

## Stop Penalizing Boys for Not Being Able to Sit Still at School

This year's end-of-year paper purge in my middle school office revealed a startling pattern in my teaching practices: I discipline boys far more often than I discipline girls. Flipping through the pink and yellow slips--my school's system for communicating **errata** [=bad] behavior to students, advisors, and parents--I found that I gave out nearly twice as many of these **warnings** [=varovani] to boys than I did to girls, and of the slips I handed out to boys, **all but one** was for **disruptive** classroom behavior.

The most frustrating moments I have had this year **stemmed from** [=came from/originated in] these battles over--and for--my **male** students' attention. This spring, as the grass greened up on the soccer fields and the New Hampshire air finally rose above freezing, the boys and I **engaged in** a pitched [=kruta bitva] battle of wills over their intellectual and emotional engagement in my Latin and English classes, a battle we *both* lost in the end.

**Something is rotten in the state of** boys' education, and I can't help but **suspect** [=podezirat] that the pattern I have seen in my classroom may have something to do with a collective failure to adequately educate boys. The statistics are grim [=ugly/scary like the ugly duckling ☺]. According to the book [\*Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys: Strategies That Work and Why\*](#), **boys are kept back** [opakují ročník/ propadl] in schools at twice the **rate** [míra] of girls. Boys get **expelled** [vyloučit] from **preschool** [=škola] nearly five times more often than girls. Boys are diagnosed with **learning disorders** [poruchy učení] and attention problems at nearly four times the rate of girls. They do less homework and get a greater **proportion** [=pomer] of the low grades. Boys are more likely to **drop out** [=nechávat školu] of school, and make up only 43 percent of **college** [=US university] students. Furthermore, boys are nearly three times as likely as girls to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (**ADHD**). Considering 11 percent of U.S. children--6.4 million in all--have been diagnosed with ADHD, that's a *lot* of boys **bouncing around** [=poskakovat] U.S. classrooms.

Booger = sopel

Eye boogers = ospalky

### [The War Against Boys](#)

A [study](#) released last year in the Journal of Human Resources confirms my suspicions. It seems that behavior plays a significant role in teachers' grading practices, and consequently, boys receive lower grades from their teachers than testing would have predicted. The authors of this study conclude that teacher bias regarding behavior, rather than academic performance, penalizes boys as early as kindergarten. On average, boys receive lower behavioral assessment scores from teachers, and those scores affect teachers' overall perceptions of boys' intelligence and achievement.

While I love teaching boys, many of my colleagues do not, particularly during the hormone-soaked, energetic, and distracted middle- and high-school years. Teachers and school administrators lament that boys are too fidgety, too hyperactive, too disruptive, derailing the educational process for everyone while sabotaging their own intellectual development.

Peek into most American classrooms and you will see desks in rows, teachers pleading with students to stay in their seats and refrain from talking to their neighbors. Marks for good behavior are rewarded to the students who are proficient at sitting still for long periods of time. Many boys do not have this skill.

In an attempt to get at what actually works for boys in education, Dr. Michael Reichert and [Dr. Richard Hawley](#), in partnership with the [International Boys' School Coalition](#), launched a study called [Teaching Boys: A Global Study of Effective Practices](#), published in 2009. The study looked at boys in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, in schools of varying size, both private and public, that enroll a wide range of boys of disparate races and income levels.

The authors asked teachers and students to "narrate clearly and objectively an instructional activity that is especially, perhaps unusually, effective in heightening boys' learning." The responses-- 2,500 in all--revealed eight categories of instruction that succeeded in teaching boys. The most effective lessons included more than one of these elements:

- Lessons that result in an end product--a booklet, a catapult, a poem, or a comic strip, for example.
- Lessons that are structured as competitive games.
- Lessons requiring motor activity.
- Lessons requiring boys to assume responsibility for the learning of others.
- Lessons that require boys to address open questions or unsolved problems.
- Lessons that require a combination of competition and teamwork.
- Lessons that focus on independent, personal discovery and realization.
- Lessons that introduce drama in the form of novelty or surprise.

So what might a great lesson for boys look like? *Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys* is full of examples, but here's one I want to try next time I need to help my students review information, particularly a mass of related ideas. Split the class into groups of four and spread them around the room. Each team will need paper and pencils. At the front of the room, place copies of a document including all of the material that has been taught in some sort of graphical form--a spider diagram, for example. Then tell the students that one person from each group may come up to the front of the classroom and look at the document for thirty seconds. When those thirty seconds are up, they return to their group and write down what they remember in an attempt to re-create the original document in its entirety. The students rotate through the process until the group has pieced the original document back together as a team, from memory. These end products may be "graded" by other teams, and as a final exercise, each student can be required to return to his desk and re-create the document on his own.

Rather than penalize the boys' relatively higher energy and competitive drive, the most effective way to teach boys is to take advantage of that high energy, curiosity, and thirst for competition. While Reichert and Hawley's research was conducted in all-boys schools, these lessons can be used in all classrooms, with both boys and girls.

Teachers have grown accustomed to the traditional classroom model: orderly classrooms made up of ruler-straight rows of compliant students. It's neat and predictable. But unless teachers stop to consider whether these traditional methods are working for both girls and boys, we will continue to give boys the short end of the educational stick. According to Reichert and Hawley, "Doing better by all children includes doing better by boys," and

Whatever dissonance, confusion, and conflict may hover in the air as stakeholders assert new and competing claims about the nature and needs of boys and girls and the essential or trivial differences between them with respect to how they learn and should be taught, few could reasonably argue with the proposition that many boys are not thriving in school. Nor could one possibly argue there is no room to reason or improve.

Educators should strive to teach all children, both girls *and* boys by acknowledging, rather than dismissing, their particular and distinctive educational needs. As Richard Melvoin, headmaster at Belmont Hill School in Massachusetts, [wrote](#), "To provide rights and opportunities to girls is important; to call for the diminution of males, to decry their 'toxicity' as [Richard Hawley] has put it so poignantly, has not served boys and girls--or men and women--well... May we all find ways of understanding even better this complex 'piece of work' called man."