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Tips for Teaching Boys

By

Dr Christopher Reynolds

To help children achieve their best at school there needs to be an appreciation of the difference in the learning styles of boys and girls. The brains of males and females organise and function differently even before a child is born. From very early in their development through the formative years, children learn differently.

Children will benefit more from schooling where teachers plan strategies to teach to the whole brain by recognising the strengths and weaknesses of both genders.

Boys want to learn just as much as girls. The problem is that they are not doing well in the type of schooling that is common across western countries. Statistical review of US education performance show that: Boys get 70% of the Ds and Fs for their grades. Boys account for 66% of learning disability diagnosis. Boys represent 90% of discipline referrals. Boys dominate such brain related disorders such as ADHD/ADD. Of all dropouts (20% of all students) 80% are male.

To more effectively teach boys requires us to first understand how children learn and then to teach them, with an awareness of gendered learning styles, differently in order to stimulate learning. Here is a few teaching hints.

First, boys need order.

In terms of order, boys need to know who is in charge and what are the rules. In the absence of order, their testosterone-driven makeup leads them to want to set up hierarchies and they tend to jostle with each other to establish a pecking order. However, where there is structure and order, boys can relax and interact more effectively with others.

Second, boys need the opportunity for physical activity.

With regard to physical activity, boys' high energy levels and competitiveness need to find expression in order for their bodies and minds to develop. Boys also tend to learn concepts more easily if they can see them put into practice and do physical things with their bodies to comprehend the idea being taught. This way, they can use their right-brain perceptions to give meaning to the left-brain concepts being introduced.

Third, don't teach boys as if they are girls.

As a rule, children are supposed to be quiet and compliant in class – which is not the natural tendency for boys. The male brain wants to learn through symbols, abstractions, diagrammes, pictures, and objects moving through space than the monotony of words. Look for ways to bring more energy into the classroom.

Fourth, try to make schooling fun.

Try and bring some fun and excitement into the classroom. For boys, learning needs to be physical, energetic, concrete and challenging. Because the male brain has 15% less blood flow than female's, it is a good idea to have exercise before class, boys neuro-physiological state is enlivened and more able to learn.

Fifth, move from the known to the unknown.

To teach verbal skills or comprehension, start boys working on building blocks, or cars, or something of interest and get them to talk about how they 'feel' or know about the activity and expand from there. In writing a story, talk about it first to clarify ideas and story lines before

moving to a plan for the exercise. Helping them to get started, but give further help along the way.