

Boys learn better when creative approaches to teaching are used

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With the new school year just beginning, educational experts at the University of Western Sydney say boys can enjoy as much social and academic success as girls if educators employ creative approaches to teaching and learning.

While there is no quick fix to improving boys' social and educational outcomes, research has revealed that it is important to establish strong teacher-student relationships, with a focus on student interest, voice and control, which would offer all learners - particularly boys - a dynamic learning environment.

Research team member, UWS lecturer Geoff Munns, from the School of Education, says the project concentrated on boys from Indigenous, low socio-economic, rural and isolated backgrounds.

"Boys from these backgrounds have historically experienced more social difficulties and under-achieve academically compared with other students," Dr Munns says.

Successful strategies used included using culture-based programs to encourage higher motivation by linking community life to school. In one school, indigenous students took part in cultural activities during school time with elders in traditional settings rather than in the classroom.

"The schools showed that tailoring the education to motivate and engage students improved rates of attendance, reduced suspensions and improved literacy," he says.

"There were also improvements in students' self-image and self-esteem, school and classroom relationships."

The report entitled "Motivation and Engagement of Boys: Evidence-based Teaching Practices" found that schools and educators who collaborated to look for fresh perspectives and innovative solutions

could better address various teaching issues such as misbehaviour, low attendance and literacy.

The research identified pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools - both government and non-government - that have helped boys' social and academic success by focusing on the relationship between education practices and boy's motivation and engagement.

It recommends that Australian educators develop better curriculum policies by incorporating the extended knowledge of networks of teachers, students, parents and community members, and incorporate 'real world' professional development for teachers.

Source: University of Western Sydney

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