

Smelly Feet?

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and keywords:

Research suggests that boys are more likely to achieve well when they are presented with interactive opportunities in terms of learning and teaching. They are more likely to engage in activities which are related to real-life contexts where they can make meaning of the learning.

Keywords: Collaboration, context, competition, problem solving, decision making.

Similar topics:

N/A



Materials:

- pens
- paper
- sticky labels
- a range of advertising examples from TV, radio and magazines
- worksheet 1
- commission emails – as explained in Part 1 of activity
- tape or digital recorders/ computer sound recorders

Duration:

Exercise part 1: 60 minutes

Exercise part 2: 60 minutes

(These can be run concurrently, or on different days.)

Number of participants:

20 boys

Age:

7 - 8 years old boys



Aim:

- To design and present a radio advertisement for a new 'foot odour' product

(Short) Explanation:

This activity is designed to address boys' learning needs in an effort to engage them in the development of their studies in English lessons.

This activity involves the boys working in two teams. Both teams work for the same multi-media company and they must both devise a radio advert for a new foot odour product.

In Exercise part 1 the boys will work collaboratively to create a design image for the company. At this stage it is not necessary to tell the boys about the second part **to the activity, nor** that they will be creating a radio advertisement, this happens at the end of Exercise part 1.

In Exercise part 2 they will work in competition to create a radio advertisement for a new 'foot odour' product.

Guidance for the game or exercise:

Exercise part 1:

Put the boys in role as 'Advertising Creatives' working for a multi-media company. The teacher should take on the role of the Manager for the company.

- Give the boys badges and ask them to design their name tag.
- The boys must now decide on the company's name and design a logo for that company.
- Discuss together what an advertising agent might do.
- Present to the boys some clips of TV, radio and film advertising, as well as some advertising from magazines.
- Explain that this is the nature of the work of 'the company'.

At the end of the discussion and design activities the teacher should tell the boys that the company has received an email from a large manufacturer of 'foot' products. (The manager should read from an official looking sheet with a 'commission' for an advertisement of their new product. The manufacturer has asked that they be presented with more than one example of the advertisement.

In order to fulfil company requirements there must be two teams working on the product. The boys must now decide who will be in each team and who the team leaders will be.

Once the teams have been decided move to Exercise part 2 of the activity.

Exercise part 2:

The boys are now working in two teams for the same company, with the same task, to produce a radio advertisement for the new foot odour product.

The teacher (manager) should ask the boys to recall the adverts that were presented to them in Exercise part 1 of the activity and to discuss the most effective aspects of the adverts.

- What caught their eye?
- What has stayed in their mind?
- Which advert can they remember the most? Why is this?
- How might they use this information in the creation of their own advert?

They should use sound recording devices to create the final product.

And so to work:

Provide copies of worksheet 1 for the boys to use as a prompt and writing frame for their adverts.

The most effective advert will be used in the advertising campaign, although the runner-up may have their advert aired on local and regional stations.

Reflection:

Discuss the task in relation to working in collaboration and competition.

- How did it feel to work together?
- How did it feel to work in two separate teams?
- How might you transfer this learning to other areas of study?
- Did you feel that this task was purposeful?
- Did it have meaning in relation to the wider world?

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

Boys are not less able than girls, so why do they continue to achieve less well in UK schools than girls? The problem with boys' underachievement is not exclusive to the UK, Francis (2006), recognises a parallel with boys in Australia and suggests that this 'moral panic' is spreading to other countries. It may be necessary to analyse classroom practice and attitudes to learning in order to guide boys to achieve greater success in their education. According to Ofsted (1999), improving the achievement of boys is a complex matter in which interlinked factors play important parts. They include a positive learning ethos, good teaching and classroom management, close monitoring of individuals and effective support for learning.

Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson (2006) observed that in classes where there were a larger proportion of boys, that teachers often saw boys as synonymous with problems. Boys are sometimes viewed as being more difficult to handle. Often this is not the case, and their behaviour is a sign to denote lack of interest or enthusiasm and we should focus on why this is rather than focus solely on problematic behaviour.

In their report 'The Gender Divide' (1996), Ofsted findings were that boys often responded better to lessons that have a clear structure and a variety of activities, including practical and activity-based learning, applications to real-life situations and an element of fun and competition. Many boys find it helpful to be given short-term targets and feedback that focuses on how they can improve. The 'poor boys' discourse positions these boys as in need of help and attention. But according to Francis (2006) certain groups of boys are beginning to be demonized for their apparent wastefulness of resources and failure to take responsibility for their own achievement.



'Unwittingly, boys can be labelled and their behaviour perceived as inappropriate or even challenging. The qualities and skills that are most valued by schools, the ability to communicate orally and represent ideas on paper, are often the very aspects of learning that boys find the most difficult.'

(DCSF, 2007, p.5)

According to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the UK (QCA, 1998), the key to raising boys' achievement in English lies in recognising their strengths and building on these. This a key recommendation based on evidence gathered from schools by a working party over a two-year period.

Findings from a longitudinal study, Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE 2004), which followed a cohort from age 3 to 7, indicated there were significant gender differences in young children's intellectual and social behavioural development at entry to pre-school. Girls generally showed better social development than boys, especially in cooperation/conformity and independence and concentration. Girls also showed higher attainment on all cognitive outcomes. Girls made greater gains in pre-reading, early number concepts and non-verbal reasoning than boys over the pre-school period.

The researchers also found that the pre-school home learning environments differed for boys and girls. Significantly more girls' parents reported activities such as reading, teaching songs and nursery rhymes. It was not possible to establish whether these self-reported differences in parenting reflected different expectations of boys and girls, and/or gender differences in the behaviours and interests of pre-school children.

In questioning classroom practice one might ask - to what extent patterns of curriculum, teaching and learning contribute to the disparity of achievement between boys and girls? According to the DfES:

- Contributions from boys are prominent both physically and verbally during classroom interaction. Boys have more experience than girls of having their contributions evaluated during classroom interaction.
- However patterns of classroom interaction may have fewer implications for pupils' performance than the development of attitudes and strategies - in order to make a real difference to the issue it must be acknowledged that the most intervention takes place at a classroom level.
- Girls do better than boys on sustained tasks that are open-ended, process based, related to realistic situations, and that require pupils to think for themselves.

Boys show greater adaptability to more traditional approaches to learning which require memorising abstract, unambiguous facts and rules that have to be acquired quickly. They appear willing to sacrifice deep understanding, requiring sustained effort, for solutions achieved at speed.

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/genderandachievement/understanding/tandl/>

Boys' achievement or lack of it, has recently been associated with the feminisation of primary education. The drive continues to recruit more men into primary education and to provide greater support for male primary teachers. In autumn 2005, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) surveyed 1,000 parents of primary age children and found:

- one in four parents were concerned that their children did not have enough interaction with male teachers
- 61% believed male teachers had a crucial role to play in helping children feel more confident with men
- 26% were worried that their children would lack a male perspective on life
- 22% were concerned their children did not have enough contact with positive male figures of authority
- 47% did not have any contact with male teachers.

According to the Department for Education and Skills there are 26,200 male primary school teachers in England compared with 141,000 female primary teachers; that's less than 16% men.

Research at Durham University suggests that male primary school teachers make no difference to pupil learning. Researchers analysed data relating to 8,978 boys and girls aged 11 in 413 classes in English primary schools. They looked at test results and questioned children about their attitudes to school.

Their findings showed that there was no significant link between gender and attainment and on attitudes it showed that female primary school teachers brought out the best in both sexes. There was no evidence that male teachers enhanced boys' attainment.

In responding to the Durham research the TDA stated that its purpose in trying to attract more men into primary schools was to create a more representative environment for pupils – not simply to raise attainment among boys.

It is also true that many young children lack a male role model in their lives. Family breakdown means that a significant number of children lose contact with their father within five years of divorce. Whether or not male teachers improve boys' attainment they do provide a suitable male role model for young boys to aspire to (<http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/primary-teaching-will-it-always-be-a-womans-world-1541>).

As previously stated, the boys' achievement debate is a complex discourse and there seem to be no simple answers. What is evident is that to bring out the best in boys and to help them experience success we must analyse our attitudes towards boys' learning,

consider the structure and contexts of lessons we teach and provide a positive learning ethos in order to nurture and engage the boys.

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Further Reading:

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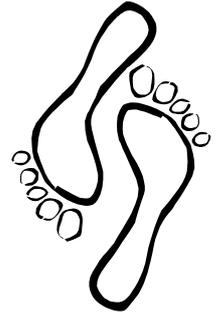
Worksheet 1:

The Fresh Feet Company has invented a new spray to help with the problems of foot odour.

Write the words for a radio advertisement encouraging people to buy this new product.

Before you start, think about:

- **Name** of the product (it must be easy to remember)
- **Who** might use the product.
- **Why** they need the product.
- **Price** the product will be.
- **Memorable** jingle or phrase.



Introduction:

How the advert might sound:

Remember the advertisement is for radio. You will not need to use any illustrations.

Adapted from: Rising Stars UK Ltd. 2004