The Atypical Boy

Abigail Norfleeyt James, Ph.D.
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Who is the Typical Boy?

- Active
- Aggressive
- Loud
- Visual learner – not verbal learner
- Kinaesthetic approach works
  - Touches everything
- Peer oriented
- Interested in sports
- School is not a priority
Who is the Atypical Boy?

• Verbally oriented
• Passive and controlled
  – Responsive to teachers
• Nerd/Geek/Dork
  – Gamers/LARP/fantasy re-enactment
  – Asperger’s syndrome
• Loner or friends with girls
• Interested in art/drama/dance or classical music
• Either developmentally mature or immature
Dealing with his parents

• Why did they choose a boys’ school?
  – Want him to turn into a “normal” boy
    • Do not understand/approve of his interests
  – Social factors

• What can you do?
  – Help them come to terms with their son
  – Support the boy in his interests and abilities
  – Face the fact that your school may not be the right place for this boy
    • As a teacher, that is not your decision to make
The Verbal Boy

• The Problem
  – Boys’ schools curricula designed for non-verbal student
    • A particular problem in maths and science
  – This boy can become a “teacher’s pet”

• The Solution
  – Teachers need to plan curricula for all sorts of learners
    • Need to help students prepare for coed learning situation
    • Pushes staff to expand teaching approaches
  – This student will develop into more a versatile learner
The Passive Boy

• The Problem
  – Does not participate
  – Will not defend himself
  – Whines, blames others for his problems
  – Depends on parents for support

• The Solution
  – If parents are overinvolved, they need enlightenment, and child needs instruction in self-control
    • Parent group will help, good advisory/house system
  – Develop methods to help the boy participate in class
  – Encourage participation in extracurricular activities
The Nerd/Geek/Dork

• The Problem
  – Preoccupied with computer – don’t do their work
  – Socially inept – Autism spectrum? Focus of bullying
  – Contemptuous of fellow students and some teachers

• The Solution
  – Limits on computer access, use of technical skills to help self, others, and school
  – Social skills training
  – Don’t turn them into teacher’s aides, but try to get them to help other students, not their peers
  – Provide upper level courses – special sections, local tertiary school
The Loner

• The Problem
  – May have substance abuse issues
  – May be a bad fit with the rest of the school
  – May be shy
  – May have home or abuse issues
  – May be due to sexual orientation differences

• The Solution
  – Find out the issue
    • Is he shy? Drugged? New? Unprepared? Can’t keep up with the material?
  – Someone needs to step up to connect with this student
    • Likely to be someone who is “off the grid”
  – If shy, may need social skills help
  – Will need an advocate
The Artist/Actor/Dancer/Musician

• The Problem
  – Classical music not other types
  – Interests which can be seen as feminine
  – Appearance can make problems worse

• The Solution
  – Educate the school
  – Treat the pursuit of art similarly to the pursuit of sport
  – Encourage artist to participate in at least one sport
    • Swimming helps singers
    • Fencing helps actors
    • Debate helps all performers
Ahead/Behind of the Developmental Curve

• The Problem
  – Student is significantly larger or smaller than rest of class
  – Student is either academically way ahead of the rest of the class or way behind

• The Solution
  – It can be very hard for adults to respond appropriately to a child whose size is different than his peers – keep reminding them of his age
  – This student can be moved forward or held back, but it will create social issues
Welcoming all students to school

• Not all boys think or learn alike and the boy who is noticeably different may feel as if he doesn’t belong
• Society can have a rigid definition of masculinity and any behaviour which is atypical can be threatening to young boys
• Adults can be unaware of their own prejudices and pressure students to conform
• Schools can develop an “us against the world” ethos and may be perceived as closed to those who do not fit the model