

Reducing Sexism and Violence Program (RSVP) Middle School Program

- Audience:** Male-identified middle school students (6th- 8th grade)
- Initial Training:** Four one-hour workshops for groups of 15-20 students
- Outcome:** More inclusive view of masculinities, heightened awareness of gender related pressures and consequences. The desire to continue this work in high school.

“Boys to Men was so beneficial to our school. Their student-centered, discussion-based approach has made a big difference for our students and our school climate as a whole.”

“Boys to Men helped our 8th graders wade through some of what is most challenging about being an adolescent boy in our culture. Our students emerged knowing more about the men they want to become and better prepared to interact with each other and our school community.”

RSVP Middle School Program (RSVP-MSP) explores ways that gender pressures are limiting and harmful to boys and girls. Students look at how cultural definitions of masculinity can encourage boys to detach emotionally, limit their aspirations, and accept that sexist attitudes and harmful behaviors have become normalized. Healthier, more inclusive ideas of manhood are openly discussed and modelled.

Grounded in numerous sociological theories of change, workshops use clips from the 2015 documentary *The Mask You Live In*, group discussions, inspiring activities, and sharing of experiences around realistic scenarios. Participants are encouraged to practice empathic listening, self reflection, and critical thinking around many topics which include:

- Toxic and healthy masculinities
- Gender pressures and implications
- Critical media consumption
- Personal boundaries and consent
- Healthy and mutually respectful relationships
- Bystander intervention
- Leadership and support

Middle school boys are rapidly building beliefs and attitudes from perceived peer beliefs. The middle school environment is ideal for building positive and respectful attitudes and accurate peer perceptions through safe, honest and constructive conversation. Starting this foundational work at this age is a critically important and rewarding part of our violence prevention efforts.

Please visit www.maineboystomen.org or contact us at 207-774-9994 for more information or to schedule programming.

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