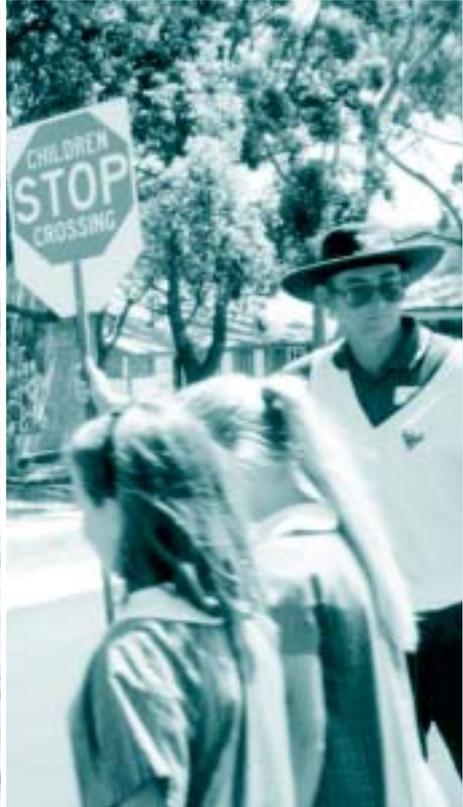
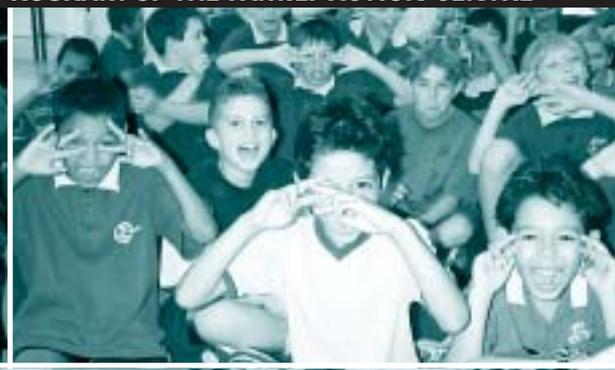




# The Boys in Schools

**BULLETIN** → Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys' Needs

PRODUCED BY BOYS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM OF THE FAMILY ACTION CENTRE



## In this Issue

- **Self-esteem for Boys**  
Making Choirs Cool in a Darwin Primary School
- **Emotional Literacy**  
Using the Science Classroom: A Report from the UK  
Intervening with Kids on the Edge of Trouble: A Report from NSW
- **And . . .**  
Rough and Tumble at a Child Care Centre  
SCOPE for Boys  
The Nuts and Bolts of Kids in School: A Course for Dads

## The Boys in Schools Bulletin

- Focuses on practical initiatives going on in schools
- Puts teachers in touch with others who are trialing new approaches to boys' education
- Supports and encourages a constructive debate on boys' education issues
- Develops materials and programs to assist teachers in their work with boys
- Provides information on new resources directed at boys



Produced by:  
The Boys in Schools Program  
The Family Action Centre  
The University of Newcastle  
University Drive  
Callaghan NSW 2308

Graphic Design:  
Communication and Information Services  
The University of Newcastle

## Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of the *Boys in Schools Bulletin* for 2002. This year we are very excited about establishing a forum for practitioners to discuss and debate the big ideas about the education of boys.

The theme for this edition is self-esteem. The two research pieces from schools are about boys and self-esteem and emotional literacy. Brian Matthews argues strongly for co-education as a means of developing good relationships between boys and girls. His article focuses on developing emotional literacy in the co-educational science classroom.

Brian's article points to some very useful teaching strategies and measuring tools to bring emotional literacy into the awareness of boys and into the core business of the curriculum and the classroom. His article shows how emotional literacy can be part of science teaching practice. These tools could easily be adapted to other subjects and to single-sex situations and would be just as useful there in developing self-awareness and social skills and, therefore, self-esteem.

Kevin Bell's research in northern NSW suggests that boys' self-esteem fell when they changed from a single-sex school to mixing with girls in a co-educational setting. The pre- and post-change measures for self-esteem – coupled with the interviews with the boys – highlight the depth of feelings that boys have about looking good in front of girls. It also provides some insight into how self-esteem is linked with boys' academic success.

The program descriptions – from meeting boys' needs through documentation in a pre-school to a boys' choir, and from the SCOPE program to a course adapting the Rock and Water approach into a wider boys' program – show the diversity of approaches to self-esteem. The common theme in all of these accounts is the links between male identity and self-esteem. The range and scope of these excellent programs in a variety of curriculum areas and across all ages is very encouraging.

This edition contains a description of the Nuts and Bolts course for fathers, which continues our discussion of the importance of fathers' involvement in schooling. We also have a review of a unit of work on a novel by a young man who has recent memories of studying novels at school.

Happy reading and implementing.

Deborah Hartman, Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne

### Disclaimer

Other than the Editorial, the ideas and opinions presented in the Boys in Schools Bulletin are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the ideas and opinions of the Boys in Schools Program or the Family Action Centre.



# Contents

## Guidelines for Contributors

The *Boys in Schools Bulletin* is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content is meant to motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including, of course, the girls).

The sorts of questions we use when asking about initiatives are:

- Say a bit about your school: What was the initiative and who was it aimed at?
- What happened?
- What lessons did you learn?
- What advice would you give to other teachers as a result?

This doesn't have to be a formula but the information must be about what is happening with boys in schools. If you are in any doubt, have a look at previous issues of the Bulletin. Or contact us and talk about it.

### *Rollo Browne*

Phone: (02) 9555 8424

Email: rollo.browne@bigpond.com

### *Deborah Hartman*

Phone: (02) 4921 6749

Email: deborah.hartman@newcastle.edu.au

### *Richard Fletcher*

Phone: (02) 4921 6401

Email: fmr@cc.newcastle.edu.au

## Primary Section

### **Motivating Middle School Boys Through Music**

Working with boys to improve their self-esteem through involvement in the school choir at Malak Primary School, Darwin, NT \_\_\_\_\_ 2

### **Women Carers Focusing on Boys' Needs**

The Salamander Child Care Centre, NSW, has lots of female carers and lots of boys. How are boys' differing needs catered for in this environment? \_\_\_\_\_ 6

### **The Nuts and Bolts of Kids and School: A course for dads**

Getting dads involved in school results in benefits for the pupils, teachers and, of course, the dads themselves \_\_\_\_\_ 10

## Research Section

### **Boys and Girls Working Together**

Research from the UK with Year 7 science students in a co-educational London comprehensive school \_\_\_\_\_ 16

## Secondary Section

### **Everyone's Looking At Me**

What happens to the self-esteem of boys when their school system changes from all-boys to co-educational? A study from northern NSW \_\_\_\_\_ 24

### **Bedley Park Behaviour Program**

A program that offers intervention for boys in danger of becoming 'problem' boys: How to motivate them before they fall into the trap \_\_\_\_\_ 30

### **The SCOPE Program for Boys**

A successful program to raise the self-esteem of boys at Berry Springs School near Darwin, NT \_\_\_\_\_ 36

## Bulletin Board Section

### **Local Benchmarking is Revealing**

Comparing national statistics on boys' academic achievements with those at the local level offers some interesting results, even in a selective school \_\_\_\_\_ 40

### **Resource Reviews**

Review of the perfect book for Year 8 boys: *Alex Jackson: Grommet*. Also Strength Cards for Kids \_\_\_\_\_ 41

**Nuts and Bolts (II): Setting boys up for a cycle of success at Maitland Grossman High School** \_\_\_\_\_ 43

### **Dads and Sons**

Information from the UK Department for Education and Skills website \_\_\_\_\_ 44

### **Go-Kart Kids**

Team-building with boys at a Christian Brothers college in Canberra \_\_\_\_\_ 45

# Primary Section

## Motivating Middle School Boys Through Music

*Liz Veel*



**Working with boys to improve their self-esteem is never easy. Doing this through music and singing — often shunned and seen as uncool by boys entering their middle years — might seem doubly difficult. Not so for the staff of Malak Primary School, Darwin. The following article shows how negotiation, respect and careful management can produce extraordinary results.**

*Many of the boys in the group came originally to sing 'to get out of work'.*

In January 2001 I was asked by the principal of my urban primary school in Darwin to manage the middle school boys' music group. I would be working collaboratively with Dr Bob Smith, the Northern Territory Education Department's Music-in-Schools Adviser. Our school was one of four schools in which Dr Smith ran similar projects. The weekly one-hour session was run in class time. The group was composed of a range of students, the majority being from ethnic and Indigenous backgrounds. A majority of the boys who attended were among those in the school with recognised behaviour problems.

For four years I had been successfully managing a girls' senior choir and a predominantly female junior choir, enabling them to compete and win at eisteddfods and participate positively in community choral events. I was reasonably confident with successful choral music practices. I knew immediately that the way I would work with the boys would be different. Importantly, the school climate encouraged innovation and change and supported any strategies I employed.

Prior to my involvement, Dr Smith and the principal had been making some positive advances with the boys' music group. I had seen them perform and knew that my colleagues had worked hard to extract a powerful sound from the group. Through their performance the boys confirmed their self-esteem and developed a strong interest in music and a commitment to the group. However, some issues with negative self-image remained, adversely affecting the boys' performance and ability to cooperate. At this point in time I was aware of some of the issues facing boys in education. I agreed (somewhat reluctantly) to manage this group and now, eight months later, find it the most challenging and rewarding session in my week. I have been pleasantly surprised at how much it inspires and motivates me. Dr Smith and I have created a positive working relationship. In particular, our awareness of the issues surrounding boys' education and application of middle-years-of-schooling strategies have fostered the boys' growing collective pride and caring ownership, resulting in many musical triumphs.

### Making the Shift

The issues surrounding boys' education became apparent within the first few days of my involvement with the boys' singing group. The boys clearly enjoyed being there but a range of disruptive behaviour patterns presented themselves. Many of the boys in the group came originally to sing 'to get out of work'. A lack of peer group cooperation and cohesion was limiting the confidence, self-worth and fulfillment of the group. The practices that I employed with the girls would clearly not have the same success with the boys. The behaviour I saw in the boys' singing group was testing and challenging, very different to the girls' choirs where conformity and acceptance of rules was the norm.

I had already realised that it would take changes in my teaching practice to empower the boys to view music education as a positive force in their lives. I would need to use a range of different strategies and a sense of humour to engage the boys. I needed to develop a positive link to school and learning, through music, for the boys.

## Laying Down the Law

Australian educators agree that there are many issues surrounding boys in education. The idea that the education of boys poses special difficulties is not new. Parents and teachers are very well aware of the many problems boys have in the process of growing up and being educated. The challenge I had was to change the boys' perceptions and attitudes of themselves as musicians and to allow the peer group to establish clear behavioural guidelines. I started by drawing on my knowledge of middle-years-of-schooling practices to establish behavioural limits and expectations for the group. Educators agree the importance of peer group and the waning importance of authority figures are clear social characteristics of the middle years of schooling.

I resolved to change the boys' perceptions of the authority role expected of myself and Dr Smith. We quickly spent a session establishing rules democratically, with the boys thinking out the rules and a dominant student acting as the chairperson. A consensus of the peer group was that cooperation and care was needed for the group to reach its full potential. A behaviour/consequence system was agreed to whereby non-cooperative behaviour (such as mucking around and touching each other) received an immediate negative consequence established by the group. Cooperative behaviour, care and one hundred per cent effort would receive a positive reward at the end of the session, to be negotiated by the group. This change had a profoundly positive influence on the attitudes of the boys. They all liked being in the singing group, they started to care about its success and were willing to try to negotiate to change. This was indicated by comments such as: 'I can express myself freely without being embarrassed' (Alex, aged 13); 'People cooperate' (Stewart, aged 12); and, 'We can learn new songs easily' (Warren, aged 10).

As the boys began to democratically determine positive and negative consequences for their actions we noticed a less confrontational and more responsible attitude begin to emerge. Consequently, the tone and timbre of the boys' singing improved. They were able to focus on sounding good, rather than on surviving intimidating behaviour. We got the boys to remind themselves of the group-negotiated rules every week, and gradually, over time, we saw a real improvement in self-managed behavior.

## Compliments for Confidence

As I continued working with the group and got to know the boys it became apparent that many of them were lacking in self-esteem. Some were regarded as academic failures and their low self-esteem was interfering with the cohesion of the group. I again looked into my middle-years-of-schooling experience and decided that I would use peer-counseling practices to increase the self-esteem of each member of the group.

I initiated a weekly peer compliment session in which half the boys engaged as an audience whilst the other half sang. The audience half had to compliment someone in the singing half on their performance and to give reasons why they had sung well. The procedure was then reversed with the singing group becoming the audience and the audience becoming the singing group. Comments such as, 'I think Jack sang really well because he knows the words and sings the notes clearly', 'David looks cool when he's singing' and



*Getting in the groove.*

*Cooperative behaviour, care and one hundred per cent effort would receive a positive reward at the end of the session, to be negotiated by the group.*

*At school camp it was the boys who were the leaders in communal singing and they were a highlight of the campfire sessions.*



*'I can express myself freely without feeling embarrassed.'*

*The Haka has become very popular because, while it encourages noisy and heroic behaviour, the boys have learnt to monitor and self-regulate the personal space needed to perform it.*

'Alex is a great leader' made the group listen in positive anticipation for their compliment. Again Dr Smith and I were astounded at the immediately noticeable changes to the boys' singing and performance. They became a proud group! We have continued this practice in varying forms because it serves as a powerful motivator for the group. As their self-esteem improved over time, so did the boys' ability to sing in tune, with musicality and strength, along with more positive self-managed behaviour.

The increase in musical self-confidence has manifested itself quite clearly in other areas of the boys' schooling. At school camp it was the boys who were the leaders in communal singing and they were a highlight of the campfire sessions. On return from an excursion on the bus it was the boys who led and enjoyed some tuneful and pleasurable singing. On both occasions the boys were complimented by their male and female peers and by teaching staff.

Our resolve to keep a positive tone during the music sessions with the boys has strengthened over time. Dr Smith and I use compliments, humour and jokes to keep the boys focused. In their normal classrooms these same students had been constantly disciplined as a result of their disruptive behaviour. Certainly, disruptive behaviour in the music lessons had to be dealt with, but with a sense of humour and in a non-confrontational way. Humour has been used positively to engage the boys. As a result the classroom 'tone and atmosphere' has lightened and become stronger and more positive, allowing more effective listening and learning to take place. The evidence for this was the increasing capacity of the boys to learn more complex songs and harmonies.

## **Not Just Singing: Finding the right songs for the boys**

The songs, chants and rhythms that the boys have learnt this year have indeed become progressively more challenging in terms of musicality, increasingly developing quality in pitch, tone, timbre and expression. A variety of songs and chants have been learnt that relate to many cultural and diverse backgrounds. Some songs were chosen because they affirm self-image. 'Be True' (*ABC Songbook*, 2001) is a favourite because it encourages self-acceptance. The Yothu Yindi song 'Tribal Voice' and the Warumpi Band's 'Stand Up and Be Counted', endorse pride and independence. Our Indigenous boys often requested these songs.

The New Zealand Maori Haka chant was initially difficult for the group, in terms of managing physical activity and music. Over time this has become very popular because, while it encourages noisy and heroic behaviour, the boys have learnt to monitor and self-regulate the personal space needed to perform it. Two popular boys of Maori descent volunteered to lead the group, creating a sense of authenticity and, again, allowing the group to define its own way of working and rule-making.

The 'Wap Bam Boogie' and 'passing stick' games from the Pacific (such as the challenging Maori stick game 'Titi Toria') are noisy and active games that encourage drumming performances. These activities address the need for physical action, and are seen as a refreshing change for the boys from the somewhat passive learning atmospheres of their regular classrooms.

As the boys have developed a greater repertoire of songs (approximately thirty to date), they have been encouraged to negotiate the content of their one-hour session. This collaboration between the boys, Dr Smith and myself has empowered the boys to take ownership and establish direction in what they do. The boys are often asked to choose what they would like to sing, and as a result have demonstrated more responsible

attitudes and increasing commitment to many aspects of their music session. Comments such as, 'The more we sing, the better our voices will be' (Stewart, aged 12) and 'People cooperate here' (Jared, aged 10) reflect increasing satisfaction with the functioning of the group.

In our frequent discussions about our collective coordination of this boys' music group, Dr Smith and I have developed a very positive and affirming professional relationship. We exchange jokes and share a relaxed style of management. This role-modeling has had a positive impact on the group. Many of the students in the group come from backgrounds affected by the breakdown of the nuclear family and are no longer able to see adults working positively together. The boys approve of our partnership through comments such as, 'I reckon our teachers are nice' (Lyll, aged 12) and 'Our teachers get on well' (Rodney, aged 11).



*'We want to go on television!'*

## Singing in the World: Performance and technology

Some middle-years educators point to the need for schooling which brings the 'outside world' closer to that of adolescent males. Dr Smith and I addressed this need by integrating technology with music. A recording session was held in the computer lab and the boys' songs were digitally recorded. The boys were able to manage the recording session themselves and view the results via a sound/graphic tool projected through a digital projector. I then burnt a CD of the boys' songs and played it over the school loudspeaker at the end of lunchtime. The boys were enthusiastic and impressed. I now use that CD when Dr Smith is unable to provide piano accompaniment in lessons.

It became important that the group present its accomplishments to other audiences. Presentation is essential to the development of self-image and is also agreed by educators to be an important middle-years concept. Early audiences were familiar school audiences. Other appreciative but less familiar audiences comprised an invited audience of VIPs and other staff. By Term 3 the group felt confident enough to perform at a whole-school assembly, which confirmed the power and quality of sound coming from the group. The impression of strength and pride was indelibly etched on the rapt faces of the audience.

The success of the school assembly and the interest established by visiting education leaders has encouraged the boys to reach higher and further. The boys have commented that, 'We want to go on television' (Jason, aged 12) and, 'We want to sing for other schools' (Lionel, aged 12). Dr Smith and I are rapidly developing plans that will enable the boys to reach their objectives.

## Conclusion

The comments made by the boys confirm our choice of appropriate middle-school strategies to deal with the issues surrounding boys' education and, consequently, elevate their self-esteem. It has been an engrossingly interesting and hugely rewarding task. The outcomes of our musical endeavours have been wide-reaching. In the school, teachers have happily reported that formerly non-compliant boys are working more cooperatively in classrooms. Dr Smith and I have noted that our work has had a huge impact on the way we work as professionals in management positions, and how we interact with and advise our peers about the issues of boys in education. Dr Smith has recommended the successful strategies we have used with this group in his other three boys' music groups. By far the most rewarding part has been the huge enjoyment of the boys themselves and their growing positive commitment to the Boys' Music Group. There is no doubt that the boys want to now tell the world about themselves. We are positive that that will happen!

Liz Veel is a Primary Schools Music Educator in the Northern Territory. Her work is mainly with music groups from the middle years (roughly late primary-early secondary, or Years 6, 7, 8 and 9). During 2001 she worked with a Middle Years Boys' Music Group at Malak Primary School, Darwin. She can be contacted on (08) 8927 9366.

# The Salamander Child Care Centre: Women Carers Focusing on Boys' Needs

*Sue Groom and Edith Stankey*

The Salamander Child Care Centre is located in the Port Stephens area, just north of Newcastle, NSW. As with the vast majority of child care centres, most of the staff are women and this became an issue that one of the centre's pre-school teachers examined in relation to the boys in her care. Sue Groom, the Director of the Salamander Child Care Centre, and Edith Stankey, a teacher in the pre-school room, recently spoke to Deborah Hartman about their program.

*What is the program like at Salamander Bay, and how does it cater for children generally?*

*Sue Groom:* We try to have a program that is based on seeing the child as an individual, and making the learning that occurs based both on how the child likes to learn and the interest the child brings to the learning situation. So the curriculum, as such, is a blend of the interests of the children, the skills and knowledge of the teachers and the environment in which all of the learning occurs. We try to consider children with a certain image in terms of their believing they are competent learners, that they have knowledge and they have rights in terms of what it is that we can provide for them.

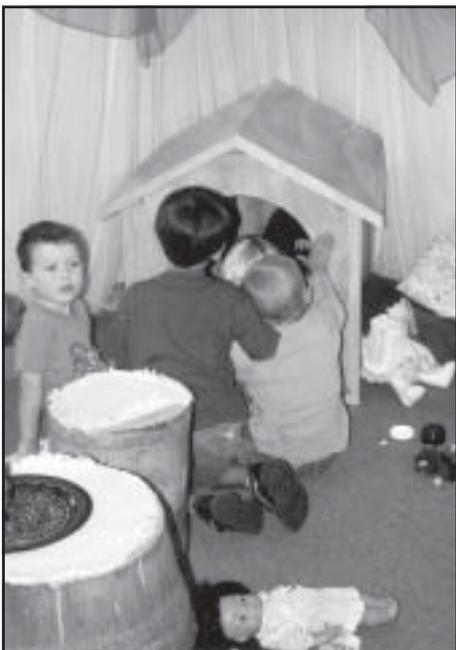
*Edith Stankey:* It's also based on a lot of respect for the children as human beings rather than just as objects, I suppose. What we provide is something really purposeful and meaningful for their lives rather than them coming here to pass the time.

*Okay, so can you tell me a bit about the initiatives that you do at your pre-school that might be particularly useful for the boys in your groups?*

*Edith:* We have something happening in the pre-school room where we really value listening to the children and trying, before we set any curriculum and any further learning, to really listen to where the children are at. So from the beginning of the year we've been spending some time just observing the children really closely — not only where they're at developmentally but also their social network and how they're using the environment. We're influenced by the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy, one aspect of which is that the environment is the third teacher. So we've been spending some time looking at how the children use their environment.

One of the places where that's been really interesting is the home corner. We found that, at the moment, the boys are always pretending to be dogs. We've been trying to understand why this is so, and what it might mean in terms of gender issues and power play — what might be going on in there. And when we've been really looking at what's been going on, it's become obvious that the boys are always down on all fours and in a kind of less powerful position, whereas the girls are being the mums and the boys are being the naughty doggies who get put in the corner and have to go outside and on the lead, and all that kind of thing. We've been trying to think of a way to perhaps elevate their position or enhance the play in there or just provoke something to see what will happen. So my husband has made a doghouse which we're going to put in there, and we've got a nice little dog lead and a little collar! Rather than just bring in bottles and kitchen implements and dolls and things, we're actually looking at what other equipment might be needed in terms of the boys' needs in there as well. Hopefully this beautiful doghouse — well it will be interesting to see whether the play changes as a consequence of it, whether the boys power position changes in the home corner area. So that's one of the things.

Another example is in the dress-up area. The boys have been getting all the sheets together because they've been wanting to put capes on — being superman and all this kind of thing — and rather than just banning that, we tried to understand what's going on there and to allow for some of that to happen and to work with them on that kind of thing.



*The boys in their kennel.*



A third example was when the boys were really into the rough and tumble play. Given that all the teachers in the pre-school room — as with most pre-school rooms — are women, we find that it's kind of annoying to have the boys rolling around on the floor, attacking each other. But we tried to spend some time understanding that kind of play, and we made up a place and a time where it was okay to engage in that in a safe way. We talked to the boys about it and we allowed them to come up with ideas for when and where it might be safe to play like that and what rules they might need to make that kind of play safe. In the end a culture developed where the boys, when they were outside, would get a teacher to come over and be the judge and sit there and make sure that everybody had a turn and took their shoes off and that people stopped if one of the boys said stop. There was time out and they just learned the rules of rough and tumble play in a safe way.

*Sue:* The other thing was the football. The female staff realised that the boys were really interested in football and so there was a little section made and everybody talked about what the rules of the football game would be. They played football every day and that went on for a long time as well. But I think the most important thing — to Edith's credit — is that she will look at what's going on in the play but will consider it in terms of gender. I think that is something that we really need to do, to say, 'Well, what's happening here? What are the boys doing? What are the girls doing? Whose needs and interests are being met, and what's really going on within the play?' We then should try to make some adjustments, or even some provocation, to allow for the play to continue with some balance, if an imbalance is detected.

I think there's a recognition in the way that Edith does look at and observe and then analyse play. It's a recognition that, yes, boys are different and perhaps there are different needs there as well as different styles of play, and that these needs also need to be catered for. I think we need to put on our 'boy glasses' every now and again and say, 'From a boy's point of view is this catering to me as a person and a learner?' Maybe we don't always do that because we're all women and it's difficult to see things from a masculine point of view. We might try and listen to our husbands or look at our sons, but really, sometimes that's hard. We must look further than the fact that it's okay to be different, and ensure that the difference continues.

*What effect does this approach seem to have on the self-esteem of the boys would you say? Maybe you could both comment on that.*

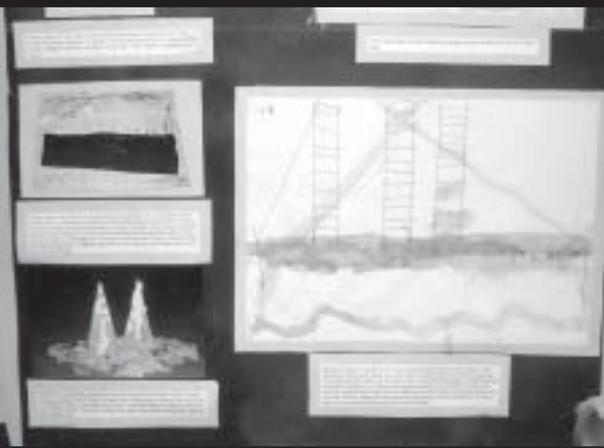
*Edith:* I was just thinking, 'Oh gosh, I hope it's positive!', but it's hard to think about the outcomes and whether you're really making a difference because it's a lifetime job. But Sue has just reminded me of a particular boy who started in our room halfway through the year. His mother was really unsure about him coming and he was really unsure and he'd just stand at the sideline and not do anything. We tried everything, but it was only when we started the football game that he actually became involved. He opened up and started making friends and it made a really big difference, a breakthrough. Again, this year, he began the year off standing on the sideline, not doing anything, until the other day when he noticed two of the other boys playing football. He went over and played with them, and it was catching that moment — trying to make that moment last and happen again — that's going to be so important for this year, I think.

*There was time out and they just learned the rules of rough and tumble play in a safe way.*



*Rough and tumble play.*

*I think we need to put on our 'boy glasses' every now and again and say, 'From a boy's point of view is this catering to me as a person and a learner?'*



*Documenting the children's work.*

*If the focus is on the process . . . you might discover some amazing thinking processes behind some block-building or some bike riding or just a game of football.*



*A drawing from the boat project.*

*Sue:* The recognition of the boys' male identity, I think that's what we have trouble with.

*As women teachers?*

*Sue:* Yes, it's something we have to work at to be aware of. It's one of Edith's strengths.

*Edith:* Well, in the early childhood field this awareness of male identity has been around for some time. That and the fact that pre-school care is a field dominated by women. It isn't just about providing equal opportunity for the boys, it's more than that. It's not just a case of telling them that they've got the same opportunity as the girls to go in home corner, it's not just that. It's the extra step beyond that and really observing what's happening in a different way. It's making sure you're covering all of those sections of allowing for difference and allowing for individuality. I think we've recognised gender is one of those things that we need to attend to in terms of difference.

*In a positive way?*

*Edith:* Oh yes, very much so.

*One of the things that we talked about last year when we came to visit your centre was the methods you used for documenting the work of the children. This documentation helped you to an awareness of what the differences might be and highlighted the skill and the thinking that went into the boys' work that may not be quite so evident in their current product. Would you talk a bit about that documentation and how that fits in, Edith?*

*Edith:* Yes, sure. This is another idea that comes from the Reggio Emilia system, and some other current thinking in the early childhood field. Rather than just putting up a pretty painting on the wall because it looks nice, we focus on the production process of that painting. The term 'documentation' has evolved where we're documenting and including the learning process that happened during its production. We might take photos and then actually describe the process on it, so that instead of just putting up a painting, the emphasis is shifted away from the product and back towards the learning that happened within the actual making of that painting. As a great generalisation, girls are the ones who produce the 'pretty' painting or the nice detailed drawings and they would be the ones that would be valued and put up on the wall. This could happen easily if you're trying to create a pretty environment, but if the focus is on the actual process and you're really listening to the children, you might discover some amazing thinking processes behind some block-building or some bike riding or just a game of football. This you can document and then actually describe the process of how these amazing children — these boys — how amazing they are in what they came up with and what they were thinking and learning with each other at the time. To put that up on the wall is valuing that process and making that kind of thing visible. That's really giving a voice to what the boys have got to say. They can then see that their work and their thinking and their ideas are valued as well. Which in turn encourages them to do more.

*Sue:* Edith's been doing some wonderful work with the children with boats in her room. We're in an area [Port Stephens] where there's lots of water activities and I think that the emergence of boats has been really important to the children, given their home and experiences. There're so many of the boys involved in that, and I think the documentation showing the processes and the thought patterns is really allowing for those interests of the boys to show out as well. And it's not only in one of our groups. In our other pre-school group there're several boys in that really investigating what boats are all about. They're making big boats out of blocks and all sorts of things. Whereas they might only draw the boats if it's encouraged or suggested that they draw — but in the first instance it's very

physical. It comes across in a three-dimensional way. I think it comes back to the listening and to following the boys' interests, then it becomes something we're recognising that's really important for them to learn. I think it's allowing for those interests and those other ways of learning to be given the opportunity to be used rather than only expecting one way of expressing. That's the other thing from the Reggio Emilia approach that's influenced us a lot. It's an idea of the 'hundred languages' and of allowing many ways of expressing or talking or passing on or communicating, and the documentation allows for that.

*Has the documentation helped you — and possibly the parents — to be able to understand the learning that was going on through the boys' expressing themselves in that physical building kind of way?*

**Sue:** Yes, it's good for the parents who may not yet completely understand that there are many ways of showing your knowledge, of expressing what it is you know. That's why the documentation process — taking lots of photos of different activities — is so much more powerful in showing this knowledge base for the boys. They may not do the painting, the painting is tangible and something that the children can take home and that parents can see. I don't think the parents ever see this other side, these other competencies their children have, which we see all the time and get very excited about. The documentation is so important because it demonstrates the children's competencies and their knowledge and their learning and I think that we sometimes don't recognise or believe that's something they have.

*How have the parents reacted? Have you noticed that the parents have a different kind of awareness of what the boys' needs might be through documenting in this way or is that too early to say?*

**Edith:** I think it's really hard to say — that's a really difficult one. I think we haven't been very vocal about boys' issues. It's not like we've brought that to anyone's attention very much yet. It's been more on our mind as teachers in what we do, and even sometimes then it's just in hindsight that we realise that we were really thinking about gender. I think parents are more willing to accept that boys are really different to girls, much more I think than even maybe the teachers or the educational institutions.

But I still have parents who say, 'My boy's always in block corner. Can you make sure he does a painting today'. So it's good if you then have something that you can refer to, and point out a process their son may have been involved in, and in the end they also value that. I don't think we have any physical evidence of that, but we will. It's one of those things that maybe we need to have more discussions on as a whole team and really kind of start verbalising.

*Is there anything else you would like to say, just to finish off about your program or the effects that you can see in the self-esteem of the boys or in the relationships between the boys and the girls?*

**Sue:** We have a strong emphasis on respect for each other. We have strict guidelines by which every child has the right to express themselves and say what they feel, not be put down or bullied. I've seen more and more that the children, and particularly the boys, solve their difficulties more satisfactorily in the approaches that we take. Being able to stop and talk to each other about what's going on, who can have a turn now, negotiating and resolving some of their conflicts in that way. Just through the negotiation process that can flow through from talking about where a project might lead in terms of learning in the room and them understanding those negotiating skills. I think that's fairly important as well. You can really, really notice that with the children here. All you need to say is, 'What do you need to do about it?' and they will talk to each other about their conflicts. Whether that's boys or girls, it doesn't matter really, but it certainly has helped with the boys. They can and do use aggression to solve their difficulties, so I think that is a very positive thing.

*That's why the documentation process . . . is so much more powerful in showing this knowledge base for the boys.*

## The music of working together

**Edith:** I saw you over there drawing together. What was it like to work together like that?

**Blake:** Liam was showing us what to do and he kept showing us till we were finished.

**Todd:** He told us how to do the anchor, the anchor rope, cannons, the sails, the pirate ship flags, the, the . . . [both look at Liam for help]

**Liam:** The keel.

**Todd and Blake:** Yeah, the keel.

**Edith:** What was so great about working together?

**Blake:** It's good to work together because you don't get grumpy and you'll have friends.

**Todd:** It's fun and you get to draw new things.

**Liam:** We were happy and we had our best noise and music. Music is the noise and noise is the music, and we could just draw.

Sue Groom is Director and Edith Stankey is a teacher in the pre-school room at the Salamander Child Care Centre, NSW. They can be contacted on (02) 4982 0777.

# The Nuts and Bolts of Kids and School: A Course for Dads

*Richard Fletcher*

**The Engaging Fathers Project is part of an international initiative to improve children's well being by involving their fathers in all aspects of their upbringing. The project in Australia is based at the University of Newcastle in the Family Action Centre. During 2001, project staff worked in partnership schools to attract fathers (and father figures) from low-income areas to participate in enjoyable, father-friendly activities in schools. As part of their work, the Engaging Fathers Project team has developed a course for dads: The Nuts & Bolts of Kids & Schools.**



*Volunteering in the literacy program, to help girls as well as boys. The men gain insights into the difficulties that the kids are going through.*

The idea for the course came from those dads who were already involved in activities such as Father–Son and Father–Daughter Sports Gala Afternoons, Dads' Breakfasts, and 'Dads' Smokos'. Nobody smoked at the Dads' Smoko, of course, they simply sat under a tree behind the Year 5 classroom, drank tea and coffee and talked. But the name conveyed the right message: there was a place at the school for blokes to get together.

The smokos had no set agenda but Ken and Craig, community workers from the Engaging Fathers Project (EFP), encouraged discussion with the fathers on how they might become involved in the school and with the children. A range of options were discussed, but communicating with children came out on top. Negotiations with the TAFE Outreach unit meant that the course participants could gain a certificate of attainment by completing the seven-week course. Twelve men turned up for the first day; one started work the day after and one left before completing the course. Ten men completed the full course.

Each week a presenter covered the main topic area while Ken facilitated. Craig attended most sessions to ensure that the links were maintained with the Aboriginal men in the group. The usual parenting education mainstays — handouts and worksheets — were conspicuously absent. Instead, the presenters were strongly advised to make the sessions interactive and to leave plenty of time for discussion. Particular care was taken to build a respectful atmosphere where different (even unpopular) notions could be openly discussed. The men were not pressured into speaking on each topic, but there was no shortage of conversation. Getting men to talk about all aspects of parenting was easy. The challenging part was managing a group of men who were not used to 'group discussion'.

## Did It Work?

The fact that nearly all the men stayed for the full course was in itself an important testimony to the course. However, we also asked for comments in the evaluation session at the completion of the course, and we asked key staff for their views. As far as we have been able to determine there were no negatives as a result of the course. In the discussions surrounding the Engaging Fathers Project as a whole, some teachers have expressed concerns about the general issue of males on the premises, and in an area where staff have many demands on their time, any extra duties have to be shown to produce results if they are not to cause resentment.

As this was the first time that the Nuts and Bolts course had been delivered we wanted to get a range of perspectives on how successful it had been. As well as asking those men who participated, we also interviewed the facilitator of the School as Community Centres project (who provided the room and tea and coffee), the principal and the Aboriginal education assistant. We also had some students comment on the role of dads in the school at a meeting with the principal. The children were supportive of fathers being in the school to help and to play games. Their answers, however, suggested that they were surprised at all the fuss about dads coming to the school: they thought that we should just get on with it! At the end of the article there are some samples from the feedback sessions.

## Course Evaluation and Feedback

### What the dads said about being in the course

I didn't really know what to expect so it was a plus for me. I don't think anyone really knew what it was going to be all about. I've never been in this situation before, as far as a bunch of blokes who are talking their own problems.

The strength cards [see page 42] showed you that even though you chose one or two you could basically relate to all of them. When you see different people get all these different things, you can relate to each one of them, so you know everyone is going through the same thing.

I found that too with those [strength] cards. The first five people that spoke before me, I could have related to the whole five of them and when I got to mine and then I heard the other four fellas after me, I could've related to the whole ten. So that was interesting.

Oh well, knowing that in striving for what I believe is right for my kids, knowing that there is other people out there trying to do the same thing. That you're not alone, I suppose that's what it is, just knowing that other people are trying to do the same thing.

Everyone is in the same situation, you're not just the only one sitting out there on a limb; and also met a few top blokes in the course in last five to six weeks. It's been interesting.

See if you're living up to your own standards, I think, is what the thing is. You're learning how to relate to children and everything and do you do it? Is it right, is it not right?

There's nothing out there that teaches parenting. I mean, when I had a kid I was hoping that the wife — because she's a girl — would know it all, but in fact she didn't. In fact I think I knew a little bit more than her, which is really nothing, but there's no course for parenting. You have the kids and then it's all trial and error and flying by the seat of your pants, so it's good to get some information on parenting.

It helps clarify your own feelings on parenting, because you're doing things and you're wondering, 'Am I going about it the right way or the wrong way?', and then you come here and there's a lot of feedback. So you think, 'Oh, am I doing it right or not? Should I pull up on that and change?' So it's giving you a larger view of parenting from a lot more people and it's also good to understand there are other people going through the same difficulties as yourself. You're not Robinson Crusoe.

To sum it up in one word I think 'eye-opener' would be it, that it's not what you would expect. If [the other fathers] asked me what I thought I would say, then I'd say it was an eye-opener and teaches you a lot about your own skills as a parent.



*Food is a key strategy in making the school a father-friendly place.*

*'You have the kids and then it's all trial and error and flying by the seat of your pants, so it's good to get some information on parenting.'*

*'I just seem to be more relaxed, I feel, in explaining things now. Rather than jumping down their throats I think about it first.'*

*'My nine-year old daughter said to me, "You don't shout as much dad."'*

#### **Comments from dads on the effect of the course**

I just seem to be more relaxed, I feel, in explaining things now, rather than jumping down their throats I think about it first.

I've relaxed in my situation around my children and all that. The way I speak to them. Instead of jumping down their throat I'm talking to them on their level and it has calmed me right down.

The funny thing is with the whole situation, if I was sitting at home I'd say something. Obviously it was noticeable, but not to me. I'd say something and Vicki would say, 'Oh, that's the course coming out of you.' So she noticed a difference there, and she said that to me probably about three times over the course of this course we've been doing, so obviously there is a difference and you don't really notice your difference till it's pointed out to you.

I think it woke everyone up, opened everyone's eyes up about fathers being in the school; and I think being a lot more safer around and knowing what to expect from the people outside the school, just looking at you if you want to help out at the school. So it's changed my attitude.

I think it was good that there was no pen work involved, you know, you could sit back and relax, and think. You take more in than sitting trying to concentrate on writing. I've got nothing against writing and that, but there was no pressure put on you. You sit there, watch a few videos, a few sheets and basically I think everyone took it in easier that way than sitting down writing. So it was good in that respect.

I'm relating to adults even different than what I was before, but it's good. It's a good course and I'd recommend it.

Yeah, it teaches tolerance and acceptability of other people as well. It's just not dealing with kids and that, it's a whole communal thing. It's how to be tolerant and accept everybody in your community.

My nine-year-old daughter said to me, 'You don't shout as much dad'.

I have also noticed it in the school. When I was at the other school and I had a conflict I really jumped down their throats. And then at this school I was called to the office because my boy had done something; I went in and just talked about it. It came out a lot better because I just talked and didn't go in angry. It wasn't the different school principal, it was me. I knew that principal when she was at the other school. And I would get so worked up, my wife wouldn't come in with me, she stayed outside behind me, and so it must be different 'cause she went right in there with me.

I take time for things. Now I have two nights a week playing darts, she has Friday and Saturday nights playing Housie. I used to go five nights a week and didn't let her go out. Also, I used to get migraines two or three times a week and now I haven't had one in seven weeks. Its because I don't get stressed now.

My kids reckon I should go to the TAFE course every day. They tell me to go. I get calm.

My wife was in Melbourne and I was getting a bit stressed and my little fella, I told him to get out of the car and he just ignores me. So I grab him by the shirt front to get him out of the car and I was a little bit stressed and I don't hit but

I yelled at him and he went into his bedroom and didn't come out; normally he'd be out on his bike. And that night as I went to bed I saw he was still lying awake. So I went in and apologized. He said that he didn't hear me telling him to get out that he was playing Nintendo. So I apologized and kissed him goodnight . . . I felt relieved to tell you the truth. Normally I'd sit there stewing about how to tell him and still be the boss and I'd go over it in my mind and then I'd say it but still be the one up here, and then still think about it a lot afterwards. So after I apologized this time I felt better and went to sleep.

We've got to let kids be kids. My girl and boy were having milk and the girl spilt the milk and she looked at me like she was expecting something, like me to blow my top, and I said, 'You'd better go and get a cloth', and she did. As soon as we'd done that the boy spilt his Milo right beside where her milk had gone. They were both looking at me and I could see this fear and they were waiting for me to blow up. And I just couldn't do it. And I think my wife's changed too. She doesn't go at them so much.

I've learnt a fair bit from the course. I have good kids and we always used to sit at the table and talk about stuff, but now since the course we do it better.

I have learnt to step back a little. My kids say, 'He's going schizo', and now I step back. The kids don't want to hear the lecture again from me.

#### **Staff comments on the effects of the course:**

##### **Vicki Smart, Support Teacher, Learning Difficulties**

The Eastlakes District Intensive Reading Program is a mobile program, moving between schools, running four days a week for two hours a day. This term it is based at Windale, but students come from other schools too.

These children are in need of help and having the men [from the Nuts and Bolts course] come to help has been invaluable. They come regularly; they've gone through skills training with the men, and they come in as volunteers. They have actually been given a basic set of skills to help them adjust to the classroom situation. They've taken those skills and are very eager to develop them. They're interested in working in the classroom side. And the Intensive Reading Program is a good place for volunteers to start. It's a different sort of regimen to the mainstream classroom. The fact that they get to work intensively with children means that they build up a rapport with the children and they have an insight into the difficulties the kids are going through. I think that they can relate, and the fact that they see changes in the kids actually strengthens their own skills and understanding of problems that they have. They are not as intimidated as they would have been because we all come to learn.

The support that they provide is just invaluable. One particular boy needs daily work, intensive daily work, and there is no way with the eight children that I could have given him that support on a daily basis without the helpers. I wouldn't trade them for the world.

And I have to say that I think that it's the Engaging Fathers Program that has made the difference. The fathers must feel a more supportive environment here, because for fathers to come up and knock on a teacher's door and say, 'I'm here to help', that doesn't happen. I've usually got to go searching for anybody to help, male or female. And the fact that the boys and girls in this classroom have got different role models has been advantageous, definitely.



*Father-Son Gala Sports Afternoon. Getting active (and having fun) with your kids is the idea.*

*The support that they provide is just invaluable . . . I wouldn't trade them for the world.*

*'I have a dad helping every arvo.  
And these are not all Aboriginal  
dads either.'*

*'It's also had spin-offs for the older  
children at high school too.'*

**Darren Dunn, Aboriginal Education Assistant**

We do have a lot of welfare issues with boys here. With the Engaging Fathers Program there is probably ten dads involved in the school now and the [negative] behaviours have gone down. With them being in the classrooms, not just actually working with their own kids, but just having a lot of male voices going around here, in the playgrounds. And that's what I see happening in the school, there is a lot more discipline because there is more males around and males are doing a lot more activities.

The dads have changed. After the Nuts & Bolts course they kept on coming up and approaching me. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday I have Aboriginal art and one dad said his kids were involved, so he wanted to help. But another dad — his kid wasn't even in that class — he said, 'Would I be able to have a go, would I be able to support?' And the questions that they asked me, I could pick it up straight away that they have been upskilled in the course. They are thinking about what they can ask and what they can offer, and before they wouldn't say anything. So I used to have quite a few numbers on my own and it was always a bit heavy on me, and now with the dads coming in I can probably take ten kids and the dad will take the other ten. I have a dad helping every arvo. And these are not all Aboriginal dads either.

**Julie Rayner, Relieving Principal**

It's an overwhelmingly positive program and it's positive for learning outcomes for students. I think there's been clear evidence that when a couple of our fathers become highly engaged, not only in the Nuts & Bolts course but in the classrooms, that their children's outcomes improve as a result. The sense of pride that has developed with the fathers and within the community has broken down the barriers between the fathers and the school, so it is not seen as separate and is less confronting. It has made an excellent platform to build for the future.

I think that the children like knowing that their families are valued in the school and that their fathers' expertise is valued. I've noticed a significant rise in the self-esteem of the children whose fathers are in the program. Their sense of confidence, shown through their body language and the way that they speak to staff, is much more positive. From a staff point of view, I think it has allowed staff to see different ways to think about what fathers might do within the school, the way they can work within the school, what strengths they can bring to the school. I think it has been a nice surprise.

The other benefits are for the fathers who also have children in the high school. It's been reported to me from the high school principal that those fathers are now engaging in much more appropriate ways with the high school, and the principal's attitude towards fathers has changed. He has invited the fathers into the high school to operate in a similar style. So it's also had spin-offs for the older children at high school too.

**Wendy Lawrence, Facilitator, Schools as Community Centres**

As a result of the course, and the Engaging Fathers Project, we have a lot of fathers who can work in the classroom with their kids, particularly those with poor behaviour. In the classrooms the men assist them with their work, keeping them on task, generally pacifying them and keeping them calm and focused. And for the first time, really, fathers have actually been involved in the literacy program in the school. Fathers just went and said that they wanted to be involved.

And the kids love it! Absolutely love it. They will often come and talk to me because they know I think their father's okay, and I know their father, so therefore I'm alright. So the boys will often come and talk to me and for that reason, for me, it has made a wonderful contact with boys in the school.

Often they will come and confess to me they've done something really stupid and it gives us an opportunity to talk about it. Not in a discipline way but in a reciprocity way and looking at responsibility. One of the boys came and said, 'I'm in trouble, I've punched a kid.' So we were able to go through those particular things about why hitting is good or not good and his feelings or whatever. That was two days ago. This morning he yelled out to me, 'G'day, how are you going?' 'I'm going really good', I said, 'How are you?' 'I haven't hit anyone!' That's the first thing he said to me — I haven't hit anyone! And his father has talked to me about it, particularly the way I dealt with his son. What he noticed was that I didn't yell. So, it's a different way of kids being able to access other people who can take a different tack and maybe have a better result.

The effect on the fathers who have done the course has been profound. One dad had been unemployed for a long time, it looked like he might be on a disability pension. After the Nuts & Bolts course we talked a lot — he'd come in here every morning for weeks just to have a chat. One day he said, 'I think I'll apply for this job.' The job was the road-crossing supervisor for the school, the Lollypop Man, seeing the kids across the street when they're coming to school. Now that mightn't seem like much of a job, but he hadn't done a job interview before, ever. For him it was an important step. He said to me, 'It's about community obligation', so he really understood that whole thing of, you know, doing something for the kids. I'm not sure that he would have done that without the Nuts and Bolts course.

## The Nuts and Bolts of Kids and School

### Week 1: Communication (shut up and listen)

How can we determine what other people are saying?  
 Reflective listening and paraphrasing  
 Attending skills  
 What are the communication roadblocks?  
 What are the alternatives?

### Week 2: Parenting and partnerships

Isolation and loneliness  
 Responsibilities  
 Participation: What can fathers contribute?

### Weeks 3 & 4: Safety measures for children at school (Child Protection and Code of Conduct)

How safe are your children?  
 What is in place to protect parents and workers in the school?  
 What is good practice?  
 What is the law?

### Week 5: Turn that frown upside down

Confidence building: Inner strengths  
 Family strengths, motivation, resilience

### Week 6: Child development and behaviour

What would you expect children to be able to do at different ages?  
 What is typical children's behaviour?  
 Why do they behave the way they do?

### Week 7: Child development and behaviour

What positive strategies can be used?  
 Skills for working with children  
 Communicating with children

### Week 8: Presentation and BBQ

*'The effect on the fathers who have done the course has been profound.'*



*'Community obligation' leads men to make a contribution.*

Richard Fletcher is the Project Leader for the Engaging Fathers Project at the University of Newcastle's Family Action Centre. He can be contacted on (02) 4921 6401.

# Research Section

## Boys and Girls Working Together: Science and Emotional Literacy

*Brian Matthews*

**The debate over single-sex versus co-educational schooling is one that occupies much discussion and research, both here and overseas. The following article is by Brian Matthews, a science teacher working in London, England. The Improving Science and Emotional Development (ISED) project ran for twelve months in two London co-educational comprehensive schools. The philosophy behind ISED, and Brian's interpretation of the results, are particularly interesting when read alongside Kevin Bell's article on page 24.**

In the past our schooling focused on the academic 'under-achievement' of girls; now the emphasis has shifted to boys' 'under-achievement'. One way to tackle the problem is to focus specifically on girls or on boys, but I believe that children are best helped not by separating their issues, but by accepting that boys' needs and girls' needs are so intertwined that they should be educated together. In using the word 'together' I do not mean simply in the same school, but also through cooperation.

What is required is a pedagogy that moves away from the see-saw view where first girls are focused on, and then boys. We need an approach that recognises that, for them to achieve equality, girls' and boys' achievements must be seen together. This was the foundation beneath the Improving Science and Emotional Development (ISED) project, which ran for twelve months with eighty Year 7 students in two London co-educational comprehensive schools.

As its title suggest, the ISED project is not just about improving academic results. It is also about emotional development. Thus, in order for the philosophy of ISED to be understood I have briefly outlined below the rationale behind it.

### **Masculinity and Femininity: Confronting the gender divide in the classroom**

We understand many ideas only through their relationship to each other. For example, an understanding of 'wet' requires an understanding of 'dry'; the contrast between the two makes the meaning. Similarly, biologically defined 'female' and 'male' have no meaning by themselves, but only in relation to each other.

Our understanding of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' arise through males and females socialising together, and only have meaning in tandem. Femininity and masculinity are actually processes. By this I mean that we only learn what it means to be masculine or feminine through the ways in which we interact with people of the same and opposite sex. In a sense, we are our interactions, and these are often comparative ('girls cry' implies 'boys don't'). It is through these interactions and experiences that we come to have a sense of identity, which can change with time. Hence, gender — masculinity and femininity — are processes that are learnt, negotiated, changed, and forged (Matthews 1998). It follows from this that what are seen as 'boy problems' are not ones that can be solved in isolation from girls. There are two more important aspects, and I will give an example to illustrate these.

During a science lesson in a co-educational school I set a range of set problems, two of which were required to be solved on a computer. However, I was concerned that the boys should not hog the computers and keyboards. I had a range of options, the two most obvious of which were to create boys-only groups and girls-only groups, and the other was to say, 'I want the girls to have first go on the computers.'

What I did was to say, 'Hands up all those who have computers at home, or feel that they are very familiar with them.' Significantly more boys than girls put their hands up, but all I said was, 'When you are in your groups I want those who have not got their hands up to use the computers first, and the person in the group with less experience to be the one to start with the



*Boys and girls work together.*

keyboard.' By taking this approach, gender was negated as an issue and experience — that is, social factors — became the focus. Nor was I implicitly reinforcing gender stereotypes as I would have done if I had organised the class along the lines of the earlier two options. By organising the class in the third way, attention was drawn to the students' level of experience in using computers, and this affected both sexes. The boys and girls were treated as potentially the same, but their social experience was acknowledged. This argument is based on research, carried out by Dweck over thirty years, which is outlined below.

## Self-Theories, Esteem and Emotional Literacy

Dweck believes that children identify with and fall into two broad groups, and that their behaviour, intelligence and social roles are determined by which of these groups they belong to. In the first group, called the 'entity theory' group, the factors determining behaviour and intelligence are ones which dwell within us and are unlikely to change; that is, they are biological. In the second group, the 'incremental theory' group, intelligence and behaviour are not fixed but can be cultivated and are open to change.

While those in the incremental group recognise the importance of social and cultural factors in their behaviour, those in the entity group can be vulnerable in that failure (academic or social) can be seen as a reflection on their own intelligence, resulting in a loss of self-esteem. Entity group children find it more difficult to deal with failure than those pupils who are incrementalists. Incrementalists are also more likely to work harder when confronting a problem, as they believe that achievement is affected by social factors. Dweck does not mention gender specifically, but we can see that for boys and girls growing up, the more they hold incrementalist theories, the more likely they are to see the complexity of the other sex, as well as work harder, learn from failure and have a less vulnerable self-esteem.

I believe that Dweck's research confirms the idea that boys and girls benefit greatly if educated in ways that enable them to learn, through experience, the social and emotional nature of

learning and establishing relationships, and of how to face up to and overcome difficulties. What is needed is a set of strategies that will enable pupils to develop their social and emotional skills together; that is, their emotional literacy.

But what is emotional literacy?

There are many competing terms used in overlapping ways, including emotional intelligence, social intelligence, spiritual intelligence and emotional development. The term emotional literacy was first used by Claude Steiner (Steiner & Perry 1997) who said:

Emotional literacy is made up of three abilities: the ability to understand your emotions, the ability to listen to others and empathise with their emotions, and the ability to express emotions productively. To be emotionally literate is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power and improves the quality of life around you. Emotional literacy improves relationships, creates loving possibilities between people, makes co-operative work possible, and facilitates the feeling of community. [page 11]

As educationalists we all realise that the development of boys' emotional literacy is important. Boys, especially those in trouble, may have a restricted emotional vocabulary and feel isolated from peers and adults. However, on the positive side, boys bring much vitality and energy to relationships. Boys have sensitive feelings and should be encouraged to engage with these, rather than hide them, and I believe that the co-educational situation is a good environment for this.

Given all of the above background theory, I attempted to develop a framework in which boys (and girls) could learn about the complexities of the other sex, overcome stereotypes and develop both socially and emotionally. This would create a greater chance that the boys and girls would be confronted with the social and emotional evidence of the 'incremental theory' and so raise their self-esteem as well as develop social and academic skills. A situation in which boys and girls have to learn cooperatively is one where, with suitable structures, this can occur, and this was the basis of the ISED project.

## Improving Science and Emotional Development

I set up the Improving Science and Emotional Development project with three teachers in two typical London comprehensive schools. The project lasted for one year and involved over eighty Year 7 pupils. The project developed techniques to enable cooperative learning in science lessons.

In order to help secondary pupils to develop their social and emotional skills I felt that it was important to situate them within the context of normal subject schooling. Science is a natural area for such work. Contrary to popular opinion, it is inherently a social activity. Science incorporates imagination, creativity and social and political values. To develop social and emotional understanding in science lessons could give three results for the price of one: greater interest in — and understanding of — the nature of science; developing positive methods of communication, so getting along with people, and feeling good; and maintaining academic success.

Clearly, for pupils to progress emotionally, they need to gain an understanding of one another, and in particular to do so across gender divides. Hence, co-educational schools provide the greater chance to enhance social and emotional development. Only here is it possible to engage pupils in their emotions, rather than to simply be told about them and about how they should change. Dialogue and the ensuing interplay is central to helping pupils develop their sense of 'self' and 'other'.

For the pupils to develop in ISED they needed to be able to:

1. Communicate with one other in a safe environment
2. Talk and listen
3. Think about the social processes
4. Articulate (by writing and talking) what they thought was going on in the interactions
5. Compare this with what other people thought had gone on (to understand that there are different perceptions of the same discourse)
6. Discuss this so that they come to understand their own and one another's viewpoints
7. Empathise with one another

## How Did ISED Work in the Classroom?

The teacher divided the pupils into mixed-sex groups of five pupils, one of whom acted as an observer to watch and make notes while two boys and two girls worked together. A task was set so that the two boys and two girls worked, talked about, and learnt about a science problem for about 10 to 15 minutes. A prepared sheet was given to the observer who filled it out, noting who talked and listened, whether anyone was supportive and if there were frequent interruptions.

When the activity stopped, the observer filled in totals on the sheet and made any relevant notes on how the group worked and socialised together. While the observers filled out their sheets the two boys and two girls filled in a sheet of their own to indicate how they — and the others in the group — worked on the problem using the same criteria as the observer. The pupils were then given time to discuss their views. In fact, time for this was short, and sometimes even missed altogether. The discussions may then have gone on informally, which was probably the best place for them.

Once the pupils were familiar with the procedure, the observer was no longer used and pupils worked in groups of four (two males and two females). They then filled in an opinion sheet that asked a variety of questions about social and cognitive skills. Some of the questions from the six different sheets were:

- Who do you think suggested useful things to do?
- When I was working in my group I felt . . .
- How well did you get on with the rest of your group?
- Were there any differences with sex or race?
- Did someone in the group help you learn?
- Does group work affect how you feel about science?
- Does it make it more social?
- Were there more disagreements or arguments
- Did working this way make science more relevant? Does it make it more social? Were there more disagreements or arguments? Did working this way make science more relevant? Harder? Easier? Interesting? Boring?

A special database was developed to analyse the Opinion Sheets, discern patterns and to examine how good the pupils' predictions actually were of how much they talked and listened. These research lessons were carried out about once every three weeks.

The procedures were designed to legitimise pupil-to-pupil and pupil-to-teacher discussions around social and emotional issues as well as the cognitive ones. In essence, we were trying to get pupils to develop a social coherence based on accepting each other and each other's differences.

APPENDIX 1

DISCUSSION ASSESSMENT

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: DA1

Name	Each time a person talks, put in a ✓.

Main comments When you fill in the chart below, do not use ticks or numbers. Make a comment like: The most; a lot; the least; frequently; well; not at all.

Name	talking	listening	interrupted others	helped others	how much did they learn?

Other comments

© B. Matthews Goldsmiths College ISED project 2001

APPENDIX 2

GUESSES

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fill in the chart below, without looking at anyone else's. Do not use ticks or numbers but make a comment like: The most; a lot; the least; frequently; well; not at all.

Name	talking	listening	interrupted others	helped others	how much did they learn?
You:					

Other comments (Use the back of the paper as well)

© B. Matthews Goldsmiths College ISED project 2001

## Results

The Opinion Sheets gave a great range of evidence on what the pupils were feeling and thinking. I'll focus here on the pattern of talking which, while varying considerably from group to group and with time, indicated a good balance between contributions from both boys and girls. In the groups where there were two boys and two girls the speaking order could have been that a male spoke the most, then the next male, and the two females speaking the least. This order would be coded as MMFF. If both girls dominated the discussion then the code would be FFMM. The distribution of speech amongst boys and girls when monitoring and feedback was used as follows:

Table 1: Who dominated discussions?

	Number of times a pattern was obtained in the classes over the research period
MMFF	12, i.e. males dominated
MFMF	20, i.e. fairly even but males slightly more dominant
MFFM	15, i.e. an even distribution of talking but with a slight male lead
FMMF	8, i.e. an even distribution of talking with a slight female lead
FMFM	22, i.e. fairly even but females slightly more dominant
FFMM	23, i.e. females dominated

When the full total of discussions was analysed it was evident that the extent of talking between boys and girls was reasonably balanced. However, girls dominated the discussion on a slightly higher proportion of occasions.

One aspect of helping boys in the classroom related to their social and emotional development. A questionnaire to elicit their feelings was given to the pupils at the beginning and end of the year, and a Lickert-type six-point scale was used to record the data. (For ease of interpretation the results in the following tables have been converted into percentages and rounded to the nearest whole number.) The results of the questionnaire revealed that the boys said that they had changed over the year.

Here are some selected results, but note that the scores have been analysed so that for all results a positive score means a constructive change. So, for example, in question 2 below the change of 3% by boys indicated that they wished they were someone else less than they did at the beginning of the year. The first results selected indicated that the boys had been learning socially and emotionally from the strategies used in the research:

APPENDIX 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 6  
 Members of group: \_\_\_\_\_

In each of the questions below write the person's names in order in the boxes.

1. Who do you think spoke:  
 the most      next most      the least

--	--	--

2. Who do you think listened:  
 the most      next most      the least

--	--	--

3. Who do you think suggested useful things to do:  
 the most      next most      the least

--	--	--

4. Who do you think disrupted the group:  
 the least      next least      the most

--	--	--

5. When I was working in my group I felt .....  
 because .....

6. Working in a group was useful because.....

7. How does group work help you, or stop you, from learning?

© B. Matthews Goldsmiths College ISED project 2001

*Table 2: Changes in pupils' feelings*

Question posed	Average % change over the year	Average % change of boys and girls
1. I find it difficult to talk to people if they don't agree with me.	12%	Boys: 13% Girls: 8%
2. I often wish I were someone else.	7%	Boys: 3% Girls: 13%
3. I do not do anything to make myself look foolish.	7%	Boys: 10% Girls: 2%
4. I am able to ask for help.	7%	Boys: 10% Girls: 3%
5. I get angry when someone criticises me.	5%	Boys: 8% Girls: 3%
6. I wouldn't make a comment if I thought it would cause an argument.	5%	Boys: 5% Girls: 7%
7. I don't think my classmates like me.	5%	Boys: 8% Girls: 2%
8. I don't make friends easily.	5%	Boys: 0% Girls: 11%
9. I think a lot about what others think of me.	3%	Boys: 3% Girls: 2%
10. I always feel I could have done better.	3%	Boys: 5% Girls: 0%
11. I like myself.	3%	Boys: 7% Girls: 0%

Many of these issues relate to self-esteem or self-confidence. The results imply that boys felt better about themselves (questions 2, 7 and 11) and that they were more confident about speaking (questions 1 and 4). Also the answers to questions 5 and 1 are supportive of the idea that they are getting better at being able to handle their emotions. Of course, one cannot tell from this questionnaire alone if real changes occurred. However, the mere fact that the boys were articulating that they feel they had improved is at least one important stage. (The results of the questionnaire also throw up lots of interesting issues relating to the girls' self-esteem, but that should be part of another study.)

One skill that is seen as central to emotional development is the ability to name one's feelings:

*Table 3: Naming feelings*

12. I can name my feelings.	2%	Boys: 3% Girls: 0%
13. I can tell how my classmates are feeling.	2%	Boys: -2% Girls: 7%

It is interesting that some change for some boys had occurred, and this may indicate a trend if the research were continued over more than one year. While they were getting better at naming their feelings, it appeared that they were not so good at telling the feelings of their classmates.

The question in table 4, below, which asked whether the pupils thought that they were treated equally by their teachers, showed a negative result for the boys. In post-study interviews with the boys, they articulated quite clearly that they felt that the teachers treated girls better as they let them get away with more:

*Table 4: Am I treated equally by teachers?*

14. The teacher treats other pupils better than they treat me.	-2%	Boys: -5% Girls: 3%
----------------------------------------------------------------	-----	------------------------

Other data indicated that the results were uneven between boys and girls:

*Table 5: Perceptions of self within the group*

15. I am not distracted easily.	-3%	Boys: -2% Girls: -7%
16. I never feel worried.	-3%	Boys: -2% Girls: -5%
17. I stay calm even if my classmates are angry at me.	-3%	Boys: -1% Girls: -3%
18. When I make a mistake I admit it.	-7%	Boys: -8% Girls: -2%
19. I know most of the pupils like to work with me in science lessons.	8%	Boys: 8% Girls: 8%
20. The others would say that I am a good member of the group.	7%	Boys: 7% Girls: 7%
21. I suggest good ideas in science lesson.	3%	Boys: 5% Girls: 0%
22. I can concentrate on my science lessons even if others try to put me off.	-5%	Boys: -5% Girls: -5%

Evidence that concentration is still a problem (questions 15 and 22) and that boys were finding it difficult to admit to mistakes (question 18) was confirmed by other data. However, the change in concentration could either be because they actually did find it more difficult, or that their perception of what it means to concentrate had been sharpened. To resolve this issue would require extra data. However, taken as a whole the evidence indicates that the boys were improving their social and emotional skills. More evidence on this came from a questionnaire given to the pupils about their feelings on working together. Called *Learning with Each Other*, they were asked what they liked and disliked about working with the same and opposite sex. Below are some of the boys' answers, giving a flavour of their feelings.

*Boys' comments*

Why I like working with girls (other sex)	What I dislike about working with girls	Why I like working with boys (same sex)	What I dislike about working with boys
You learn to get on with girls They express their feelings Don't mess around Make work easier Learn more You learn what girls talk about Can concentrate Don't interrupt the teacher More knowledge, know the answer	Giggle Muck about and do dumb things Moan They are so bossy I hate it when girls take charge of the group Girls get uptight and it's hard to learn how to get on with them Talk too much	Fun Talk about football Help you Talk about girls Have fun Cheer you up Understand them more as same sex Like working with you They like what I like Get to know them better Helps me understand girls	Take the mickey Get into trouble Don't work as hard You may get in trouble Muck about Some really get on my nerves Should get on with the work

The boys valued working with the girls because they got more work done and also learnt how to get on with them. They did not like working with girls when they were bossy! On the other hand, the girls did not like it that boys messed around so much, but appreciated the humour they brought to the classroom.

The boy who said that he liked working with boys because you learnt to understand girls (bottom of column three) had either just filled it in the wrong column, or intuitively realised that to understand the 'other' helps you to understand the 'self'.

Evidence from interviews indicated that pupils talked together and listened to one another, and that they said how much they helped one another. Here are some quotes from the interviews.

*Steven:* It's good because then you can see that if one of you is not good at science and one of you is, then if you work together you get better.

*Jim:* Yeah, and also you get different opinions and different ideas for science and what we're doing. And if someone gets stuck you can help them out . . . and they can help you out.

*Carol:* You just, like, mingle with each other and help each other.

Here is an extract from another interview, which indicated that the pupils were supporting each other, and also that this affected both their self-esteem and feelings towards science:

*Interviewer:* Do you feel more confident talking to other people because of the group work?

*Louisa:* Yeah, it makes you feel a lot more confident.

*Keith & Kamila:* Yeah.

*Kamila:* When I first came I was really shy, but when you're working in groups in science it helps you to talk to other people and builds up your confidence.

*Keith:* Because they give you the chance to experiment, do the practicals, and to get to know people as well.

The collaborative work provided a framework for discussions about emotional and cognitive factors and enabled the boys and girls to get to know each other better. The vast majority of pupils said that they learnt to deal with each other and with difficulties. They began to realise the complexities of the same and the other sex and how changes occurred through the year. All of this supports an incremental theory of people and relationships.

So far this presents a rather rosy picture but there were, of course, difficulties. It is to one of these that I now turn.

## Strategies Used With the More Difficult Boys

Most of the boys and most of the girls responded well to the cooperative learning, most of the time. The teachers used a number of different strategies to form the pupils into groups. The teachers planned out beforehand who they wanted in each group and either organised them as they came into the classroom, or simply told them at the required time. Alternatively, they gave out cards to the pupils with four As and four Bs on them and then told them to get into groups with the same letter. In one science lesson the boys and girls were seated alternately, and so the nearest pairs were put together. Initially the pupils were quite resistant, but it got easier as time went on as it was done regularly.

However, some of the boys were very resistant and could not get on socially. One strategy was to put the boys with social difficulties with a sensible boy and two sensible girls. This usually had a positive effect on the more troublesome boy and resulted in the boy displaying more reasonable behaviour. The boy, in conversations with the teacher afterwards, would seem to want to be like the others in the group. When pupils were put into groups, the teacher made a clear focus on learning, rather than who they were with, and so deflected attention away from personalities. The three sensible members of the group were generally aware of what was going on and happy with it. The groups were changed regularly, otherwise this would not have been the case! The groups were changed so that all the pupils got to know each other.

In one class there was a particular boy with learning and behavioural difficulties. The school had actually tried to move him to a special needs school. However, even he responded well to the ISED type of work. However, if a larger percentage of the pupils had been as potentially disruptive as this boy then it is difficult to say what might have happened. In general it was necessary to be very careful in changing the groups of pupils. A principle was to put a difficult pupil in a group with calm pupils who would gently say, 'Come on, we need to get on with the work', and so cajole them and not respond in an aggressive way.

Most of the boys found it easier if they were put into groups by teachers, rather than having to select their own. At the beginning of the year some boys were loud and pushy in the group work. However, as the year went on, and they were clear about what was expected of them, they generally responded and improved. The most successful

gains were those where boys learnt to be more tolerant. By the end of the year most of the boys reported that they enjoyed working together.

Some 'gifted and talented' boys were not happy working with others. They said that they wanted to get on by themselves as they felt that working in groups held them back. Understandably, their focus was on the academic side of school. The gifted and talented girls tended to be less like this, but had their moments!

Similarly, some boys (and to a lesser extent, girls) wanted to give all the answers without discussing it with the others; that is, they wanted to dominate the rest of the pupils.

Another strategy was to form a group where all the boys with behavioural problems were together for a short while, but not continuously. The boys were then able to see, and explain to the teacher, that their behaviour was not 'sound'. They could compare what it was like to work in such groups and to compare it with working in the other groups. They were, therefore, confronted by their own behaviour. This helped them reflect and to make progress.

This sort of work is difficult, and these approaches did not solve the problems of all the boys, but they did alleviate the difficulties and resulted in an overall improvement in behaviour.

## Conclusion

This research is based on the belief that educating boys and girls together and working on their social, emotional and cognitive skills at the same time will enable them to develop. This is a small study that lasted only a year; even so, the indications are that pupils did develop and aspects of their self-esteem improved. They learnt to get on better together and to learn about each other. This provides evidence for the 'incremental' theory of social and cognitive behavioural factors.

The research indicates some short-term gains in that it encouraged boys and girls to understand each other more, and so gain a more realistic and grounded sense of one another. In the long-term, since they are learning science together, it holds out the possibility that they could be more likely to accept each other as future scientists with whom they could work alongside. I realise that teachers already try to encompass within their teaching ways of encouraging boys and girls to get on together and to take up science as a career. However, I argue that we need to do this in a more consistent and structured way along the lines indicated here.

## References and suggested further reading

- Bar-on, R & Parker, J (Eds.) (2000) *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence: Theory, development, assessment and application at home, school, and in the workplace*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dweck, C S (2000) *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*, Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Greenhalgh, P (1994) *Emotional Growth and Learning*, London: Routledge.
- Lee, C (1993) *Talking Tough: The fight for masculinity*, London: Arrow.
- Matthews, B (1998) 'Co-education, boys, girls and achievement' In *Raising Boys' Achievement in Schools* (Ed, Bleach, K) Trentham Books, pp. 173–93.
- Matthews, B (2001) *Improving Science and Emotional Development (The ISED project: Emotional literacy, citizenship, science and equity)*, London: Goldsmiths.
- Matthews, B (2002) Why is emotional literacy important to science teachers? *School Science Review* (in press).
- Matthews, B, Kilbey, T, Doneghan, C & Harrison, S (2002) Improving attitudes to science and citizenship through developing emotional literacy (the ISED project). *School Science Review*, 83 (305), in press.
- Steiner, C & Perry, P (1997) *Achieving Emotional Literacy*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Zohar, D & Marshal, I (2000) *Spiritual Intelligence: The Ultimate Intelligence*, London: Bloomsbury.

Brian Matthews is a science teacher working in London, England. The ISED project was funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation and was carried out in 1999–2000.

A free copy of the full ISED report can be obtained from:  
 Brian Matthews  
 Goldsmiths College  
 New Cross  
 London SE14 6NW  
 England  
 Ph: 0011 44 20 7919 7322  
 Email:  
 b.matthews@gold.ac.uk  
 or www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/  
 academic/ed/ised.html  
 See also: www.nelig.com/  
 articles/ised.htm

# Secondary Section

## Everyone's Looking at Me: The Impact on Self-esteem for Boys Going From All-boys Education to Co-education

*Kevin Bell*

**The opportunity to compare self-esteem levels in a group of students before and after their education system changes is extremely rare. Kevin Bell had this opportunity when an all-boys school in northern NSW became a co-educational school in 1998.**

*My previous work led me to believe that the boys' self-esteem would drop with the introduction of co-education, but would the study bear this out?*

This project dates back nine years to when I was studying for my Diploma in Education at a co-educational school in Brisbane. For my major assignment during my practical I carried out a comparison of the school's development of self-esteem in the students and compared it to a range of other schools. These other schools included one other co-educational school, two single-sex girls' schools and an all-boys' school. I was testing the hypothesis that development of self-esteem at the co-ed schools would be better.

The study involved administering the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory to the Year 12 students in each school. This inventory was developed by Stanley Coopersmith, an American psychologist who wrote several books and articles on the development of self-esteem, including the widely acknowledged *The Antecedents of Self-Esteem*. The Coopersmith Inventory has been refined and developed over the past thirty years and has been tested on Australian sample groups. It was found to be consistent and to discriminate well between the high and low self-esteem groups.

The Inventory consists of twenty-five questions that are answered 'Like me' or 'Not like me'. Examples of the statements are, 'I find it very hard to talk in front of a group', 'I'm a lot of fun to be with', 'I'm popular with persons my own age', 'Most people are better liked than I am' and 'I'm a lot of fun to be with'. The study was further divided into four subscales: general, social, home-parents and school-academic. Coopersmith's Inventory is particularly useful as it has these subscales, which makes it possible to hone in on aspects of self-esteem, rather than purely analysing the total self-esteem. General self-esteem refers to one's general commerce with the world; social refers to how one reacts and engages socially; home-parents looks at how someone acts and reacts at home, with parents and siblings; and school-academic looks at the student's academic self-confidence.

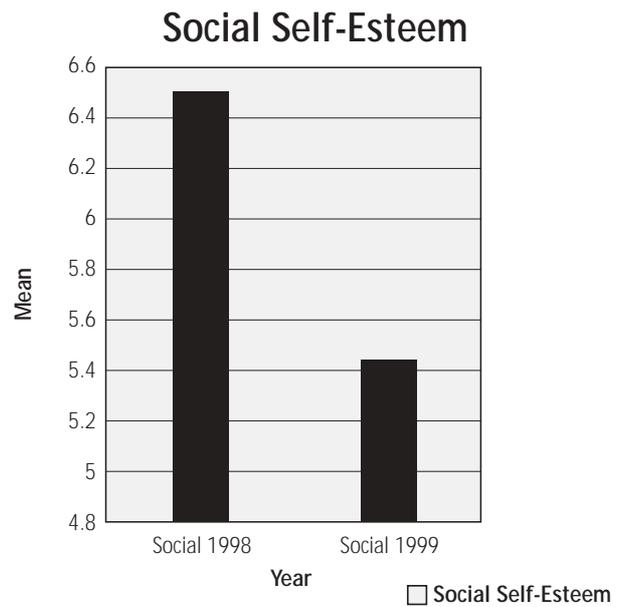
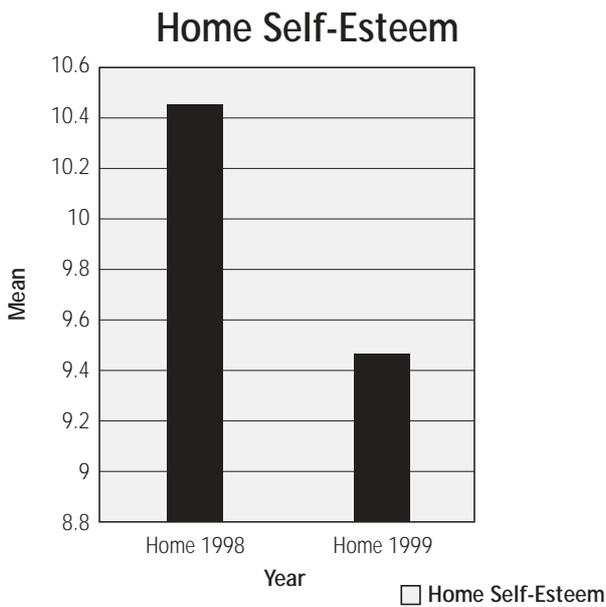
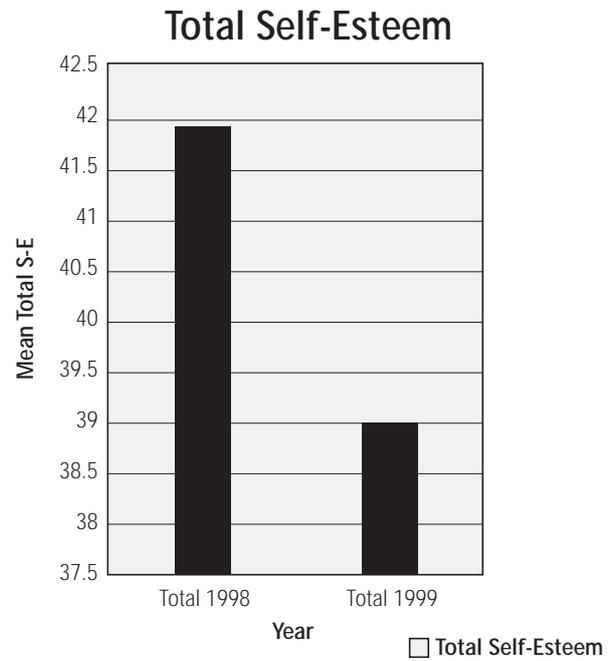
To my surprise, I discovered that the boys at the all-boys school were significantly higher in self-esteem than the students at most of the other schools. This challenged me, as I had set out to show that co-education produced a young person who would have a better self-esteem than one who had studied in a single-sex environment.

Four years ago, in 1998, the school in which I was teaching proposed to change from all-boys to co-education. This was a wonderful opportunity to administer the Coopersmith Inventory to the boys both before the changes come into effect and then, twelve months later, after co-education had been introduced. My previous work led me to believe that the boys' self-esteem would drop with the introduction of co-education, but would the study bear this out?

Permission was granted by the school for me to undertake a longitudinal study. The Coopersmith Inventory was issued to all boys in Years 7 and 8, during their pastoral care period, in November 1998. In November 1999 it was re-issued to the same boys in the same manner. The results confirmed what I had suspected: according to the Inventory, the boys' self-esteem had dropped significantly.

When means of the four subscales were compared, it was found that there was a significant drop in social self-esteem and home-parents' self-esteem. There was also a significant drop in total self-esteem. I outline below my findings on the subscale social self-esteem.

Year	Total Self-Esteem
Total 1998	41.9308
Total 1999	38.9922
Year	Social Self-Esteem
Total 1998	6.5
Total 1999	5.4419
Year	Home Self-Esteem
Total 1998	10.4692
Total 1999	9.4574



*The results from the questionnaires were translated into charts using the Coopersmith Inventory. Following the change from all-boys to co-educational, the subscales of 'Home' and 'Social Self-Esteem' fell drastically, resulting in a significant drop in 'Total Self-Esteem'.*

*The mere presence of the girls appeared to put pressure on the boys.*

## Student Interviews

A series of interviews were carried out with boys who were at the school during the transition from all-boys to co-education. When the data of ten of these interviews (with twenty-four students) was analysed a recurring theme emerged: Everyone's looking at me. This fits Coopersmith's subscale of self-esteem which he termed 'social self-esteem'.

Questions from the Inventory which were particularly relevant to this subscale were: 'I'm a lot of fun to be with'; 'I'm popular with persons my own age'; 'People usually follow my ideas'; 'I'm not as nice looking as most people'; and 'Most people are better liked than I am'.

An interview with Mark, Tim and Louis on 17 October 2000 gave some important insights into the boys' social perception. When the group was asked how things had changed since the school had become co-educational, Tim replied: 'You have to behave now that the girls are here. You can't say anything that might offend the girls or something like that.' When Mark was asked why some boys now sat back and didn't answer questions, he replied, '[They're] scared of getting embarrassed, and like that, they don't want to get paid out by the people trying to be cool and stuff like that.' Mark went on to note that this occurred in any class whether it be science, maths, English or whatever. This illustrates that a young boy's social (and probably his academic) self-worth appear to have been diminished by the presence of female students, whose presence have changed the way the boys react in class to answering questions. The cool boys now have an audience of females and participate less readily.

The mere presence of the girls appeared to put pressure on the boys. When Louis was asked why boys might feel embarrassed in class with girls being there he replied, 'It's just mainly because the guys are trying to impress. They feel a lot more secure if the girls give them attention. And if someone thinks they're loved or liked by a girl they feel a lot better inside. But if they say something really stupid in class then they'll think that the girls hate them and that they'll have a real low self-esteem.'

These boys had had two years of all-boys schooling. When girls appeared on the scene the classroom became a social place, where the threat of embarrassment in front of the females added a new complexity to learning and socialising. If a boy is embarrassed — either through answering a question incorrectly, or even perhaps answering correctly — the cool guys may 'pay out', and the girls may laugh. An academic environment has become an anti-social one.

When Tim was asked whether or not the girls had affected the answering of questions in class, he replied: 'It doesn't affect me. But I have seen it. Like before the girls came, guys would volunteer the answer, but now they're a lot more cautious unless they think it's absolutely right.'

The inference of this statement would appear to be that if the answer is wrong, a social disaster may occur. When Louis, a very cool and confident young man, was asked if he felt in any way less confident about answering questions in class, he answered: 'You do want to be accepted by everyone else, but you get over it if you say something stupid. It's not that important unless you really, really like the girl in class.' When asked, 'What if you really, really like the girl in the class?', he answered, 'Then you shut up.' It would seem that even the confident boys were affected in their social (and school-academic) self-esteem by the presence of females. Answering questions in class is now, for them, a social activity. Something to be considered socially, before an answer is volunteered.

When Tim was asked to compare the classroom before and after co-education, he said, 'With girls here it just makes it a lot more embarrassing with stuff ups.' Louis added that, 'When it was just guys you could say whatever and

get away with it. And, like, no one would care.' When questioned as to whether the girls ever actually responded to a wrong answer, he replied: 'It's mainly how you feel inside, I think.' Thus, whether or not the girls actually responded to a boy answering a question incorrectly, the boy was affected negatively inside. He believed the girls (or *that* girl) thought less of him.

The group was asked what they thought of themselves since the girls had arrived, and whether that changed at all. Louis answered: 'When it was just guys, you could see a lot more people walking around with scruffy hair styles and stuff like that, they wouldn't care about having their socks right up or their shirt in. But now there're girls, people are wearing longer shorts, and cooler hairstyles.'

Boys, it would seem, were now more concerned about how trendy they looked. The longer shorts Louis mentioned referred to a trend in the school at the time for the boys to buy school shorts that are too big for them; as the shorts drop down below the knee, they are seen to be more trendy. This was not an issue until the advent of co-education. School has become, for these boys, a more socially aware environment. It used to not matter if you had a traditional haircut, wore the proper school shorts and perhaps looked a little regular. Now school is a place of social pressure, where how your hair looks is important, and whether you look trendy is an issue.

In an interview with one of the female English teachers, she noted, 'For the boys in junior high school, an all-boys school allows the boys to become themselves.' If this were true, it would appear that the presence of the girls slowed down the process of becoming oneself, due to the diminishing of social self-esteem.

In an interview with Dane, Ken and Steve on 5 December 2000, the boys pointed to the sporting carnivals as being very different to what they were in the single-sex environment. They said that the carnivals were a social event where, in the past, the boys would lose their voices shouting and cheering, '. . . but this year you just didn't notice that'. 'Why would that be?' I asked. 'Trying to be cool!' replied Steve. 'Trying to be cool?' 'Yeah, trying to impress the girls, probably.' Thus, the swimming and athletics carnivals, events where the boys had been able to feel uninhibited, and where they could express themselves in their cheering, banner-making, war cries and participation, had become events where the boys watched what they were doing, and tried to be cool. Supporting your team, as they had, was not seen as cool. I asked, 'Now, what do you mean by "cool" at the carnival?' Steve replied, 'Oh, if you yell out you'll be paid out.' Dane said, 'You don't want to embarrass yourself.' The boys continued using phrases like, 'the boys try to impress', and, 'don't want to make fools of themselves'.

One of the most interesting changes to the swimming carnivals was the change in apparel. The boys now largely wore their board shorts in their races. As Jack noted in his interview, 'They used to wear just stickies [Speedo type swimmers]'. Now, with little consideration of how much slower they might swim, they wore board shorts, because of their embarrassment to be seen in racing swimwear!

Socially the boys appeared constrained by the presence of the girls. A college social event, such as the carnivals and footy games, had been turned into a social quandary. The boys still wanted to cheer, compete and carry on as they had in the past, but the psychological pressure — real or imaginary — that the presence of the girls posed prevented the boys from carrying out their acts of self-expression. Interestingly, mums, sisters and girlfriends had always come to these events, so it is not the presence of females as such, but apparently the presence of female students that affected the boy's feelings. They wouldn't 'cheer and muck about and compete' in case they were paid out, in case they were seen as a fool, as they now wanted to be seen to be cool in front of their female peers.

*'With girls here it just makes it a lot more embarrassing with stuff ups.'*

*Supporting your team was no longer seen as cool.*

*A word that came up in nearly every interview was 'embarrassed'.*

## Conclusion

That the boys' self-esteem had been eroded is not the issue; just why this was the case, and how it might be improved is a more pertinent question to discuss. It may be that the girls' language skills outshone the boys', which allowed them to take a leading role in classroom discussions, especially in English. It may be that the boys lost some form of tribal grouping that once supported cheering at the football and carnivals. This appears to have been lost with the arrival of the girls. It may be that the boys were physically and emotionally a year or two behind the girls, who began to dominate classroom debate.

A word that came up in nearly every interview was 'embarrassed'. The boys were embarrassed to answer questions for fear of being laughed at by the girls. They were embarrassed to cheer for the footy team, as they were afraid of girls laughing at them. They were embarrassed to wear Speedos at the swimming carnivals. Perhaps this fear of embarrassment was an important aspect of their apparent drop in self-esteem.

I have resisted the temptation to re-issue the Coopersmith Inventory in the following years. It may be that the boys' self-esteem has grown, and that the experience of the girls coming to the school has now been absorbed in a positive manner. However, I believe that the results stand as an important educational lesson. Young adolescent boys are self-conscious of girls in the classroom, and also more generally at school. This appears particularly salient in English and other language-rich courses. This self-consciousness leads to embarrassment and inhibition, making the boys reticent about participating fully in classroom learning.

There has been a decline in the number of single-sex schools in Australia since the 1960s. Policies in the government and private sector have favoured co-education. Research by the influential British educationalist R R Dale, who supported co-education, is often quoted. The move to co-education has been ostensibly for educational reasons, but of course economics has also influenced bureaucratic decision-making. It is time to reassess the value of single-sex schools, and particularly single-sex boys' schools. Single-sex schooling is not for everyone, but my research indicates that it does suit a large proportion of adolescent boys. The significant lowering of their self-esteem affects not only their academic achievements, but also their social well being. It is also opportune for educationalists to reassess the value of providing some single-sex boys' and girls' classes within a co-educational environment.

We should all be concerned about boys' under-achievement at school, especially in their development of language and expression. Perhaps it is time to reassess the co-educational environment, to allow boys to excel, without the added pressure of the boys' perception of the girls' dominance and intolerance. To quote the school's head of LOTE: 'In the co-ed classes the boys are twenty marks lower than the all-boys' class. The girls make their presence known.'

### ***The following is a summary of statements from the interviews with the students***

When it was an all-boys' school no one really cared what you wore and stuff like that. Now, you just do. You just do care (Jack, 11 September 2000).

Like now you gotta have like an image for yourself. Hold up an image, stuff like that (Len, 7 September 2001).

People are just too embarrassed to do certain things any more. Just getting out there and having a go at cheering and things like that (Paul, 8 August 2000).

I don't know, guys now just don't do sport, 'cause the girls don't really like sport. Guys don't do sport because girls don't; and they just couldn't be bothered. With all boys, everyone would just get into it. Whereas now they just sit down; it's like, 'who cares?' (Jim, 7 September 2001).

You know how, um, you have an all-boys' class and you all participate in it? Well, now they're all afraid that if the answer's wrong they're gonna be laughed at, so no one answers any more (Allen, 9 November 2000).

You think before you say things. You don't say it just like you normally do with a group of guys (Rod, 9 November 2000).

I felt more comfortable reading out aloud when it was all boys. Because now with girls I feel that if I don't do this right, then down hill I go again (Micky, 13 December 2000).

Because you would have got over it in about two minutes, but with girls you kind of think, 'Oh, are they thinking about my stuff-ups in class?' (Micky, 13 December 2000).

Before the girls came we were just one group. There wasn't any different groups between us. In the classroom, we all talk together and, like, do stuff together in the classroom and after school. And now the girls come [and there's] one group over there with the girl heads [those that group with the girls] talking with their group; now we have separate groups (Pete, 7 September 2000).

I don't feel as confident as I did when it was all boys. I sort of hold back a bit, don't talk as much (Stan, 10 August 2000).

You get embarrassed when you're in front of all your friends and so you might have friends that are girls and someone might pay you out. You feel embarrassed then (Stan, 10 August 2000).

They [girls] look at you funny sometimes (Clem, 10 August 2000).

I reckon it's pure and simply embarrassment (Al, when asked why boys are less involved in college activities, 10 August 2000).

We used to walk down the hall and push everyone around and stuff. Now you just walk down, like a civilised human being. Male bonding kind of disappeared (Len, 7 September 2001).

You're scared if the girls have an opinion about something and you have the opposite to that opinion, you're scared to just say it; what they'll think of you. They'll think, 'Oh you're just an idiot', and they're better than you or whatever (Jim, 7 September 2001).

It's just mainly because the guys are trying to impress. They feel a lot more secure if the girls give them attention. And if someone, a guy, feels that they're loved or liked by a girl, they feel a lot better inside. But if they say something really stupid in class, then they'll have a real low self-esteem (Louis, 17 October 2000).

Apparently, like, being friends with girls here, sometimes they have their so-called 'mood swings', they'll talk to you one day, the next day they wouldn't talk to you for days or weeks before you could reel them back into being friends. That's what really gets on my nerves. I always think that I've done something, that I've offended them and I've changed my ways of thinking, how I express myself, probably a bit more quieter because some girls have their own different agendas of each other so, you have to be careful of that (Simon, 13 December 2000).

You do want to be accepted by everyone else, but you get over it if you say something stupid. It's not that important unless you really, really like the girl in class (Louis, 17 October 2000).

If a guy pays you out, you don't take it to heart, but if a girl does then you think about it a bit more (Tim, 17 October 2000).

I felt weird, being surrounded by a lot of girls singing; like an individual because there wasn't very many boys when the girls came. Yeah, so I dropped out then (Micky, 13 December 2000).

Most of the boys are embarrassed now singing in front of all the girls 'cause they must think that men aren't supposed to sing (Micky, 13 December 2000).

*'I felt more comfortable reading out aloud when it was all boys. Because now with girls I feel that if I don't do this right then down hill I go again.'*

Kevin Bell is researching the issue of boys's self-esteem in a co-educational environment as his research Master's at Southern Cross University, Lismore. He is a high school teacher, and is teaching Mathematics and Studies of Religion at a systemic Catholic high school in northern NSW. He can be contacted on (02) 6688 2015.

# Bedley Park Behaviour Program

*Jill Rodney and Richard Lake*

The Campbelltown District Behaviour Team's 'Park Program' is located in the grounds of Bedley Park Special School at Campbelltown, NSW. Jill Rodney and Richard Lake spoke to Richard Fletcher about their work.



*The Park Program staff. Back, left to right: Nicky Cooke (TA), Richard Lake (Teacher). Front, Anne Frahm (Counsellor), Jillian Rodney (Teacher).*

*Tell us about the Park Program.*

*Jill:* The program runs every Wednesday for fourteen weeks. It targets students in Years 7 and 8 who have not made the transition to high school successfully. The school targets the students on the basis of their behaviour and looks at things such as the suspension records. We are not after students who have a long history of poor behaviour because the program only runs once a week, and so we only see the children fourteen times.

*What is the aim of the program?*

*Jill:* The whole focus of the day is on behavioural focus looking at the children's behaviour, helping them to take ownership for their behaviour and give them some strategies for managing their behaviour in a more appropriate manner to get what they want.

*So what do you do?*

*Jill:* We give them models of behaviour. We show them how the way they are thinking and feeling leads them to act in a particular way, and what the consequences of their actions might be. We help them in their decision-making so that the consequences of their actions are more positive, so that they get what they really want. Part of the day also has an academic focus where we pre-teach skills. We check with the school about what is coming up — for example, mathematics — and we pre-teach those skills so that when they get back into class their behaviour is not a result of not understanding the work. We also do a section called 'School and Life Skills', which I'll hand over to Richard to talk about because he teaches that section.

*Richard:* The 'School and Life Skills' section involves two facets. Firstly, it's looking at the individual student and what they bring to the educational setting: reputation, attitude, those kinds of things, and how that evolves and how that affects their interaction with their peers or the teacher or whatever happens to be the particular issue. Secondly, we look at the other side of the equation: how the preconceptions of the person they are interacting with — principally their teacher — can affect certain outcomes. Importantly, we point out that the reality of a situation isn't always as important as a perception. I guess what I mean by that is, and a common example I use, is when a teacher is giving the instructional part of a lesson. The student who's sitting at the front sitting up straight with their eyes ahead gives the teacher a message that says 'I'm interested, I'm engaged, I know what's going on, I'll be able to do what you've asked'. The reality may be that person is thinking about what their girlfriend said to them or what they want at the mall or what happened at the skate park last night, and the student up the back who is scribbling in a book or seems to be flicking through a paper may comparatively have a much better understanding of what's going on and be able to meet the expected outcomes with fewer problems. But the message that they give to the teacher isn't a positive message and can be an obstacle for that individual's learning.

*How do they react when you explain it like that? Do they go 'Oh, I see?'*

*Richard:* No, I guess we use models to exemplify these issues and then get the students to come up with examples from their own experience at school that may parallel this, or try and get them to put that example in a situation that

makes sense for them. Often the other students in the group will offer suggestions on what things might have affected the outcome and how that outcome can be manipulated in the future in a way that is more positive for the student.

*So this is peer teaching?*

**Richard:** I guess so. It's still led by the teacher, I'll still structure the lessons and ask open-ended questions and guide the learning. But I guess the main focus for the students' education is to take on board suggestions from their peers encouraging them to help each other and to brainstorm through the consequences of their actions. We want them to think about how things may have been tackled differently, what other outcomes could have been achieved by tackling things in different ways. We link that back to some of the behaviour models that we teach them about.

*I understand that you use role playing, where you two role play good guy/bad guy?*

**Jill:** Ah, yes. An example we might use is to set ourselves up as two people having a conflict, but without letting the students know that this is happening. The two teachers start a conflict over a very minor issue and escalate that conflict to the point where one of us might throw down our books and walk out of the room. It's interesting because the students start to take sides and say, 'You shouldn't have done that', or, 'Don't talk to her like that, she didn't mean it'. Finally we tell the students it was a role play and work through it with them and do a 'social autopsy' and talk about what has happened — how did it start off, what could we have done at that point to stop it escalating — and look at different points throughout the escalation and relate that back to how they react in similar situations in the school.

*And do they feel cheated?*

**Jill:** Some of them say, 'I knew you were only acting all along' and others say, 'She still shouldn't speak to him like that'. Different students have different reactions.

*Are you afraid of triggering reactions from their own past where they might have witnessed family conflict?*

**Jill:** It hasn't happened yet, but it's interesting that you mention events being triggered. This is a relatively short program, only fourteen weeks, but after the first couple of weeks — when we get to know the students and things are fairly settled — Richard and I start to find out which things really upset the kids, and we start to purposely 'push their buttons'. Now, we're really lucky, we have a very high staffing ratio — we only have seven students and we could have fourteen wonderful weeks — but that's not what we want. We want the children to display the range of their behaviours to us so that we can help them work through their more negative behaviours. And this is where the 'triggering' or 'button pushing' comes in. One boy hated being told where to sit and that was enough to trigger really negative behaviour in him at school, and so as soon as a teacher told him he had to sit in a certain seat he would refuse, the situation would escalate, he'd start swearing and he'd get sent to the principal. So I spent one day beating him to his seat and saying, 'No, I'm sitting here! Because I'm the teacher, I can tell you where to sit.' I'd trigger that reaction in him and show him that the way he was acting at school was pointless and didn't really get him what he wanted.

**Richard:** He went into refusal, 'I'm not going to do it, you can't make me', all that kind of stuff. And then the other students started telling him how it had to be. Using some of the buzz words we use to point out how he was reacting.

*Buzz words?*

**Richard:** Yes, we get the students to evaluate each other's behaviour as part of what we do, and to avoid explaining behaviour patterns over and over we give them certain buzz words to label that behaviour. The first one we usually start off with is nose picking. It's okay to pick your nose in certain situations — if you're by yourself, at home — but if you're sitting down at the dinner table it's an inappropriate thing to do. Lots of behaviours have appropriate settings and inappropriate settings. Instead of having to go into the whole, 'No Terry, this isn't an appropriate time to be doing this', and going over the issue and talking about the things that he is doing that he already knows are inappropriate, it's a lot more effective for one of the

*We want the children to display the range of their behaviours to us so that we can help them work through their more negative behaviours.*

other students to say, 'Get off your high horse, Terry, you're nose picking again!' I guess the behaviour doesn't need to be specifically labelled. Terry knows what he's doing and whether it's appropriate or not. You don't need to get into an argument with the individual regarding particulars of that behaviour, it's enough to label it and move on.

*Can you give me some other examples of buzz words you use?*

*Jill:* We talk about manipulative behaviour and people who are being manipulated. People who manipulate others we call 'puppeteers' and say that you are pulling this person's strings to get them to do what you want. Conversely, the student who is being manipulated, we say, well, you are being made the puppet, you're dancing for this person who is deliberately trying to get you angry and riled up because it's great entertainment to see you spit the dummy and walk out of the room. We call each other woodcutters, too. A woodcutter is somebody who chops down somebody else to build themselves up in a social situation. So we try and give them visual clues, something that they can link to the behaviour pattern.

*So it's concepts you are giving them?*

*Richard:* I guess so, yes, and because they're not things that they would normally call one other — even when they're upset with one another — it's almost fun to use those labels and to catch each other out nose picking, or woodcutting or being a puppet. It motivates them to point out when other people are acting in an inappropriate way instead of encouraging that person to be inappropriate. In some ways it becomes a bit of a management tool for us. We get them to self-manage to some extent.

*Is it dependent on them liking you from the beginning?*

*Richard:* I think any kind of relationship — whether it's with a teacher, student, a parent, whoever — for it to be effective, they don't have to like you, but they have to respect you. For them to respect you, you need to respect them. You have to build a rapport. Sometimes even the students who you know do like you, and you like them, have times during the day when they really don't like you at all. Often this is because we hold up a metaphorical mirror to them and say, 'This is what we see, this is what other people see. Other people label you this way, how does that make you feel? What do you think about that? Is that something you want? Is that helping you get what you want? Are there other ways of getting those things? Can we change those labels?'

We even put physical labels on them sometimes. I'll get a bunch of sticky labels and we do a workshop the week before about perceptions, and what other people's perceptions are. We then get them to write down the name of a teacher who they say hates them, the name of someone who likes them etc., and write down five things that each person might say if the student asked them, 'What am I like?' Once they've got those fifteen or twenty labels we stick them on them and invite them to remove half or a third or whatever and talk about wanting to actually get rid of some of those labels — their reputations, perceptions, those kinds of things — and ask them how they might go about doing that. Again having a very tangible way of looking at these things I think helps the students take it on board.

*How did the program start?*

*Jill:* The need was identified at Campbelltown District level. A district committee was looking for a gap in behaviour services. We already had a school for students with behaviour issues at Lamandra School, but we were looking for something for students whose behaviour had been fine in primary school but had slipped off the rails a bit since hitting high school. We wanted to pick them up before they needed a full-time placement. The concept for the program was floated in the district and another ISTB [Itinerant Support Teacher, Behaviour] at the time — Mark Smith — and myself put up our hands and said we would be interested in this sort of work. Mark and I ran the program for a year and then Richard came on board for last year and this year. Ingleburn Rotary provided initial funding for resources, and the Department of Education now supports the program.

*And is there a reason why you deliberately have a male and a female run it, would you say?*

*Jill:* Well, at the school we are based in, there are no other males on site on the day, and so we thought it was important for safety issues. But I think more importantly some of our children come from backgrounds where they don't have a male role model, so we have a male there for them so that they can have close contact with a male at least one day a week.

*And can you tell me about the special school?*

*Jill:* For part of the day, usually about forty-five minutes, each student will work in the school that is on the site. The school is a school for children with multiple disabilities — usually a mobility problem as well as an intellectual disability — and their ages range from about three to eighteen. Our students work in one of those classes. While they are working

in that class they are actually in the role of teacher's aide. They are taken from their normal role as student and put into a role where they are assisting the teacher to manage other students. And we've had some interesting situations there. Kids being kids, the Beverley Park students don't always do what they are supposed to, and our kids have had to try and manage difficult students and have commented on how difficult this teaching job is. So it has been quite interesting!

Because a lot of the kids from Beverley Park have communication issues — they might be totally non-verbal, some of them sign and others have very few words — our kids have to find new ways of communicating. Even when our kids are fairly frustrated they can't revert to their normal communication roles where they might swear or even hit somebody. Instead they have to find other ways of communicating with these children and dealing with their frustrations.

*And how do the kids on the program evaluate it, the fourteen weeks?*

*Jill:* We have a daily goal-setting session, where they set a goal for the next week at school. They evaluate that the following week. We encourage them to give themselves a rating, where they write down how well they think they went with their goal. At the end of the program they have a written evaluation where we give them certain questions to answer and another section where they can write down whatever they want to write down. They answer questions on what they liked and, if they were designing the program, what things they would change. We've had everything from, 'Make it full-time' to, 'Buy a dishwasher!', because in the program the kids have to do their own washing up. But we've had some really interesting insights. It's now in its third year and we've made quite a number of changes to the program, lots of them based on suggestions the kids have made. We tell the kids that their suggestions don't just stay with us but that they go to district level meetings — which they do — and we let them know that we really value their input on those evaluations and they do take them very seriously.

*And can you tell me about the mentor program?*

*Jill:* Because our program is only a fourteen-week program, and as soon as one program is finished a couple of weeks later the next one starts, we don't have time for follow up. So we feel that it's very important to have someone in their school supporting them who understands where they've come from, the process they've been through and to continue this support after the program. Even though we started the mentor program right from the start we've come to realise how important it is, because when we are looking at our successes, the kids who have had really interested and active mentors are those who have made big changes. While we might find that in the fourteen weeks their behaviour improves in school, when the program finishes and if there is no-one there to support them, it may revert back quite quickly. So the mentor is a teacher always chosen by the student and they are present at the initial interview at the school before the program starts. They are encouraged to support the student, touching base with the student a couple of times a week. We fax the mentor every second week with the student's goals and progress and things that they might want to talk to them about — behaviour models or just what they cooked for lunch. A whole variety of things: what they've done, whether they've been working really well with the kids in the special school or any other issues that may arise. They pick male and female mentors about equally. They seem to go for the active ones, the PE staff always score very highly.

*So are teachers flattered when they are picked?*

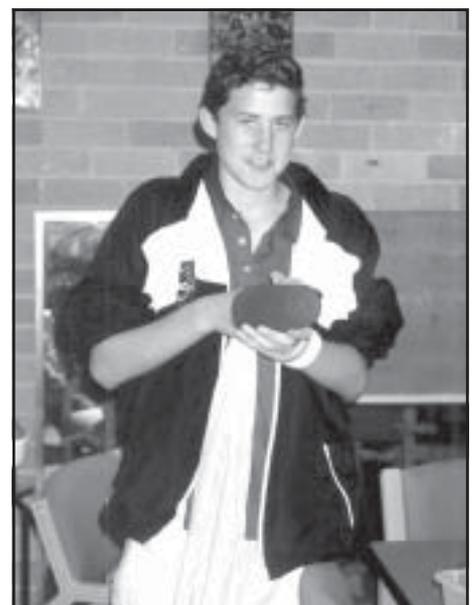
*Richard:* I think some are and some are a bit bemused. Quite often the student picks them and the teacher might say, 'Why did they pick me? I always have trouble with him.' So, yes, some are flattered, some are a little puzzled.



*Ashley helping in the classroom at Beverley Park Special School.*



*Joel working as a teacher's aide.*



*Anthony helping with washing-up as part of the lunch program.*



*Ashley overcoming his fear of heights on the high ropes course at Wooglemai Environmental Education Centre (with a little help from Nicky and Jillian).*

*There have only been three students in the two-and-a-half years who have had to seek alternate placement.*

*And the mentor's job is to contact them twice a week, get the fax report. What else is their job once this is done?*

*Jill:* We ask the mentors to report back to us on any incidents that have happened with the student — positive or negative — during the week. During the sessions we confront the students with their behaviour from the previous week, and having this up-to-date information allows us to incorporate this into the session. After all, reliving a situation that has actually happened is much more valuable than a role play. The mentor also spends a whole day with us. Half of that day is spent completing a 'high ropes' course with their student in which they work as a partnership to check each other's safety and complete that course. Then Richard works with the mentor for about an hour explaining about the program in more detail. This usually takes place halfway through the program. He also explains the approaches that we've taken and, in the afternoon session, the student works with their mentor in a one-to-one situation completing a work book which consolidates the approaches we've taken. In that session the student explains to the mentor all the buzz words and the approaches. Having the mentor work with Richard is really in case the student is not articulating this clearly, but we try to make it so that the student believes that they are the one giving the input back to their teacher.

*And how do you evaluate the program?*

*Jill:* We have parent, student and teacher surveys that we send out at the conclusion of the program so that we have some feedback not only from the schools, but the parents too. Have they noticed any changes at home, or any changes that the schools been reporting to them? We also look at pre- and post-suspension records at District Office.

*And what do you find?*

*Jill:* We have had some great results with those, whether that's because the program or the school has become more tolerant and understanding of the child's needs or a combination of factors. There have only been three students in the two-and-a-half years who have had to seek alternate placement.

*Do you get feedback from teachers?*

*Jill:* Yes, we do a number of interviews with the teachers throughout the program, talking to them about specific concerns. Part of it is for us to identify the kinds of issues that are coming out in the classroom — what the teachers see as the issues — and part of it is to give them feedback on what we have found has worked or exacerbated the problem. As we said, we are pushing the kids' buttons, trying to make them react, but a result of that is that we see what brings them down, what escalates the behaviour, what kind of strategies seem to be working, what type of strategies work in the short-term but have a short shelf-life, that kind of thing.

*You make a video, too. Could you tell me about this?*

*Richard:* We make a video of each student as we go through the program. On the first day that they attend I'll do an interview with them, asking them what they understand about the program, what kind of students are targeted, what kind of issues the other students have identified that they have. I then ask them why they think that they've been targeted, what kind of issues have caused the school to, say, target them, how they feel about that, whether they think that those issues are valid or not. Sometimes they don't think they need to be there.

So, that will be the initial interview. Then about halfway through the program they'll do an interview explaining some of the things they've been learning, maybe recounting something that has gone on in the school and how they have dealt with it differently. Talking about some of the buzz words,

some of the models that we've used, maybe some of their goal setting and what has been involved and what they've had successes with, what they've found frustrating. At the end of the program they'll do a final interview saying what they think they have achieved, what they think still needs to be worked on. Interspersed throughout the video, in between those interviews, will be footage of them working in the school, or preparing lunch or on an outing, maybe an impromptu interview about something that is going on.

At the end of the program we go back into the school and we have a screening with any of the teachers that they'd like to invite along. Their Year Adviser is usually there, sometimes other executive members of staff like to come along, and I guess it's a way of tying what they've been doing and their experiences back into the school, showing the teachers the processes they've been going through. And also letting the student know that the teachers know what they've been doing. It puts a little bit more pressure on the student to live up to some of those expectations and some of the goals they've set for themselves.

*Do a lot of teachers get asked?*

*Jill:* It depends on the student. A lot of them don't have a great rapport with their teachers. Often that means the numbers are down, but we still encourage them. In the final couple of weeks we let them know that this is coming up and try and encourage them to ask their teachers to come along, and to talk about the reasons why we think that it's important. And also how we think it will benefit them.

*How does the invitation happen?*

*Richard:* The student can go and invite people. The mentor will be the contact person who organises a room and a TV and video, as the mentor is talking to the student all the time. When we fax the mentor we'll mention it to them that this is something that is coming up, something the student needs to think about, that the student might be a bit apprehensive about and that they might need to give a bit of a prod or a push along. Bring to the forefront of their mind why they are actually at school.

*What are your feelings about the process, and about your relationship with the students?*

*Jill:* Well, watching the videos with the student and their teachers allows us to communicate to the school the experiences that the student has gone through. It's also a reminder of how far they have come in taking ownership of their behaviour and making changes to their thinking, actions and outcomes. The video enables teachers to see a more positive side of the student. Teachers often comment that they are amazed at the achievement, effort and honesty shown by the students. As a teacher who has worked with the student for the fourteen weeks you feel a sense of celebration and pride in them for what they have achieved. At the same time there is some sadness as you know that this is your last formal contact with the student.

*Richard:* In some ways showing the video is exciting, a bit like pushing the fledgling out of the nest to see if it can fly. It can be rewarding to see how far they have come in taking ownership for and addressing the issues that have brought them to our attention. It's also a little sad in that you spend fourteen weeks building a rapport with the students in order to have an effective relationship with them and as you see that relationship blossom it becomes time to withdraw and start afresh with a new group of students. As an ISTB we don't often get the same kind of opportunities as regular classroom teachers to develop close relationships with our students. The Park Program allows us this to some degree, and so I guess we go through similar emotions to regular classroom teachers at the end of the school year.



*Everybody hard at work. Well, almost everybody!*

*As a teacher who has worked with the student for the fourteen weeks you feel a sense of celebration and pride in them for what they have achieved.*

Jill Rodney and Richard Lake are Itinerant Support Teachers, Behaviour, in the Campbelltown District. They can be contacted on (02) 4627 2096.

# The SCOPE Program for Boys

*Terry Quong*

**Berry Springs School, near Darwin, NT, has developed its own unique program for the development of boys' self-esteem. Called the SCOPE program — Special Children Offered Positive Experiences — it is based on the educational philosophies of Glasser and Kemmis, as well as having a significant input from the staff.**

Berry Springs School, on the Cox Peninsula about 60 km from Darwin, caters for students from pre-school to Year 7. We have about 240 students, of whom about 20% are Indigenous pupils. In order to improve the self-esteem, learning environment and educational outcomes of the boy students, I developed a program that is enhancing the achievement of our boys. The SCOPE Boys' Program caters for twenty-four boys and is conducted as a withdrawal program once a week.

There are seven fundamental beliefs behind the SCOPE program. These are:

1. That clear differences exist between the way some boys and girls learn.
2. In general, boys do less well at school than girls, particularly in literacy and numeracy. They also get into trouble more often than girls.
3. Some boys do not have any positive male role models in their lives.
4. For some boys, effective learning can require higher levels of energy, movement and physical contact.
5. Some boys lack self-esteem and, together with their high energy levels, can result in their acting in inappropriate ways. They can become bullies, victims or simply disruptive and 'off-task'.
6. Classroom teachers who are working with large numbers of students at once need support when teaching some of the boys in their class.
7. Building resilience in boys is not something that happens by chance: someone has to make it happen. Explicit teaching of resilience is essential.

## Guiding Philosophies

There are three educational philosophies which guided the development of the SCOPE program: choice theory; action learning; and valuing differences. The first and most important of these theories is Dr William Glasser's Control, or Choice, Theory. In his 1998 book *Choice Theory in the Classroom*, Glasser outlined five basic needs which we all have. These, in order of priority, are: survival; love and belonging; personal power; fun and enjoyment; and freedom.

Assigning 'survival' as a level one priority and 'freedom' level five, we try to help the participating boys attain level five — freedom — at school. Most importantly, we believe that boys at risk (that is, disruptive boys and boys who are failing in the regular classroom) are at level one — survival — and are not doing very well at all. Level five is reached when boys become independent learners, free from barriers to learning (such as low self-esteem) and able to freely communicate with their teachers and peers.

The second theory behind SCOPE is Dr Stephen Kemmis's Action Learning. In Action Learning an ongoing cycle of Plan–Act–Reflect–Plan–Act–Reflect is established, with participation by the boys and the teachers. In the SCOPE program we emphasise our own version of this cycle, which is Look/Listen–Think–Act–Look/Listen–Think–Act.

The third theoretical base behind SCOPE is our own Valuing Differences theory. We believe that fairness only exists when everyone is treated differently. Fairness does not mean sameness. SCOPE is based on a valuing of difference, as it is recognised that each boy has his own needs. It also means that boys can quite easily cope with different sets of rules. For example, what is okay at Grandpa's house is not okay at Dad's house. Similarly, what is okay in one teacher's class may not be okay in another teacher's class. I believe that valuing differences is a basic reason for the success of the SCOPE program.

## What Is Different About This Program?

This is a boys-only program, but there are a number of reasons why SCOPE is different to many other self-esteem programs. The boys are selected for the program by their teacher, with parental approval. Each weekly session must have two parts: a quiet part and an active part (see course outline below). The boys in the program are allowed to be energetic and even to touch each other appropriately, for example, during our active session when contact games such as rock climbing are played. The program is multi-aged, and older and bigger boys are encouraged to work with younger and smaller boys. It is also multi-skilled, in that boys with better literacy and numeracy are required to help their SCOPE mates (peer learning). Importantly, being involved in SCOPE is a privilege, not a right. Boys have to earn the opportunity to be a SCOPE boy, and boys who misbehave in their regular class may be excluded as a consequence. We keep the boys' classroom teachers fully informed of absolutely everything taking place in the program and keep the teachers involved as much as possible. Finally, SCOPE Boys Rule! We promote pride in membership of the group; our SCOPE boys look after their mates in the playground and after school.



Terry Quong, was a teacher at Berry Springs School when he designed the SCOPE Boys program. He says: 'If you want any help in understanding or setting your own SCOPE program, or more background theory, send me an email at [terry.quong@latis.net.au](mailto:terry.quong@latis.net.au). I'd love to talk to you about it 'coz it really rocks! And is too deadly. (Sorry, I've been with the boys too long!)



# SCOPE Boys Program: Weekly Outline

Week #	Quiet activity	Movement activity	Main ideas
1	<b>Introduction</b> Collect kids from classes; first meeting. Discuss outcomes of the program.	<b>Stepping Stones</b> Activity based on whole team assisting each other to move over 'stepping stones' from one point to another.	Meet each other for first time; start to develop a positive group identity. Team work skills. Work as one group; do not split by ages. Older children help younger.
2	<b>Donut name tags</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have a nick name?</li> <li>• Favourite music?</li> <li>• Favourite movie, etc.?</li> <li>• Stories about when you at a donut?</li> <li>• Split group into two by age difference.</li> </ul>	<b>Brandy</b> Form group into a circle with three in the middle. The middle boys have to 'protect' the third from being hit by a soft ball or sock thrown by the people around in the circle. The 'target' cannot move. Older and younger kids together.	Establish positive team/ group image (belonging). Explore 'self' — who am I? Explore good times kids have had. Protecting each other from harm. What did it feel like in the middle?
3	<b>Buddies</b> Form into partnerships of three kids. Work on worksheet. 'What makes me feel good?' Older kids lead the younger in filling in the blanks.	<b>Brandy</b> Continued, this time with set partnerships of three (one older, two younger boys). Plan strategies for group throwing and boys protecting.	Establish partnerships with boys — 'buddies' in sets of three. To assist and protect each other during and outside the SCOPE program.
4	<b>Where I live</b> Worksheet on 'Where I live'. Issues raised include getting boys to talk about their home lives, e.g. 'stuff', toys, likes and dislikes. Where they play, where they go to be alone, where they are sent to when they are in trouble, etc.	<b>Shoeing horses</b> Two chairs; seven plastic cups; two blindfolds. Aim is to put a 'shoe' on each foot of the 'horse' before your opponent. Cups can be pinched from the other horse if not being held. Team members can shout advice.	Learning about each other outside school. Developing notion of 'different rules' for different places (school, home, shopping centres, grandparents' place, etc.).
5	<b>Where I live (2)</b> Worksheet on 'Where I live'. Issues raised include: getting boys to talk about their home lives, e.g. 'stuff', toys, likes and dislikes. Where they play, where they go to be alone, where they are sent to when they are in trouble, etc.	<b>Degree of difficulty Shooting for goals</b> Students in teams have to roll a ball through two markers on the ground to a catcher. The angle of throwing becomes more acute, thus, increasing difficulty.	What is an appropriate response when things get harder? When things are easy it's good . . . but as they get harder what do you do? What do 'silly' kids do? What do you do to help?
6	<b>The soccer match</b> Practice for soccer against another local primary school.	<b>Soccer training</b> Team work with older and younger boys.	Rule: Three passes must be made between boys before someone can shoot for goal.
7	<b>The soccer match</b> Excursion to other school for SCOPE boys' soccer game.	<b>Soccer</b> Play soccer against another school.	Non-competitive (big boys and young boys play together) shared experiences. Meet other boys at another school.
8	<b>Bullies and bullying behaviour</b> Where does bullying happen around the school? Who does the bullying?	<b>Baking mini-cakes</b> Students in teams make small cakes. Clean up. (Need to start activity at beginning of period — discuss bullying during baking time.)	Why do kids get picked on? What's cool and what's not? Making cakes is not stupid. Working in teams is cool. Get video segment of the 'cool' cooking dude.
9	<b>The best way to say no! (1)</b> Boys practise assertive behaviour. Role play situations. Demonstrate to other boys how to say no.	<b>Duster hockey</b> Hockey using a blackboard duster in the classroom.	Explicit assertiveness training focusing on 1. Saying no without being rude. 2. Saying no is okay! 3. Saying no to friends. 4. Saying no to teachers and parents.
10	<b>The best way to say no! (2)</b> Boys practise assertive behaviour. Role play situations. Demonstrate to other boys how to say no.	<b>Climbing the webrope 'wall'</b> Boys have to climb a wall of rope webbing. Boys are linked together so they have to assist each other over the wall. Cannot do it alone.	Saying no continued. Focus on team work.

11	<p><b>Plan and conduct a whole school disco at lunchtime</b> Brainstorming ideas for the disco. What do we need to do to get ready and to make it awesome?</p>	<p><b>Prepare posters and decorations</b> Visit GP Room, plan and clean up area ready for the SCOPE boys' disco. A planning activity that will build identity as a group. The SCOPE boys' disco! Focus on collaboration and generating ideas for the disco.</p>	<p>A planning activity. That will build identity as a group. The SCOPE boys' disco! Focus on collaboration and generating ideas for the disco.</p>
12	<p><b>Plan and prepare for Disco Dance Competition</b> Boys form dance groups and practise a set dance (e.g. Nutbush City Limits, Bus Stop)</p>	<p><b>Dancing</b> Boys learn to do a dance for the SCOPE boys' dance competition.</p>	<p>Working together. Brain-gym crossing overs (dance routines). Self-esteem. Building group identity.</p>
13	<p><b>Orientation run around the school.</b> What is an orientation run? Why work in pairs? Practising writing tasks (recording on run).</p>	<p><b>Orientation run</b> In pairs boys follow 'chalk' arrows around the school. At set points boys have to record where they are in their best writing. Point awarded for time and for writing and readability. Staggered time start for pairs of boys.</p>	<p>Working together to follow a series of linear steps. Working in pairs on tasks. Collaboratively working towards specific outcomes.</p>
14	<p><b>You can't play with us (1)</b> What do you do when kids exclude you from a game or keep secrets from you? Role playing both 'good' and 'bad' responses. Assertiveness training. Bullying/victim.</p>	<p><b>Basketball court Pac-man</b> Boys can only walk on marked lines — no running — while two boys are the Pac-men and have to chase them. When 'eaten' the boys are 'out' and have to stand in the centre.</p>	<p>Explicit teaching skills to deal with exclusion (bullying). Explicit teaching that exclusion is bullying and unacceptable. Boys who are Pac-men must work together and plan their moves.</p>
15	<p><b>You can't play with us (2)</b> What do you do when kids exclude you from a game or keep secrets from you? Continued.</p>	<p><b>Basketball court Pac-man</b> Boys can only walk on marked lines — no running — while two boys are the Pac-men and have to chase them. When 'eaten' the boys are 'out' and have to stand in the centre.</p>	<p>Explicit teaching skills to deal with exclusion (bullying). Explicit teaching that exclusion is bullying and unacceptable. Boys who are Pac-men must work together and plan their moves.</p>
16	<p><b>Using the Internet</b> Working in pairs explore and enjoy various pre-selected Internet sites for boys.</p>	<p><b>Computer games</b> Boys set up to play computer games in pairs. Games include 'shooting Star Wars-type games'.</p>	<p>Explicit teaching of computer skills. Working in pairs and collaborating (sharing turns, etc.). Reading and spelling.</p>
17	<p><b>Look them in the eye</b> Looking at someone when you talk to them. Role play of situations, boys have to say a prepared statement while looking the other person in the eye.</p>	<p><b>Soccer shoot</b> A 'D' is drawn on the court, and a goal set up using hats. From various points around the 'D' boys get to try to kick a ball through the goal.</p>	<p>Explicit teaching of skills in building self-confidence and communication. Awareness of body language. Focus on 'being rude', 'being a victim'.</p>
18	<p><b>Winning and losing</b> What do you say when someone gives you a compliment? What do you say when you have come second?</p>	<p><b>Brandy</b> Form group into a circle with three in the middle. Two of the middle have to 'protect' the third from being hit by a soft ball or sock thrown by the people around in the circle. The 'target' cannot move.</p>	<p>Explicit teaching of dealing with compliments and with losing. Focus on boys helping each other to discover the best response. What makes them feel embarrassed? What makes them feel okay? Older and younger kids work together.</p>
19	<p><b>Rock climbing</b> Working in pairs. Trusting and taking unnecessary risks.</p>	<p><b>Rock climbing</b> One by one stand on desk, close eyes and falls backwards to be caught by group of boys, building trust in group.</p>	<p>Focus on building self-esteem and trust in colleagues.</p>
20	<p><b>Rock climbing</b> Excursion to site for supervised rock climbing activity.</p>	<p><b>Rock climbing</b> Excursion to site for supervised rock climbing activity.</p>	<p>Working in close and trusting teams/pairs. Taking responsibility. Self-esteem.</p>

# Bulletin Board Section

## Local Benchmarking Is Revealing

In previous Boys in Schools Bulletins, articles have featured national and international statistics about the academic and social progress of boys. These statistics have highlighted the on-going difficulties many boys are facing. Some commentators have characterised the issue of educating boys as only of concern in certain communities, such as low socio-economic groups or Indigenous communities.

The following statistics collected by one selective state high school show the importance of collecting your own local statistics if schools are to truly know how well their boys are doing. Local information can assist each school to develop programs to meet the needs of the particular boys attending their school. As this school data shows, boys' issues are not confined to specific social, cultural or economic groups.

Merewether High School is a selective academic high school in Newcastle, NSW. At the Annual Presentation Day held in December 2001, awards were presented to students for outstanding achievement across subject areas as well as in activity/hobby areas such as chess and service to the school community.

Overall Academic Excellence Certificates were presented to those students who gained marks in the top 10% of their year. While both boys and girls were represented at each level, and both boys and girls at this school generally perform well above state averages, the pattern of results was clear.

### Overall Academic Excellence Certificates

YEAR	No. Boys	No. Girls
7	5	18
8	2	19
9	1	15
10	2	15
11	4	15
12	5	15

## Book Review

by Jack Hartman

### Alex Jackson: Grommet, by Pat Flynn, University of Queensland Press

The book that I am reviewing is called *Alex Jackson: Grommet*. I am also going to review the teacher's support material which accompanies the book.

This book is about a teenage boy in Year 8 called Alex Jackson. Up until the time of the story Alex's life has been all about skating. Nothing else has ever come between him and his skating before, but these days things have changed. Caught up in the whirlwind of teen angst, Alex is trying to figure out all he can about love, girls, family, being popular, dealing with bullies and — above all else — the need to be cool.

I believe that all teenagers in Year 8 would really enjoy this book because it deals with a lot of the issues in life that they would be dealing with, and be dealing with for a few more years to come. The book also conveys these messages of life in a realistic, interesting and enjoyable way.

The teachers' materials that accompany the book are aimed at students in Year 8. The main sections are divided into topic titles such as, 'Do you get it?', 'What's it mean?', as well as listening and vocabulary. All these sections of work are interesting and would be challenging to Year 8 students; they test how much of the book the reader took in and whether or not they identified with the major themes.

The section that I think is most fun is 'Have your say' because it allows the reader to convey their thoughts about Alex and the book. This is also very useful because it helps you to think about the book and, therefore, understand the main messages in growing up. Boys would particularly like this part because it gives them a chance to say what they really think, and boys like to be able to give their opinions. Most book reviews in Year 8 ask you to give both sides of the story rather than your own opinion.

I would recommend this book to all Year 8 students, boys and girls. I find that girls are not as fussy about what they like to read as boys are, but they would like to hear what a teenage boy thinks. Year 8 boys need to really like what they read before they get into it, so they would like it because of the main character. Every Year 8 boy would want to be like him because he can skate like no other and the hottest girl in Year 8 likes him. I, myself, would like to have studied this in school just because I could relate to the main character, Alex, and I found the support materials interesting.



This book was reviewed by Jack Hartman, 19-year-old high school dropout, who found girls more interesting than school but now lives with his girlfriend in Newcastle and attends the University of Newcastle.

# Strengths Cards for Kids

*Reviewed by Simone Silberberg*



St Lukes Innovative Resources have a wonderful range of materials for professionals working with children and families. One of my favourite resources from their range is the *Strengths Cards for Kids*, which is a set of forty very colourful cards. Each card consists of a strengths statement and a large, full colour picture of an animal or animals depicting the strength in question. All of the strength statements start with 'I . . .'. For example, 'I am good at sports', 'I am good at making things' and, 'I have a lot of energy'.

The *Strength Cards for Kids* are ideal for building self-esteem, discovering buried strengths and mobilising strengths to tackle problems. They can be particularly useful in work with boys. I have found the best way to get boys to talk about themselves and their family is to actively do something with them. I will introduce the cards as a game and spread them out on the floor. After they have had an opportunity to look through the cards, I usually start by asking them to pick a card that shows one of their strengths. Then I will ask them to tell me of an occasion when they used that strength. If I am working with a group of boys, I may also ask them to pick a card for the boy sitting next to them and to give an example of a time when that boy displayed that strength. I also use the cards when boys are tackling a particular problem by asking them, 'Which strengths do you usually use to get you through difficult times?'

Each activity works towards discovering and acknowledging the strengths in the person, and opens conversation on how those strengths can be used in areas of struggle. The cards are a useful resource to actively engage boys in this process — and a lot of fun too.

***Strengths Cards for Kids*** can be purchased from St Lukes through the following contacts:

Phone: (03) 5442 0500

Email: [stlukeir@stlukes.org.au](mailto:stlukeir@stlukes.org.au)

Web: [www.stlukes.org.au](http://www.stlukes.org.au)

The price is \$48.95 for a set of 40 cards an includes a booklet of suggestions.

## Nuts and Bolts: Setting boys up for a cycle of success

*Stephen Gaul*

Within the curriculum for Year 8 at Maitland Grossmann High School we have a line called Options. In this line students are rotated to a new subject each term. These subjects include Keyboarding Skills, Drama, Language and two classes organised around gender. An all-girls class with is taught by the Head Teacher English, and the Head Teacher Personal Development, Health, Physical Education is teaching a class of boys. The classes are run during one forty-minute single period and an eighty-minute double period. The boys' class complete a program of work designed to meet some of their academic and social needs by organising activities that will hopefully interest and engage the boys in their schoolwork. The term is divided into three three-week topics designed to teach the boys that they can succeed in school if things are presented to them in a way that suits their learning styles and interests.

'Knot That' is a unit that teaches the boys the appropriate knots and techniques for tying a load down on a trailer and building a rope bridge. Most of this work is completed outside the classroom with the boys enthusiastically participating in the activities. The tasks undertaken are designed so the boys experience success of some description. Achieving promotes enthusiasm and interest. It is most important that the boys achieve some kind of success in what they are doing. Success, like failure, can become a cycle, so achieving becomes a focal point of the activities.

In the topic 'Staying in Control' the boys look at anger management. The triggers of their anger, with possible reducers and distracters for them to help stay in control, are explored. This is also a three-week unit, with most of the work completed using Freerk Ykema's 'Rock and Water' program. Again the emphasis is for the boys to experience success in their activities.

In the final unit, 'Reading Between the Lines', literacy skills and interest in reading is the main focus. Concentration games and recalling activities are used to develop comprehension skills. There are also three male guest speakers from the community coming to address the boys. The speakers talk about literacy in their work and their leisure time. They also provide a piece of writing that interests them and we go through that piece with the boys in class team-teaching the group.

The boys are encouraged to 'deliberately try to succeed' because, quite often, they deliberately try to fail. With this success comes an improvement in self-esteem. School also becomes a place where they can find interest and success. If we continually set the boys up to fail, they will learn this behaviour and it is a difficult cycle to break out of. Success brings confidence, confidence brings with it improved effort which, in turn, brings success and a new cycle is established.



Stephen Gaul is a teacher at Maitland Grossman High School, East Maitland, NSW. He can be contacted on (02) 4934 2066.

# Dads and Sons Website

The poor academic achievements of boys in the United Kingdom has been the subject of debate and research for some time (see *Boys in Schools Bulletin*, vol 4 no 3 2001 p.27 for a summary of their National Curriculum Assessment). As this web page attests, the UK Department for Education and Skills attempting to enlist fathers and sports stars to motivate boys to do well.

To visit the website, log on to the following address:  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dadsandsons>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Dads & Sons' website. At the top left is the 'department for education and skills' logo. At the top right is the 'Parents' Centre' logo. The main header features the 'Dads & Sons' title with a 'a winning team' tagline. Navigation links include 'LINKS', 'QUESTIONS', and 'JARGON BUSTER'. A secondary navigation bar lists 'HOME', 'ENGLISH', 'MATHS', 'SCIENCE', 'HISTORY', and 'GEOGRAPHY'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'WHY DADS & SONS?' and contains a paragraph of text about the website's purpose, accompanied by a small image of a magazine cover. The right column is titled 'WIN!' and features a 'Competitions' banner. Below this, it lists 'Tickets to the F.A. cup Final' and 'A Pontin's Family holiday'. A quote from 'JOHN MOTSON, BBC Commentator' is displayed next to a small photo of him. At the bottom left, there is a 'Message from Ivan Lewis MP, Minister for Young People and Learning' with a small portrait of him and the beginning of his message.

department for education and skills

Parents' Centre

# Dads & Sons

a winning team

LINKS QUESTIONS JARGON BUSTER

HOME ENGLISH MATHS SCIENCE HISTORY GEOGRAPHY

## WHY DADS & SONS?

This website gives you some advice and ideas on how you can get involved with your 11-14 year old son's education, and what you can do to help him get on. The most important thing is for him to see that you believe his education is important. If he sees that, it will make him value it more as well, and he'll start to get more out of school. To find out more about the Dads and Sons campaign, and about education in general, take a look through this website with your son, and see how much both of you can learn. There are two great competitions to enter- win [FA Cup Tickets](#) and [a family holiday from Pontin's!](#)



## WIN!

**Competitions**

[Tickets to the F.A. cup Final](#)  
[A Pontin's Family holiday](#)

**JOHN MOTSON**  
BBC Commentator

“ Work often seems to take over our lives and I know how difficult it can be to make time to be with your kids. But it's really important and can make such a difference to your lad's development. He'll appreciate your interest and support - and you'll find it rewarding to. ”

**Message from Ivan Lewis MP**  
Minister for Young People and Learning

You've got a son aged 11-14 at school, you'll know their life is challenges right now. Secondary school's different. There's the new homework. And they're growing up fast. All this new-found

# Go-Kart Kids: Blending Competition and Responsibility in Year 8

*Jonathon Doyle*

St Edmund's College, Canberra, is a Christian Brothers College with approximately 1200 boys in Years 4–12. I was given a Year 8 class at the start of this year and I was keen to try and create some positive results. The boys can be challenging at times as it's a large class of mixed ability drawn from both rural and urban areas. Part of our mission at the school is to be non-selective in our enrolments, which means we can get a chance to work with some boys who need a lot of care. I had done a lot of reading over the break about creating teams. Personally I had always been a bit of a 'lone-ranger' but I was prepared to try creating teams.

I split the class alphabetically into three groups and told them that the winning team would be going go-karting at the end of the term. I then began to award (and deduct) points for all the areas of the class life: uniform, punctuality, homework, assignments and numerous other areas. The change was almost instant and the boys began to take a new type of control over the room and the types of behaviours that were taking place.

I created a simple spreadsheet on Microsoft Excel that allowed me to take an overhead to class every lesson to show them exactly where they stood at any time in the term. I kept the paper copy next to me and could add or remove points from a student at any time. I would take the sheet back to my desk at the end of the day and add the new information to the spreadsheet. This part of the process was important, I wanted the record keeping to be very simple and useable. (I still enjoy the moment of hushed intensity as I turn the overhead on and they squint to see their team score!) I also created a column that tracked each student's individual contribution to the team. This allowed each of the boys to see where they stood and allowed members of a team to be aware of who was contributing and who was holding them back. This was not meant to make anyone uncomfortable but allowed people to have a 'quiet word' with their team mates about their motivation levels.

After a while the room began to ring with the cry of, 'How many points is [— —] worth'. I accept that it is not perfect in that ultimately we want the boys to be self-motivated but, like most teachers, when we find something that seems to get them involved, then I push it to see how far it can go.

At least a couple of students failed to engage and had begun to impact their team negatively. After a couple of warnings I removed them from the team and went back to our traditional discipline

structures with them. The team had begun to realise that they were losing any chance to win because of a small few and expressed their anger about it. It seemed a further indication that they were committed to the project. A strange thing happened, however, after I removed them. The behaviour of those students taken out of the team began to change and they appeared to want to recommit to the process.

The cost of taking the winning team go-karting was another challenge. A good session for the whole group cost about \$200. I was aware that taking boys go-karting was not likely to be part of our excursions budget so I started thinking again. We came up with a simple idea. We got the canteen manager to agree to a \$40 canteen voucher as a prize and had a raffle. The boys in the teams then competed to draw up the best advertisements and tickets, which won them more points for their team. They then collated the tickets and I gave them ten each to sell and a plastic money bag. They had to sell ten tickets each and return the stubs and money to me for the draw. Selling their ten gave them more points and they took a positive ownership of the process. Again, my key concern was simplicity as I did not want to carry the whole thing myself. It is amazing what can happen when you give boys responsibility. They took charge of the process and all I really had to do was encourage them and keep the goal in front of them. Most of the tickets have been sold here on campus and we will do the draw at an assembly where we can tell the school about the program.

I would have to say that it is a guinea pig run. I teach six different classes across the school and I am trialing it in one; if it works I might try something similar in others. The positives are the ways in which the boys engage and give endless suggestions, usually on new ways to get points! They are keen to be given new and wider ranging responsibilities and maybe we haven't been giving them enough. I feel that they love the chance to compete, to see progress in scores and to try and win. How many times have you seen boys racing to be first to your class because they know they will get five points, or be afraid of coming last because they might lose them? The final stage is to take the video camera with us when we go go-karting, so that if I run it again I can show new classes a taste of the end result. To be honest, I'm a little excited! I'm excited because they seem to like coming to class and because I haven't been go-karting since I was their age . . . someone has to go with them!

Jonathan Doyle is a teacher at St Edmund's College, a Christian Brothers College in Canberra.

# Professional Development for Educators

Available through the Boys in Schools Program, Family Action Centre, the University of Newcastle

## Boys in Schools Program

How can we get the best for our boys and from our boys?

Parents, teachers and schools all over Australia are grappling with the issues of how best to educate boys. Boys' low levels of literacy, poor academic achievement, aggression and harmful risk-taking are seen as serious problems in our community.

Would you like to know: how to fully engage boys in classroom learning; how to help boys use all of their intelligences; how to bring out the best behaviour in boys and develop their self-confidence; or what a boy-friendly school might be like?

The Boys in Schools Program offers a strengths approach to engaging boys, individually and in groups, that recognises the importance of male identity and uses the potential resources of energy, humour and safe risk-taking that boys and older males are likely to bring to any situation. The program offers knowledge and skills development in educating boys for professionals and parents across Australia through workshops, seminars, training programs, postgraduate courses and publications.

## The 2002 Boys in Schools Seminar Program

The Boys in Schools Program of the Family Action Centre is holding a series of one-day seminars in rural and urban centres throughout Australia in 2002. Topics will include:

### ***Boys in schools:***

The big issues — engagement, literacy and behaviour

### ***Engaging fathers in your schools and services***

for the benefit of all

### ***The peer group in the middle school:***

Working with boys so their peer groups can support emotional and academic well-being

Seminars are held from 9.00am to 4.00pm with lunch provided. Cost is \$110.00 (inc. GST)

## Specialised Boys in Schools Workshops

The Boys in Schools Program offers tailor-made professional development workshops for education staff on a local school, cluster or district basis. You can contact us with your particular professional development needs in educating boys. We offer reasonable rates for whole-day and half-day professional development workshops.

Presenter fees are negotiable and in the range of \$1,500 per day plus GST. Travel expenses include economy air fares or hire car rates, mid-range hotel accommodation and meals.

Fees include negotiated content and times to suit your individual needs, quality presentations by leaders in the field of boys' education, and a copy of workshop notes booklet for each participant.

## Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Specialising in Educating Boys)

A practical course for educators wanting to develop knowledge and skills in educating boys. The program is offered through the Faculty of Education, University of Newcastle. The graduate certificate offers four courses that can be studied over one or two years. Topics covered include: an introduction to educating boys; the academic and social needs of boys; pedagogical issues; and organisational and structural issues in educating boys. Fees are \$700.00 per course and are a legitimate tax deduction.

## Coming in 2003

Master in Educational Studies (Specialising in Educating Boys)

## Designing and Implementing Programs for Boys

*Presented by Rollo Browne*

What makes programs work? How do we get skills to stick? What are the key elements, useful processes, activities and strategies to use with boys? This workshop has a practical focus on working with boys in schools towards social outcomes. We will examine:

- How to design and run programs for boys
- What's in it for boys? Revealing the need for change
- A framework for thinking about boys' programs
- Key elements of effective boys' programs, including
  - Engagement
  - Group work
  - Use of action methods
- Selecting appropriate topics
- Practical activities and strategies
- Approaches to building social skills

This is a two to three-hour program with notes provided.

## Building Relationships with 'Difficult' Male Students by Observing Ourselves

*Presented by David Shores and Jackie Marlu*

The relationship between teacher and male student is recognised by many educators as critically important in a student's positive social, emotional and academic development. Much work has been done attempting to understand and remediate classroom and school situations where this relationship has broken down. Often this takes the major focus of attempting to modify or manage the behaviour of the 'difficult student'. This often provides a new start for a more positive relationship. But what happens when the relationship breaks down? What do we do when boys continue to withdraw, resist or actively and consciously work not to develop a positive relationship or change their 'difficult behaviours'? Building Relationships with 'Difficult' Male Students by Observing Ourselves has been developed specifically with such situations in mind. The workshop has been conducted extensively, over five years, in South Australian schools.

This is a one-day workshop.

## Year 9/10 Boys Program on Masculinity and Power

*Presented by Rollo Browne*

The school's male teachers run small groups of boys through a series of rotating activities. Rollo gives a keynote address, uses action methods and on power and runs activities during the morning. In the afternoon the small groups work on and present their solutions to problems such as bullying, harassment and violence. Activity sessions include Language and Sexuality, Images of Masculinity (Photolanguage or Male Photopak) and Males Coping with Pressure. Staff must run through the program prior to the day. A suitable venue, such as a library with sufficient break out rooms, is required.

This is an all-day program. Copies of teacher notes and student handouts are provided.

## Social Education Classroom Program: Developing social/emotional intelligence through an exploration of risk-taking behaviour, with a focus on boys

*Presented by David Shores*

If the Girls' Educational Strategy was very broadly about getting our female students out into work with a wider range of options, then what's the aim for Boys' Education? To get them out into the world? They're already there! I believe that the aim of Boys' Education is rather to get our boys and young men back into themselves, to develop introspection.

The Social Education Program uses young males' attraction to physical risk-taking to create an interest in, and an understanding of, our intra-personal experiences. Participants explore how these experiences can be used to create more positive relationships in the classroom. What we think, feel, do and say are connected. With practice, by observing ourselves in action, we can develop an understanding of what it means to take responsibility for our internal and external behaviours.

For further information about these exciting professional development opportunities contact:

Michelle Gifford

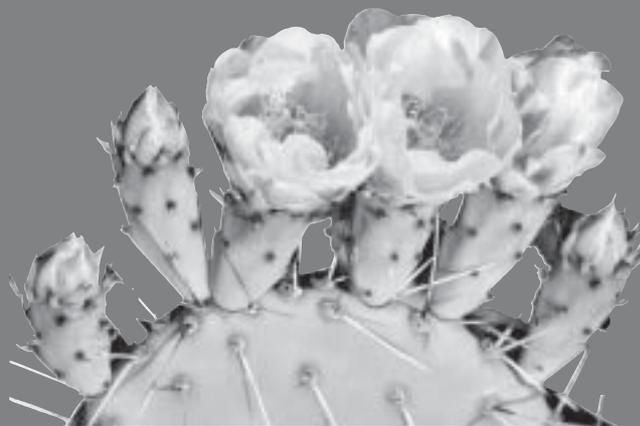
for bookings and administration

Ph: (02) 4921 8739

Email: [Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au)

Or visit our website [www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac)

# The third biennial Teaching Boys Conference: *Boys to Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships*



Sponsored by the Boys in Schools Program and the Engaging Fathers Project of the Family Action Centre, the University of Newcastle, and the NSW Department of Education and Training.

## The third biennial Teaching Boys Conference: Boys to Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships

5 pm Thursday 27 March to 4 pm Saturday 29 March 2003  
Also featuring optional pre-conference workshops  
9 am to 4 pm Thursday 27 March 2003

Plenary and keynote presentations, participant discussions and interactive workshops will showcase successful programs, school and community partnerships, innovative and practical strategies and current research.

### Conference themes:

- Engaging Boys: Building on boys' strengths in the educational process
- Boys and Literacies: Building on home, school and community partnerships
- Welfare and Behaviour: Building partnerships for developing resilience and purpose in boys

## And . . . hear the Northern Territory Boys Choir!

### Who should attend

Teachers, principals, health and welfare staff, parents, educational leaders, counsellors, youth workers, policy-makers, community and government agency staff

### Conference Manager

Tulips Meetings Management  
PO Box 116  
Salamander Bay NSW 2317  
Australia

Ph: (02) 4984 2554

Fax: (02) 4984 2755

Email: [boys@pco.com.au](mailto:boys@pco.com.au)

Conference website: [www.pco.com.au/boys2003](http://www.pco.com.au/boys2003)

### Key Dates

Registration brochure available	Late October 2002
Early-bird registrations close	20 December 2002
Optional pre-conference workshops	27 March 2003
Conference	27 to 29 March 2003

### Are you doing things that are exciting and innovative in this area?

To discuss sharing your strategies and successes with others, please contact:

Michelle Gifford

Family Action Centre

Phone: (02) 4921 8739

(international +61 2 4921 8739) or

Email: [men-and-boys@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:men-and-boys@newcastle.edu.au)

### Some of the confirmed presenters include:

**Ann Buchanan** University of Oxford Centre for Research into Parenting and Children

*Recent research linking family factors to boys' resilience and school outcomes*

**Bob Morgan** Murri Consultant and Associates, NSW

*Using the strengths of the Aboriginal community to grow fine boys into fine men*

**Ken Rigby** University of South Australia

*Effective bullying strategies to help schools tackle bullying*

**Freerk Ykema** Creator Rock and Water Program, The Netherlands

*Linking action to teaching; boys setting boundaries*

**Richard Fletcher** Family Action Centre, the University of Newcastle, NSW

*Developing a positive role for fathers in your school*

**Deborah Hartman** Boys in School Program, Family Action Centre, the University of Newcastle, NSW

*Women's role in teaching boys well*

**John Spirings** Research Strategist, Dusseldorp Schools Forum, VIC

*Pathways to growing fine men: workplace and community support for boys in schools*

To express your interest in attending and to receive a conference registration brochure in late October 2002, please complete an on-line expression of interest at [www.pco.com.au/boys2003](http://www.pco.com.au/boys2003)



# Boys in Schools Resources for Teachers

# Order Form

Title	Pub No.	Price (Inc.GST)	Quantity	Total
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (school set) – 3 copies of each issue	002S	\$95.00		
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (single) – 1 copy of each issue	970	\$45.00		
The Boys in Schools Bulletin back issues – (3 issues) – 2001 bulletins	004S	\$33.00		
The Boys in Schools Bulletin back issues – set of four – 1999 bulletins	004S	\$28.00		
Being a Man Photopak	979	\$132.00		
Boys in Schools	961	\$28.00		
Leadership in Boys' Education	992	\$33.00		
I Can Hardly Wait Till Monday	001	\$33.00		
Boyz Rulez posters	981	\$33.00		
FatherCare posters	983	\$20.00		
Male Health posters	991	\$33.00		
Boys to Men Posters	004	\$33.00		
113 Ways to Be Involved as a Father poster	006	\$11.00		
The Rock and Water Approach	002	\$45.00		
Man's World: A Game for Young Men	974UK	\$121.00		

Contact the Family Action Centre for class set prices. Please note: We can only accept Australian Dollars. All prices include postage and handling within Australia. Overseas customers: Invoices are not available outside Australia – Please add 10% for Postage.

**Total \$**

Make Cheque payable to: The Boys in Schools Program (ABN 15 736 576 735)

Contact name: \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Order no: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone no: \_\_\_\_\_

Please invoice our organisation  Enclosed is my cheque for AUD\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please debit my credit card  Bankcard  Visa  Mastercard

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of cardholder: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form to:  
 Michelle Gifford  
 Family Action Centre  
 The University of Newcastle  
 Callaghan NSW 2308  
 or fax to (02) 4921 8686

# The Rock and Water Course of the Netherlands

The Rock and Water program offers teachers, counsellors and youth workers a new way to interact with boys and girls. Through physical/social teaching, exercises are constantly linked with mental and social skills. In this way the program leads from simple self defence to boundary and communication exercises, and then to a strong notion of self-confidence. The program offers a framework of exercises and thoughts about boys and manhood to assist boys to become aware of purpose and motivation in their life.

Topics include: intuition, body language, mental power, empathic feeling, positive thinking and positive visualising. Discussion topics include bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, goals in life, desires and following one's inner compass.

## Freerk Ykema

The course was developed in the Netherlands in 1995 by Freerk Ykema. Freerk — a former Physical Education and Remedial Teacher and counsellor — wished to address motivation and self-confidence problems in primary and secondary school students. Freerk currently directs three Rock & Water Institutes in Europe and Australia. The course has been awarded the best education program targeting boys education in the Netherlands. After three tours to Australia, 900 Australian teachers have been certified to teach it. It is now practised by many schools in Australia.

## Day One

This workshop provides a survey of the entire course (with teaching materials). The emphasis is on the contents of Lessons 1, 2, 3 and 4: standing strong, the rock and water attitude in physical, mental and social context; dealing with pressure from others.

## Day Two

This workshop extends the range of exercises and topics: breathing to extend physical power and to maintain self-control; the body language of The Tunnel and of The Beach; feeling, setting and respecting your own and other people's boundaries. All lessons from 1 to 8 are practised.

## Day Three

Lessons 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are about self-realisation and so more suitable for older students. They address lack of direction, sexuality and personal development. Lessons 9 to 13 are best directed at boys only.

## National Tour Dates

13 – 15 March	Sydney	Julie Garland	(02) 4721 8330	julieg@fpahealth.org.au
18 March (intro)	Alice Springs	Lyn Hollow	(08) 8999 5757	lyn.hollow@nt.gov.au
21 – 23 March	Darwin	Lyn Hollow	(08) 8999 5757	lyn.hollow@nt.gov.au
25 – 27 March	Melbourne	Sue Van Der Veen	(03) 9758 2000	sue@sjcftg.melb.catholic.edu.au
8 – 27 April	Queensland	Gary Simpson	(07) 5568 7111	garysimpsonxx@bigpond.com
29 April – 1 May	Wodonga/Albury	Margaret Hunter	(02) 6056 1550	mhunter@uhchs.vic.gov.au
3 May (intro)	Frankston	Judy Hunter	(03) 9783 7955	jhunter@fhs.vic.edu.au
5 – 7 May	Mildura	Sandy Jardine	(03) 5023 5190 ext 206	jardine.Sandra.s@edumail.vic.gov.au
8 – 10 May	Melbourne	Sue Van Der Veen	(03) 9758 2000	sue@sjcftg.melb.catholic.edu.au
15 May (intro)	North Gosford	Michelle Gifford	(02) 4921 8739	michelle.gifford@newcastle.edu.au
16 – 18 May	Singleton	Michelle Nicholson or Michael Voorbij	(02) 6571 1199	
27 May – 7 June	Western Australia	Ralph Gurr	(08) 9409 8688	eventswa@ozemail.com.au