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## ***Our Children Tackles Gender Roles in Today's Schools***

### **National PTA's flagship publication teams up with experts to address gender issues**

**CHICAGO (December 11, 2009)** – Despite inroads made by women toward improving gender equality, children continue to be socially and academically disadvantaged due to gender inequality. This month, a **special online edition of *Our Children*** is calling attention to the ways attitudes toward gender may negatively affect girls and boys and how schools and parents can ensure that all children reach their full potential.

"We've assembled many of the top experts in gender-based studies of education and culture to offer the public a kind of progress report on gender equality and the popularly named 'boys crisis,'" says *Our Children* editor Marilyn Ferdinand. "While there's some good news about the number of girls using technology and going to college, traditional roles for both girls and boys continue to limit their choices and cause them pain about the way they are treated."

This month's special online edition of *Our Children* features:

#### **"Taming Media Stereotypes that Make Kids Aggressive"**

**Lyn Mikel Brown, EdD**, professor of education and human development at Colby College and a founding member of the Harvard Project on Woman's Psychology and Girl's Development, tackles the myth of the "Mean Girl" and addresses the negative consequences this type of labeling causes for today's girls.

#### **"Gender Bias Is Alive and Well and Affecting Our Children "**

**Karen Zittleman, PhD**, a researcher and teacher focusing on educational equity, and **David Sadker, PhD**, professor emeritus at American University and part-time professor at University of Arizona, are coauthors of *Still Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*. They discuss how teachers tend to teach boys and girls differently based on social expectations, overdisciplining boys and challenging girls less, thus contributing to the education disparity that prevents students from reaching their academic potential.

#### **"Cracking the Boy Code"**

**William S. Pollack, PhD**, an associate clinical professor of psychology in the department of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, discusses the reality of the "boy crisis" and the obstacles boys face as a result of

trying to abide by a strict “boy code” of masculinity that shuts off social and career directions they might otherwise pursue.

#### **“Gender and Media Images: Time for a Change “**

**Stacy L. Smith, PhD**, an associate professor of entertainment, and Amy Granados, a doctoral student, both at the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University of Southern California, present the results of research that shows how the portrayal of women in media can negatively influence the perceptions boys and girls develop about the role women play in society.

#### **“Technology + Girls” = An Equal Chance for Success**

**Lesley S. J. Farmer, PhD**, a professor at California State University Long Beach and researcher on education technology describes the ambivalence girls feel about pursuing technology education as somehow “unfeminine,” and how parents can help promote technology education and careers to their daughters.

**Visit [PTA.org/pta\\_magazine.asp](http://PTA.org/pta_magazine.asp) for more information.**

#### **In the Print *Our Children***

Think there’s nothing you can do about the amount and type of homework your child’s teacher assigns? Think your teens are better off leaving their career options open until they try a few things out in college? Think again. Two experts writing in the December 2009-January 2010 issue of *Our Children*, The National PTA Magazine, challenge the conventional wisdom on what it takes for students to achieve.

In “**Get Real about Students’ Career Preparedness**,” **Kenneth Gray, PhD**, professor of education, emeritus at Penn State College of Education and author of *Getting Real: Helping Teens Find Their Future, 2nd ed.* (Corwin Press, 2009) says, “Young adults need not worry about closing doors to career opportunities—they need to worry instead about opening them. Competition is fierce, and globalization has only increased the worker pool. Those who can narrow down their career interests and prepare to compete will be the most likely to open a door.”

**Cathy Vatterott, PhD**, associate professor of education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and author of *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices that Support Diverse Needs* (ASCD, 2009), says that “most parents feel they have no choice when it comes to homework.” In “**Homework: Renegotiating the Parent-School Relationship**,” Vatterott sounds the charge: “When homework creates distress, lack of balance in a child’s life, or negative feelings in their children toward school, parents must speak up.”

The December 2009-January 2010 issue of *Our Children* also contains practical articles on encouraging literacy and other topics of interest to parents and PTA leaders.

#### **About National PTA**

National PTA comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and

community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health, and welfare of children and youth.