

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- States would be able to propose an alternative to the standard four-year graduation time frame for certain groups of students who typically take longer than four years to graduate. The Department of Education has proposed that all states would use the new standard definition of graduation rates by the 2012-2013 school year.
- Write your member of Congress and ask that these improvements to No Child Left Behind be made now that the bill is up for reauthorization. Use AAUW's Two-Minute Activist, and send an email message to your elected officials directly from AAUW's web site.
- Attend a town hall meeting with your members of Congress, and ask them to state their views on these policy recommendations. Urge them to do what they can to move these commonsense reforms forward.

Questions?

If you have any questions or would like additional information to help raise awareness about this important new research and the issue of gender equity in education, please contact AAUW at 800/326-AAUW or theme@aauw.org.

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AAUW PRESS RELEASE

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Contact:

[AAUW Local Contact Name]
[Phone], [E-mail]

AAUW REPORT DEBUNKS SO-CALLED “BOYS’ CRISIS” IN EDUCATION

Income Disparity More Influential than Gender in Educational Achievement, Says Most Comprehensive Analysis to Date

[City/State] — New research released by AAUW provides the most comprehensive analysis to date on trends in educational achievement by gender, race, ethnicity, and income. This report shows that girls *and* boys from the fourth grade through the end of college are making steady educational gains. An analysis of data from all 50 states indicates that girls’ successes do not come at the expense of boys. The data show that family income is more closely associated with academic success than with gender.

The report, *Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education*, presents a comprehensive look at girls’ educational achievement during the past 35 years, paying special attention to the relationship between girls’ and boys’ progress. Analyses of results from national standardized tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the SAT and ACT college entrance examinations, as well as other measures of educational achievement, provide an overall picture of trends in gender equity from elementary school to college and beyond.

Girls’ Academic Success Does Not Penalize Boys

In states where girls do well on standardized tests, so do boys. On the other hand, in states where girls do not do well on standardized tests, neither do boys. Standardized test performance in elementary and secondary school has improved or remained stable for both sexes across the board.

In addition, both women and men are now more likely to take college entrance examinations such as the ACT and the SAT, and more men and women graduate from college today than ever before. The proportion of young men graduating from high school and earning college degrees is at an all-time high. While older/nontraditional female college students outnumber their male counterparts in earning college degrees, the gender gap is almost absent among those entering college directly after high school.

Even though more women than men are earning college degrees, men continue to outearn women in the workplace almost immediately after graduation. AAUW’s report *Behind the Pay Gap*, released last year, found that one year after graduation, women earned 80 percent of men’s wages; ten years out of college, women earned only 69 percent of men’s earnings. A

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sizeable portion of these pay gaps cannot be explained by choices men and women make (such as field of study, choice of job, and time out of the workforce to care for children).

[Insert brief quote by state or branch president about AAUW's *Where the Girls Are* report refuting the myth of the so-called "boys' crisis" in education.]

Income More Influential than Gender

Children from the lowest-income families have the lowest average test scores on standardized tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Consistently, a rise in family income is associated with a rise in test scores. Differences in educational achievement vary by race/ethnicity and family income level. For example, girls often outperform boys within each racial/ethnic group on the NAEP reading test. When broken down within ethnic groups, this gender gap is found to be most consistent among white students, less so among African American students, and least among Hispanic students. AAUW researchers and many others agree that part of the achievement gap results from differences in family income, but the true extent of the overlap between race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status is masked by limitations of available federal data sources.

Conclusion

This examination of gender trends in educational achievement since the 1970s, using leading educational indicators from fourth grade to college, shows that girls' gains have not come at boys' expense. Overall, educational achievement has improved or stayed the same, and more men and women are graduating from college than ever before. Girls have made rapid gains in many areas, but boys are also gaining ground on most indicators of academic achievement.

[Include brief paragraph about how the AAUW state or branch organization is working with girls who face educational barriers (i.e., STEM programs on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, educational seminars and conferences for girls, etc.) in the state or local community.]

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AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research. With its nationwide network of approximately 100,000 members, 1,000 branches, and 500 college and university partners, AAUW has been a leading advocate for equity and education for women and girls since 1881.

Visit the AAUW website at www.aauw.org.

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Talking Points

1. *Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education* is the most comprehensive look to date at girls' educational achievement during the past 35 years. The report looks at student performance on standardized tests in elementary and high school and the SAT and ACT college admission tests. The data are broken down by gender within race and family income levels.
2. The report debunks the myth of the so-called "boys' crisis" in education. Educational achievement is not a zero-sum game. As girls have done better in schools, so have boys. Overall, both boys and girls have shown steady improvement over time.
3. The proportion of young men graduating from high school and earning college degrees is at an all-time high. While older/nontraditional female college students outnumber their male counterparts, the gender gap in enrollment is almost absent among those entering college directly after high school.
4. Even though more women are earning college degrees, men continue to outearn women in the workplace, and the gap in pay is evident almost immediately after graduation.
5. Understanding disparities by race/ethnicity and family income level is critical to understanding girls' and boys' achievement. The trends in academic performance by family income level and race are fairly consistent. On average, white and Asian American students earn higher test scores than African American and Hispanic students do. Also, on average, students from higher-income families earn higher test scores than students from lower-income families earn. But low performance is NOT inherent to any one group.
6. The educational progress made by girls and women since the publication of AAUW's landmark report *How Schools Shortchange Girls* shows that advocating for students can make a difference in their educational opportunities and achievements. With the release of *Where the Girls Are*, AAUW continues its role as a leader in educational advocacy.

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