**Top Ten Reasons for an All-Boys Education**

***Dr. Stephen Johnson’s speech advocating the many merits of an all boys environment has been reproduced with kind permission of Upper Canada College’s journal “Old Times” (copyright 2003). While understandably certain references are specific to his own independent school, his remarks are poignantly appropriate for all families considering an all-male education for their sons.***

**10. BOYS LEARN AT THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENTAL PACE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.**What does that mean? It means that girls learn to read before boys do, and they tend to achieve better in school, particularly in the early years. In an all-boy environment, boys are able to develop at their own pace. They are not judged in comparison to girls. They do not start off their school life with the sense that they are behind. As a result, they don’t lose interest in school or in reading.

**9. BOYS MATURE LATER THAN GIRLS PHYSICALLY AND SOCIALLY.**An all-boys’ school gives boys a little longer to grow up socially. It protects them from society’s pressure to get involved with girls before they are ready. It saves them spending all their time trying to impress the girls, and lets them focus on their school work and on being boys.

**8. BOYS HAVE BOUNDLESS PHYSICAL ENERGY.**Boys tend to engage physically with the world. I call it the stick principle. When you go out walking in the woods with boys, they all immediately pick up a stick. Girls don’t do this. But boys like to touch the world, poke at it and explore it physically. It is this male energy that is at the root of most behavior and discipline problems at a young age. Boys are more physical. They have to move. They are more likely to fall or knock things over. In a class with girls, this normal boy behavior stands out. It often seems inappropriate or wrong.

In an all-boy environment, we can use and direct that male energy, and help boys learn to manage their bodies and physical strength. Because they have positive outlets for their energy, they focus better in the classroom.

**7.** **BOYS ARE ESSENTIALLY DISORGANIZED.**This seems to be a male trait that doesn’t change with age. Back in the 1800s, Thomas Huxley wrote, “Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and however early man’s training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.”

Just walk down any hallway at the Prep between classes or when school is over and you will see examples of male disorganization! For boys, who tend to live in the moment and do not always think ahead, finding the right books at the right time, keeping lockers organized, and arriving at class with shirts tucked in can be an overwhelming challenge. Unfortunately, boys need organizational skills to succeed at school and in life. In an all-boy setting, we can focus on helping them develop those skills through our tailor-made agendas and a timetable that sets aside structured time for this purpose.

**6.** **BOYS ARE CREATIVE.**We know that, given the right opportunity, boys love to create. They throw themselves into music, art, drama and creative writing. Most have a strong artistic side. But in a co-ed setting, many boys simply will not pursue these activities.

They don’t try out for the play or join the choir often because of some misguided social sense that these activities are not masculine. One of our teachers who came from a public school setting was struck by the sound of boys singing. In a co-ed school, it is primarily the girls who sing.

In an all-boy setting, boys are not silent or disengaged. They can explore their creative side without fear, take risks and develop a broader, more inclusive sense of what it means to be male.

**5.** **BOYS ARE GREAT LEADERS.**Boys can handle responsibility from a very young age. Given the chance, they take charge, lead others and accomplish great things. In a co-ed environment, they may not get the same chance to be leaders perhaps because of that male energy I talked about or because they are not as organized as the girls or as willing to volunteer. Peer pressure may keep them from becoming leaders.

In an all-boy environment, they have no choice. They have to play all the roles. They learn how to lead and how to work as part of a group with other boys: whether at our Norval Outdoor School, on stage, on a rep team, in the classroom, as reading buddies for the younger students or through community-service initiatives, such as Hoops for Heart. They learn leadership skills they will use the rest of their lives.

**4. BOYS ARE RISK TAKERS.**Boys tend to act first and think later. They often take risks without realizing they are risks. This can be a good thing – some of the greatest achievements in civilization start with someone taking a risk. We don’t want to subdue that male trait. But we do want to direct it and help boys learn the judgment they need to avoid hurting themselves or others.

**3.** **BOYS MAKE GREAT FRIENDS.**What does friendship look like for boys? It changes as they grow. Friendship is every boy in class spending his recess looking in the snow for a classmate’s lost tooth and then promising to look again the next recess.

As your sons mature, their friendships become deeper and more supportive. Here is a list of what boys said recently about what it meant to be a friend: “being loyal; standing up for someone else; being encouraging; trusting; caring and helping; being someone you can depend on.”

What our boys learn about friendship now will enrich their lives. Many of the friendships they form here will, in fact, last a lifetime. I am always struck by how many returning alumni are still close, supportive friends. These vital male friendships grow and thrive best in an all-boy environment, where boys are not competing with one another for the girls’ attention.

**2.** **BOYS ARE FUNNY.**In my experience, men tend to have an irreverent sense of humor. We use humor to cope, and to relate to one another. And that sense of humor starts very young. Boys make each other laugh, and they make their teachers particularly the male teachers laugh. They are always telling jokes – often very bad jokes – or imitating each other or their teachers.

In an all-boy setting, the sense of humor is everywhere. The more we can encourage that sense of humor, the better equipped your sons will be to develop relationships with other people and to thrive in the real world.

And, finally, my number one reason for boys’ education…

**1.** **BOYS NEED MALE ROLE MODELS.**Boys need male role models to help them grow and develop. They need men around to show them different ways of being male. These days, fathers are much more actively involved in their children’s lives than they used to be, and that’s good. But, even so, during the early years, boys often spend very little time with men.

At a boys’ school, they will have a number of male teachers. Those men will have different strengths. Some will be coaches, some musicians. Some will have a great passion for drama or poetry or science or English, and those men will make a huge difference in the boys’ lives. Almost every old boy I’ve met has talked about a particular male teacher who inspired or challenged him.

Another thing our male teachers model for the boys is how to relate to women, and this is no small thing. Years ago, the Prep was a male bastion. Today, it’s quite different. We have men and women working together in all aspects of the school: The office, the classroom, the sports fields, the guidance program and the drama productions.