Kent County Literacy Coach's Network

Susan Laninga
positioned educationally than many of our males to take advantage of the economy’s shift. Our boys have long been able to take poorly in their academic achievement and still find substantial employment in the industrial sector where wages were high, even if the work was less interesting and intellectually engaging. Over the decades, males have become habituated into the belief that, irrespective of their performance in school, there would be work for them somewhere and work that would generate a reasonable middle class lifestyle for them. But those opportunities are disappearing quickly in America as witnessed by the loss of manufacturing jobs in Michigan since 2001. Failure to gain a high school diploma is now seriously problematic. Gaining some level of higher education, be it an associate’s or bachelor’s degree, will become the new threshold or benchmark, if it has not already become so.

It might be argued that females have become the unintended beneficiaries of a societal practice that sets behavioral expectations for them in school, but has persisted in letting “boys be boys.” The net result, so goes the argument, is that females have, through our societal expectations, developed a behavioral skill set that is more conducive to the present school experience and its study and work habits. Thus, as we examine the success of your young women in our educational institutions from kindergarten through higher education, as a gender they continually outperform their male counterparts. There are greater numbers and percentages of them than males succeeding in all the areas that are important for our society to move forward. Studies have found that high school males on the whole put greater stock in being a good athlete than planning to attend college or getting good grades [2]. Notwithstanding the importance of extra-curriculum sports in the lives of our students, how wrong-headed is such thinking? As parents, and particularly as fathers, are we not perhaps doing our sons a dis-service by favoring attitudes that foster sports’ participation and success at the expense of academic performance? Winning a state championship as a 17 year old is a memorable one-time experience. Having a solid education that affords significant occupational opportunity and financial reward lasts a life-time.

[1] for an interesting history of women’s suffrage in America, see that topic in ‘wikipedia.org’


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