

Closing the Gender Achievement Gap

Funding Transformational Professional Development to Improve Teacher Effectiveness

Where is your student achievement gap? Is it between boys and girls? Is it in literacy? Is it in math and science? Is it between high income and low-income students? Is it between ethnic or racial groups? Since 1996, the Gurian Institute's professional development programs have helped school districts close gaps in all of these areas. Our Boys and Girls Learn Differently program alone has been used in more than 2,000 schools and districts, by over 40,000 teachers.

The federal **No Child Left Behind Act** provides professional development funding to help schools close their student achievement gaps. If your school or school district faces an achievement gap in one or more content or demographic areas, *Gurian Institute* programs can help. Our work with a Title I middle school in Oklahoma led to a nine percent reduction in the reading gender gap in one year. Best of all, reading scores for girls improved, too.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations state

“In accordance with section 1119 and subsection (a) (4), high quality and ongoing professional development for teachers, principals, paraprofessionals, pupil services personnel, parents and other staff must be provided to enable all children in the school to meet the State’s student academic achievement standards.”

Gurian Institute education trainings meet NCLB requirements for professional development:

- N** ✓ Improves students’ academic achievement on standardized tests.
- C** ✓ Aligns with and directly relates to academic content standards, student achievement standards, and assessments.
- L** ✓ Delivers high quality, sustained, intensive, student-focused training for a positive, lasting effect on classroom instruction and teacher performance.
- B** ✓ Is based on research-validated practices.
- ✓ Improves classroom management skills.

Each year, the US Department of Education provides billions of dollars to states and school districts to improve K-12 schools and meet student needs. The recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will infuse billions more in new formula funds disbursed to state and local education agencies, qualifying school districts and schools. *Districts and schools fund Gurian Institute programs* across the country from their formula funds for:

- **Title I – Improving Basic Programs**
- **Title II – Improving Teacher Quality**
- **Title V, Part A – Innovative Schools**

Title I – Improving Basic Programs

Title I is designed to ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state academic standards and assessments. Title I provides formula grants to school districts, when then allocate funds to individual Title I schools based on the poverty statistics of their students. Title I funds may be used for a variety of services and activities, mostly in reading and math instruction. The legislation encourages the use of strategies such as extended day, extended year and summer programs to increase learning time. *Title I funding also may be used for professional development of teachers in core academic subjects.*

“One of our elementary schools has had exceptional results in literacy. When the Gurian Institute’s work in our district began, 56 percent of the students were reading at or above grade level. Today, 90 percent of our students are at that level. Furthermore, in 1999, girls were outperforming boys as indicated on the statewide achievement test: 21 percent of girls were scoring in the top levels of the test, while only 11 percent of the males were in the upper levels. Today, this gap has closed.”

Dr. Dan Colgan, Superintendent
St. Joseph School District
St. Joseph, Missouri

How Can the Gurian Institute Help?

Gurian Institute workshops are designed to help schools meet the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of boys and girls, preschool through high school. Providing teachers with an understanding of how the brain works and the brain-based differences between boys and girls helps teachers to revolutionize their thinking about how to meet students’ needs. Teachers examine their own knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about males and females and modify their teaching strategies to address the *neurological* needs of boys and girls.

When addressing achievement gaps associated with race, socioeconomic status and/or language background, it is critical to examine the role gender plays in patterns of achievement. Among students of color and students living in poverty, the achievement gap between boys and girls may be even larger than it is between white, middle-class boys and girls. By closely examining school or district-wide data, many school leaders begin to see this pattern.

Beginning in 2009, Title I requires school districts to obtain and report this type of disaggregated data—about the relationship of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender and achievement in core subjects—to their communities, state, and the federal government in order to meet the requirements for Annual Yearly Progress. This requirement gives school districts new tools to closely examine gender differences in student achievement.

Largely, teachers are uninformed and under-equipped to differentiate instruction based on the differences between boys and girls. *Gurian Institute* programs provide educators with scientific research about the brain coupled with effective instructional practices designed to meet the unique learning and developmental needs of both boys and girls. *Gurian Institute* success data show that, through appropriate intervention, achievement within and between gender groups gaps close, while behavior problems and dropout rates decline.

Title II – Improving Teacher Quality

The Improving Teacher Quality program increases student achievement by promoting the use of scientifically based professional development, and holding districts and schools accountable for improvements in student academic performance. Because each community may face a variety of challenges with respect to teacher quality, this program allows funds to be used for a wide array of intervention programs.

Title IIa will fund training for teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals, as well as all materials associated with training. All activities supported with Title II funds must be based on a review of scientifically based research that shows how such interventions are expected to improve student achievement. Schools must:

- Ensure that activities are aligned with state content standards and will result in improvements to student academic achievement.
- Coordinate the program with other professional development programs.
- Develop activities in a collaborative fashion.

How Can the Gurian Institute Help?

The *Gurian Institute* provides certified and master trainers who are experts in a school or district's area of focus. Our trainers have extensive backgrounds at the elementary, middle and high school levels, in private and public schools (including international, military and juvenile justice schools), in coed and single-sex schools, and in a variety of educational approaches.

The *Gurian Institute* provides crucial training to school personnel that most did not receive in college. With the recent explosion of scientific information about the brain, it is critical to help teachers and schools focus on how the brain learns. *Gurian Institute* training is tailored to each organization and can include ongoing training sessions, technical assistance, classroom lab experiences, and team-teaching and model teaching. In addition to delivering the curriculum, certified *Gurian Institute* trainers can facilitate book studies or support the work of teacher leaders in Professional Learning Communities. Additional supports, such as electronic newsletters, discussion boards and training-of-trainers, are available to ensure sustainability, a continued focus, and the highest level of school-wide implementation.

Title V, Part A – Innovative Schools

The Innovative Schools Program grant supports state and local efforts to implement promising education reform support programs designed to improve school, student and teacher performance. Innovative Schools funding supports efforts to recruit, train, and hire highly qualified teachers to reduce class size, and provide *professional development activities carried out in accordance with Title II*, that give school personnel knowledge and skills to provide students with the opportunity to meet academic content standards and student academic achievement standards. Additionally, programs that improve the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged elementary and secondary school students—including activities to prevent students from dropping out of school—are funded through Title V, Part A.

How Can the Gurian Institute Help?

Gurian Institute training is designed to improve school performance, increase student success, and provide tools for teachers to enhance their effectiveness and engagement. The theory base of Gurian's *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* is supported by other evidence-based research, including Marzano's *Classroom Instruction That Works* and Levine's *A Mind at a Time*. *Gurian Institute* professional development is innovative because it brings together the best education practice and pedagogy, adds theory about the role gender plays in the teaching and learning processes, and provides instructional staff with proven strategies to use in the classroom right away.

Gurian Institute learning is not “one more thing” on a busy teacher’s plate. Rather, it weaves naturally into teachers’ prior knowledge base. Equipped with a new understanding of how the male and female brains learn, teachers are better able to make informed and strategic instructional decisions about how best to motivate, engage, and teach their students. As school personnel understand more about how boys and girls learn differently, the culture of the building begins to change. Teachers are encouraged to allow students to be more actively engaged and interactive during learning. Master scheduling decisions are made differently, with consideration for when and how students learn best. Students’ passions are enlisted to provide a vehicle for learning across content areas.

“The gender-friendly instructional theory and techniques have helped us to significantly improve student achievement and meet the individual needs of both genders...when our seventh and tenth grade MCA Reading and Math mean scores are now compared with our surrounding districts, we notice higher scores in our district for both boys and girls. We also notice the gap between boys and girls beginning to close. Furthermore, we have found that teacher and parent heightened awareness of gender differences in learning styles and appropriate strategies has been well received by students themselves.”

Ken Dragseth, Superintendent
Edina Public Schools
Edina, Minnesota

Unfortunately, in the face of significant pressure to improve low test scores, some underperforming schools have cut extra-curricular programs, social studies, and science in favor of a singular focus on reading and mathematics. This is neither innovative nor healthy for children on a social, emotional or physical level. The *Gurian Institute* encourages innovation through the provision of a rich curriculum for all kids – not just the rich kids – in an environment that honors the brain-based strengths, talents and interests of both boys and girls.

Successful Gurian Institute Programs

The *Gurian Institute* is conducting training and technical assistance for the parents, teachers, and other instructional personnel at six elementary schools participating in the Even Start program in **Prince George’s County Public Schools** Maryland (PGCPS). The district is using Title I funding to train teachers and administrators in six pilot elementary schools about the gender-specific educational needs of boys and girls in Pre-K through 2nd grade. In addition, Gurian Institute trainers have conducted several parent informational sessions and are presenting in training academies for parents from schools in the pilot.

The *Gurian Institute* has worked with the **Atlanta Public Schools** for the past two academic years facilitating professional development for administrators, faculty and staff of two new charter schools—the Business, Engineering, Science and Technology Academy at Benjamin S. Carson and the Coretta Scott King Young Women’s Leadership Academy. Significant progress was made in both schools as they worked to develop a boy-friendly and girl-friendly culture for their students. *Gurian Institute* trainers and coaches continue to help the district and the two building principals to refine their practices and introduce new staff to Gurian Institute concepts.

Jefferson County School District (JEFFCO) in Westminster, Colorado (Colorado’s largest public school district) recently completed implementation of a *Gurian Institute* Training-of-Trainers model across the district, equipping 150 Instructional Coaches and 24 Master Trainers who are embedding gender training into their ongoing professional development district wide, Pre-K through 12th grade. To date, 400 members of building and district leadership teams have been trained and the Instructional Coaches have participated in a three-day training Institute. JEFFCO’s goal is to ultimately eliminate their gender-gap in literacy (which echoes the national statistics) between boys and girls and improve performance for all students from Pre-K through grade 12. Some schools in the district (elementary, middle and high school) are piloting single-sex classes while most are maintaining a coed environment.

Roosevelt Middle School in **Oklahoma City** used Title I grant funding to provide three years of professional staff development as they implemented a single-gender core class model in their 6-8 middle school. Training included annual, multi-day onsite sessions for all staff and

Our test results at the end of the year were quite significant. We use the standardized testing system called MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) by the Northwest Evaluation Association. MAP achievement levels are shared in the form of RIT scores. You can give MAP test multiple times throughout the year, so we were able to do a fall pre-test and a spring post-test.

In the pretest, prior to Gurian awareness and training, the gender gap in reading between girls and boys in grades 3rd-8th averaged 2.35 RIT points per grade level (i.e. 7th grade girls average reading RIT is 230.0 while the boys is 227.65). However, in the spring post test after the Gurian keynote and training, the gender gap average between boys and girls dropped to an average of 0.92 RIT points per grade. In other words, the gender gap between boys and girls in reading was reduced by 1.43 RIT points—a remarkable percentage reduction...

Joseph M. Porto, Superintendent
Avoca School District 37
Avoca, Illinois

administration, classroom observations and participation in the Summer Institute. Their success was impressive, as they were able to significantly narrow their achievement gap and decrease disciplinary referrals. In 2005, the school had a gender gap in reading achievement of 17 percent. Boys scored 55% satisfactory on the 8th grade CRT reading test while girls scored 72 percent. By the end of 2006, after the Gurian Institute training, boys scored 71 percent satisfactory on the reading CRT and the girls scored 80 percent—narrowing the achievement gap to 9 percent in one year. In terms of discipline success, the total number of fights occurring on campus in 2006 decreased from 125 to 30.

Hope High School in **Hope, Arkansas** contracted for multi-day onsite training with the *Gurian Institute* and saw marked improvement in 2006 final exams and overall grade improvement. Teachers also believe the students have retained more knowledge based on the new strategies being implemented. Class sessions at Hope High School are now 90-minute blocks of time and teachers strongly believe that brain breaks and new strategies enable the students to stay more fully engaged. Hope sent seven faculty to the *Gurian Institute's* Summer Institute. These “focus teachers” help to encourage ongoing implementation. The school has done book studies and is implementing ongoing training.

For more school success data, visit the Gurian Institute at www.gurianinstitute.com.