

## Twelve Suggestions for Teaching Boys

Bambi Betts and Michael Thompson

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[www.michaelthompson-phd.com](http://www.michaelthompson-phd.com)

1. **Re-think homework.** Meaningless or make-work homework creates the greatest pushback from boys because it ruins their playtime and causes fights at home. Teachers should try to use differentiated homework, offer homework online that gives immediate feedback, or give boys a way to earn their way out of homework.
2. **Authenticity.** Boys often consider school irrelevant to the lives they are going to lead; try to connect assignments to the real world and to their aspirations to be men.
3. **What are the stakes?** Does it matter to me? Does it matter to other boys? Does an assignment involve risk, public performance or competition?
4. **Do not use the threat of failure.** The constant threat of failure, on which most schools are premised at the deepest level, does not work for boys because they eventually write off the entire enterprise.
5. **Pre-assessment.** Do the boys in your class already know a lot of the stuff you are going to teach this year? And do you know what they already know? They won't respect your teaching until you find out what they know.
6. **Movement.** Let them move inside the classroom as much as you can tolerate. Remember that boys who hate Shakespeare will learn lines from Romeo and Juliet when they can act them out with others – with swords.
7. **Minimize words, maximize non-verbal cues and avoid power struggles.**
8. **Do not compare boys unfavorably to girls.** Boys know they are behind developmentally. Don't rub it in.
9. **Use humor.** Irony, mystery, surprise, a well-told story, all of them work well. Never resort to sarcasm.

10. **Do not set boys up for failure.** They are very shame sensitive. If a boy comes into Kindergarten able to write letters in capitals, don't tell him that's wrong.
11. **Boys love technology.** It gives them a sense of control. Do not condemn their love of technology and video games without understanding why they love it and what it does for them.
12. **Let boys read and write about (and draw!) what they love.** There is often a collision between boys and teachers when it comes to reading. Teachers tend to like fiction, character development, journals and emotional openness. Boys, in general, like non-fiction, science fiction, graphic novels and stories of emotional toughness such as sports biographies. They especially love value stores of espionage, combat and death.