

Reducing Sexism and Violence Program (RSVP) for MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Audience: Male-identified middle school students (7th- 8th grade)

Initial Training: Four one-hour workshops for groups of 10-25 students

Outcomes: Awareness of gender pressures, emotional awareness and regulation, social awareness, healthy relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and sustained engagement in RSVP upon entering high school.

“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 for Middle School (RSVP-MS) explores ways that gender pressures are limiting and harmful to individuals, particularly in the context of adolescent development. Additionally, the program contributes to positive social and emotional development as a means to increase social support and prevent harmful, disrespectful, and violent behaviors in Maine schools.

The program’s theory of change is grounded in several fields of research including sociology, psychological science, neuroscience, education, and social work. **A recent evaluation of RSVP-MS, in partnership with the University of New Hampshire, demonstrated a self-reported increase in emotional awareness, a significant decrease in the endorsement of attitudes supporting male power and privilege, and a significant increase in the endorsement of gender equity among couples in families.**

RSVP-MS utilizes various teaching methods and builds upon itself through the duration of the program to ensure that students are able to integrate their learnings in and across different contexts. The four workshops consist of large group discussions, peer-to-peer activities, film and animated clips, small group activities, and social skills role playing.

These activities contribute to learning and social skills development in the following topics:

- Healthy masculinities
- Gender pressures
- Thinking critically about media
- Personal boundaries and consent
- Social media and technology
- Relationship and communication skills
- Bystander intervention
- Leadership and social support skills
- Social and Emotional Learning

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 among developing students by providing a safe space to openly discuss societal pressures.

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