**Misreading Boys**

**Empowering boys through reading and writing**

**Interactive Training Modules**

Classroom strategies to increase boys reading

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**Self-training modules**

* Swimming in a sea of spoken words
* "I've read that book before"
* Reading between the lines
* "How do I know what I think until I've heard what I say?
* Boys literacy and popular culture
* Boy-friendly reading and writing
* A boys resistance to literacy
* Misreading violence
* I want to be funny
* Teach boys to read like a writer
* "I don't want fifty pages about the next five minutes of your life"
* His learning brain
* Body smart - picture smart
* Boy and books
* Boys and words
* Drawing words
* Writing pictures
* Gender and cultural bias in the classroom
* The writing conference
* Bony bum boys
* Walk and talk - communicating with boys
* Winning ways with wayward boys

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**Classroom Strategies For Increasing Boys' Reading**

At times, the problems for boys in school seem insurmountable. Fortunately, simple, practical strategies have been offered by the same experts who criticize the ways things are. Their suggestions apply to boys in high school and may be helpful to teachers and parents.

Let them play. Give boys lots of opportunities for physical activity and don't expect them to sit still for long periods of time. "Play is the work of childhood, it's how kids learn social skills and develop verbal skills, and it's vanishing from the classroom. Kids are not being allowed to play enough in school, both indoors and outdoors," says Jane Katch

Create learning activities where boys use their bodies. They learn by touching, moving, climbing on, and building things. They solve problems physically — so if kids are handling real things, they will learn more effectively. This applies to throughout their school experience," says Joseph Tobin.

Let boys read (and listen to) books that appeal to their interests. passions, and know what books can speak to those passions. Boys are open to reading make their own choices. We read to connect to interests we have interests," says Thomas Newkirk. "I tell my prospective teachers that they should have at least a thousand books in their heads.

Read aloud to boys and have them read aloud to you.

This stops way too early in homes and in schools. Reading aloud is a bridge to reading the child might do later on, independently," advises Newkirk.

Allow boys to write about what interests them instead of what interests you. "When children are learning to write, give them opportunities to write about subjects that are most meaningful to them — what they love, what they hate, what scares them and what excites them," recommends Katch. "This way they will learn the power and significance of using the written word to communicate. If they write in a way that causes others to be disturbed, then talk about ways they can write what is important to them without disturbing others rather than prohibiting their expression. I personally think Pokemon is boring but I know a boy who wrote 27 books about it and went from being a non-writer to a terrific writer."

"Another practice is connecting writing to digital storytelling. I think we need to conceptualize reading and writing as multi-modal involving not only print but music, visuals, and more," adds Newkirk.

Allow discussion of topics boys may want to talk about (but teachers and girls may not). "In a classroom that allows boys' thoughts and fantasies to be expressed in their stories and their play, controversial issues will come up. In my class, some children did not want to hear any story that contained killing," notes Katch. "But several boys complained that their stories of good guys and bad guys sometimes need to contain killing off the bad guy. When we discussed the problem, the children realized that everyone thought it was all right to kill the bad guys; there were objections only when a character was killed who was not clearly bad. So the boys agreed that they would only kill off evil characters. The children realized that by talking about what was important to them, they could communicate with each other and come to an agreement that felt right to everyone."

Allow boys to express humour in appropriate ways and at appropriate times. "Include satire, parody, and humour in the curriculum, and don't be too hard on boys who are class clowns." Instead, acknowledge the boy's skill at being humorous. If the boy gets credit for this quality, he may not repeat the behaviour. If you treat a clown as your biggest problem you are creating a conflict. Treat that boy with respect and respectfully ask him to make jokes at another time, if they get out of control," advises Joseph Tobin. "Sometimes, you just have to have a sense of humour about the boy's sense of humour.

Most teachers I know admit that as annoying as boy humour can be, it can also brighten up the day,"

adds Michael Thompson.

Reading aloud by teachers, guest readers, and students is a valuable classroom activity to which substantial amounts of time should be allotted. It is especially beneficial for boys who may not be reading at other times and need to be introduced to the pleasure that reading provides. Teachers can capture boys' interest by associating the material to be read with their existing knowledge. When they read aloud to boys, teachers can help them to associate sounds with symbols by letting them follow along with the text.

Rotating reading materials of different genres allows boys to see the many types of reading materials available--not just novels and textbooks, but also newspapers and magazines, how-to guides, comics, and computer programs--and their multiple uses.

Boys gain confidence in their reading ability when they read aloud in class. Frequent interruptions or corrections undermine this confidence, however. Since teachers correct boys' reading more than girls', they need to be sensitive to the effects of their criticism.

Additional time for silent reading promotes the independent development of skills and the enjoyment of reading.

Teachers can help boys comprehend reading materials and promote analytical thinking by involving them in class or group discussions. Students can review the content, purpose, and presentation of particular types of books, and how they differ. They can "talk about stories as constructions of the world, not as reflections of it," and can consider whether they empathize with the characters. They can use their imaginations to recast a story using characters of a different sex or ethnicity. Because girls tend to dominate discussions of books, teachers need to take care that boys participate

A library in the classroom stocked with attractive age- and ability-appropriate books encourages boys to pick up one when they have a free moment. Inviting all children to design the library area, and to choose and organize the books, promotes use. Regular visits to the school library show boys a much wider range of reading materials and foster their desire to improve their skills so they can read the more sophisticated material there. Outings to the public library serve the same purpose. Also, getting children library cards encourages future visits with their families.

**Two Page Plan –** Classroom strategies to get boys reading

*What strategies have you used successfully to get boysreading?*

*What tips have you learned in this session that would you would use to get boys reading?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

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