

Michael Auden's Teaching Boys

Interactive Training Modules

Is He Ready to Learn?



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The Village Teacher

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Michael Auden's Teaching Boys Self-paced training modules

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1. Your teaching brain – his learning brain
2. Is he ready/equipped to learn?
3. His learning styles/preferences
4. Words and images
5. How much noise and movement can you stand in your classroom?
6. Setting boundaries for his energy, aggression, humour and language
7. Walk and talk – communicating with boys
8. Balancing everyone's gender preferences
9. Some winning ways with wayward boys
10. Your boy-friendly strategies
11. Mums and Dads are Important
12. Be an empowering teacher – Ways to give your boys confidence and higher self-esteem
13. Boys and Books – boys' literacy
14. Boys and Words – boys' literacy
15. Masculinity – the grow of boys and the role of males in their development
16. Ask a man – getting the inside word on male behaviour and motivation
17. Dangerous lives – explore why boys are at risk
18. Identity – we explore the importance of personal identity to growing boys
19. Testosterone Tsunami – together, we explore the behaviour of boys going through puberty
20. His tender side – a close look at a boy's emotional development

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Boys start school too early

Boys start school too soon

Many boys suffer from starting school too soon.

At age 4 a boy has just started a testosterone surge that will see him become almost fearless. He will spend the next year or two running, jumping, leaping from heights, and generally exercising his growing independence from mum and his testing his new strength. Just when he is ready to run all day, we ask him to sit still, to listen, to cooperate with other children and to have social skills that are foreign to his world.

At four his language skills are way behind those of girls the same age. The same is true of his ability to control his angry emotions. His hearing is less developed than girls. What he does hear is understood at a lower level than girls.

Body Smart boys, in particular, will have trouble finding a comfortable niche in school apart from that of a fidgety, inattentive rascal. Many of these boys will score poorly on tests. Boys learn very early on where they are in the scheme of things. They have a pecking order in many activities. Boys who are low in the pecking order on academic achievement might find solace in being good at running, jumping, throwing, shouting, fighting or being funny.

By age 7, after two years at school, many boys have developed the language and social skills needed to get along at school. After two years of failure they have a chip on their shoulder which reminds them for years to come that they are not smart, not good at school, have poor attitudes and behavior – in other words that

they are failures. Boys with a positive self-image will survive these early years of underachievement. For many boys however, this legacy of not being good enough will last well into their teen years and for some into adult life.

Is he ready to learn?

Many boys are right-brain dominant. They exhibit stronger visual-spatial abilities than auditory sequential abilities. They do extraordinarily well on tasks with spatial components: solving puzzles, tracing mazes, duplicating block designs, counting three-dimensional arrays of blocks, visual transformations, mental rotations, envisioning how a folded and cut piece of paper would appear opened up. As toddlers, many boys like to see how things work, and they enjoy pulling things apart to see if they can reconstruct them. When given an ordinary toy, they will play with it long enough to figure out how it works, and most likely never touch it again. They enjoy novelty and challenge.

If they are introverted, they will rehearse everything mentally before they attempt it: walking, talking, reading, riding a bicycle, etc. These children are usually fascinated with puzzles and mazes.

Many boys think and learn in multi-dimensional images.

However, most schools, most teachers and most curricula are a haven for left hemispheric thinking, or auditory-sequential learners; children who think and learn in words, rather than images, and in a step-by-step fashion.

Boys are dominantly right-brained. This often means that they learn about the world through their visual awareness. Visual-spatial learners are people with a different learning style. They do well in life as engineers, scientists, architects, artists and mechanics.

However, they often have problems in school. They can learn the material, but they do so using a different

learning style.

Those who favour their right hemisphere (at least one-third of the student body and a higher percentage of boys) face several disadvantages in the regular classroom. One of these challenges is the ability to take effective notes.

Boys and written works

Why is written work so difficult?

The writing process consists of several inter-related skills: forming ideas; putting the ideas into words; using interesting, diversified language to express the ideas; organizing the thoughts in such a way that they communicate to the reader; spelling; grammar; punctuation; capitalization; correct word usage; sentence structure; and handwriting. Only the one of these skills is easy for visual-spatial learners. They excel at producing ideas - wonderful ideas, novel ideas, fabulous stories, inventions, problem-solving. But the rest of the skills involved can be so overwhelming to them that they completely turn off to the writing process. And so their ideas may be bottled up inside of them, with no way to get them out. This is destructive to the Self.

Visual-spatial learners have a more difficult time putting their ideas into words than auditory-sequential learners who think in words. They may see the image clearly in their minds, but not be able to retrieve the words that go with the picture. It often takes them more time.

School is a race against time. When the words fail them, they become anxious, and the anxiety further blocks the translation process from image to words.

It gets better

Visual-spatial learners become smarter as they get older: they are late bloomers. They need the most support during primary school where the focus is often on rote learning and sequential instruction. These children are often better equipped to deal with the greater cognitive demands of high school than the simple, sequential learning of the earlier grades.

Fidgeting boys

Young boys in kindergarten and first grade are not able to behave as well as girls due to biological and social differences. Up until fifth grade, boys require five to seven recesses a day, though most get just one.

Kathy Stevens, co-author of "The Minds of Boys" and director of training at the Michael Gurian Educational Institute, said boys' physical composition makes them learn differently than girls. "That's a biological predisposition," Stevens said. "Take a little boy who's a year to a year-and-a-half behind developmentally. Sitting down, listening, learning to write the alphabet are going to be more difficult for them in a traditional setting."

Many teachers believe if the children are sitting quietly, good teaching must be happening. "That's absolutely false," she said. "How quiet the classroom is has nothing to do with how much learning is going on."

She said it's important to create more experiential lessons and to make sure kids participate in activities like recess, music and art. We have to recognize their behavioral tempo, to let them move around.

Two Page Plan

If you are teaching boys during the first two years of school you may find them immature.

In what ways do you allow boys to follow their tendency to move?

Are you giving boys opportunities to work in a stand up position at a bench?

How can you build-in an extra three or four recesses into a boy's day at school?

Are parent's expectations of their son an issue in their feelings of failure at school?

Do you have successful strategies to allow boys to progress at a slower rate without them feeling left behind in your classroom?

What is your view of children starting school at an older age?

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