



## Stories of Impact

### Disrupting harmful gender norms with children's books

"A child's father came to pick up his son from my class. The father gave him 'a look' when he saw his son playing with a doll, and the child immediately threw the doll away. I said to myself, this is a great opportunity to read the book "Sparkle Boy" with the children. [With my questioning about] what we think is ok and not ok [about boys and girls], such as "Is Sparkle Boy really doing anything wrong just for wearing a skirt?", the children's responses were very different after reading the book. Seeing the adults in the book support Sparkle Boy's choices made the children feel okay with it too."

– Marilyn, Head Start Teacher

### Breaking the cycle of gender-based violence

"The Developing Healthy Boys training challenged the norms I have always taken for granted and it has deeply impacted how I conduct workshops for teens. In my weekly work with high school students, a portion is dedicated to social norms and toxic masculinity, and their effects on domestic violence. I discussed that domestic violence is not just a "women's issue," and victims are not always women. We talked about male victims often being faced with mental/emotional abuse—which is harder to prove—and they are often shut down when they speak up, causing them to remain silent. A student said "thank you for saying that because that happened to me and all my friends laughed at me, and I felt so alone" and he continued to share his story. Other male students began comforting him, and it was truly beautiful. These young men, who were just claiming how strong and manly they were and how that is supposed to look, were now able to show their more sensitive side and aid their fellow student at a very vulnerable moment. Many of the young men have now come forward with their own stories and feelings about relationships and domestic violence and are challenging what they have always been taught to do."

– Lauren, Domestic Violence Youth Coordinator

"The real value in the Developing Healthy Boys training is how the learning applies to professional lives as well as personal lives. I couldn't have been happier to hear from one of our staff that this training immediately changed the way that she thought about and spoke to her son. It's powerful to know that a single training, which included deep reflection and critically important learning, can create a change in perception that instantly enriches our staff's skills as educators and their personal lives."

–Arielle, Social Service Coordinator, Head Start



### Transforming beliefs and practices of early childhood educators

"This training had a deep impact on me. The most powerful piece, that challenged me in a good way, was having this dialogue in such a diverse group of participants...so many difference backgrounds, jobs, races, gender, origins and experiences. Being in such a trusting, supportive, open environment allowed me to dig deeper in my thinking, to challenge my assumptions. As an early childhood educator, I think constantly about the messages that we are giving the children in our settings both intentionally and unintentionally. This training helped me to clarify my thoughts and make my practice more deliberate.

– Keira, Early Childhood Director

### Our Purpose

Develop emotionally and socially connected boys by fostering gender-responsive knowledge, attitudes and practices in early childhood educators and allied professionals.