

# Boys need regular doses of action to focus on study

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Short, regular doses of exercise between lessons helps boys concentrate and learn more in class, says a specialist in educating boys, Dr Michael Irwin.

Dr Irwin, an Auckland-based senior education lecturer at the University's College of Education, says five to 10-minute bursts of vigorous activity, such as skipping or running, several times a day will help boys settle. It is one of the key points he will make at a seminar on boys education later this month. The seminar is a precursor to an international conference on boys' education at the University's Auckland campus later this year.

“Overseas studies have reported a significant improvement in learning if this practice is followed,” he says. Girls would also benefit if schools were to adopt the practice of building in mini-exercise routines, but biology and socialisation meant that boys generally have a greater need for regular physical activity.

He also recommends that schools create “communities of men” – including fathers, older brothers, uncles and grandfathers – that are involved in school activities.

Organising camps, lunches and other events for boys and their fathers or significant male carer would compensate for the “dad deficit” experienced by many young boys, he says. “There’s a saying that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’; I think boys need to be associated with a community of men as mentors in raising them to be fine young men.”

Of concern is the lack of positive male role models for boys, whatever their family circumstances. “We need to re-look at the whole issue of the place of males in society and their role in raising children. Education for boys is about looking at the end product. What type of young men do we want to produce? I think we need to look at the whole person.”

Source: Massey University

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