

**Boys in Poverty: A Framework for Understanding Dropout**

*By Ruby K. Payne and Paul D. Slocumb*

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**Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Boys in Poverty: A Framework for Understanding Dropout*, by Ruby K. Payne and Paul D. Slocumb. *Boys in Poverty* examines the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive causes of dropout among boys living in poverty, and provides solutions for educators to help them stay in school. This book also discusses causes and remedies for dropout among sensitive, gay, ADHD, and gifted boys; the effects of alcohol, drug use, and precocious sexuality on dropout; and educational issues confronting young men in postsecondary school.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide will be a useful tool for individual teachers or administrators or for groups of educators working together.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Impact of Generational Poverty on Boys**

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1. From the case study describing Devin's issues, name five of Devin's risk factors and the interventions that might have been used to mitigate their effects.
2. Although the school provided some support for Devin's disability, how might that support have been given more effectively?
3. What are some of the reasons for Devin's low commitment to school?
4. What are the options for kindergarteners who have been found, through early assessment, to lag behind in reading, writing, and math?
5. The book speaks about student resources in broad terms. Name six types of resources for which students should be assessed and reassessed as they move through school.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Physical Development of Boys**

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1. Boys and girls differ in motor skills and spatial ability. What are those differences? What are some of the implications of those differences for education?
2. What is the timed-silence syndrome in boys? What is its cause at the neurological level? How can schools take into account the timed-silence syndrome when planning instruction?
3. Why can a strict policy of zero tolerance for violence sometimes be counterproductive when dealing with boys' aggression?
4. How does poverty have a negative effect on boys' motor coordination?
5. Generational poverty also impedes boys' physical development through inadequate nutrition. Other than providing meals, how can schools counteract this impact?

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Emotional Development of Boys**

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1. What characteristic of boys' brains makes it more difficult for them than it is for girls to process emotions?
2. Name other factors that contribute to boys' emotional illiteracy. What strategy has been found to be helpful in improving the emotional literacy level of boys?
3. What other feelings fall under the category "feeling mad" in the Feeling-Word Thesaurus? How can teachers embed feeling words in instructional content?
4. How is shame different from guilt? What triggers the emotion of shame in boys? What are the consequences for boys of their tendency to be shame phobic?
5. Name three reasons that emotional issues often go unaddressed in poverty.
6. Why do children who have been the victims of child abuse or neglect use strategies of control and manipulation?

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Cognitive Development of Boys**

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1. During what age range is the “window of opportunity” most open for learning the basics of math and logical thinking?
2. Why is a child’s vocabulary such an important key to success in school? How can schools contribute to giving each student a rich vocabulary? What is Marzano’s process for teaching vocabulary?
3. Besides delayed language acquisition, what other differences exist between girls’ and boys’ basic learning styles?
4. How does intense physical activity enhance learning?
5. What is double-coding? What are the implications of double-coding for delivering information to students?
6. How does generational poverty negatively affect the development of executive function? What can be done in the classroom to mitigate this?

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Social Development of Boys**

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1. What messages do media typically communicate to boys about what it means to be a man? Why do these messages have added impact for boys living in poverty?
2. What are some of the physiological effects of the sensationalism to which boys are exposed in the media?
3. Why do boys tend to form larger groups than girls?
4. What are bridging capital and bonding capital? Why are boys in poverty often deprived of both?
5. How does the experience of boys in poverty work against the development of teamwork? What can be done in school and after school hours to counteract this effect?

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Impact of Drugs, Alcohol, and Early Sexual Activity on Boys**

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1. Boys take drugs for different reasons than girls. What are some of these differences?
2. Why is precocious sexual experience potentially so harmful to teens?

3. We have created a culture that encourages both thrill-seeking and abstinence among youth. What are some of the effects of this double message?
4. Competitive sports do not always work as well for boys in poverty as they do for other boys. Why? Why are competitive sports not necessarily a deterrent to substance abuse?
5. Name four ways that schools can compensate for the lack of adult males in the lives of boys who are living in poverty.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Different Boy: Sensitive, Gay, Gifted, ADHD**

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1. What connections have been shown to exist between gender nonconformity in boys and lethal school violence?
2. Name several factors that can contribute to the emotional stability of gay boys and men.
3. How can giftedness, a seemingly positive quality, lead to just as much isolation for boys in poverty as being gay or sensitive?

4. Why are boys often overdiagnosed as ADHD? After what age should a diagnosis of ADHD be considered suspect? What are the alternatives to the use of Ritalin and Adderall?

## **Chapter 8**

### **Emerging Adulthood**

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1. What are the unique issues that boys from poverty face when they enter the world of work? How does their tendency to conflate their status as males with how they are treated on the job work against them?
2. How are social class and family relationships impediments to students from poverty who enter college?
3. What kinds of affirmative statements can be used with adolescents to provide them with a future story?
4. What support systems can be offered to a boy from poverty entering the alien world of college?

## **Conclusion**

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1. What environmental indicators can be used with very young boys to identify their potential risk for dropping out?
2. Describe the diagnostic approach to individual student interventions.
3. If you disaggregate student performance data by gender and economic status, and there is a discrepancy between male and female performance, what does that tell you?
4. Parents and communities may not be able to provide as much support to boys in poverty as educators would like. For what kinds of support is it appropriate to turn to parents and the community?