



Boys' Learning
Research group on men and their families.



ARTICLES



LEARNING HAS NEVER
BEEN SO EASY



SCHOOL MADE EASY
ARTICLES

BEFORE YOU READ THE SUCCESS FOR BOYS MODULES

These questions will help get you started on some key issues relating to boys' education. You may wish to start at any point, say with media images, and work back to some general issues.

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***THINKING ABOUT GENDER ISSUES**

What do boys say about these questions:

- What does it mean to be a man?
- What differences are there in men in Australia and other countries?
- What differences are there among Australian men?

If we look at a baby of about 3 weeks, what behaviours are there already? What still has to be learned? How do people learn to smile, laugh, cry? How is language picked up?

***MEDIA IMAGES**

Look at what the media say about boys and girls. Do they suggest that all boys are the same and girls are the same? How are school leaving results reported?

What images are there of males in the media? Who are held up for us to admire? Who is ridiculed?

Consider:

- images on the sports pages
- pictures of business people
- political news
- action heroes in Hollywood movies

How realistic are these? What do boys say about this?

Read West 'Images of men in the media' (on this website)

On the school staff, what are the most popular TV shows? Do you see any patterns of TV viewing?

What do boys tell you that they watch? Compare with girls- comparisons and contrasts.[Remember that some of us tell little white lies occasionally]

Compare boys' TV patterns with those on the staff.

If you do a survey, remember to keep it simple and clear. Test it on a small group to find out about glitches and ambiguous questions. Make sure that respondents have enough room to write down what they want. Beware of the tendency in research to tell the researcher what we think he wants to hear!

***WHAT'S GOING ON FOR BOYS IN YOUR SCHOOL?**

Who gets rewarded on speech night? Who gets academic awards?

And awards in sports?

Could ways be found to broaden this?

Are ALL boys doing well? Or badly? WHICH boys are doing best? Can you work out why?

Start some discussions among teachers and parents about what could be done to improve boys' performance.

Ask teachers to nominate the main problem they have with boys in

* learning

* discipline

Get boys talking about what patterns they see among school performance.

Remember that girls have some really useful insights into boys' performance. Sometimes it may be helpful in a coed school to separate the sexes initially before bringing them back together

BOYS AND LITERACY

Walk into your local newsagent. What magazines are available for women to read? What topics are covered?

Compare these with magazines aimed at men. Are some aimed at both- eg apparently some men read Cleo or Cosmo sometimes. See if you can find out why!

When you see males on TV, what are they doing eg firing guns, walking, talking, reading. Compare with females.

What did you enjoy reading when you were say 12 or 14? How did your tastes change?

What do boys at your school like to read about? What are their favourite books? Which boys like reading most, and which read least? How do these patterns compare with girls?

Which boys have most difficulty with reading? IS there a link with behaviour problems?

***BETTER MENTORING**

Mentor was the man featured in Homer's The Odyssey who was asked by Telemachus to help with the raising of the boy Odysseus.

Who are good behaviour models for boys? And why are they good for boys to imitate?

Consider

- footballers
- other sportspeople
- fathers
- teachers
- grandfathers

What qualities would you like boys at your school to 'catch'? Remember that values are CAUGHT more successfully than they are TAUGHT.

Women can be good mentors for boys. Boys often catch values from female teachers as well as their mothers.

***INDIGENOUS BOYS**

Look at patterns in your school. What is working for Aboriginal boys, or Maori or Samoan boys? What difficulties do they have? Do all Indigenous boys have these difficulties?

What does success mean for Indigenous boys?

Look at a source such as Remote Area Nurse on SBS-TV. What patterns can you see among the islanders/ Are there tensions between whites and Indigenous peoples? How could you describe the cultures of the islands?

Why are there so many blacks in prison? How could we avoid this?

UK research says that teachers are afraid of dark-skinned boys and punish them too often relative to offences committed. Why do you think this happens? Could such patterns apply in Australia? What could we do about it?



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