

BOY SMARTS

OFFERS INSIGHTS INTO TEACHING BOYS

Barry MacDonald thinks boys are often misunderstood in our homes and schools.

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School District #35, Craig Spence, Author

Boys will be boys, and that's something to celebrate says Barry MacDonald, author of ***Boy Smarts: Mentoring Boys for Success at School***, which focuses on the differences between boys and girls and offers dozens of strategies for helping boys succeed in the classroom and at home.

From the outset, Barry makes it clear he is not subscribing to the notion that girls are succeeding in school at the expense of boys. The objective, he reminds, is to continue mentoring girls to success while acknowledging the different learning styles of girls and boys and teaching to both.

At all costs, he says, we must avoid "stereotyping". There may be a tendency for girls to be more inclusive and to be better able to multi-task; there may be a tendency for boys to be more boisterous and aggressive, and to demonstrate better spatial thinking skills; but it's a mistake to assume that all girls and all boys are locked within stereotypes - there is a huge overlap between the thinking patterns of boys

and girls, making gender a "spectrum" that everyone fits into in a unique way.

Bravado and edginess in boys are not always what they seem, Barry cautions, and adults have to be careful not to misread some of the cues. Insisting that boys straighten up, stop fidgeting, and look you in the eye is often not the best thing to do.

A sampling of suggestions from *Boy Smarts* includes:

Use brief discussions rather than lecture to help boys achieve insights;

Encourage peer mentoring between boys;

Give boys room to move. Movement, like fidgeting and shifting weight from foot to foot, helps boys focus and process thoughts;

Use humor or the unexpected to capture boys' attention;

Encourage risk taking.

"Boys learn best when they are free to make mistakes without fear of being humiliated," Barry says. "Criticism, especially in a group setting, challenges a boys status within the group and invites behaviour or attitudes such as a show of anger or indifference... When boys are afraid, learning stops in its tracks."

You can find out more about *Boy Smarts* and Barry MacDonald by visiting his web site at **www.MentoringBoys.com**.

Copies of *Boy Smarts – Mentoring Boys for Success at School* can be purchased through The Queen's Printer website:

www.publications.gov.bc.ca
(just type in *Boy Smarts* in the search window).