



**Elimbah State School**  
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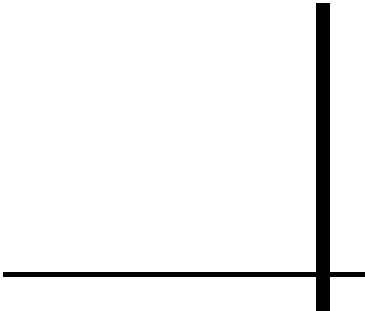


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**SUBMISSION TO ...**  
**THE 'INQUIRY INTO**  
**THE EDUCATION**  
**OF BOYS'**



July, 2000



**Elimbah State School**

**SUBMISSION: INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF BOYS**

**Part 1: Social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys, particularly in relation to literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling.**

This submission generalises perceptions about boys in schools based on the writers' own opinions and their observations of peer discussions about boys schooling. There is no intention to imply that 'all boys are like this' or that 'no girls are like this'. The writers believe that this generalisation is supported by the very existence of this Inquiry.

**1.1 Social factors.**

Boys often appear unready to meet the need to sit and listen for periods of time. They are, moreso than girls, not prepared for social situations associated with schooling, including group work, whole class activity and respecting others space and property. Their attitudes to themselves and others often appear immature relative to school expectations.

Consistent with this, boys seem to not value schooling and to be relatively unprepared to engage in the kinds of learning and learning experiences typically provided by schools. It is boys who are most often in trouble for classroom and playground misbehaviour.

**1.2 Cultural factors.**

Valuing (or not valuing) school and learning is reflexive with the culture of 'trouble' for boys. They cannot be expected to respect and adapt to rules, procedures and curricula that do not seem to respect their own boys 'culture'. Many activities that are perceived as normal and healthy for boys outside school (e.g. wrestling, climbing trees) become unsafe in most school settings. School is therefore to be tolerated by boys as a place that is frequently hostile to their culture.

Considerable effort has been expended on changing boys to fit into or adapt to school culture, which effectively means trying to change their 'culture'. If there is to be a shift away from the current 'look, listen and say' paradigm for boys' sakes, perhaps it should be towards a 'do, reason and ask' approach that admits some reciprocal tolerance. In terms of Kuhn's "Structure of Scientific Revolutions", we are accepting that boys are anomalies but we are not reviewing our theories or practices to encompass them.

### **1.3 Educational factors.**

In school, generally, boys are seen as being not ready to learn, not interested, to not know how to learn or act independently, to need constant supervision, to demand considerable attention, to have difficulty organising themselves and their belongings, and to have difficulty with fine motor skills. Their needs are in conflict with class situations where one teacher's attention is sought by large numbers of students at once, and where the ability to 'sit quietly' and 'work' for some time is valued highly, as are skills in language and the arts.

## **Part 2. Strategies schools have adopted to address these factors.**

### **2.1 Addressing social factors.**

Teachers, notably learning support teachers, have found these strategies relatively successful with boys:

- \* Activity based learning; variety of activities to choose
- \* Perceptual motor programs
- \* Parental involvement
- \* Parent workshops (including/for) fathers; Triple P program
- \* Interventions on individuals and/or pairs to meet a range of needs

### **2.2 Addressing cultural factors.**

These strategies are also considered effective:

- \* Use of metacognition, modelling and 'think aloud' strategies
- \* Australian / Multicultural
- \* Visiting Aboriginal Cultural Officer
- \* ASSPA committee to encourage involvement of ATSI parents

Use of Commonwealth grants may provide personnel to support research and development to teachers and/or whole schools.

### **2.3 Addressing educational factors.**

These strategies will support broader school-based initiatives:

- \* Parent meetings to share information and expectations
- \* Parent workshops (day/night)
- \* Intervention should be on a 1:1 or 1:2 basis.
- \* Reduce anxiety (fear of failure) and try to encourage optimism
- \* Encourage focus on learning, and the purpose for it
- \* Use boys interests to focus learning ('Pokemon', Sports, ...etc.).

### **Part 3. Further discussion.**

The teaching staff at Elimbah State School recognise the causes of difficulties in learning (both in literacy and numeracy) occur in both boys and girls beginning formal education. Girls appear in general to be better prepared for learning on entering school and to cope with the demands of the classroom. Boys (though not all) have more difficulty settling to the physical demands and ability to concentrate on teaching / learning tasks rather than the distractions of the classroom.

The writers recognise that causes for learning difficulties originate both within the child and the school system. Teachers strive to build on strengths within the child and to adapt the learning and environment to best meet the needs of each student, but need practical support and strategies if they are to attempt any significant development of new practice in relation to boys.

Research and good practice have been slow to filter into schools. The net cost of significant professional development through conferences, etc. makes whole staff involvement virtually impossible. There is a need for whole-school research and development, i.e. that occurs with support from and for all teaching staff within selected schools, so that such programs will be backed by a culture of anticipation and determination aimed at making (rather than avoiding) real changes.

Robyn Downes (Learning Support Teacher)

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