

## What Every California Parent Should Know

by Jon Scieszka

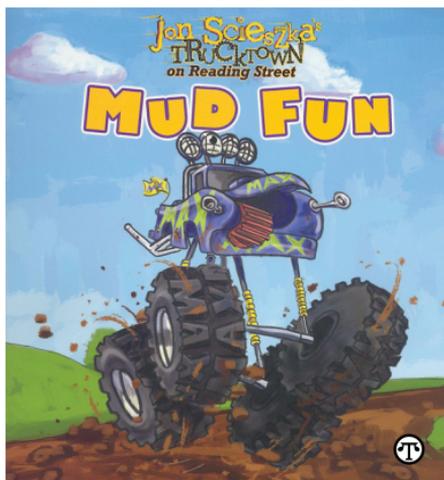
(NAPSA)—If you are a parent raising a son, you already know that boys will be boys. But did you realize he will most likely need more special attention than his sister when it comes to reading?

Studies show that boys have lagged behind girls on reading tests in every age group for the last 30 years. In the 8th grade, boys are 50 percent more likely to be held back than girls. Two-thirds of special education students in high school are boys, and overall college enrollment is higher for girls than boys.

### WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR BOY TO READ

Certainly, no one book can be right for every kid. But as a society, we need to make more of an effort to connect them with many different kinds of reading—both at home and at school. You can find a good list of books for boys in your library or at [www.guysread.com](http://www.guysread.com), [www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com) and [www.californiareading.com](http://www.californiareading.com).

Also, if you can expand the notion of what reading is, you will



have a better chance of inspiring your boy to want to become an avid, accomplished reader. This means broadening your definition of reading to include boy-friendly nonfiction, humor, sports, comics, graphic novels, action-adventure, magazines, Web sites and newspapers. Boys need to know that these materials count as reading.

This approach opens the door and the mind. Once a boy starts reading, he will be more receptive to many other types of reading over his lifetime.

### WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

One of the central problems is that boys tune out when the subject matter doesn't resonate with them. One reason boys have trouble reading is that they don't get to read for a purpose that makes a lot of sense to them. So they turn off to all reading. Boys often have trouble reading for other reasons:

- Biologically, boys are slower to develop than girls and often struggle with reading and writing skills early on.
- The action-oriented, competitive learning style of many boys works against them when learning to read and write.
- As a society, we teach boys to suppress feelings. Boys often don't feel comfortable exploring the emotions and feelings found in fiction.
- Boys don't have enough positive male role models for literacy. Because the majority of adults involved in kids' reading are women, boys might not see reading as a masculine activity.

*Jon Scieszka is an award-winning children's writer and an author for Pearson's "California Reading Street" school reading curriculum. In addition to his Trucktown series aimed mainly at boys (but for girls, too), he has written such best-selling children's titles as "The Stinky Cheese Man," which won a Caldecott Medal, and "The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs." He was recently named National Ambassador for Young People's Literature by the Library of Congress.*