

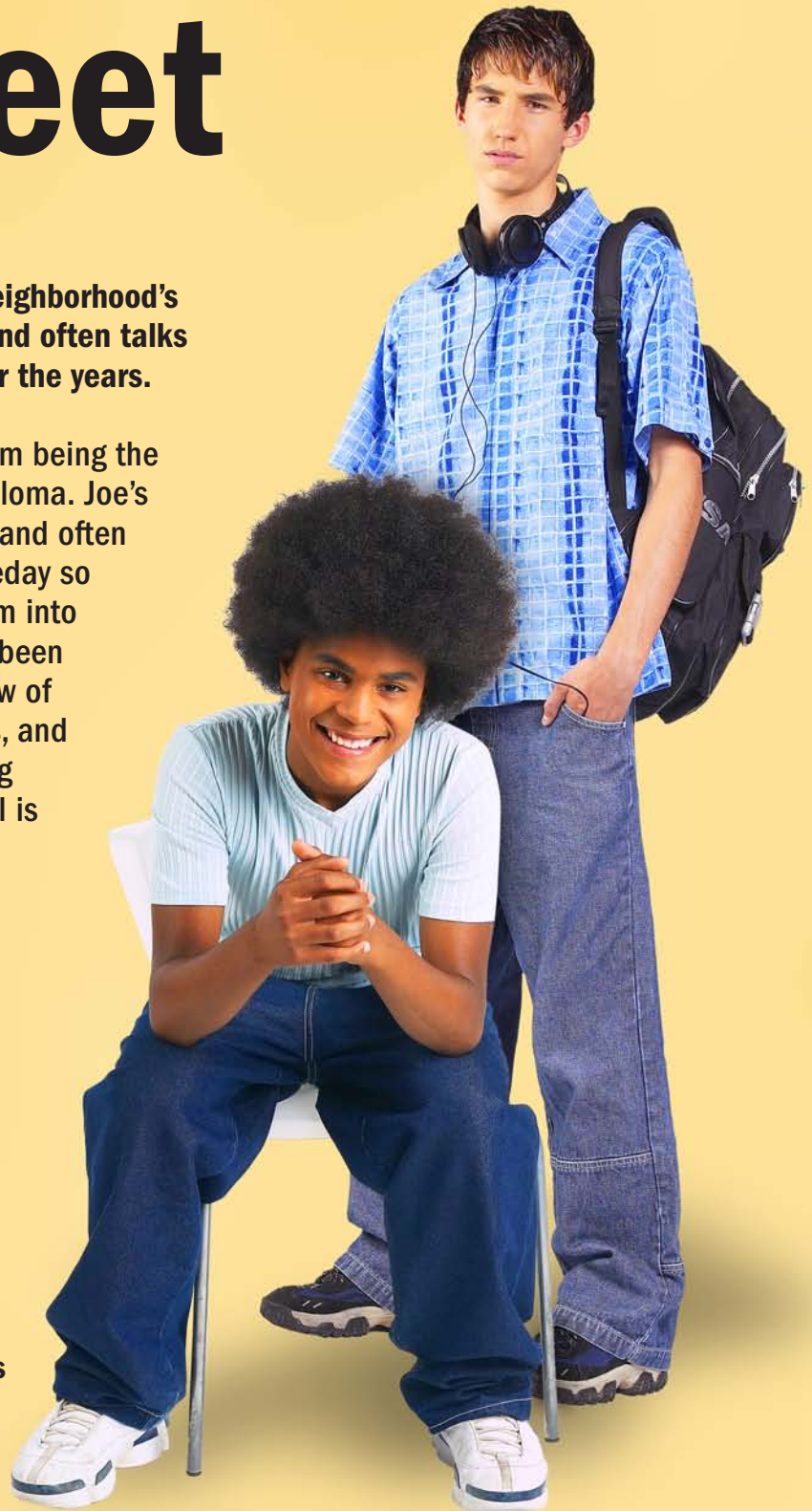
What Challenges Are Boys Facing, and What Opportunities Exist To Address Those Challenges?

Fact Sheet

Education

Since the days when he attended his new neighborhood's early learning center, Joe has liked school and often talks about how great his teachers have been over the years.

Now in eleventh grade, Joe is a year away from being the first in his family to receive a high school diploma. Joe's mom is proud of her son's accomplishments and often tells him so. Joe hopes to go to college someday so that he can get a good job and move his mom into a better neighborhood. But recently, Joe has been having trouble paying attention in class. A few of his friends have dropped out and gotten jobs, and their lives seem so much easier. Joe's starting to wonder whether all his hard work in school is really worth the effort.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Planning and Evaluation

This fact sheet is based on a comprehensive review of scientific literature, including computer searches of the major bibliographic databases (e.g., PsychINFO, MEDLINE/PubMed, EBSCOhost) looking, in particular for epidemiological studies that determine what factors make boys more or less prone to certain outcomes. The literature search was limited to scholarly journal articles and government documents published in 2000 and later unless an article was a seminal piece in the field or contributed to tracking trends over time. The statistics provided are from the most recent year for which data were available. Where possible, data related specifically to boys are included, but when these data were not available, data on youth, ages 10 to 18, are provided.

Some Facts About Boys and Education

Academic Achievement

- A 2006 study found that boys are almost twice as likely as girls to have a learning disability (10% vs. 6%) and almost 3 times as likely to have a diagnosis of ADHD (11% vs. 4%).¹
- The same study found that boys make up more than two-thirds of all students receiving special education services.²
- A 2007 study found that boys and girls who enter school with higher math and reading skills, as well as a greater ability to pay attention in class, tend to be more successful throughout their education.³
- A 2005 study found that young people, and particularly boys, whose parents are involved in their schooling tend to have greater academic achievement.⁴
- A study in 2006 found that while girls outperform boys in math grades, boys outperform girls in math test scores.⁵
- A 2005 study on gender differences in school performance found that boys who disrupt class and do not feel academically engaged may be more likely to do poorly in school.⁶
- Although African American and Hispanic adolescents have improved their performance on standardized tests over the last 20 years, in 2000, their achievement was lower than that of White students.⁷

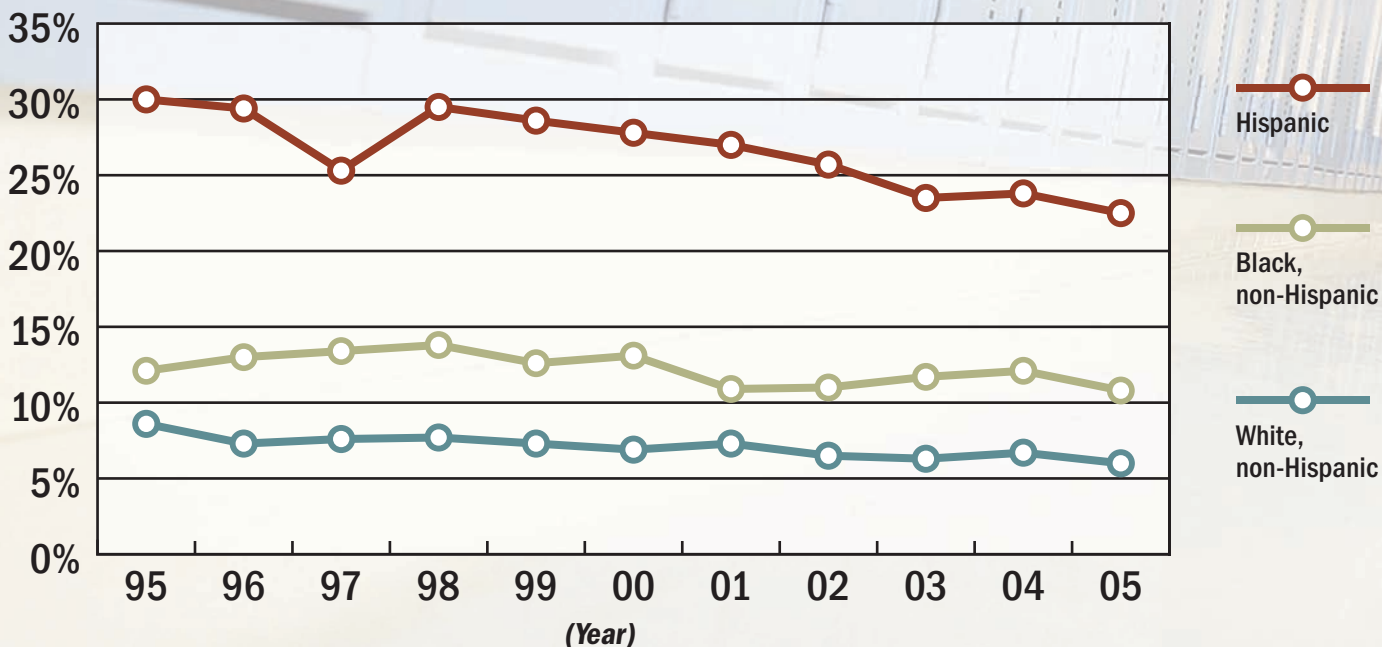
- In 2000, African American students had higher rates of suspension and expulsion than any other racial or ethnic group, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic students.⁸
- In 2000, regardless of racial or ethnic group, boys had higher rates of suspension and expulsion than girls.⁹

School Dropout Rates

- Since 1995, dropout rates for boys have declined, but in 2004, 57% of all youth ages 16 to 24 who dropped out of high school were boys and young men.¹⁰
- Since 1972, dropout rates have been higher for minority youth than for White youth. In 2005, 6% of Whites ages 16 to 24 were dropouts compared with 11% of African Americans and 23% of Hispanics.¹¹
- Boys who disrupt class, are lower achievers, lack their parents' support and supervision, or have friends who also act out in class may be more likely to drop out of school.¹²
- Boys who drop out of school are at greater risk for other problems, such as poverty, unemployment, and criminal activity.¹³

Dropout Rates of Youth, Ages 16 to 24, by Race and Hispanic Origin (%)

Source: Child Trends Data Bank



What Factors Increase or Decrease the Risk of Academic Failure?

Researchers have studied students' academic achievements and challenges to better understand why some boys and girls succeed in school while others struggle or drop out. In the process, they have learned valuable lessons about risk factors—those traits and life experiences that can jeopardize a person's healthy development—and protective factors—the characteristics and life experiences that can increase a person's likelihood of positive outcomes.

Individual risk factors for academic failure include:

- Low socioeconomic status ^{14,15,16}
- Pessimism about the future ¹⁷
- Lack of feeling connected to school ¹⁸
- Drug use ¹⁹

The following family, school, and community factors contribute to risks for academic failure:

- Poor family communication or family conflict, especially for boys ²⁰
- Low expectations regarding academic achievement ²¹
- Having friends who are disruptive in class or drop out of school ²²
- Negative school climate, such as poor attitudes or unconstructive interactions among students, teachers, and administrators; classroom disruptions; or feeling unsafe at school ²³
- Lack of educational resources, such as libraries ^{24,25}

Factors that contribute to academic achievement include:

- Ability to pay attention in class ²⁶
- Participating in extracurricular activities ^{27,28}
- Parental monitoring and involvement ^{29,30}
- Involvement with positive peer group activities and good relationships with peers ³¹
- Presence and involvement of caring and supportive adults ³²
- Community or service learning opportunities ³³



Conclusion

Statistics reveal that boys face many academic challenges, including learning disabilities, underachievement, and dropping out of school.

Given the life-altering consequences of low academic achievement and school dropout on youth, researchers have sought to gather information that can help boys succeed in school.

One thing they have learned is that boys who feel they are emotionally supported by teachers and other staff have a stronger connection to school and may be less likely to drop out.³⁴ Moreover, young people, and especially boys, are more likely to be successful in school and less likely to drop out when their parents are involved in their lives and have high expectations for and positive relationships with them.³⁵ Even if they don't live together, a good father-son relationship—characterized by frequent contact and open communication—can lead to a boy doing better in school.³⁶

Research into what works to build boys' strengths and reduce the challenges they face is still growing. Although the results are promising, efforts continue to pinpoint what strengths make some boys more likely to succeed and what risks, or challenges, increase the likelihood that they will struggle.

Boys like Joe face some tough challenges to successfully completing their education. But with strong support from teachers and parents, and with goals for the future, many of those hurdles can be overcome.

Additional Resources

To download an electronic copy of this document visit:
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/FactSheets>

For additional fact sheets in this series or for more information and resources on boys, including promising interventions and federal approaches to help boys, visit:

Fact Sheets

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/FactSheets>

Findings Brief

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/Findings1>

Annotated Bibliography

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/Biblio>

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