

Michael Auden's Teaching Boys

Interactive Training Modules



How Much Noise & Movement can You Stand?

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The Village Teacher

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Michael Auden's Teaching Boys Self-paced training modules

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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
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8. Balancing everyone's gender preferences
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20. His tender side – a close look at a boy's emotional development

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94 Greenwich Road Greenwich NSW 2065

Email: Michael@michaelauden.com.au

Web: www,MichaelAuden.com.au

How much noise and movement can you stand in your classroom?

Anyone who spends a lot of time with boys soon sees that most boys are indeed more active than most girls. A recent Harvard University study states that, "By school age, the average boy in a classroom is more active than the girls — even the most active girls don't seem to express their energy in the unrestrained way characteristic of most boys." While these findings support a stereotype some in our society have worked to eradicate, ask a kindergarten teacher and you'll likely hear that this description is true. "I've been teaching young boys for over 25 years and I don't see that their activity levels have changed, but our expectations for how long they have to sit still have dramatically increased," says teacher Jane Katch. And that's a problem for a lot of boys. Some boys in my class need to move a lot. I call them 'high energy boys.' These boys simply can't sit still as long as most of the girls. They don't have the fine motor skills girls do, so many will make big constructions like block towers, while girls will work on smaller, more delicate pictures."

Boys often learn best when their bodies are involved in a movement associated with what they are learning. Expect squirming boys to learn better.

When a boy first learns to read the word 'run', his brain fires messages to his leg muscles and makes them twitch: he's rehearsing the action of running in order to learn the word.

Boys often use their body as a substitute for three-dimensional objects and learn by feeling the space that objects occupy. When asked to describe objects they often lack words but squirm their bodies to approximate the object in question.

Allow for noise and movement in the classroom. Take them outside now and again as well.

They prefer short bursts of high energy.

Keep them busy and stay on their case with important writing tasks.

Get to know them outside the classroom and they will be easier to influence inside the classroom.

A guide for those highly physical Kinesthetic boys in your classroom.

You have lots of them (maybe 50% of your boys) and they make their presence felt by making noise and moving. They are your biggest challenge and find learning more difficult than boys with other learning style preferences.

These boys have a very short concentration span. Give them short bursts of learning.

The first 10 minutes of the class and short periods during the lesson are important engagement times for them.

Try taking these boys out of the classroom during double lessons.

Include group competition or games to give them opportunities for movement.

Use them for errands.

Let them stand and walk as they read or speak; it helps them to think and communicate clearly.

Let them move as they read and write.

They suffer from boney-bum syndrome and can't sit still for very long.

If they can have a pacifier (something to twiddle with) they may last longer and study deeper.

Here are a few simple ways to curb my annoying behaviours.

#1 - If I am out of control or angry - sit me in a bean bag. It will absorb my angry energy and isolate me from others whom I might hurt.

#2 - Like many males, I can think more clearly and communicate more confidently if I am walking and you are beside me (not looking into my eyes).

#3 - When I require discipline in class, come up close and say what I need to hear so that no-one else can hear.

#4 - Keep me busy during most of the lesson.

#5 - Let my parents know that I am doing o.k. I would prefer that to receiving acknowledgement in front of my mates.

Here are a few other tips that you might try with us.

#6 - if we are hyper-physical during breaks, try introducing a reverse lunch time. We will have to sit quietly for 10 minutes before coming back into class.

#7 - Try using a time bank to reward us. For every minute we save you by being extra cooperative give us a minute toward a free lesson.

#8 - Use a fifteen minute FREE Time card to reward us when we do something exceptional.

#9 - Try celebrating our good behaviour (party poppers), we might respond with more consistently good behaviour.

Teachers who help boys manage their need for activity and provide more active lessons will help young men develop learning approaches suited to their active learning styles.

Boys say..

My impulsivity is a major complaint of many teachers. I answer without being called on. I blurt out answers. I start before getting directions, I can't wait my turn, and I say the first thing that comes into my mind.

I am less able to delay gratification and to plan actions. I am likely to be impulsive and rude. I can't walk down a corridor without throwing myself at someone or shoving other boys against the lockers. I respond emotionally to events at school and rarely think of consequences. But take heart, by the time I get to year 11 & 12 I will have settled down.

To get me motivated, teachers might try giving me chances to compete as part of a group or against my previous best performance.

I use shields to keep other boys away from me. Irritability, nonchalance, stoicism and others. I seek to camouflage my fears with an exaggerated image of strength.

Let me use my body comfortably while reading. Sometimes I might prefer to walk and read and at other times I will just slouch in a chair or lay upon the floor. Reading is a physical thing for me to do.

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 preschool, primary, and 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.

Create learning activities where boys use their bodies. Boys learn best when learning is 'hands-on.' 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 kindergarten and throughout their school experience.

Don't eliminate recess as a punishment. Experts report that eliminating active play reduces children's attention in school and their potential for learning. You should no more drop recess than you should reading. Eliminating recess only heightens boys' active and aggressive impulses. The very boys who tend to be punished are the ones who most need physical release from their tension. If we take away their only opportunity to deal with that stress, they may become more tense and then find it even more difficult to sit still and focus on their schoolwork.

“If a child can not control his behaviour, he has to be near me until he can regain control so that I can be there to support him if he needs help. If we're outdoors, I'll have the child play in the sandbox near the teachers. But he does not have to sit still, thinking about how unfair I'm being to him, building up more anger and frustration. If we're indoors, he may have to play or work near me.” Michael advises, “With an older boy, instead of having him sit still make him do some community service work — cleaning up, make him helpful, but keep him active.”

Set clear limits for boys. Discipline in class is very important. It is vital that a teacher be clear about what she or he wants, and quick to address boys who break the rules. Boys respect clarity and strength. At the

same time, it is important not to humiliate or shame a boy. Boys are very sensitive to shame and are likely to go to war with a teacher who humiliates them publicly.

Create rules for safe play in the classroom.

With young boys in particular, it's essential to set clear rules prohibiting real aggression — activities where someone could be hurt either emotionally or physically.

Constructive rules include:

- No hitting, kicking and pushing.
- You have to stop when the person you are playing with says to stop.
- You can't pretend to shoot anybody who doesn't like it.
- If one child is disturbed by another's play you might suggest, "You can only kill the bad guys but not the good guys."
- No touching when you pretend to fight.

Certain "male" behaviours may be inborn. Boys may be biologically programmed to behave in certain ways that we define as masculine. For example, boys in all cultures around the world like to wrestle, and do a lot more of it than girls do. And when boys wrestle and roughhouse, parents typically say, 'Boys will be boys.' In this way, society expects and condones this type of behaviour.

Masculinity

The most important test is to prove you're not feminine. The hidden agenda in every test of classic masculinity requires a boy to prove he is not "girlish" and therefore not "gay." Boys compete openly to be the best at running, at sports, at showing off, at boasting, at Pokemon, at Warhammer, and at mastering the internet. The winner boasts, "Because I won, I'm the best at being a boy."

Successful athletes score the highest points. Most boys, whether they want to be athletic or not, measure themselves against the athletes in school, or against the kids in their neighbourhood who are successful in sports.

Boys act out to prove they've passed the test. They need to show other boys how well they've done and this is reflected in their behaviour in social groups, on the streets, and at school, where this presents particular problems.

Educators need to realize that some of what is called misbehaviour in classrooms should be viewed sympathetically as boys' need to act out a masculine identity. For little boys this can include being a wise guy or a class clown. Older boys may prove themselves by being bullies.

Three Page Plan – How much noise and movement can you stand in your classroom?

Think of a boy you teach who fidgets non stop. What is it that annoys you most about his behaviour? The noise, the movement, the distraction, the danger to himself and to others?

How can you build in more movement opportunities into your daily routine?

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