A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on a cold iron.
-Horace Mann

Male learners:

* Have trouble focusing because their brains go into “rest” mode when not stimulated
* Have trouble sitting still for long periods of time
* Want to focus on one topic of interest instead of moving between topics
* Don’t want to read textbooks
* Get bored easily
* Want to be physically active
* Don’t see the point in school if they are not successful or get labeled “disruptive”
* Don’t understand directions given orally from the teacher.

Gurian, 2005

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# Classroom Strategies Founded on Brain-Based Research

**Teaching Middle School Boys**


#### Salient Points

Catharine Knapp

EDGR 535: Theories of Teaching and Learning

# Classroom Implications

Boys are more likely to gain status in their peer groups by striving for dominance and working the pecking order. Add to this the fact that testosterone makes boys more aggressive and competitive by nature. Boys are more apt to want to participate if it is seen as a game or challenge.

Boys tend to process emotions in the same part of the brain where fight-or-flight decisions are made, whereas girls process the same emotions where higher order thinking occurs. PET scans and MRIs conclude that a resting female brain is as active as an engaged male brain. This means that girls are able to process information even when they’re bored! This is not true for boys. In fact, the brains of boys have several rest phases and tend to “go to sleep” if not stimulated. This is why boys tend to stare off into space or put their heads down in the middle of class. Some boys develop self-stimulating strategies for staying engaged such as drumming on the desk, tapping their pencils, doodling, standing at their seats, or bouncing their legs up and down.

Boys tend to manage decisions using a task force approach. They prioritize what is most important and decide on an immediate action. Anything else might be ignored, making it hard for boys to redirect themselves if they get off task. This seems impulsive, but boys actually take longer to process emotions than girls. Self-reflection and weighing consequences should be taught.
Gurian, 2011

# Strategies for Teachers

* Utilize gender sensitizing educational activities to combat gender stereotypes.
* Offer task-oriented discussion
* Plan hands-on activities that allow for interaction and physical movement
* Use graphic organizers, diagrams, storyboards and other illustrations
* Allow for a choice of topics when possible
* Have parents sign homework, utilize calendars and agendas, and teach organizational strategies
* Offer single-gender learning environments when possible
* Make reading and writing meaningful and relevant
* Provide positive male role models
* Allow self-stimulating behavior
* Make activities competitive
* Seat male students close to the teacher so they are able to hear instructions

*Boys need to be taught differently than girls because boys learn differently than girls.*

# The Power of Positive Role Models

Boys need positive male role models to emulate. The first of these should be the father, but times have changed to a point where the traditional nuclear family is not as common. Children wish to become more like the people they idolize. It is no wonder boys are often labeled as disruptive when they idolize pirates, ninjas, super heroes, wrestlers, and other risk takers. Men and boys have an innate desire to test their own strength and skills. It is our duty to provide positive role models for our boys who can show them how to behave in a constructive, yet innovative way.

Young, 2010

