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# SUNDAY PIONEER PRESS

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Officer Jason Andersen is the central figure in the arrest of Quenton Tyrone Williams and the shooting death of Fong Lee.

## Same cop, same claim that gun was planted

Before Fong Lee trial, officer denied setup of drug suspect

By David Hanners  
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When the family of Fong Lee claimed this year that Minneapolis police had planted a gun on the teen after he was shot dead by officer Jason Andersen, they didn't know that, a year earlier, a drug suspect had accused the police officer of planting a gun in another case.

The man testified at his trial that Andersen — then assigned to the scandal-plagued Metro Gang Strike Force — falsely claimed he had found a revolver on him when Andersen arrested him.

As in the Fong Lee civil trial a year later, Andersen denied the allegation. A jury convicted Quenton Tyrone Williams of fifth-degree drug possession while carrying a handgun, and he was sentenced to three years in prison.

Williams is appealing his conviction; in a prison interview, the inmate maintained that Andersen planted the weapon on him as leverage to turn him into an informant.

"His words were, 'Can you get me anything?' His words were, 'I'll see if I can make my magic work,' basically to get me out of jail," Williams said. "He told me if I agree on the (interrogation) recording about the gun, he'd get me released."

Minneapolis police records show a .38-caliber revolver was turned over to the department's evidence unit after Williams' arrest. There is no record it was checked for fingerprints. Police did determine the gun had not been reported stolen, but the police report and six

GUN CLAIM, 9A >



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: JOHN DOMAN

Disappointed first-grader Tyson Sonnek slumps to the floor during a word-matching exercise last month in teacher Tom Mealey's all-boys classroom at Carver Elementary in Maplewood. Mealey proposed the boys-only experiment to tackle an achievement gap between girls and boys.

## ARE BOYS FALLING BEHIND?

Boys' reading and writing skills lag behind girls', and boys seem less engaged in school, teachers say.

**Surrounding Mr. Mealey** during a Sudoku math exercise are Mr. Klonecz, foreground, Mr. Zook, right, and Mr. Sonnek — known as Ryan, Aaron and Tyson outside the classroom. Mealey emphasizes respect and relationships in his all-boys class, and teacher and students address each other with the courtesy title "Mr."



**In Sunday Life:** Study up on the latest trends and research for heading back to the classroom. **Section E**

Local educators say the problem is real and some are trying new strategies to help boys close the gap.

By Megan Boldt > mboldt@pioneerpress.com

First-grader Cyrus Mendis parks himself on an exercise ball and tackles a Sudoku puzzle to help hone his math skills. He calls his teacher "Mr. Mealey" and his classmates by Mr., too. And he's a proud member of "Mealey's Men," made up of three teams that compete to demonstrate the best behavior and the best academic performance.

Tom Mealey's classroom at Carver Elementary School in Maplewood is a bit different from other elementary classrooms. The most obvious distinction? There are no girls.

Mealey is one of many educators tackling what some call a silent epidemic. By almost every achievement measure, boys in Minnesota and across the nation are falling behind their female peers.

Boys' reading and writing test scores continue to lag behind girls', while girls have caught up to boys in math. Check out the names of the top graduates at your local high school — chances are, an overwhelming majority are girls. Girls are

BOYS FALLING BEHIND? 10A >

## Vikings want 'Metrodome Next.' Legislators' response: Not now.

By Bill Salisbury  
bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com

With the economy in the tank and state government awash in red ink, a new home for the Minnesota Vikings will be a hard sell at the Legislature in 2010.

So Roy Terwilliger wants to change the conversation. "It's not about a new Vikings stadium. It's much bigger than that," the chairman of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Commission said in an interview last week. The Vikings open training camp on

Thursday. "It's more about how we make certain that we have a year-round, multipurpose stadium for the entire state of Minnesota for years to come and do it in an economical way," Terwilliger said. He's talking about replacing

the 27-year-old Metrodome, which the commission manages. The Vikings will be the main tenants after the Twins leave for their new ballpark next season. But the Dome also houses hundreds of other events every year, ranging from the Prep Bowl high

school football championship games and amateur baseball to monster truck jams, concerts, ethnic festivals and trade shows. It's Minnesota's only venue capable of hosting pro football's Super Bowl or college basketball's Final Four

championships. The Dome supports itself financially without tax subsidies. The only way to avoid needing future tax bailouts, Terwilliger said, is to keep the Vikings.

VIKINGS STADIUM, 7A >

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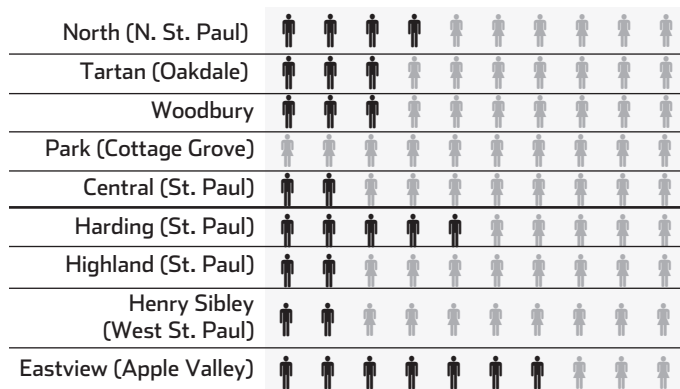
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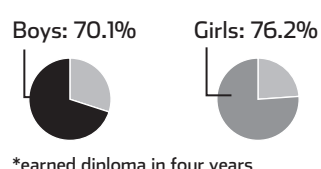
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TOP GRADUATES OF HIGH SCHOOLS

Here's how many boys were among the top 10 graduates at a sampling of east metro high schools in 2009.

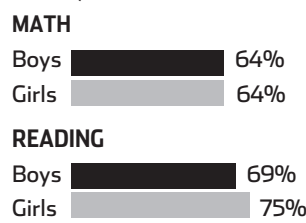


MINNESOTA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES, 2006-07\*

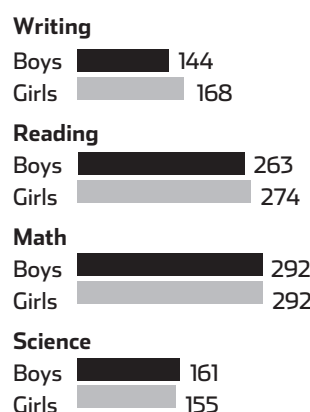


\*earned diploma in four years

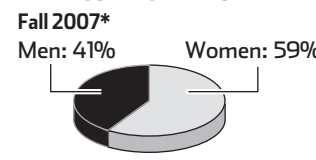
PROFICIENT ON STATEWIDE MINNESOTA TESTS, 2009



MINN. EIGHTH-GRADERS' SCORES ON NATIONAL EXAMS, 2007

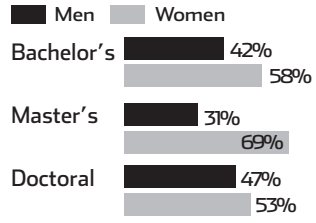


MINN. COLLEGE ENROLLMENT Fall 2007\*



\*Undergraduate and graduate

MINN. DEGREE RECIPIENTS, 2005-06



CONTINUED FROM 1A

> Boys falling behind?

more likely than boys to get a high school diploma in four years, and they outnumber guys 3 to 2 on Minnesota's college campuses.

"There's something going on with boys," Mealey said. "And we need to deal with this in an aggressive manner."

Mealey's method of dealing with it — based on what he read in research and Dr. Leonard Sax's book "Boys Adrift" — is based on physical activity, competition and positive male models.

Administrators gave him the go-ahead a year ago to start the all-boy first-grade classroom, and 20 families opted in. By all accounts, it was a success.

Dixie Gardner, whose son Blake is in the class, noticed the difference. Blake didn't like reading much in kindergarten but loves it now, and he picked out a stack of books to read over summer vacation.

"He comes home every day, and if someone asks him how school was, he always says, 'It's awesome,'" Gardner said. "He just loves it."

When students return to Carver in September, Mealey's Men will be second-graders.

Peter Olson-Skog, principal at Carver, gave the OK for Mealey to continue his experiment.

The all-boys classroom has had fewer behavioral problems, Olson-Skog said. And it appears to have a positive effect on academic performance, although it's still too early to tell.

Mealey's classroom is generating buzz, and there is an interest in creating more single-gender classrooms — for boys and girls — at Carver and other area schools.

"We're excited about what we're seeing," Olson-Skog said.

CHANGES IN EDUCATION

The notion that schools and society were shortchanging girls prompted an effort beginning in the 1970s to expand opportunities for girls in math, science and sports. But some argue that boys now have quietly slipped behind, while girls are engaged.

Author Sax, a retired family physician, says a lack of gender awareness can hurt both boys and girls — and it's not a political issue.

"To attempt even to talk about the ways boys can be disadvantaged will upset some people," said Sax, who heads the Pennsylvania-based National Association for Single Sex Public Education. "If you

suggest such a thing, you are considered an idiot, a Republican or both. And I have been called all of the above.

"But when people get into this topic, they become alarmed when they see the data," he said.

Boys haven't changed, Sax argues, but our expectations have.

Kindergarten is different from what it used to be, he says, and most boys are not ready at age 5 to sit still and be quiet. They haven't developed the self-discipline or self-control that girls have. Kindergarten used to be about play and adjusting to school and getting along with other children. Now the emphasis is on literacy and numeracy. There's less and less emphasis on competition. And many boys don't have strong male role models in their lives.

Art Reynolds, a professor at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Childhood Development, said there are many gender differences in the early years of development. Those differences are in socialization, temperament and perceptions of adults.

"What we need to look at is how we can structure school to offer more variety, so we can better tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of students," Reynolds said.

The number of public schools across the nation that offer single-sex classes is growing. At least 542 schools in the country offer them in 2009, up from 11 just seven years earlier, according to the National Association for Single Sex Public Education.

TEAMS COMPETE

The boys in Mealey's classroom can stand at tables or sprawl across the floor, as long as they get their work done. They break up their day with wiggle time. They take a 10- or 15-minute break to run laps around the gym or squeeze in a quick game of dodge ball.

Including more activity helps them focus in the classroom, Mealey said.

"I really needed to let go of the notion that everyone needs to be sitting down at all times," Mealey said. "It's a little unnerving at first to realize there's all this movement going on."

Mealey's Men are organized into three teams — Alphas, Bravos and Charlies. Mealey uses the team designations when he calls for papers to be handed in or for the boys to line up in an orderly fashion.

But it also serves as a means for competition. If one of the Alphas gets a question right, he might get a star for his team. All the Charlies have their pencils sharpened and are ready to work? They get a star.

"Individual competition will



First-grader Cyrus Mendis gets to sit on an exercise ball as he takes on a Sudoku puzzle to sharpen his math skills. Teacher Tom Mealey uses physical activity, team competition and positive role models to boost the academic achievement of his male students.

**"There's just something going on with males. I don't know what it is, if guys don't want to compete or girls are just stepping up more to take on leadership positions. It's a noticeable problem."**

Tom Nelson, recently retired superintendent of South Washington County Schools

fail, but boys don't want to let their team down," Sax said.

Sax said boys like a challenge when there are winners and losers and the outcome is in doubt. Competition teaches them to value something about themselves. For girls, friendship accounts for more than team affiliation.

MIXED VIEWS

Sax argues that if boys aren't excited about school and feel inferior, they can start to disengage as early as kindergarten. And they might never get back on board.

Tom Nelson, who just retired as superintendent of South Washington County Schools,

was so concerned about boys' achievement that he wrote about it in June in one of his weekly columns for the Bulletin newspapers.

When Nelson was at Park High School's senior awards event, he noticed all 10 of the 2009 class's top academic performers were girls.

He called the principal at Woodbury, the district's other high school, to see if Park's numbers were a fluke. At Woodbury, seven of the 10 top graduates were girls.

Nelson said he noticed something similar when his son graduated from Buffalo High School in 2004. Some boys did well academically, but the student council and clubs were

dominated and run by girls.

"There's just something going on with males," Nelson said. "I don't know what it is, if guys don't want to compete or girls are just stepping up more to take on leadership positions. It's a noticeable problem."

South Washington County isn't alone. At many east metro high schools this year, girls dominated the lists of top graduates.

Efe Agbamu, principal of Park High School, said she noticed the absence of boys in her school's top graduates this year. And she sees a gap in reading test scores. But she cautions that people need to look beyond the test scores and grade-point averages and look at the qualitative data as well.

Agbamu can name recent male graduates who wowed her with their writing for the student newspaper or their dramatic skills in the theater. They took college-level courses, and many are going off to the same universities as the top academic performers.

Schools could do more to figure out the different ways boys and girls learn, Agbamu said. That could mean changes to the curriculum and instruction and how teachers grade students, she said.

"I'm not at the panic stage yet. I don't think we need to start sounding the alarms," Agbamu said. "But it's something we need to be looking at. I don't think we've mastered the art of challenging boys and getting them focused."

A 2008 report from the American Association of University Women presents the opposite side of the argument, arguing there is no crisis in boys' achievement.

"We don't see this crisis with boys, at least when it comes to test scores and high school and college graduation rates," said Christianne Corbett, an AAUW research associate and one of the report's authors.

Focusing on gender gaps, she said, diverts attention from the bigger problem — the divisions in achievement between low-income and minority students and their peers.

Opponents of single-gender classrooms argue they're akin to segregation and don't prepare kids for real-world interaction with the opposite sex, she said.

ROLE MODELS IN READING

Rick Spicuzza, assistant superintendent for teaching, learning and assessment for South Washington County Schools, was disturbed when he started digging into the district's test scores. He saw a surprisingly large gap between boys and girls in their reading scores.

Districtwide, 76 percent of boys were proficient on statewide reading exams compared with 83 percent of girls. In math, 72 percent of girls and 71 percent of boys scored proficient.

If children don't master reading, they become alienated, Spicuzza said.

"Reading is such a gateway skill; it permeates every other course," he said.

When Spicuzza told teachers, principals and administrators at a leadership retreat what he had found, they started throwing out theories. Boys don't like to read, they said. Boys don't have enough role models in the arts and languages. To Spicuzza, the conversation sounded eerily similar to the old national discussion about girls lagging behind boys in math and science.

Then he came across an article by John Coy, a picture book and novel writer, about how bookstore displays and tables are geared to females.

One thing the school district could control was its media centers in the schools. District officials found the books and posters on display were not always that appealing to boys. Many of the posters featured female teachers suggesting books.

So the athletics directors at Park and Woodbury high schools took pictures of boys soccer and football players and made posters about what they were reading. Some of the district's elementary schools also started book clubs for boys.

At Armstrong Elementary in Cottage Grove, media specialist Yvonne Neals recruited the school's two young male physical education teachers to lead book clubs for fifth- and sixth-grade boys. The groups met monthly and read books such as "Lawn Boy" by Gary Paulsen and "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" by Jeff Kinney.

"We wanted some male role models leading these groups," Neals said. "I don't think boys are going to grow up reading if they don't see guys they look up to and respect reading."

PRIDE IN ALL-MALE CLASS

Sax argues that a boy is likely to become the kind of man he sees around him. A boy needs role models of healthy masculinity, he said.

In Mealey's classroom, respect and strong relationships are of the utmost of importance. The students address not only their teacher with the courtesy title "Mr.," but their peers as well. Mealey continually praises them for positive behavior, but the rules are clear and must be followed. "What am I going to do with you? I might as well stay at home if you can do all this," Mealey told Blake Gardner, who smiled and broke out into giggles.

"Really, do I need to move you up to third grade?" Mealey continued.

Parent Dixie Gardner says Mealey is not only a good teacher but also a positive male role model. "Some kids don't have that in their lives," she said.

Parent Michelle Klonec said the boys take pride in their status as the all-boys classroom. At their end-of-the-year barbecue, they raised their glasses to toast Mealey's Men.

"They all feel like they're a part of something really special," she said.

Megan Boldt can be reached at 651-228-5495.



Mealey's all-boy class has had fewer behavioral problems than those with boys and girls, Carver Elementary School Principal Peter Olson-Skog said. And it appears to have a positive effect on academic performance, although it's still too early to tell definitively.