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An Opportunity Gap: Focusing on the Issue of Boys' Underachievement in School Literacy

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AN OPPORTUNITY GAP:
FOCUSING ON THE ISSUE OF BOYS'
UNDERACHIEVEMENT IN SCHOOL LITERACY

A Project Report

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

Master Teacher

By

Whitney Ann Cromwell

July 6, 2007

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Completing my Master's Degree would not have been possible without the help and support of my Mom. She encouraged me to continue my education so that my children would see that their mother could do and accomplish anything. I also received help and support from my husband and children. They sacrificed many things while Mommy was busy teaching and going to school. I also could not have finished this without the support of my parents and my friends all of whom helped watch my children so I could work on writing.

In addition to my family, I would also like to thank Dr. Nourse, Dr. Fennerty and Dr. Gann for being on my committee and supporting me. The classes I took through Central Washington University have been tremendous and will help me assist many children in the years to come.

ABSTRACT

AN OPPORTUNITY GAP:

FOCUSING ON THE ISSUE OF BOYS'

UNDERACHIEVEMENT IN SCHOOL LITERACY

By

Whitney Ann Cromwell

July 2007

Male students statistically have not been as successful as females on standardized test scores or literacy activities. The discrepancy between literacy achievement between boys and girls at the elementary level is cause for concern. This gap between the literacy achievement of girls and boys will continue unless we change the way we teach. "All educators share the common goal of providing equitable learning opportunities for every student in the classroom. Providing equitable opportunities for girls is a familiar topic; providing them for boys is a relatively recent issue, but one that is appearing with increasing urgency on education agendas around the world" (Ontario Education 2004). The educational community to date had been unsuccessful in addressing

the specific issue of the male literacy gap as shown on standardized tests.

“The results of assessments administered to students in Grades 3 and 6 show that boys do not perform as well as girls in reading and writing”(2004).

Educators need to apply research-based practices in order to provide the male students with the skills they need to be successful. This project will prove a reason to do so. The gap between the achievement of literacy between girls and boys at the elementary level needs to be addressed.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

A concern of elementary educators has always been educating children to become literate students. With this concern and the increased demand for educators to raise standards in the classroom, many students have not gained the literacy skills they need to be successful (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Male students continually fail to meet standards in literacy and on standardized tests (2004). Girls score better than boys showing a gap between the two groups (2004). This literacy gender gap has received increased attention as educators come to realize the importance of literacy for boys and girls. "Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost" (Anderson, 1985, p. 1). By exploring the reasons behind this gender gap in literacy, educators can better understand what needs to be changed and modified in the classroom to help alleviate the discrepancy between boys and girls and create strong literacy skills.

Poor literacy skills can affect students regardless of race or gender (Ogle, 2001). Research was conducted on the male student population regarding standardized tests and research data determined that reading was an area of need for boys.

In an international comparison of fourth grade readers, girls scored higher than boys on reading in standardized tests in every one of the 35 participating countries (Ogle, 2001, p. 2). In the United States, girls scored 18 points higher than boys did and scored higher on national standardized tests over several years of data (NCES, 2003, p.6). According to the research done by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, (NICHD) boys were also identified as learning disabled in reading four times more often than girls (Fletcher & Lyons, 1998, p.52). In comparisons of research data since 1971, boys had made some improvements on their average reading standardized test scores; however, they still scored less than female students (Hall & Coles, 1997). The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, in which kindergarten children were measured on school readiness skills, indicated that girls were more proficient than boys when it came to identifying and naming upper and lower case letters, associating them with sounds at the beginning and end of words, recognizing common sight words, and reading words in context (Schwartz, 2002).

This project addresses these questions: (A) Why do male students, as a group, statistically fall behind females when standardized test scores are compared, and (B) What instructional strategies should be applied by educators to ameliorate the discrepancy. In responding to these questions, teachers will be provided with research based practices that will help all children succeed in literacy.

This project offers educators the history of literacy, best practices and documentation, as well as tools and resources they need to address the issue of boys' literacy.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Male students as a group have not statistically been as successful as females in literacy as shown by standardized tests scores. The educational community has not fully addressed the specific issues surrounding boys' literacy.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

This project provides educators with the background information and potential tools they need to address the issue of boys' literacy. The literature review presents evidence to suggest that the gap between boys and girls in literacy exists and this project offers resources and lesson plans teachers can integrate into their current reading program.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This project was designed during the 2006-2007 school year to benefit the male student population. The accompanying brochure and lesson plans are designed for elementary classes and elementary in-service workshops for staff members. The main ideas behind the lessons can be used to help literacy in all grades. The purpose of this project is to raise awareness of the problem that exists regarding boys' literacy, provide a means of addressing the issue of boys' underachievement and provide suggestions and recommendations to help close the gap.

RESEARCH

The review of literature for this project was obtained from articles, books and websites written within the past ten years.

DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

For clarification of this project the following terms are defined:

Literacy –The ability to read (Gurian & Stevens, 2004)

School Literacy - Reading activities that take place at school as part of the school related curriculum (2004)

Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements (WASL) -

Standards set forth by Washington State in each area of reading, writing and math (<http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/default.aspx>)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Boys need to be evaluated in a variety of environments which contribute to their acquisition of literacy such as home life as well as their current instructional practices. Although there might be other issues connected with boys falling behind girls in reading, these issues have an impact on boys and their ability to read and write.

“Why should I read about doing things when I can actually do them?” stated a 10th grade student. (NewKirk, 2002, p.54)

Researchers have proposed many different theories for boys falling behind girls in literacy acquisition. One theory is the “biological determinism” which explained that male behaviors are influenced by genetics believed by researchers, Smith and Wilhelm (2002).

One other theory by Gurian (2001) believed that there were differences with the brain structure. Gurian (2001) states that male and female differences in brain structure are vast. One difference posed was that one side of the brain is used to solve problems while the other side is used for processing reading, writing, language and verbal ability. The left side of the brain is the side used for processing reading and writing. In females, the left hemisphere is more developed at a younger age than males. Males usually used the right hemisphere more often when solving problems. The right side is used for

speech, social, visual, and spatial abilities. "Success in reading lies in the experience not of seeing, but of hearing, which gives the female brain an advantage" (Moir and Jessel, 1991, p.76).

Another difference in the brain structure of males and females is in the cerebral cortex. The cerebral cortex plays an important role in which hemisphere of the brain is more developed. According to Moir and Jessel (1991) in boys, the cerebral cortex which house, "neurons that promote higher intellectual functions and memory, was thicker on the right than the left side of the brain. It is thicker on the left in girls" (p. 21).

Girls can use both sides of the brain with more ease because of the corpus callosum which attaches the two hemispheres. The corpus callosum is bigger in females than males; consequently, it allows them to use and coordinate both sides more simply.

Other research has shown that the social construction of gender is a means of explaining the difference between boys' and girls' literacy practices. Dutro (2002) looked at the issue of how masculinity, which she perceived as a social construction, affected the ways boys performed literacy in school. Her writing was presented in, "Us boys like to read football and boy stuff; Reading Masculinities and Performing Boyhood."

Dutro (2002) spent a great deal of time in a fifth grade class. While there, she noted how masculinity affected the children's reading choices and practices. She described how finding a book to read proved difficult for boys and their

masculinity. During the process of selecting a book, boys could select from one of four choices. The four included were *Karen's Big Sister*, *Addy Learns a Lesson*, *Live from Fifth Grade*, and *Super Hoops*. She stated based on her observation that boys threatened one another in order to get the book they wanted and not to deflate their masculinity. "You better not pick that basketball book boy; you better not do it" (Dutro, 2002, p. 11). When it became inevitable they were not all going to get the basketball book, or even the lesser of the feminine book titles, they began making deals with each other to select the same "girl books" so that they would have safety in numbers. Something that should be so simple, such as finding a book to read in a social situation, is a difficulty for boys.

Throughout the research on boys and reading, one of the most common issues is that there is a shortage of available books that boys like to read. If teachers knew what boys liked to read, they might be able to get more of them to read, therefore improving their reading skills.

In a two-year study, (Blair and Sanford, 2004) it was noted that boys needed to find books that interested them personally with action, fun, and humor (2004). They noticed that "boys were more likely to read material that can be transported into conversation with their friends" (Blair and Sanford, 2004).

Another researcher, (Hamston, 2001) in Australia, interviewed 91 boys aged 5-11. In researching the data on what those boys chose to read, the findings were that boys read various types of materials, specifically those that

were viewed as masculine such as reading on the Internet or computer games. "The overall picture to emerge from this analysis was that of a cohort of boys using reading as a resource; a pleasurable activity; a source of stimulation; a location of self; and a means of establishing and maintaining connections with others" (2001).

Hamston's (2001) conclusions were similar to those of Smith and Wilhelm shown in their book *"Reading Don't Fix No Chevys"* (2002). These authors researched a small group of males from different states and schools of various socio-economic statuses. The boys were questioned regarding their most interesting activities to their least interesting activities.

When the boys were asked to complete a research project, one responded that he wanted to do his project on something like football because he had experience with that. He wanted to write about something he knew more about and had more control over. In response to what he wanted to write about the boy said, "Not really, I mean, I just like to learn about stuff that, you know, I kinda like to learn a little more about. I already know something, so I want to know more" (2002). He wanted to have control and be proficient over what he chose to write about.

Some of the boys in this study did not connect literacy in school with literacy in the home or other environments. One boy in the study was seen reading about sports in the library. When questioned about this and why he did not enter this selection in his literacy log he responded in a shocked

manner, "I thought you wanted to know about reading, you know, to learn stuff" (2002).

The boys in this study read a variety of different texts such as fantasy, humor, adventure, science fiction, sports, and adventure (Harkrader and Moore, 1997, p. 325). According to this study, boys preferred fiction to non-fiction and would rather have a main male character in the books they chose to read.

Gender differences were just one of the issues surrounding boys and literacy. Another major factor was the home life of the student and how much of his home life contributed to the boy as a reader. The family reading habits are a major implication of boys reading.

The home life of a boy has shown to be a primary role on how he develops his reading and love of literacy. A study completed at a private boys' school in Australia that helped boys understand the importance of learning good reading habits at home found that the amount of time parents devoted with their son was strongly related to how that boy increases his literacy skills as a reader when he is older (Hamston, 2001).

Boys who tended to be more successful in their literacy skills at school were more likely to have a father at home who was involved in the advancement of the young boy and his reading abilities. Successful boy readers also had mothers who were strong literacy supporters of these young boys. These boys also had more extended family members who were supportive and received extra practice at home. It is fascinating to observe how much weight boys placed

on the importance of their fathers' involvement in their reading practices according to the questionnaire answered by ninety-one of these boys questioned from ages five to eleven.

Boys who read at home and enjoyed reading were taken to the library as young children by their parents and received books as gifts. Boys who saw themselves as poor readers or who did not have much in the way of books at home said things such as, "My dad doesn't read and I don't too" (Freedman 2003, p. 8). Another said, "My father only read when he had an accident and couldn't do anything else," (p. 9) displaying yet again the significance of male role models.

Not only did brain research and family issues surrounding boys' literacy play factors, but there were instructional implications. Much of reading and learning to read does not come as naturally to a young child as talking and communicating do. The ability to learn to read needs to come from instructing in the best possible way. The correct way of teaching phonics and phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension are more important than any other instructions in reading (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998).

Another issue with boys learning to read and the instruction they are given is the fact that the majority of teachers at the elementary level are female (Schwartz, 2003, p. 3). Boys feel that teachers should have strong insight as to how to interact with them. Boys feel that teachers should care about them, be interested in their interests, help them learn and "know their stuff" (McGlenn,

2003, p.99). The author believed that when the boys thought that their teachers possessed one or more of those traits, they responded in a positive manner to their teacher and made more of an effort to work hard in the classroom. If the boys did not feel their teacher had those qualities, then the boys usually did not try hard in any of their daily work. "The teachers don't know you, care about you, and recognize you. So why should you care about them or the work they want you to do?" (p.99).

Boys feel that something else that makes a great teacher is someone who encompasses "active responses and projects" (p.103). Boys want a challenge but not something that they can't achieve. Boys continue to want work that lets them express themselves, use powerful ideas and lets them choose and have some control over what they are writing and reading about (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Freedman (2003) found similarities using semi-structured focus groups to find what boys liked to read. Of those questioned, 70 percent said that when they checked a book out of the library the number one criterion was length. The boys agreed the shorter the better (p. 8). Though 80 percent of the boys said they rarely read at home, others admitted that they stayed up late with a good book, "I get lost in books about other worlds and forget the time. My teacher doesn't think these are real books" (p.8).

The literature reviewed information regarding many boys being behind when it comes to literacy. There are differing opinions in explanations for this literacy gap between males and females. Some researchers argue that the significant difference between boys and girls is closely related to the biological differences in the brain. Other researchers state that the differences are due to the social construct of masculinity. Still others offer that family and instructional practices play roles in a boys' ability and desire to read. Those who grew up with families who supported literacy tend to have sons who enjoy reading. Those who do not like reading often do not have that family support at home. At school boys reported that they thought the literacy activities in school were boring. This research project provides ideas for improving school based literacy programs and affect instructional practices in a positive manner in order to help increase boys' literacy achievement.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

After reading a story about boys' low literacy rates, the author gained interest in the subject area and wanted to find out how to help boys succeed more effectively in the area of literacy. Recent research on this subject and best practices were combined to assist educators as they begin to help boys become more effective in literacy skills in school. The information helped the author to develop a final product that would be research-based and would provide helpful information for educators and parents. This project will help give knowledge to the importance of and need to make changes in teaching literacy. This project will also help teachers with specific lessons to help facilitate more intentional teaching for male students to help motivate their learning and love for literacy.

PLANNED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Scenic Hill Elementary staff has been reviewing data on standardized tests over the past several years and has noticed an increasing trend of boys standardized test scores in literacy being lower than girls. When disaggregating this data, our principal continually has our teachers try to figure out best practices so as to eliminate this problem.

Because our school continues to disaggregate data during faculty meetings, the author decided to create a brochure informing educators of the problem of boys' literacy problems in school and how to help them become more successful in school. In addition to holding a workshop on this issue with staff members and

handing out the brochure, the author included a lesson plan to help create more interesting instructional lessons that will increase the interest of boys in improving their literacy skills.

CHAPTER 4

CURRICULUM PROJECT

The intent and purpose of this curriculum project was to provide research-based practices in the form of a brochure for educators and parents. This project raises the awareness of teachers that the instructional approaches currently used may need adjustment to meet the literacy needs of boys who may require a different approach than girls. Educators can learn from and apply these resources and ideas into their own reading programs in order to address some of the deficits regarding boys' literacy.

As boys begin their education, explicit instruction of phonics and phonological awareness must take place. As they progress as readers, attempts must be made to keep boys interested in school literacy programs. The resources given within this curriculum project are designed with boys' literacy struggles in mind. By addressing their difficulties, an effort can be made to remediate and improve their literacy practices.

The ideas set forth in this brochure are not presented to replace school literacy programs but are intended to enhance school based literacy programs which already include independent reading time, instructional practice and teacher read-alouds.

PARENT HANDOUTS

The following parent handout was included as a resource for teachers and parents. Teachers can provide the handouts to the parents in many ways in their classrooms including open house, curriculum night, during parent-teacher conferences or at kindergarten round up. It is intended to educate and to stress the importance of family involvement in the development of their child's literacy practices. The handout presents a list of literacy activities parents can do at home with their child, boy or girl, to help increase literacy skills. This is an important step for teachers to take as research indicates that boys who enjoyed reading often have parents involved at home.

The handout may be given to parents after an educator has had the opportunity to discuss what the research indicates specific to the importance of parent support and involvement in their child's literacy skills. Taking caution not to criticize parents for what they may not be doing, teachers should go through the list of activities with parents so they understand each activity. For families who do not speak English at home, it is very important that teachers stress that reading to their son or daughter in their native language is just as important. For parents who may struggle as readers themselves or who cannot afford new books for their children, it is also very important to discuss the various programs and resources that are available to them at their local library.

PARENT HANDOUT

Ten Ways to Help Your Child Become a Strong Reader

1. Discuss with your child the type of books they like to read.
2. Read with your child. This can take place on a daily basis or as often as possible. Reading books is a great way to spend time with your child anytime of they day.
3. After reading, discuss the book with your child. Ask questions to see if they understood the story. Discuss any words they may not know.
4. Visit the local public library. Point out where the children's section is and allow your child to spend time looking at books. Visit the library as often as possible.
5. Help your child obtain a library card so they can check out their own books. Talk to them about their responsibility to take care of the books and return them on time.
6. Visit the children's section of your local bookstore.

7. Update your child's personal library by buying books as gifts for birthdays and holidays. This will ensure your child has new books of interest available to them.

8. Help your child become involved in a summer reading program. Public libraries often have such programs available for students.
9. Allow your child to read to you. This is a great way for them to practice their reading skills.
10. Make reading enjoyable. Find books that your child enjoys reading and listening to so that reading becomes something they look forward to instead of something they dread.

Para los padres

Como ayudar su niño leer?

1. Pregunte a su niño que tipo libros te gusta?
2. Leer con su niño todos los días en español y inglés.
3. Después leer con su niño, habla con su niño acerca del libro. Hablar con su niño en las palabras que no sabe.
4. Vaya a la biblioteca.
5. Ayudar su niño obtener una tarjeta de la biblioteca. Hablar con su niño sobre la responsabilidad de los libros de la biblioteca.
6. Vaya a la librería.
7. Dar los libros a su niño como un regalo para cumpleaños o la Navidad.
8. Leer en el verano.
9. Su niño leer a los padres y hermanos.
10. Hacer leer divertido. Leer los libros que son muy interesantes.

Book Lists

The book lists included are books and authors that have been shown to be favorites with children. This lists the most current years of nominees. The list of popular authors is divided up by favorite author and subject area. Using such references as books that have been picked to be the best ones by other children can ensure that boys are given books that are of their particular interest.

Washington Children's Choice Book Award

Please visit <http://www.wlma.org/wccpba> for a list of past and future nominees.

2008 Nominee List

Big Chickens by Leslie Cole Helakoski,

Charlie Cook's Favorite Book by Julia Scheffler Donaldson

Chowder by Peter Brown

Fancy Nancy by Jane O'Connor

Fluffy and Baron by Laura Rankin

Gingerbread Girl by Lisa Campbell Ernst

The Gold Miner's Daughter by Jackie Mims Hopkins

He Came with the Couch by David Slonim

Max's Words by Kate Banks

A Mother's Journey by Sandra Markle

Once I Ate a Pie by Patricia MacLachlan

Once Upon a Motorcycle Dude by Scott Goto

One Potato, Two Potato by Cynthia DeFelice

The Perfect Pumpkin Pie by Denys Cazet

Scaredy Squirrel by Melanie Watt

The Secret Science Project That Almost Ate the School by Judy Sierra

The Snow Globe Family by Jane O'Connor

When Charlie McButton Lost Power by Suzanne Collins

Who is Melvin Bubble? by Nick Bruel

Great fiction books for boys (Cartwright Fiorelli & Jones, 2003)

Listed below is one title for each author, but most have several titles with high boy-appeal.

Downriver by Will Hobbs

Enders game by Orson Scott Card

Harris and me by Gary Paulsen

Heart of a champion by Carl Deuker

His dark materials trilogy by Phillip Pullman

Hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy by Douglas Adams

Last mission by Harry Mazer

Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli

Monster by Walter Dean Myers

No more dead dogs by Gordon Korman

Oddballs by William Sleator

Raven of the waves by Michael Cadnum

Silent to the bone by E.L. Konigsburg

Slot machine by Chris Lynch

Soldier's heart by Gary Paulsen

Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz

Tangerine by Edward Bloor

Touching spirit bear by Ben Mikealsen

Favorite Authors Listed by Topic of Interest

Mystery and Suspense:

Bruce Hale

Lemony Snicket

A Series of Unfortunate Events series

Peter Lerangis

Darren Shan

Sports and Outdoors:

Matt Christopher

Gordon Korman

Chris Lynch

Fantasy:

Tony Abbott

The Secret of Droon series

Eoin Colfer

Emily Drake

Philip Pullman

Emily Rodda

J.K. Rowling

Harry Potter series

Allan Zola Kronzek

David Colbert

Roger Highfield

J.R.R. Tolkien

Lord of the Rings series.

The History of the Middle Earth series

Science Fiction:

Bruce Colville

Alien Adventure series

Lawrence David

Cupcaked Crusader series

Jon Scieszka

The Time Ward Trio series

Humor:

Ken Roberts

David Elliott

Dav Pilky

Captain Underpants series

Subjects of great interest to boys (Cartwright Fiorelli & Jones, 2003)

World records

Computers

Bigfoot

UFOs

Unexplained

Monsters

Parapsychology /Mythology

Scary stories

Urban legends

True crime

Forensics

Military

Dinosaurs

Snakes

Sharks

Wolves

Outer space

Reptiles

Natural disasters

Math riddles

Anything with wheels (bikes, cars, trucks, etc)

Almost any sport, both professional and participatory

Gameboy codes

Magic

Drawing

Comics

Optical illusions

Hip hop and Rock music

Cartoons

Star Wars

Special effects

Puns and Jokes

Poetry

Story collections

How to write poetry

Riddles

Wars

Biographies of athletes, musicians, actors and explorers

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Research shows, and teachers know, that children who read well in the early grades are far more successful in later years, and that those who fall behind often stay behind when it comes to academic achievement” (U.S. Department of Education, p. 20). Many of those students who fall behind are the male students. Statistics show boys continue to score lower on standardized reading tests and were identified four times more often than girls as learning disabled (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998). This project has attempted to focus on boys who were and still are having difficulty succeeding in school. This project has also attempted to find reasons for their failure and form an action plan to help educators learn about this issue. Focusing on gender, family and best instructional practices has been the main ideas given to educators in this paper.

The problem with boys falling behind in literacy was common, not only in the United States, but in countries around the world. Research indicated that there was no one underlying cause for the gender gap but rather a few contributors including gender, family and instruction. The good news remained that the research also offered insight as to what educators can do to help remove the gap and make boys stronger in both reading and writing.

When it came to the specific gender differences that occurred in the brain, there were a number of things teachers could do to help students. Different ways

that teachers can manage the neurological differences included explicit teaching of phonics and phonological awareness, addressing fluency, building vocabulary, and teaching children comprehension strategies. Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of boys and girls allows teachers to know where they need to make activities more appropriate to allow for success of all students.

Teachers must also be aware of how masculinity affects learning in the classroom. The influence that a society has on how a boy begins to perform makes it difficult for there to be a clear specific solution to this part of the problem. As boys begin to grow as individuals, teachers must do their best to understand the various backgrounds and individual personalities of their students. This allows teachers to know what the individual interests of a student are, making it easier to help students in selecting appropriate reading material. It also gives the teacher the opportunity to plan lessons that address the needs of the students in the classroom.

The literature review showed research that offered insight as to what boys liked to read with strong implications for teachers. From this research, it is evident that boys liked to read a variety of things from all different genres. This included everything from non-fiction to science fiction and fantasy. It seems apparent that providing students with numerous choices is essential as each individual will have their own preferences. Boys particularly liked comic books, humorous books, and sports related books. By providing students with materials they enjoy reading it is easier to get them to read especially during provided

independent reading time. Teachers must also learn to recognize and appreciate new forms of literacy, such as reading about video games that previously may not have been seen as acceptable material.

Research also indicates that parents play a strong role in the development of their sons' literacy practices. By offering parents the resources they need to successfully aid their child, teachers can assure they are taking positive steps towards getting boys the extra help they need at home. Information worth presenting to parents includes popular book titles for kids, information about and the location of the public library, and a way they can help their son improve his reading skills.

For educators, providing research based instructional practices based on what research indicates works best has shown to be extremely important. These practices, according to Smith and Wilhelm (2002) and Fletcher and Lyon (1998) include:

1. Explicit teaching of phonics
2. Teaching comprehension strategies
3. Building fluency
4. Building background knowledge
5. Allowing boys to help with some book selection
6. Providing high-interest books
7. Allowing reading to be a social activity
8. Making projects challenging, relevant and skill level appropriate

9. Providing clear goals and feedback

By giving some of these experiences for students in the classroom, teachers might have a better chance at reaching the males students, especially those who are struggling as readers. While using these various strategies, it is important to remember each student has his or her own individual needs that may need to be addressed including the female students who must not be overlooked. Instead, an attempt must be made to help all students so that no one is left behind. By implementing some of these research-based instructional practices in the classroom the strongest attempt at well-rounded inclusive instruction can be made.

In addressing the issues related to gender, family, and instructional practices, educators can take steps toward closing the gap in literacy between girls and boys and raising boys' achievement. Research must continue in all areas of education so teachers can use research-based practices in their teaching. In boys' literacy, research needs to carry on and focus on instructional practices and the impact on the students in order to find out if the best practices are the right ones and if student skills are improving as a result. By researching what works and what does not work, educators can continue to meet the needs of all students.

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Appendix A

Book Share Lesson Plan Format

Objective: Students will be able to communicate with classmates about a book that is “too good to miss.”

EALRs: Communication: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Set:

“Boys and girls, I have a book that I would like to share with you that is just “too good to miss.”

Presentation: Demonstrate a book share for students. Tell about the title and author, type of book, names of main characters and talk about the problem of the story. Describe to the children in detail why this book is “too good to miss!”

Ask students if they have any books that are too good to miss and explain that they will be able to share any book that they really liked.

Allow students their own time to share their “too good to miss” book. Remind them to hold up the book for all to see and allow other students to ask them questions about it.

Closing: Thank the students for sharing and remind them why it is important to share books that they enjoy so others can enjoy them too based on their recommendation.

Monitoring: Watch for great listening skills on the part of the students while listening to the book share and give positive praise throughout the discussion.

Assessment: Did the students prepare and deliver a book share addressing the EALR requirements for communication?

Were the students listening to their classmates during the book share and discussion?

Follow-up: Ask the children if any of them had a chance to read any of the books that were recommended by their classmates.

Appendix B

Primary Elementary Classroom Read Alouds

The following lesson plans were designed for use as teacher read-alouds and teacher read-aloud follow-up activities for primary elementary classrooms.

They were designed for the purpose of providing boys, as well as all students, with literature activities they enjoyed as determined from research stating the importance of regular and frequent read-alouds of both fiction and non-fiction, the inclusion of social activity in assignments, more male main characters, and movement in activities. The lesson plans were also designed to meet with the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements for reading and communication.

Appendix C

Lesson:

Direct Instruction Lesson using Read Well

Objective: Students will be able to increase their fluency in their daily reading lesson by practicing the repetitive sounds the letters say.

EALRs: Reading: 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 4.2, 2.2,

Communication: 2.1, 2.3, 2.5

Materials:

- Read Well Unit 20 Lesson 4
- Read Well Unit 20 magazine
- Read Well Unit 20 small group book *The Little Red Hen*

Set:

Make sure you have reviewed expectations of how the students should be sitting at their small group tables. Each child knows to sit up and have their eyes on the magazine. We can review the letters, sounds and words learned before using the sound and word cards.

Presentation:

Continue to practice the sounds around the square on the front page of the magazine. Students should touch each sound (tracking) and say the sound all at the same time for the extra practice and repetition. Using the blending cards, have children repeat the words they have practiced during their weekly lessons.

After teaching the direct instruction reading lesson, each student will have their own Read Well lesson small book. Each child will open their book to the story of *The Little Red Hen*.

Preview the text. Discuss previewing as a comprehension strategy.

During reading, briefly define vocabulary words that students might not know in order to help them comprehend the story better.

Visually display for students and point to the words you are defining them.

Link to text by explaining that this story will be about helping friends.

Ask students how they help their friends.

Ask questions to assist comprehension.

(Who is the story about?)

(Who was Little Red Hen's friend?)

Processing:

After reading, allow students to give feedback on the story by sharing personal responses. Discuss some of the characters and the setting of the book.

Closing: Allow time for students to share their answers with their classmates.

Monitoring: Check for comprehension during read-aloud. Observe students as they work to make sure they are on task and understand the requirements.

Assessment: Check for comprehension. Give students the weekly assessment to find out whether they can move on to the next level. (See Appendix for sample sheet).

Follow-up: Have students do a journal entry of a time they really wanted to do something and how they felt when it finally happened, ask them to illustrate their writing and share with a friend.