

"We often see that in their own self-initiated play, boys' interests, choices and approaches to play can be different from girls'. If these interests and choices are valued and supported, boys are more likely to develop positive attitudes about themselves as learners."

Confident, capable and creative: supporting boys' achievements, DCSF 2007

The Unique Child

- Help boys to develop positive images of themselves as learners by providing engaging and purposeful learning experiences in which they can achieve success
- Listen to and observe boys to find out about their interests, ideas, preferences and learning styles
- Reflect on what you have observed and consider the best approach to inspire, challenge and support each boy
- Celebrate achievement by involving boys in documenting what they have done

Positive Relationships

- Use information from the children's main carers and from previous settings to find out what all children like to do and what is important to them
- Invite fathers and other male visitors to the setting, involving them in a range of activities, including those which may be avoided by boys
- Be more flexible, responding to individuals with interest, respect and an open mind

Enabling Environments

- Ensure that both the indoor and outdoor learning environments meet the needs of boys as well as girls
- Include themes and resources for role play areas which reflect the boys' interests, as well as the girls'
- Ensure that resources and displays reflect positive images that do not stereotype according to gender

Learning and Development

- Promote active learning, where boys become involved with people, the environment, objects and ideas, often for sustained periods
- Provide challenging opportunities, where boys can make decisions, solve problems and think critically
- Plan opportunities for boys to express their ideas in a variety of ways, e.g. through music, role-play, dance and model-making
- Ensure there is a balance between child-initiated spontaneous play and adult guided activities



Leaders and managers

- Monitor adult involvement in activities chosen by boys. Does it match their involvement in girls' chosen activities?
- Lead the team in identifying steps to overcome lower achievement of boys
- Support practitioners in reflecting on the achievement of all children in the setting

A few tips...

An interest in wheeled toys:

- set up a garage, vehicle testing centre, pizza delivery, or motor cycle couriers
- make signs and street names, parking tickets and number plates
- number the tricycles
- provide car manuals and sales brochures, books about transport, maps and atlases
- use real spanners and screw drivers to dismantle an old bike or other mechanisms
- investigate gears, including those in clocks and hand whisks
- introduce maps and mapping

An interest in building:

- provide clipboards, pens and rulers
- use hard hats and overalls
- obtain architects plans and diagrams
- display photos, posters and books about buildings, structures and tunnels
- look for shapes and patterns in buildings and other structures
- use some real bricks and cement
- set up a shop selling builders materials
- read stories such as 'The three little pigs' and explore building with different materials

An interest in Spiderman:

- have a collection of super hero toys
- have comics and annuals in the book corner
- look at real spider webs and provide further information, such as non-fiction books
- provide a range of mark-making and craft resources so that children can create representations of Spiderman and webs if they wish

Further information

Refer to Confident, capable and creative: supporting boys' achievements (DCSF 2007) for further information and case studies. For copies contact dcfs@prolog.uk.com or telephone **0845 602 2260**.

Engaging boys in the early years: the experience of three Islington settings

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/casestudies/foundation_stage/achievements/islington/islington_cs.pdf

For further information visit www.childrenscentres.org.uk
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