

Michael Auden's Teaching Boys Emotional Literacy

Interactive Training Modules



How boys learn

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The Village Teacher

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Kids seem to come in two basic designs: some are good at school and some are good at creating. There are also some who are good at both, and everybody can become better at one or the other. Those who are good at school can become better at creating, and those who are good at creating can become better at school.

Individuals who exhibit stronger visual-spatial abilities than auditory sequential abilities are considered visual-spatial learners. 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, and similar creative items.

About Boys learning styles

What Are Learning Styles?

Does he think mainly in pictures instead of in words?

Does he know things without being able to explain how or why?

Does he solve problems in unusual ways?

Does he have a vivid imagination?

Does he remember what he sees and forget what he hears?

Is he terrible at spelling?

Can he visualize objects from different perspectives?

Is he organizationally impaired?

Does he often lose track of time?

Would he rather read a map than follow verbal directions?

Everyone gathers information about the world through three sensory receivers: visual (sight), auditory (sound), and kinesthetic (movement).

Some people rely most on visual cues, others prefer auditory input, and still others learn best through movement. Educators refer to these differences as learning styles.

Learning style entails how a person best takes in, understands, and

remembers information. In most children, one sense is usually more finely tuned and influential for learning than the others.

Does he remember how to get to places he visited only once?

Is his handwriting difficult for others to read?

Can he feel what others are feeling?

Is he musically, artistically, or mechanically inclined?

Does he know more than others think he know?

Does he hate speaking in front of a group?

Does he feel smarter as he gets older?

Is he addicted to his computer?

If you answered yes to 10 of the above questions, he is very likely to be a visual-spatial learner.

Assessing Learning Styles

So how do teachers identify students' learning types? Only ten to fifteen percent of schools use formal tests to determine learning styles. I would like to see these percentages increase and the information added to students' permanent records. Most teachers, however, especially in primary school, observe their students closely to determine learning styles. Then they use learning styles strategies that individualize instruction to take advantage of each student's learning type.

Find Your Student's Learning Style

It's not hard to figure out a child's dominant learning style. Does this boy have a primarily visual learning style?

• Visual learners are watchers

Visual learners are watchers. As babies, they are often drawn to lights, colours, and movement. They revel in colourful toys and piles of picture books. Visual learners enjoy and learn easily from pictures, handouts, videos, and films. In school, they can learn science principles by watching a science experiment rather than having to conduct the experiment themselves.

• Auditory learners are listeners

Auditory learners are listeners. They learn to talk early and, as toddlers, enjoy listening to tapes and playing musical instruments. Auditory learners are talkative. They like to read aloud, recall commercials word for word, and do tongue twisters. In school, they memorize maths facts much more easily in a song or poem than from flash cards.

- **Kinesthetic learners are hands-on types**

Kids who love taking things apart to see how they work are kinesthetic learners. As babies, kinesthetic learners are in constant motion, their movements are well coordinated, and they are anxious to crawl and walk as quickly as possible. In a classroom, kinesthetic learners can be fidgety. They'll often be the first to volunteer to do something —anything—active. They want to do an experiment not watch it or read about it.

Schooling at the high school level favours auditory learning. But students whose dominant learning style is visual or kinesthetic can improve their auditory learning skills. They can also incorporate many study techniques that draw on their learning-style strengths. The first step to taking best advantage of any child's learning style is to identify and learn about it.

Body Smart

Quick Quiz

Does your student:

- Like to move around and be active?
- Learn physical skills easily and quickly?
- Move while he thinks?
- Enjoy acting in plays?
- Mimic or imitate people's gestures and expressions?
- Play sport and is good in one sport in particular?
- Build models with skill?
- Dance well?
- Use movement to remember things?
- Have good coordination timing?
- Love recess at school?

Answering yes to any of these questions is an indication that he is Body Smart!

What does it mean to be Body Smart?

Being Body Smart means that a boy learns and thinks with his body. It means that he expresses himself using his body. Whether he likes sports or making things or movement in general he is likely to be body smart.

We assume that our body and our mind do different things. The body does many things by getting signals from the brain. A boy's brain issues commands to his body quickly. The response of his body to all this stimulation means his body gets pretty smart.

A boy who is body smart:

- is fit and healthy.
- can learn to think and solve problems in unique ways.
- can use his body to express himself artistically.

Being Body Smart is about thinking and learning through touch, movement, and motion as well as having physical skill.

To improve his Body Smart skills, improve things like:

- Balance
- Coordination
- Flexibility
- Strength
- Endurance
- Reflexes

For more focused Body Smart skills he might show greater physical intelligence through his:

- Dexterity
- Hand-eye coordination
- Tactile sensitivity

The hands are one of the most intelligent parts of the human body. Opposable thumbs are what sets humans apart from other animals. People working with their hands are using “fine” motor skills. These require good hand-eye coordination and dexterity. Hands can be used to learn and understand problems by feeling their way around situations. Surgeons “see” with their hands during operations. Physiotherapists and others “see” with their hands during massage.

The Mind and Body Connection

A boy’s mind and body work together to gather and process information. They often work together better than when apart. The key to doing this successfully is to “listen” to his body when it’s telling him something important. Bringing his mind and body together can help your son focus on and improve how he use his various body smarts.

His body can work with his mind to solve problems and get creative ideas. He can *think* with his body. When Einstein had problems he could not solve through logic, he played the piano. Many of his greatest ideas came while using his body smarts to help his mind

grapple with problems. Gut feelings are an example of using Body Smart intelligence.

The brain responds strongly to learning opportunities that:

- Involve new learning experiences e.g. going outside to learn something
- Arouse their emotional response
- Getting to handle things associated with learning (tactile children respond to this approach)
- Seeing and hearing ideas simultaneously
- Answering open-ended questions that challenge new thought and applying existing knowledge

Gut feelings and physical responses can help your son think through information and feelings. Physical reactions to situations (butterflies, hair bristling, etc) are the body's way of telling you that you are on the right track, or that you need to pay attention to something important.

Improving his body-mind connection is another way your son can be the best at what's important to him. Listening to what his body is telling him and developing his instincts can help your son grow and learn.

Exercising his Body Smart brain

Your son can understand Body Smart better by using imagery. He can think better by using kinesthetic imagery. Close your eyes and imagine the following situations:

- You're lifting a heavy weight.
- You're walking and slipping on ice.
- You're doing a double somersault on a trampoline.
- You're swinging in a playground.
- You're on a roller coaster.

Were you able to sense the feelings in your body? These physical sensations you get while imagining are examples of kinesthetic imagery or body thinking. By taking his body through these

imaginary situations your son can become more creative and polish his problem-solving skills.

He may find that his Body Smart self shines brightest when he uses his abilities to physically create what he is thinking about. Body Smart boys get a lot of information about something by touching and holding it. He can figure out its shape, moving parts, whether it is warm or cold, smooth or rough or soft or hard. We call this skill tactile sensitivity.

A Body Smart boy learns well when his body is free to move. He can think more clearly and often express himself better when he is walking or moving. Moving around helps Body Smart boys to solve problems, learn and explain things.

All that physical energy inside your son is a good thing, especially if he can use it in creative and useful ways. Where will your son's energy take him?

To keep my attention teachers need to:

- Set clear tasks where the pupil knows exactly what to do.
- Keep distractions to a minimum.
- Give indications of how long I will need to work on a task.
- Give me breaks if necessary.

Picture Smart

Quick Quiz

Does your male student

- Remember faces better than names?
- Like to draw out his ideas to help solve problems?
- Think in pictures and easily see objects in his mind?
- Enjoy building things?
- Like taking things apart to see how they work?
- Enjoys watching movies and videos?
- Read or draw maps for fun?
- See patterns in the world around him?
- Draw or doodle a lot?
- Play lots of video games?
- Remember in pictures things he has already learned?
- Learn by watching other people do things?

What does it mean to be Picture Smart?

Picture Smart is mainly about learning and thinking in pictures.

Picture Smart boys learn more from the visual world around them than from written or spoken words. Your Picture Smart son will have a strong sense of how objects relate to each other (spatial intelligence). Take a look around you, notice the shape, colour, texture, size of objects. Now close your eyes and recall as much as you can. Your Picture Smart student will have a good memory of the details he took in through his eyes a few seconds earlier.

Picture Smart boys combine what they see with their eyes with what they imagine with their “mind’s eye.” Picture Smart intelligence is important to artists and inventors. Your Picture Smart son may also show this intelligence through photography, design, movie making, building models and other imaginative pursuits.

Picture Smart boys often doodle in the margins of their books while thinking or listening. Doodling helps them capture the ideas being presented. Doodling or drawing helps Picture Smart boys to

understand and commit to memory facts and ideas.

Many Picture Smart boys have a hard time in school. That's because most time in school is spent focusing on words rather than pictures. Because Picture Smart boys tend to think in images instead of words, they may have trouble remembering facts or ideas that are expressed in words or numbers.

I like it when the teacher:

- Introduces a fun activity or a quiz to break the tension of the learning environment.
- Gets me to move around the classroom or introduces a music break.
- Gets me to write out revision cards and question others after swapping cards.

Boys who combine being Body Smart with Picture Smart

Characteristics of the Visual-Spatial Learner

- Thinks primarily in images
- Has visual strengths
- Relates well to space
- Is a whole-part learner
- Learns concepts all at once
- Learns complex concepts easily; struggles with easy skills
- Is a good synthesizer
- Sees the big picture; may miss details
- Reads maps well
- Is better at maths reasoning than computation
- Learns whole words easily
- Must visualize words to spell them
- Much better at keyboarding than handwriting
- Arrives at correct solutions intuitively
- Learns best by seeing relationships
- Has good long-term visual memory
- Learns concepts permanently; does not learn by drill and repetition
- Develops own methods of problem solving
- Is very sensitive to teachers' attitudes
- Generates unusual solutions to problems

I am more attentive if I understand the goals of instruction. I am more cooperative at home and at school if I am allowed some input into the decision-making process and some legitimate choices.

Some ideas for my teachers:

- Touch my shoulder to get my attention.
- Get eye contact before talking to me.
- Limit the number of directions you give me at one time.
- Show me, don't tell me. For me, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Some more ideas for my teachers:

- Let me observe others before attempting new tasks. I learn by watching.
- Use visualisation techniques.
- Teach me to use computers and let me do assignments with the assistance of a word processor.
- Shorten written assignments. Grade on ideas, not mechanics.

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.

Brain connections that are in existence when a child is born contribute to only one third of intelligence.

The environment and learned information are critical in shaping brain structure, behaviour and intelligence.

Much of what happens is not fixed by genes or inheritance. Anyone can learn at any time of their life. Where learning is concerned – teachers have a major contribution to make to an individual's growth and development intellectually.

The quality of learning cannot be better than the quality of your teaching.

Four Page Plan - His learning styles/preferences

What teaching strategies seem to work with a range of boys in your classroom? Make a list of a dozen or so.

Is there a pattern that shows your male students prefer visual/spatial learning situations?

Here is my list of kinesthetic learning strategies that appeal to my male students?

Here is my list of visual learning strategies that appeal to my male students?

What other classroom strategies do you think will help these boys learn in your classroom?

What behaviours can you adopt that will make boys more comfortable to engage?

Are there assessment styles that will suit these boys better than your existing ones?

Describe the type of classroom that your visual/spatial learners might thrive in.

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