

Female Teachers

Despite some very recent research from The UK, Australian research through ACER and other organizations has consistently shown that the gender of the teacher has no impact on boys' academic achievement. It is the relationship with the teacher that is paramount in boys' success.

Women are naturally very relationship oriented and this has a very positive impact on boys in both Primary and Secondary schools. Some educational sectors have sought exemption from Equal Opportunity guidelines to be able to advertise for male staff and in every instance this has been rejected because of this very research. We should, instead, insist that teacher training courses spend more time teaching our pre-service teachers how to establish warm, caring and firm relationships with students.

When we had a rigid discipline system based on hurting students who didn't conform, men did have the edge in terms of getting boys to work in fear of the cane or strap – but that is no longer the case and never will be again. Students are no longer in fear of getting hurt (a good thing) and we must now move forward with more humane methods of getting students to achieve using positive incentives. When a teacher (male or female) informs a student (privately) that their behaviour has caused the teacher stress and when that good relationship is present, that is when a student attempts to behave better. Discipline in terms of punishment or consequence (which is sometimes necessary) tends to manage or hold that behaviour in check but recognising positive behaviours from someone in a caring relationship changes behaviour.

There are many parents who want to see their son have a male teacher to keep them in check - forgetting that those days are gone! We should instead be valuing the amazing women that teach our sons and supporting them in every way possible. The number of male teachers is declining and will continue to decline as salaries and conditions are comparatively poor. When a boy has a male or female teacher that inspires him, he may look at teaching as a career even unknowingly into the future.

What many parents are wanting is adult males to care for their son in a masculine, affirming way - this has been lost to a great extent in Australia on a number of fronts. However, those men don't have to be teachers! We need to look at ways of society recognising the value of men and (in particular) the value of men in our boys' lives - fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers, employers, youth workers etc. This is what is lacking and we shouldn't project that need onto our education system.

When we value teachers (men and women) and value education more, we may find more men re-entering the profession. When we undervalue teachers we find boys subtly moving away from such careers. Please let's work together to ensure that all our teachers are valued and held in high esteem in our homes and in society. Only then will we see our sons (and daughters) prosper in their schooling.