Jamaica Teaching Council

Advancing the Education of Boys Programme

CREATING EQUITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

IMPROVING THE ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS OF BOYS
Creating Equity in Teaching and Learning
Improving the achievement levels of boys

The concerns for the underperformance of boys have been expressed island-wide. The results of various formal examinations provide the evidence that the education of boys is in a crisis. Approximately 2000 boys are incarcerated each year and these are the ones caught by the law. We are well aware that there are many other boys involved in illegal activities. Sustained economic recovery for Jamaica seems distant with such a large mass of wasted manpower and persons whose character undermine investment and investors. In our efforts to achieve 2030 vision, there is a renewed focus on the educational outcomes of boys. It is important to note that girls are not disadvantaged by the focus on boys and may even raise their own achievement levels above that of the boys. The schooling experience of boys should at least give them meaningful livelihood skills and an internal desire for peaceful living.

Poor Performance Issues

Boys:
Cognitive domain
- Are not able to translate what’s being taught in the classroom into the real world
- Hide from the learning environment
- Have the entrepreneurial skills
- Have to fend for themselves at an early age (they know how to make change, money skills, etc.); school becomes second place to their lives – at a certain age, they have to take care of themselves (making the change at the market)
- Are focused on other things that distract them from learning
- Short attention span
- Do not transfer or apply knowledge gained
- Often times do not see future in education

Social domain
- Have issues establishing their self-identity
- Are forced to sell items in school to survive
- Find school subjects uninteresting
- Unable to link school experience with their real world
- Do not necessarily engage themselves with academic areas that are not related to their practical fields
- Are often absent or late for school
- Do not see education as a vehicle to take them out of poverty
- Are influenced by popular culture
- Lack parental supervision
- Lack positive role models
- Respond to peer pressure
- Are underfed
- Form gangs
- Poor choice of role models
- Are not reliable in planning and executing club meetings
- Drug abuse
- Do not manage sexual urges in socially acceptable ways
  Their teachers

- Are not equipped to use real world experience in the schools
- are unwilling to adjust to the new realities
- are unable to identify the learning needs of boys and respond accordingly
- do not a sense of autonomy to make the curriculum changes needed to enable the active participation of boys in the learning experiences
- unable to find strategies that encourage the entrepreneurial spirit of boys
- do not employ methodologies that are consistent with their learning styles
- are challenged by the structure of the curriculum

Teachers’ personal perception of the boys
  - Persistent
  - Determined
  - Interesting
  - Prepared
  - Motivated to ask questions
  - Seek to gain additional information when the activity is of interest to them
  - Creative and full of new ideas
  - Apply knowledge gained and use it to help their peers
  - Not positive about themselves- have low self-worth
  - Unengaged boys appear lazy
  - Lazy- time wasters
  - Talkative
  - Disruptive

How schools have been responding
In order to stimulate boys to engage themselves with the education environment, schools have introduced various strategies. Among these are:

- Boys’ Day
  The purpose is to re-socialize boys into the meaningfulness of education. For example, resource persons address the boys
- Men’s Week
  To encourage the boys through positive male role models
- All boys classes
- Institute uniform groups – for example cadets, cubs, scouts, marching bands
- Boy friendly lesson plans
- Differential instructions
- Use of homework planner that parents sign
- Introduce a school participation contract that parents sign
As we go forward – improve the outcomes of schooling, harnessing and directing the genius in our boys

Expectation of boys

We must ask ourselves very pointed questions about our response to gender. What are our true expectations of the boys and how do these expectations influence our planning for student outcomes? One hundred and fifty-four teachers were asked to give one word that would describe the boys that they taught. Only one teacher had a positive word. In the perception of the teachers the boys were difficult and did not care to learn. Is this really true or is it the fallacy of a disabling provision of education? Evidence shows that boys will learn if they are taught using engaging approaches and the goals of education are meaningful in their contexts. Success therefore demands that the teacher interprets and delivers the curriculum using gender sensitive approaches.

Enabling productive learning environments

- Technical and vocational areas should be varied and meaningful. The school must be alert to opportunities for income earning the school community. For example, a school located in large agricultural areas, banana growing areas; sugar cane, yams, coconuts, etc. should explore by-products. Information technology offers a wide range of areas for training and entrepreneurship. The school should work at identifying non-traditional income generating areas in various sectors of society. A number of areas are listed in the boys Journal.

Collaboration among teachers (taking opportunities of QECs)

- Teachers working with their peers should be planned and not left to chance. Staff planning time is absolutely necessary in order to ensure meaningful classes. Members of staff have various strengths and they should use their strengths to improve the teaching and learning environment. Teachers working together are able to integrate learning through relevant experiences. For example, Students who are constructing furniture will undertake the mathematics related to the construction of the furniture. In science they can learn about the furniture polish, content and behavior of the substance. This will stimulate them to make their own furniture polish from available materials like mahogany and Cheney root. They can explore the plants from which they can extract colour. In English their reading writing activities would be related to the description of products, memos, satisfied or dissatisfied customers. They would see purpose in reading and writing. Teachers should take the opportunity of the Quality Education Circles (QECs) for wider sharing of experiences and for generating new ideas.
Organization of classes

- Group structure: boys play team games; hence the group structure is normal for them. In their classes, group work should be organized and encouraged; however, the groups should be small with defined responsibilities. Group grades should also be awarded. The project approach or STEM approach would facilitate group organization.

- Promoting Meaningful Interrelationships

The proud teacher boasted that her highest performing student in Home Economics graduated as a medical doctor. At high school she had sessions in which all the related professions were demonstrated or simulated. The diabetic patient needed the dietician. The chef learnt the art and science of cooking. The sportsman needed to build his body. The medical doctor needed to know when the patient needed a dietician. This interrelationship enabled students to see livelihood possibilities in the pursuit of home economics. Therefore her classes comprised equal numbers of boys and girls. The students were all round high performers.

Organization of classes by gender could facilitate more learning for boys, particularly in the academic subjects. When boys are by themselves, then they normally engage more with the learning environment as they do not feel threatened by the girls. The teacher is also able to focus and utilize the natural characteristics of boys, for example competitiveness and love of music and drama, and plan their lessons accordingly. Some schools in Phase 1 of the programme initiated the single sex classes. In general they pointed to the resentment of parents and the boys themselves when the idea is mooted. Their response was rooted in the homophobic concerns. The principals supported their decisions through negotiating with parents and reminding them that if they were given the opportunity to
send their boys to one of the boys’ schools, they would gladly grasp it. Once the school passed this initial hurdle, they reported improvements in the performance of boys. It was noted that teachers had to be carefully selected for the boys’ classes. To start with they should perceive the boys positively.

**Identity formation** - many of our boys are uncertain about their own identities. The questions concerning the self, needs to be answered as they grow up. The dominance of females in some boys’ lives and the absence of satisfactory male role models could contribute to an identity crisis. The school programmes need to assist boys in responding to questions such as I am I? Where am I going? What does society expects of me? How can I measure up to the demands? How do I feel about myself?

**Enabling school leadership** - *If they walk do not out through the front door of school, they will come in through the back door of our homes.*

An effective school leader runs a school in which no one fails. Each student will leave school with at least a certificate informing of his or her competencies and capabilities. During the school life of the student, the school would have identified the interest of the said student and learning would be optimal. An effective school leader must have:

(a) a guiding philosophy that sees value in everyone committed to equity
(b) a conscience that says, “I cannot fail this student”
(c) a feeling of accountability
(d) a confidence that empowers one to make enabling changes to the traditional structure of and inputs to education and.
(e) the competence to recognize and draw on opportunities for the benefit of his students.

Such a school leader is an avid learner. He or she will track students, one year after leaving school in order to determine their post-school engagements and use such experiences to improve the livelihood opportunities for subsequent groups.

**Conflict resolution**

Jamaican boys are challenged by aggressions, particularly boys from poor circumstances or criminal segments of the society. There are times when, in their home environment, they need to be aggressive to survive. However, when this aggression is not controlled, then they use aggression as a response to every problem. From the earliest years in school (Kindergarten), boys should learn peaceful conflict resolution. Teachers should not await a conflict to teach conflict resolution. It should be taught routinely through dramatization, discussion and role plays.

Boys can build electronic games to demonstrate conflict resolution. Teachers can create case studies for them to discuss.
Curriculum – Planning for learning

From the very beginning of the school year, boys should be participating in decisions about what they learn and how they learn it. They should feel ownership for their learning process and outcomes. They should take turns at leading and following. In the planning process they should understand their assessment and be able to assess and record their own performances and have discussions and feedback. Why did I get it right and why did I get it wrong?

- Flexibility in teaching and learning - There should be flexibility in the teaching process, taking advantage of teachable moments. When there is an event in the community or nationally, the teacher should be able to take advantage of the event to have discussions, identification of issues and various options for resolution of such issues.

- Stimulating vision – success in any industry requires vision. English literature, appropriately taught is effective in stimulating visionary thoughts. Teachers should create opportunities to rethink and redesign traditional practices. For example, use of different art media or development of a different kind of paint brush creating an unusual texture. The teaching and learning environment must give space to vision. Teachers should initiate collaboration to adapt the national curriculum enabling students to give meaning to their education.

- Some learning approaches that stimulate boys – patterning, repetition, practice, competition, arguments /debates, projects, drama, music and research and presentations. They also enjoy field trips, work experience and collaboration with other schools.
- Types of assessment:
  - Oral presentation
  - Written task
  - Question and answer
  - Dramatization - role play
  - Self-evaluation
  - Edmodo
  - Creative task

During the summer programme on Events Planning at Edna Manley, this young man chose to be different. He sent a written message in his artwork and painted on the back of his T-shirt. It caught the attention of everyone. All artwork on all the other T-shirts were creative. The work of the young man in the picture following was not only creative, it was different. The Art lecturer saw and appreciated the difference.

Other T-shirts printed by the boys to promote their products

Use of technology
• Communication/Information technology—teachers can utilize modern communication technology to inspire boys to participate in their own learning. Use of smart phones, tablets, cell phones, etc., are some ways in which teachers can engage boys in the learning environment. Teachers can utilize EdMoDo, YouTube, and many open educational resources to bring new ideas to the e-learning environment. Teachers and student are able to expand the learning space through the use of videos, Skype, WhatsApp and social media. Learning should be a cooperative experience. Boys would be attracted to their teachers’ website as long as they find it helpful in undertaking their learning tasks’

• Industrial technology – teachers will need to keep abreast of advancement in industrial; technology. Resources are expensive and limited but creative ways should be found to expose the boys. For example, partner with the productive sector to expose the students to equipment not available in the schools. Modern cars have computer software that provides the technical information on the status of the car. Ask in the community for someone to donate defunct car as a learning aid. Community members could also be asked to donate defunct small equipment to schools.

• Boys need a clear understandable framework in which to operate. Together with the boys, establish a class protocol for ensuring that technology is utilized responsibly. There should be sanctions for the breach of the agreed protocol.

Using real world experience to engage students

It is important to integrate lessons that include “real world” experiences that reinforce learning without pain. For example, a student who was skilled at the use of technology (graphic designs) was tasked to create different designs that the school needed throughout the year. He was taught how to handle deadlines, learn how juggle his different responsibilities and how to market his skills.

Seating plan

• An interactive classroom arrangement is for boys the desks to form tables so that four boys can sit together. This arrangement will encourage group work. Boys should also be in the front rows.

Managing student behavior

• Respect for students- Teachers should speak to students respectfully and demand the same respect from them. Be consistent in the approach so that students establish patterns of behavior and relationships. If there is need to change, there should be a dialogue with the boys explaining the need for change and negotiate the change.
Schooling as a business

The purpose of schooling is to sustain a society through a flow of persons prepared to contribute effectively to the said society. Schools are strategically placed to direct the flow of persons through various avenues, all equally important. About 30% of boys that will matriculate with 5 or more CSEC passes at levels 1 and 2. These will continue to sixth form and Tertiary education.

Other avenues through which boys may obtain certification include:
1. City and Guilds examinations
2. CSEC passes in TVET
3. HEART/NTA/NCTVET certification in an area of skill
4. School level certification in a skill area – the certificate should be strategically designed to indicate what the student is able to do.

All students’ work should be productive work. Students should acquire skills in the context of real production. Hence the technical and vocational areas and the science laboratories should be centres of production.

Basket of knowledge
Teacher prepares a list of activities to introduce or reinforce a lesson. The activities should be creative and interesting. In Literature, the activity could be to demonstrate the emotion of Mr. Bank when heard the news that he won the lottery. The activity could be about an aspect of dress design or joinery. What is important is that boys are able to undertake the activity and add their own thoughts or flair to it. The activity should be short and not take more than one minute. The activities are written on small slips of paper and put in the basket. Each boy will randomly select a piece of paper from the basket. Teachers keep a record book in which participating students get points. Teacher will ensure equity in opportunities to score points.

Of the school level trade certification could be shared with the community, enabling understanding and acceptance of the value of the certificates. A school-community relationship that builds up competence in income generating areas would be of great benefit to the school.

The Junior Achievement programme in Jamaica offers opportunities that motivate and enable students to become entrepreneurs. Schools can learn and emulate such experiences. Collaboration between TechVoc and the Business Teachers can assist in building learning centres that engage students in the acquisition of basic competencies in English, Science and Mathematics. As such, these subjects would be directly related to a productive interest. English Literature is an important subject for stimulating creativity and vision and should be taught appropriately to all students.

Showcasing students’ work
The school should showcase and market students work through various channels. The sale of products should be used to encourage students to produce good quality work and in reasonable quantities. Management of funds should be carried out by the school. However, the boys should keep their accounts and should bank the earnings. Expenditure should include general insurance, health insurance and education levy. The bank in the community should be invited to open a special account for the Grade 10 and 11 boys’ projects.

At the point of graduation, the boys should decide what to do with the business. They could carry on after they have graduated from school or liquidate the business and go on their own. All of this would add to their learning experience. All moneys borrowed for investment should be repaid with little interest according to an agreement.

Stimulating and Engaging Boys

The Ball Game
Boys will become engaged in activities that relate to some of things that they do.
Let’s play ball
For homework, boys prepare a set of questions on the lesson selected by the teacher
The next class
Teacher collects the questions
Teacher divides the class into two teams, Team A and team B (Boys may name their respective teams)
Teacher throws the ball to member in Team A. The person who gets the ball answers a question asked by the teacher. If the ball drops, the team loses a point and must answer two questions to regain the point.
The ball is thrown back to the teacher.
Teacher throws the ball to team B and then ask the question.
The teacher directs the ball to a different student each time. The boy is obligated to catch the ball or his team will lose points.
Teacher and boys can set the time for duration of play.

The team with the most points is the winner.
Setting up a school for business – enhancing livelihood opportunities

The laws of nature: the young learns for the adults by patterning, practice and ultimately production. In this context there is no unemployment. Hence unemployment is a man-made phenomenon

What then are the true role, nature and responsibility of school and schooling?

The establishment of school took over the process of nature in order to create societies and continuation of such societies. Children spend an average of 15 years in school. At the end of the child’s school life, the question is “Has schooling been productive or destructive?” The next question is “What kind of school do you manage and administer?” Is the school progressively de-skilling the society? What are the options opened to the school?

Study, reflect and act – success for all

Creating success for all is challenging but possible. In school, one normally finds three groups all equally important - those who are prepared to work towards being the engineer (drivers of production), those who will work to become the highly skilled technicians(highly technical workforce) and those who will work to be tradesmen (mass skilled workers). All characters have a place in industrial development and income generation.

School must educate all types to the best of his ability. To be effective, the curriculum must be adapted in order to meet the needs of all groups.

Group 1 – Programme structures for CSEC and CAPE in many subjects including TECHVOC
Group 2 – Programme weighted for English, mathematics and sciences and TechVoc – will still pursue CSEC and CAPE in these areas
Group 3 - Skilled workers – English, mathematics and science and TechVoc leading to a variety of certification
All students will be certified. Students will have individual timetables in grades 10 and 11.

Using IT skills to the fullest to market the products of the business

This would include the design of the product, its conceptual document, preparation of flyers and other graphic designs, sending out targeted messages, etc. Classes should stimulate vision and creativity, encouraging the students to invent - design, machinery, and toys with engines. Students establish themselves in business groups and share ideas and competencies.

Effective transition through secondary school

From Grade Six (leaving primary schools) to Grade seven (entering high school)

This transition is critical for the boys. A baseline must be established informing of their level of achievement at primary and the areas for further development. This baseline becomes a guide for building an effective teaching and learning environment. Subjects should be timetabled according to learning needs. Grade 7 is the year when the high school should seek to bridge the learning gaps and stimulate and motivate learning.
By Grade 8- Boys should learn to work independently and should be a part of a culture of excellence established in the school

Grade Nine – The boys should identify career and educational goals, and areas needed to determine their strengths and weaknesses. The teaching and learning programmes should respond to their individual needs.

By Grade 10 - the boys’ education should be focused on their career goals
By Grade 11- they are already productive and have livelihood skills that are measurable.

Use of QEC as a learning community

In respect of TecVoc, there might be need to join QECs. QECs could build and maintain their own accessible knowledge bank in order to promote timely sharing of experiences.

Boys’ Journals
Each boy in the programme is given a journal to assist him in keeping focus. Although the Journal belongs to the boy, it should be kept at school and utilized a formal setting unless otherwise instructed and controlled by teacher. Peer grouping can be done, where boys with similar interests can be grouped and allowed to work together while maintaining individual journals. A prize should be given to the boy with the best kept Journal.

The STEAM approach
Many countries have to a greater or lesser extent on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). In Jamaica, the Arts are fundamental part of our culture and an area in which we have the competitive edge. We also must include sports as an area in which we have excelled. However, STEM is at the core of production to the various areas of strengths and therefore will undergird advancement in sports and the arts. For example, innovations with sports medicines, sports equipment, dance forms, lighting illusions, innovative theatre props etc. Communication is an integral part of how we project ourselves and the language of power and industry is English.

As we endeavor to ensure equity in the education system, we need to envision and create approaches that will consolidate the critical areas into learning experiences geared towards livelihood skills. Every child leaving the classroom should be equipped to generate his or her livelihood.

Very often, we forget as teachers that the memory must be exercised and strengthened like any other part of the body. In the learning of mathematics is one such area that requires a strong memory to the same extent that it requires understanding.

If the lesson is about profit and loss, dramatize a business, if it is about rate of interest, create a bank. If the lesson is about areas, create designs to be explained and sold. This will enable boys to practice mathematics in a life context.
**Improving behaviour**
There was a boy who was very disruptive in class. He exhibited unacceptable behavior and seemed un-controllable. His teacher decided to meet with him and agreed on a behavioural contract that he and his parents would sign. In the contract, he would earn phone cards for good behaviour and for doing his school work. It worked. The young man changed around and was always on task. The incentive was sustained until he got into the habit of working and understood the value of school education. Alongside the incentive he had a specified number of hours on one to one with the guidance counsellor. The incentive brought about immediate response but counselling was needed to sustain the response.

**Stimulate the imagination**
Organize the class in working teams
Read a poem and give each team a verse to illustrate depicting environment, feelings, changes, etc.
Each team should select a presenter who will speak on behalf of the team

**The teacher as an enabler**
Given the opportunity, boys are able to prepare their own lessons and teach their classes. Teacher identifies some topics for student teaching and let them prepare and teach the lessons. Boys can organize themselves in groups to prepare the lessons and decide how to make the presentations. Encourage them to use technology in the delivery of the lessons. To ensure that main points are addressed, teacher can contribute to the preparation.

**Field trips**
Sometimes boys feel trapped in the classroom. Classes can be held in a nearby farm or field. It is important for the teacher to plan carefully the purpose of the trip and the activities to be undertaken by each student or groups of students. Each task should involve writing and reporting.

**Recognition sweetens labour**
In all these activities, the boys should be recognized and awarded for their achievements. The awards acquired should be entered into their Journals.

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