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with **Geraldine Doogue**  
**On Tuesday 01/04/2003**

## Boys' Auditory Problems

Recent audiological research suggests that young boys have problems processing sounds, because their ears develop differently to girls' ears.

This physiological evidence was music to the ears of Dr Ken Rowe, the principal research fellow at the [Australian Council for Educational Research](#), who was already involved in a research project looking at how teachers might better accommodate auditory problems in their students.

### Guests in this story:

#### Dr Ken Rowe

Principal research fellow at the Australian Council for Educational Research

### Further information:

#### Ken Rowe's Abstract

Auditory Processing: Why many boys are behind the literacy '8-ball' throughout the early and middle-years of schooling

Dr Ken Rowe

Principal Research Fellow

Australian Council for Educational Research

Invited address presented at the

Teaching Boys: Boys to Fine Men Conference

Newcastle City Hall, NSW, March 27-29, 2003

Abstract: Auditory processing is the ability to hold, sequence and process accurately what is heard. Children with auditory processing difficulties (mostly boys) commonly present to paediatric outpatient departments of tertiary-referral hospitals with disruptive, inattentive behaviors and underachievement in literacy. They also present for audiology assessment in consequence of parent and/or teacher concerns that such children appear 'not to listen' and may have 'hearing loss'; but typically, their hearing acuity is unimpaired. This address presents key findings from recent clinical and educational research conducted jointly at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital and the Australian Council for Educational Research, indicating that compared with girls, boys have a higher prevalence of auditory processing difficulties. Further, recent epidemiological research undertaken by physiologists at the National Acoustic Laboratories in Sydney indicates that from the age of four years, boys have significantly reduced physiological capacity to process auditory 'streams' of sound such as speech. That is, compared with girls, boys process speech sounds more slowly – resulting in many boys spending their early and middle-years of schooling 'bobbing up and down like corks in a sea of classroom and teacher-generated blah'. Unless appropriate teaching strategies are put in place, these problems impact negatively on boys' early and subsequent literacy progress, as well as their behaviors. The address outlines key features of these practical, evidence-based, teaching strategies that have strong positive effects on boys' literacy progress and their attentive behaviors in the classroom.

Dr Ken Rowe [BA (Hons) Melb, MSc London, PhD Melb, DipGenStuds Swin, TPTC Melb] is a Principal Research Fellow at

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the Australian Council for Educational Research. His substantive research interests include: 'authentic' educational and psychological assessment; multilevel, 'value-added' performance indicators and bench-marking; teacher and school effectiveness; differential gender effects of schooling in the context of teaching and learning; the impact of externalizing behavior problems on students' learning outcomes; and the educational/epidemiological effects of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) in children and adolescents.

In addition to attempts to 'keep-up' with three active sons, Ken and his consultant paediatrician wife Dr Kathy Rowe (at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne) are in high demand as keynote speakers related to their separate and collaborative research, and publish widely.

### Links to the auditory research of Eric LePage and Narelle Murray

The Boys' Inquiry Hansard webpage is now an inquiry report <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/commtee/r4381.pdf> between pages 35 and 47 of the pdf file.

The final Boys' inquiry report with all the commentary is at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/Eofb/report.htm>

The walkman article is available at <http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/xmas98/lepage/lepage.html>

Also there is more general information about the early-warning methodology (which Karina Kelly reported on Quantum in the early 90s) in the last few [NAL annual reports](#).

Go to the most recent annual reports, publications and recent conferences particularly <http://www.nal.gov.au/downloads/ASA%202002%20OAE%20Poster.pdf>

You can find more general information about otoacoustic emission methodology at [OAE Portal](#).

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