

# Recovering Angry, Fatherless Boys Being Left Behind

By Ronald E. Johnson, Ph.D.

# Request to be a Substitute Dad:

- “You are the only dad I ever had.”  
—African-American boy
- “You were there in place of my dad when I needed someone.”  
—Anglo boy
- “You were the dad I never had.”  
—Hispanic boy

(What about: rebellion, rejection, reactions, resentment, recalcitrance, resistance, recidivism?)

# Fatherless Sons

- “We will never solve the crime problem in America until we solve the problem of fathers not loving and training their sons.”  
—Zig Ziglar
- “I never saw a man in prison who went fishing with his dad.” —J. Edgar Hoover
- “Ninety nine percent of men in prison do not respect or love their dads.” —Zig Ziglar

(Most male prisoners send Mother’s Day cards to moms, but ignore Father’s Day.)

# Three R's in Lives of Un-mentored Boys

- Readin' (below peers and test thresholds)
- Ritalin, (the first prescription to suppress anger)
- Relationships (broken)

# Prominent adults who shape habits, values, aspirations and attitudes:

- Mom (boyfriend/stepfather)
- teachers (women; 1-3 years experience)
- counselor/probation officer/principal (often women)
- girlfriend(s) (promiscuous) (co-dependent)
- merchants (usually women)
- media (stupid, incompetent, violent males)
- Coaches (often most helpful)
- neighborhood “boss”
- Extra-curricular coordinator

# The negative scenario caused by no dad.

- desperate moms (“Help my son!”)
- conflict with mom’s boyfriend(s) (abusive/detached)
- perspective: angry (over loss of real dad)
- life isn’t fair nor does it offer hope for anything better (no one to direct, discipline)
- loss of interest in academics (hurt, distracts)
- unemployability in quality career (lack of purpose)

A boy left to himself  
brings shame to his mother.

# Efforts to Compensate for Dad's Absence

- athletics (guidance and approval from male coach)
- gangs (false family identity)
- girlfriend(s) (intimacy/search for manhood)
- gay partner(s) (seeks affirmation of gender)
- drugs (escape)
- job(s) (time filler/money to demonstrate power)
- pornography (search for manhood)

# Pressures that work against strategies to affirm boys.

- media's distortion of reality about male characteristics and responsibilities
- sensual allurements/appetites that play upon raging hormones (Internet, magazines)
- emotional voids that cry to be filled by somebody (Who am I?) (What is life purpose?)
- quick-fix prescription or illegal drugs
- Hopelessness (Can I hope for anything better?)
- anger at adult culture

# The Reality of Research Statistics


- impact of single-parent homes on boys
- ethnic neighborhoods/schools
- impact of virtues, principles and beliefs
- schools of choice
- incarcerations
- special education

# System symptoms that cannot be denied:

- low performance percentages in some schools,
- leaver percentages in too many schools,
- successful schools of choice (charters, private, home),
- fellow teachers who are not effective in classrooms,
- adopted textbooks that look nice but don't "work" for many students,
- low math skills.
- female leadership in schools

# Symptoms of Boys when Dads Fail to Mentor/Bond

- angry, volatile, argumentative
- lack of commitment
- immediate gratification
- subculture habits (attire, music, speech)
- untrusting of adults
- short term negative practices
- easily discouraged
- lack of radiance
- victim mentality
- mood swings (conscience)
- short attention span



... almost the  
same symptoms as  
drug abusers!

# Contemporary efforts to remedy:

- single sex schools
- assistance from faith-based organizations
- Disciplinary Alternative Placement (DAP)
- prescription drugs
- charter schools/vouchers/tax credits/home
- Incarceration (short-long term)
- Expulsion to streets
- Therapy (laws that recover)

# Suggested formula for recovering boys:

- academic setting different than high school
- at least one adult who cares
- philosophical new beginning (LAWS)
- immediate evidence of success
- tough love/accountability
- give up negative choices vs. positive choices
- noble virtues and causes
- conscious-probing questions
- Help with math/reading
- “doable” structure

# Removing the stigma of alternative placement as a punitive program:

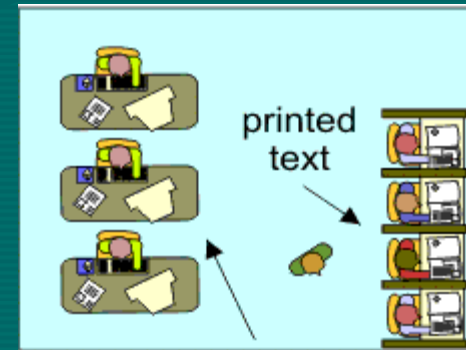
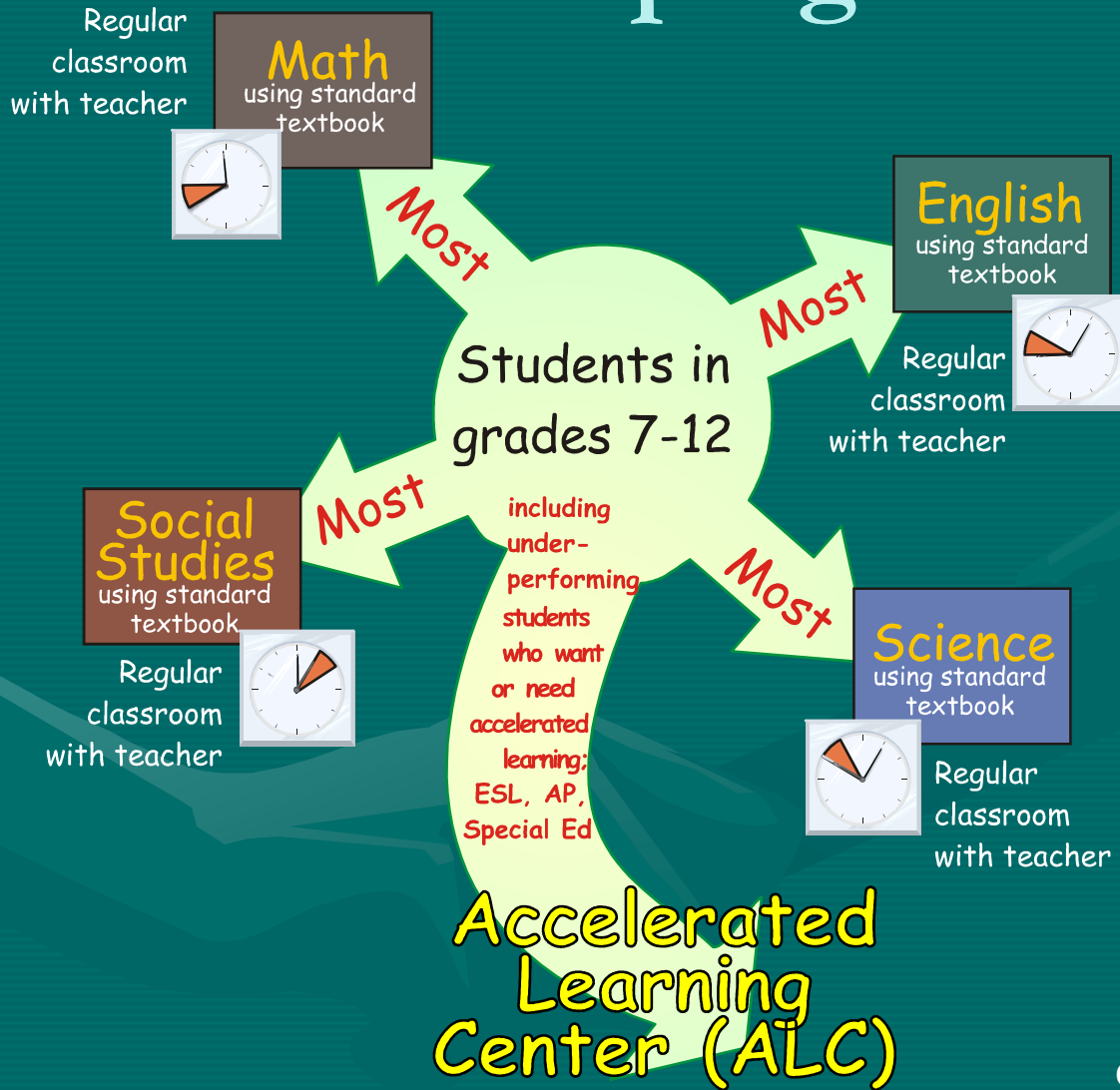
- punitive vs. dignity
- alternative curriculum
- individualized learning program
- inspirational environment

**“This don't look like no school.”**

# *Status quo* opposition to non-punitive alternative placement:

- individualized learning not appreciated
- effective curriculum limited
- various learning styles not accommodated
- professional prejudice against non-punitive alternative school

# A positive model pull-out alternative program on campus:



computer delivered curriculum

# Recovery environment (at school):

- character posters that prompt integrity
- attire that elevates aspirations
- instrumental music that inspires
- career enhancement skills
- sub-culture values vs. noble elegance
- “non-school look”
- high expectations of character/career
- chess, projects
- Service learning experiences
- “LAWS”
- (Rogue elephant story)

# Curriculum

- left and right brain engagement
- draw emotions into studies (vignettes)
- measurable assignments
- role models that inspire emulation
- opportunities to be trusted
- progress independent of peers
- accelerated opportunity/make up failure
- art, drama, speech, UIL, FFA
- immediate feedback on effort
- structured for predictability
- accommodates short attention span

# Suggested recovery strategies:

- noble ideals and virtues
- biographies and works about noble males
- borders and expectations (responsibilities)
- make up previous failures rapidly
- one positive person who cares/influences
- community support/projects (help others)
- give up to fill up
- daily accountability for choices

# Mentored fatherless boys can succeed:

- “I used to hate school; now I like it. What are you doing to me inside?”
- “...now I am going to college to reach my dream.”
- “I want to graduate...”
- “I could kill a person, but I’ve changed my mind...”
- Vignettes: Audy Murphy, Frederick Douglas, George W. Carver, Oliver Perry, George Washington, Henry Clay

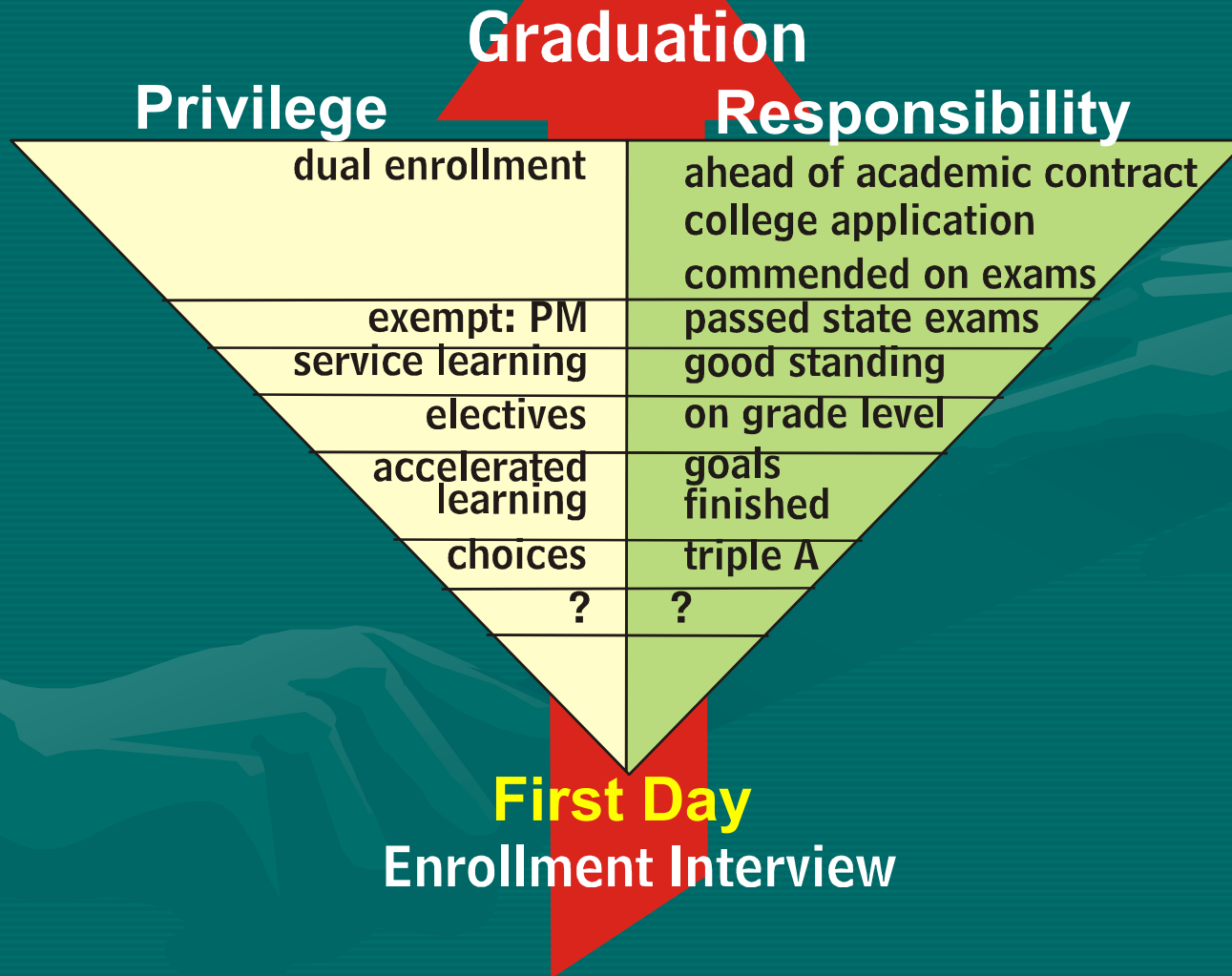
# BNLC to assure NCLB (Boys Need Leadership Challenges)

"The man without a purpose is  
like a ship without a rudder—  
waif,  
a nothing, a no man."

—Thomas Carlyle

- braggin' rights: tough masculine assignments that require sacrifice, effort, commitment
- male heroes who inspire emulation
- Self-esteem efforts vs. tough challenges
- responsibilities and causes that pull boys past temptations and abuses (something that captures energy and emotions)

# Privilege vs. Responsibility

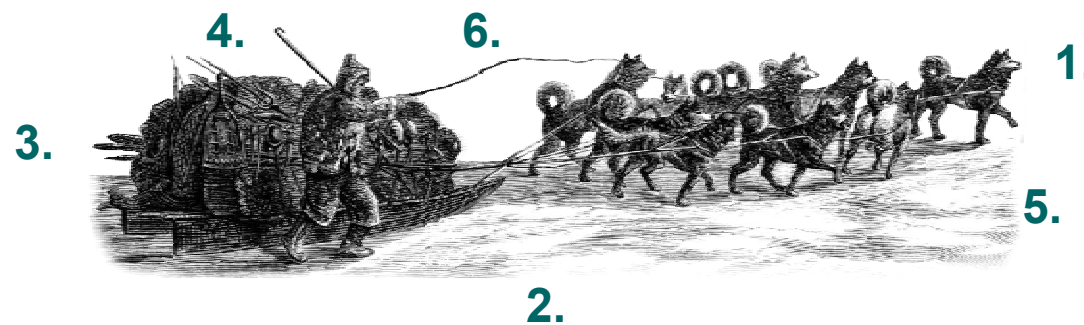


# Staff responses to students:

- Don't be easily offended/intimidated
- Befriend (but not familiar)
- Make eye contact that smiles
- Mentor in short moments
- Ask probing questions discretely
- Be honest, fair, discrete, flexible
- Talk about & display noble concepts
- Don't expect paradigm shift "today"
- Connect with support groups
- Direct focus on responsibilities
- Treat as top notch students (Zig Ziglar)
- Be consistent objectively

# Six Principles of Learning:

1. Students willing to learn
2. School environment enhances learning
3. Reasonable academic load
4. Staff directs learning process
5. Needs defined rules and procedures
6. Visual and physical incentives of accountability



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