

# Classroom Climate that support Male and Female Differences

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In my last Focus article, I presented the differences in male and females minds as researched by Dr. Gerison and Dr. Stake from the University of Southern California and myself during the last ten years. In this article, a presentation of how to set up climates for learning to support these differences and create better learning opportunities for male and females.

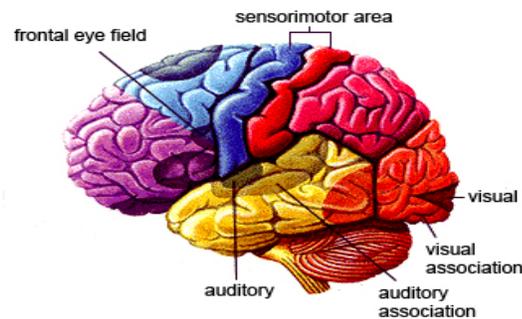
## Discipline Issues:

An immense stressor for college faculty and students seems to be a lack of discipline. Faculty-student bonds can be built or broken by management issues in the classroom. What the research is saying and through our observations college students need:

- A firm and caring teacher, who genuinely cares about each student and shows it
- One who sets rules and reinforces them verbally and nonverbally
- One who sets expectations high and helps each student rise to meet them
- A classroom environment that provides equal educational and technological opportunity to every student
- A team-learning environment where students' emotional stress management is an integral part of the learning process
- Conflict-resolution standards and practices that, when need, take precedent over academic learning
- Mandatory service programs

Healthy brain development requires a healthy team environment, which in

turn requires a clear and well-enforced discipline system. Peer mediation, peer conflict resolution, and peer-driven discipline councils are good innovations for making more of the responsibility for self-discipline a peer-directed experience, while ensuring that adult students grow.



## Teaching and Learning

All through school, the more tactile and concrete the teaching is, the easier it is for the widest variety of students. **Visual, aural and tactile is a three-sense approach.** See it, hear it, and touch it. Through interactive and experiential activities, the abstracting mind makes even larger intuitive leaps than it can in a “read the problem, now write the solution” kind of exercise.

## Reading

As brain based gender research increases in usefulness, we generally notice what so many reading specialists already know; the vast majority of reading-traumatized and reading-deficient students are males. What can we do for them?

### Cut repetitive aural stimulation.

The student is following his own brain seeking left-hemisphere stimulation that fits him. He is probably

unable to handle the complex vocabulary and sub textual material as easily as most of his female classmates and many of his male classmates when the words are “just words”.

He has difficulty grasping and decoding the text when it is aurally presented. He becomes frustrated, his pride is hurt he is on his way to an LD diagnosis.

**We have found that males require parsing of text into discrete units** that can be analyzed separately. He would probably also benefit from having concrete manipulative experiences interspersed with reading experiences, physical learning that integrates reading with other parts of education.

Our research shows us that reading and writing difficulties, throughout school, are primary reasons for male dysfunction in school culture. If by high school, a young man (or woman) is having reading difficulty, self-esteem plummets, core-self and identity development are more difficult, and the future becomes academically frightening. Not to read in this culture is to be lame.

## Ultimate Learning Environments for Males and Females

Based on the brain gender research the following recommendations are being made:

- Allow movement in the classroom, especially for those students who think well when they're moving around. Standing up, sitting exercises while taking tests, debates on opposite sides of the classroom, etc.

# Classroom Climate that support Male and Female Differences - Continued

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- Use more visual teaching methods. Make sure PowerPoint, overhead, handouts are provided. **If males do not see it they do not believe it.** (don't forget do not dim lights, males brains need brighter lights)

- Decrease verbal instruction and increase hands on problem solving approaches. Male brains go into pause after too much "talking".

- Concepts need to be presented in distinct units of study. Break up lectures, discussions, into categories not in generalizations.

- Get feedback as often as possible. The best method is for them to write down what they have learned, on note cards, three minute papers, etc.

- Assignments need to have dates of return in order of priority. Do not say, "By the end of the month you must have the following.....completed" it must be spelled out in detail.

- Start a class out with the major objectives to be discussed and end with the same major objectives that was taught.

- Lectures need to be stated as this is the beginning, now the content, and in conclusion. All activities must have a beginning, middle and end and be readily noticeable.

- Use a variety of test methods. Males do better in multiple choice, females do better in essay formats.

- Male brains go into pause state after tasks. Pause breakers that

activated the brain are spinning, shouting, and jumping or other physical movements. In other words keep them active.

- Males need coaching on cooperative learning. Before starting group or team work, give a handout of how a team works together. Make sure it is in task

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format.

- Males respond better to louder voices. Use a firm and louder voice. Not screaming. It helps to have females to raise their voice when discussing issues.
- Offer encouragement statements not praise. We do not want to raise "praise junkies" Encouragement statements are: "how did you come up with that answer?" not "good job"; "what part of your answer did you like best?" not "excellent response".
- Avoid lowering standards. Keep standards high; just realize that how they are achieved is different.

Brain-based research is helpful in understanding why it is that males, who get 70 per cent of the D's and F's in schools and only about 40 per cent of the A's, end up outscoring females in standardized tests. The individual who favors deductive and quick abstract reasoning tends to do well in a multiple-choice format. The individual who tends to quickly single out information rather than

thinking out a larger variety of possibilities also does better. The individual who takes high risk taking is likely to answer questions under pressure and risk guesses. This student could be male or female but there is statistical probability that the student is male. Males also have a high statistical advantage in math because of male-brain advantage.

As standardized tests

come to

include more essay formats, females do better; bring the male-female scores nearly to parity. The math scores become even closer as math questions are invested with more essay features.

Given how the standardized tests are administered now, brain-based gender research asks us to be cautious about using these scores as the prime forecaster of the present or future of a high school student's intellectual life.

Our educational culture is struggling today not only with clear problems of management, pressure from legislators to raise test scores, lack of funding, safety and overwhelmed teachers, it is also struggling for an identity. I hope that as our culture embarks on deciding what kind of climate we need for learning it will realize how essential education in brain and gender differences is.