

I am a teacher of an early childhood class. I am 39 years old and have 2 boys of my own. My comments are views and opinions that have come to me after having spent considerable time with my own boys and the children I now teach. I taught my own boys until both were 6 years old as I felt they didn't need to be "Institutionalised" until after that age.

I returned to teaching maintaining this view and have since discovered many problem and hard to manage children are generally boys. As for example ADD is a "trendy" complaint with recently graduated teachers many boys find themselves medicated and parents beside themselves with questions needing to be answered. Diet is another area that parents are hanging their hopes on, with elimination diets to exclude various preservatives and additives etc. Sue Dengate being a delegate of this diet up here in the Top End.

I would like to say that boys are suffering in education. The system is structured in such a way that it stifles the creativity not only of boys but some girls also. Boys wriggle, they are inquisitive, they need constant action. Boys I think start school too early and miss a lot of this fervour and activity they need to grow healthy bodies and minds. In studies I have read many times over mention that boys develop differently and acquire brain skills later than girls. Boys cannot cope as well in beginning school activities as girls do because they are not ready.

The boys in Transition usually drive in free play activities, building Lego, playing shoot urn up games on computer, rim and shout super hero action role play. Girls on the other hand draw lovely pictures, play with dolls and make beautiful gifts for each other. The more studious boys, the boys who always want to please, work hard but to what end? By Year 4/5 they are saturated and begin to slacken off in attitude. Year 5 boys generally create most problems for teachers and schools. Ask any school Principal.

Looking at my class attendance role, I see the lack of fathers at home. Some years I have counted up to 50% of homes were existing without a male. Where have all the fathers gone ? My husband is an advocate of the book "Raising Boys" by Steve Biddulph. He read it to help himself understand what he was to do with his sons and not fail, like so many fathers do. Communication, example, role model are things that are lacking from most boys upbringing and these factors are creeping into the boys educational results. I don't have a number of degree's behind my name and I haven't done any full time study on the effects of education on boys but I can see as a class teacher that strategies need to be implemented to cope with the growing problems that boys are facing in school.

I would also like to add that there is a dire need for more males to be employed in Primary schools as role models, sports teachers and mentors. If we can provide this assistance early maybe some literacy and numeracy problems may not be problems at all. Males won't be found in the Primary schools unless there is some positive media communication, men are not driven to teach in an area where society may accuse them of all sorts of sexual connotations. Of recent years the number of males in teaching has dramatically fallen I think due to the negative view placed on men and their role in child related occupations I'm sure if statistics were studied on how many male teachers actually enter teaching the evidence would be conclusive.

There are a lot of factors that can contribute to the negative feedback boys give in their educational results and prove there is a need for review. I hope there can be some positive steps taken to help this dilemma of boys and education.

I hope some of my opinions have been useful, as I'm looking for answers as well and would be very supportive of developments if given the opportunity to assist.

Yours Sincerely
Melanie Akhurst