

Boys' Literacy Matters

Making a Difference

Several studies have shown that mentoring is an effective strategy for improving student achievement, and, in particular, boys' academic success. Boys respond better in school when they know that there is a caring adult, parent or teacher, who shows empathic support and who communicates in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Barry MacDonald, author of **Boy Smarts** and editor of *MentoringBoys.com*, states that "kids don't care how much we (teachers and adults) know until they know how much we care." MacDonald offers the following mentoring tips for parents and teachers:

- Boys need movement. They tend to process their thoughts and emotions through action and fidgeting. When involved in a potentially tense situation, provide them with opportunities for movement—taking a walk or engaging in a minor activity. Avoid insisting that they stand or sit still.
- Boys are, by nature, more silent when it comes to expressing their feelings. Give them space and respect their silence—talking too much, insisting on eye contact and moving too close can be seen by boys as intrusive or trying too hard. Quite often boys believe that talking about their feelings is "unmanly" or "wimpy," so they are afraid of allowing themselves the chance to talk about their experiences or emotions. As a caring adult, move into this silence with him—spend time together, saying little, but listening to the subtle cues that his behaviour or body language can provide.
- When disciplining boys, provide clear and reasonable limits. Consequences should be restorative (ones that teach rather than punish), respectful, related and reliably enforced. Don't let yourself get hooked into a power struggle. Be firm, clear and composed when responding to boundary-pushing adolescents.
- Despite their "bravado," most boys are afraid of making mistakes and being humiliated. A caring adult can help them understand that making mistakes is



not a problem, but rather a necessary part of learning. Learning is restricted when the learner feels threatened or afraid. A caring adult can provide encouragement and can show that trying again and again, shows courage, self-acceptance and can lead to deeper learning.

For more tips, visit
www.MentoringBoys.com

For additional information, please contact:

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In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.

Albert Schweitzer



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic
 District School Board

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