**Transcript – Boys will be boys**

The difference between teaching boys versus girls has fascinated educators for some time now. We know that there are over 100 physical difference in the brains of boys and girls. This suggests that boys learn in a different way than girls in the classroom.

Research has shown that boys:

* Mature slower or later than girls
* Have slower sensory data intake
* Take longer to process emotion
* Have less impulse control
* Store more trivia!

Boys learn in a gender-specific way. Knowing the way boys learn can greatly impact their success in the classroom. Let us look at some ways we can help the boys in our classrooms learn more effectively. Boys need more space, so think about this as you set up your learning centres. Make sure that areas where lots of children play are large enough to accommodate several children. Extend these areas if necessary to other parts of the room. Allow boys to move from the tables to the floor. This gives them more room to spread out. Take activities outside. All children enjoy a larger space and outside stimulation. This is a great time to teach them about the different seasons, plants and animals.

Now, let’s look at some of the physiological differences that affect how boys learn. The corpus callosum is a structure inside the brain that connects the left and right cerebral hemispheres. It facilitates communication between the two hemispheres. Boy have a smaller callosum. This may affect their ability to relay messages from one side of the brain to the other. This means that boys are often more single-task orientated than girls. They get frustrated if they have to jump from one thing to another too quickly. Here are some strategies to help:

* Give children a warning that things are about to change – play a transition song a few minutes before ‘clean up’ or give the ‘5 more minutes signal’.
* Plan larger blocks of time to complete activities.
* Provide ways for children to save their work, for example, take photos of their work before transitioning into another activity.

This will give boys the opportunity to remember their creation and maybe rebuild another time. Keep a folder to store the photos. This will help with staying organised and on-task.

Now let’s take a look at the way we process information.

Girls typically use more of the left hemisphere, whereas boys use more of the right hemisphere of the brain. The left hemisphere helps us to be more intuitive, holistic, subjective and to look at wholes, while the right hemisphere helps us to be more logical, rational, analytical, objective and to look at parts. Knowing these differences can help us to determine a better plan for teaching boys in the classroom.

Right hemisphere learners can benefit from:

* Hands-on activities – teachers should incorporate more art, visuals and music for their lessons.
* Group activities – provide more opportunities for boys to work in groups that allows them to stay engaged and motivated.
* Imagination and role playing activities – create more activities that allow boys to use their imagination.

Beef up your dramatic play area with topics that interest boys, and don’t forget the accessories – a tool belt and a measuring tape will engage boys more than just a hard hat.

Make sure a large group time is short and action packed. Use songs such as “Heads, shoulders, knees and toes” and the “Hokey pokey” to give children the opportunity to move and learn. Include finger plays and hand clapping games to help boys focus and concentrate.

Hearing can be an important factor in a child’s attention span and learning. Girls typically hear 2–4 times more effectively than boys. Boys often hear better out of one ear than the other, so try seating boys in the front of the class where they can easily hear what is being said. Provide them with many opportunities to listen to books and songs in the listening centre. Headphones block out noise and allow them to focus on the story. Use lots of visuals and movement to teach, instead of just language. Add a recipe chart showing the steps for making play-dough, or use a game of “Simon says” to teach positional words. Tap into a boy’s emotions – competition, celebration, drama; and also a natural ability to create worlds that only exist within their imaginations. For example, these boys decided to become tigers at their centres by using markers to create a dramatic effect. Use their creativity to inspire and motivate in unexpected ways.

Boys often have a unique humour that is often misunderstood and overlooked. Using this humour can help teachers make a connection. Let boys express their humour openly in a classroom. Silly books like “Walter the farting dog”, “Banned from the beach and songs like “Nobody likes me, everybody hates me”, can bring the classroom alive for boys and hold their attention like nothing else. Make sure and let them act out every gross sound and emotion.

All of these methods can result in increased rapport between teachers and boys in the pre-K classroom and make the task of learning more exiting for everyone.