

February 2009



**THE ROAD
AHEAD**

***Boys' Literacy
Teacher Inquiry Project
2005 to 2008***

This project has been funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

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Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project 2005 to 2008

Final Report

Prepared by
OISE Research Team

For
Ontario Ministry of Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From autumn 2005 through summer 2008, one hundred and three teams, involving one hundred and forty-five schools from English-language boards, were guided by a project team from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project. A parallel project was undertaken in French-language boards and included forty inquiry teams.

Schools were involved in a large-scale collaborative teacher inquiry project designed to address the gender gap in literacy achievement. Included were both elementary and secondary schools, some of which worked with small samples of boys and some of which worked with the entire population of boys in the school. Teachers and administrators examined which strategies mattered most in terms of their effect on boys' engagement with and achievement in literacy development. Of high importance was the fact that this project was closely aligned with ongoing provincial initiatives concerned with resource and staff development. Teacher inquiry was meant to be a key *complement* to school reform and literacy-based initiatives presently underway in schools and districts.

As part of a series of Ontario Ministry of Education initiatives to raise the achievement of boys, schools were given funding for investigations carried out over three years. It was to be the largest teacher inquiry project undertaken in education in Ontario. The report contains significant findings on teaching practices that yielded promising results for boys. It also chronicles the growth in data literacy among participating teachers and presents evidence of greater commitment to ongoing collaboration at the conclusion of three years.

By all accounts the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project has been successful. Improvements in the level of boys' interest, engagement, and achievement in reading, writing, and oral language have been noted. School teams report, through their data, increases in boys' confidence to engage in literacy activities. Tribute is paid to the teachers and administrators in schools and district offices who worked collaboratively to determine what works best for the boys in their schools. We have the evidence that talk works – before, during, and after reading and writing. When we allow boys to make choices, their interest and enthusiasm can be kindled. One main lesson was learned: “if boys' interests are to be valued (and there is conclusive evidence that they should be), we need to embrace a broader definition of “reading materials” when selecting the range of materials used”. We cannot continue to do the same things with the same materials. However, providing good materials is only one part of this complex puzzle. What we do with them matters more. Teaching isn't everything, it is the only thing.

Eight key learnings were identified in this project.

- 1. The power of teaching with a wide variety of materials:** Obtaining and making available and accessible a wide range of materials of interest to boys

increased their motivation and engagement. These materials were enhanced when they were used by teachers in instruction and assessment activities.

2. **The role of social interaction in boys' learning:** This project demonstrated the value and the role of social interaction in boys' learning. Working in social learning contexts provides boys with the opportunity to talk about issues, increasing interest and engagement.
3. **The importance of regular and consistent provision of choice for boys:** This project demonstrated that promising results were obtained when boys' opinions were surveyed and their student voices considered. Boys performed well when they had opportunities to choose their reading resources and to have a say in how they responded to their reading and writing. Not only is this an effective way of identifying interests, concerns, needs, and areas for improvement, it is also an important way to actively engage students in their own learning. By listening to student voices, teachers were better able to respect, respond to, and make decisions about student learning.
4. **The importance of student talk:** Talk allows individuals to communicate, share ideas about topics and relevant issues, and make sense of the books they are reading. Such conversations provide a solid foundation for reading and writing activities and help boys develop confidence and a sense of competence.
5. **The value of using differentiated approaches:** Differentiated approaches to instruction and assessment recognize and respect the unique needs of boys. In this project teachers used a variety of indicators and tools in order to collect data to assess the knowledge, interests, attitudes, and learning styles of individual students. A variety of instructional approaches were used to provide boys with opportunities to develop necessary skills and to celebrate current strengths.
6. **The importance of clear assessment strategies:** Clear assessment strategies helped teachers provide focused, precise instruction. Assessment that included multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources and tracking of performance over time provided teachers with information that enabled them to respond effectively to the individual learning needs of students.
7. **The benefits of information and communication technology:** Used in moderation, information and communication technology can be a powerful stimulant to feedback and affirms student choices and responses. Use of this technology was a complementary instructional strategy that motivated and engaged students. It provided immediate feedback and respected the everyday reality of boys who routinely use computers and engage in online activities such as blogs, wikis, and games. New media and technology provided boys with increased opportunities to become engaged in reading activities. Videos, computer social networks, and computer games supported boys' literacy development. Specifically, blogs, wikis, smart boards, interactive video/audio conferencing, and gaming activities stimulated and sustained interest and motivation.
8. **The need to engage parents/guardians and the community as partners:** It was important to include parents in their children's education, and the inclusion of male role models from the community in reading was a real success.

In addition to these key learnings, eight notable successes were identified from the final school project reports. These successes reflected changes in the professional learning culture of schools, the growth of teachers in meeting the needs of boys, and improvement in boys' achievement and attitudes.

- 1. Use of data to record and report boys' literacy achievement and attitudes:** School project teams collected, analysed, and displayed data on boys' achievement and attitudes. Progress was tracked and frequently displayed in prominent places within classrooms. In many schools there were noticeable gains. However, there were also schools where boys' achievement did not improve. The data, however, were used to inform decisions and to take action for designing and revising instructional and assessment strategies and activities.
- 2. Purposeful collaboration among teachers:** The project resulted in teachers purposefully collaborating on issues related to teacher inquiry and boys' literacy. Purposeful collaborative time was consistently put to good use over the three years of the project. Teachers shared ideas, best practices, and resources. Together they developed the belief that boys could be successful readers.
- 3. In-depth understanding of teaching strategies:** The three-year inquiry project contributed to an in-depth understanding of teaching strategies that were focused on the needs of individuals and groups of students, especially boys. Instruction and assessment practices became more authentic, immediate, and refined as the study progressed. A range of differentiated approaches were used, including tracking individual progress, consensus marking, read aloud strategies, more talk time, and more feedback to guide students.
- 4. Increased deprivatization of teaching:** During this project teaching became a more transparent activity. Instructional and assessment strategies were examined, discussed, and shared. The increased deprivatization of teaching included classroom visits, shared observations and note taking, and public displays of student achievement data for continued focus on accelerating the growth of targeted students. These types of activities occurred in many school projects.
- 5. Increased involvement of others:** The project generated interest among other staff within and among schools. This extension of interest and involvement of other staff provided a wider network and a foundation for sustaining this initiative over time. The spillover effect also extended to students, both boys and girls, in other grade levels, as well as leading to the increased involvement of parents.
- 6. Growth of data literacy within and between schools:** Without question, the teacher inquiry projects resulted in the growth of data literacy. Learning how to collect, analyse, and act on data became a way of functioning. The focus on teacher inquiry became a vehicle for shared accountability.
- 7. Growth of collaborative assessments as regular and consistent practices:** Teachers began to assess student work together more often and regularly. Collaborative assessments provided teachers with opportunities to share best practices and to improve current instructional and assessment practices. Practices among teachers became more consistent because of the collaboration.

- 8. Development of a more positive school climate:** The project supported teachers in planning and working together. As a result, relationships among staff, students, and the community were strengthened and existing school climates and professional learning communities were positively enhanced.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Ministry of Education in the province of Ontario has a sustained intent of maximizing the educational attainment of all students in the province. Three core goals of the Ministry of Education are as follows:

1. Higher levels of student achievement
2. Reduced gaps in student achievement
3. Increased public confidence in publicly funded education

These goals represent the ongoing focus of activities and initiatives related to education in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Core goal number two is concerned with initiatives to support those students who for whatever reason need extra help. One group in this category is boys who are falling behind in their literacy achievement.

“Our goal is to reach every student, regardless of his or her personal circumstances. Our commitment to both higher achievement and reduced gaps in performance is increasingly being recognized internationally as a unique strength of Ontario’s approach to education.”

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 8)

Since the inception of large-scale achievement testing through the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), results from these tests indicate a pattern of underperformance in reading and writing for many male students in the province of Ontario.

The gender gap revealed by EQAO 2007–08 assessments of reading and writing in Grades 3 and 6 was as follows:

- Grade 3 reading: 68% girls vs. 55% boys
- Grade 3 writing: 74% girls vs. 59% boys
- Grade 6 reading: 73% girls vs. 60% boys
- Grade 6 writing: 76% girls vs. 58% boys

These numbers represent the percentage of all Grade 3 and 6 students at or above the provincial standard. It is evident that a gender gap exists.

The gender disparity is further exhibited in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) administered yearly to students in Grade 10. Results are for fully

participating first-time eligible students and in 2007–08 success rates were as follows: 88% girls vs. 80% boys.

Furthermore, the perception surveys that form part of the EQAO achievement tests indicate that boys are less interested and committed to reading and writing than girls. Girls are more likely than boys to say that they like to read and write both inside and outside of school, and they read and write more frequently and have more positive feelings about their literacy abilities.

Perception data from the 2007–08 EQAO tests in Grades 3 and 6 can be summarized as follows:

I like to read – Grade 3 students:	68% girls vs. 51% boys
I like to write – Grade 3 students:	61% girls vs. 43% boys
I like to read – Grade 6 students:	61% girls vs. 40% boys
I like to write – Grade 6 students:	51% girls vs. 32% boys

These data demonstrate that in both student achievement and student engagement with reading and writing there are marked gender differences between boys and girls.

To promote student success in literacy for all students, the Ministry of Education undertook several initiatives related to boys and literacy. In fall 2004, *Me Read? No Way!*, a ministry resource guide, was published. *Me Read? No Way!* identifies thirteen practical and evidence-based strategies to support boys' literacy achievement. *Me Read? No Way!* was designed for teachers, principals, and other professionals at the elementary and secondary level. It was intended to provoke discussion and build capacity among Ontario educators. Early and continued interest in this document speaks to educator motivation to address boys' literacy achievement.

The thirteen key strategies, used as an organizer for the document, are as follows:

- Have the right stuff: *Choosing appropriate classroom resources for boys*
- Help make it a habit: *Providing frequent opportunities to read and write*
- Teach with purpose: *Understanding boys' learning styles*
- Embrace the arts: *Using the arts to bring literacy to life*
- Let them talk: *Appealing to boys' need for social interaction*
- Find positive role models: *Influencing boys' attitudes through the use of role models*
- Read between the lines: *Bringing critical-literacy skills into the classroom*
- Keep it real: *Making reading and writing relevant to boys*
- Get the Net: *Using technology to get boys interested in literacy*
- Assess for success: *Using appropriate assessment tools for boys*
- Be in their corner: *The role of the teacher in boys' literacy*
- Drive the point home: *Engaging parents in boys' literacy*
- Build a school-wide focus: *Building literacy beyond the classroom*

In January 2005, the Ministry of Education convened a provincial symposium on the topic of Boys' Literacy Achievement. The event was a forum to share effective practices, pool expertise, and increase awareness of recent research related to boys' literacy achievement. In addition to keynote presenters such as Jeffrey Wilhelm, there were breakout sessions featuring promising practices from schools and districts. Attendance was sponsored by the ministry and the response was robust. A CD containing all session print materials and selected tapings was sent to every teacher in the province. During the proceedings, Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education at that time, promised, "We are going to close the gap that is hurting the future of too many boys and young men in the province. We will provide the focus and resources to find solutions."

In January 2005, the ministry established a Boys' Literacy Advisory Team that met for six months to discuss boys' literacy and to advise the Minister.

In 2005 March, the ministry committed \$5,000 per school site to selected schools with large achievement gaps as evidenced by Grade 6 EQAO data. Funds were for the acquisition of resources to engage boys in literacy activities.

All the above initiatives were designed to increase school and district capacity for changing teaching practices related to boys' literacy achievement.

Next, in 2005, the ministry launched a more sustained project. It was recognized that what was required was a determination of promising practices and high yield strategies specifically relevant to the Ontario context. This would entail launching teacher inquiry projects with a specific focus on improving boys' literacy achievement. Taking place in both English-language and French-language schools, the project was designed and developed by the ministry. Of high importance was the fact that this project was closely aligned with ongoing provincial initiatives concerned with resource and staff development. Teacher inquiry was meant to be a key *complement* to school reform and literacy-based initiatives presently underway in schools and districts.

It was understood that there would be a great variation in knowledge of the process of teacher inquiry and boys' literacy achievement in schools across the province. It followed that capacity building in areas related to both teacher inquiry and student achievement would be required. A project team from the Continuing Education unit of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, was contracted by the Ministry of Education to lead this initiative in the English-language schools of Ontario. The team was comprised of researchers and practitioners, all of whom have broad, in-depth experience with staff development and action research. The OISE team members also have specific and complementary experiences in literacy development, resource acquisition and libraries, research in aspects of literacy, large-scale and school reform activities, and boys' literacy achievement. The project team's task was to support the school inquiry work, and to review and write all necessary reports, including overall key findings of the project. All this work was monitored and approved through the ministry. The team was solely responsible for outreach to schools

and professional development through the entire teacher inquiry cycle. The OISE team attended several of the design sessions and had responsibility for all capacity building prior to and during the three-year life of the project. A complete overview of all knowledge mobilization strategies used appears in a later section of this report.

THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE TEACHER INQUIRY PROJECT

The Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project was initiated in the province in September and October 2005. The project was to be a multi-year effort and was meant to involve teams from either individual schools or a group of schools. Teams were invited to apply for up to \$20,000 funding for purposes of the inquiry work. From the outset, a framework for capacity building and accountability was made clear to all potential participants. School teams knew that two interim reports, as well as a final report, would be required, and guidelines for spending the funds were communicated. There were to be no surprises.

The overall outcomes of the project were to:

1. conduct inquiries into what strategies work well to improve boys' literacy skills;
2. share results with teachers across the province;
3. develop processes for collaborative review of student achievement data;
4. create school networks to promote ongoing collaborative learning in ways that increase student achievement; and
5. contribute to teacher confidence and morale.

The Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project was intended to complement other provincial initiatives focused on plans to "raise the bar" and "reduce the gap" related to students' literacy achievement. Themes of alignment and coherence with existing initiatives were to be emphasized throughout this project. Participants were expected to capitalize on teaching practices and resources related to teaching and assessing reading and writing as foundational to their classroom inquiry. Activities related to this project were meant to align with the belief statements and guiding principles from all Expert Panel reports previously prepared and distributed through the province.

An excerpt from the initial information sent by the Ministry of Education to school districts in October 2005 (*Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project: Questions and Answers*) captured the purpose of the project in this way: "We trust the approach will create a system-wide mindset for school improvement, enhance decision making, promote reflection, and empower those who participate in the work."

More specifically, the overall goals of the project were to:

- build capacity among teachers and administrators for literacy instruction that supports achievement among boys, drawing on the strategies described in *Me Read? No Way!*;
- identify and recommend effective practices to improve boys' literacy skills;
- share effective practices across the province;
- improve instruction and programs on the basis of assessment data; and
- build sustainable, collaborative professional learning communities among schools for purposes of literacy development.

Phases of the Ministry of Education teacher inquiry process were described as follows:

Phase One: Define the question known as the “Essential Question”.

Phase Two: Create an action plan.

Phase Three: Collect data.

Phase Four: Analyse the data.

Phase Five: Draw conclusions and determine next steps.

WHY TEACHER INQUIRY?

“With the practice of informed professional judgment, embedded in a culture of inquiry, conversations in meeting rooms and hallways in schools become tremendously purposeful and insightful.”

(Dr. Steven Katz, Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, EQAO Conference on Large Scale Assessment, November 2007)

Teacher inquiry has other names, such as action research and teacher research. For purposes of this project the term “teacher inquiry” was used. Carl Glickman (1995) defines teacher inquiry as “study conducted by colleagues in a school setting of the results of their activities to improve instruction”. It is a process by which, after determining an area of focus and an essential question related to their teaching practice, teachers observe in their schools and classrooms, modify their practices in light of their observations, commit to reading, reflection, and discussion with colleagues, and assess the results of the inquiry. Next steps are determined and the process begins again.

As educators engage in inquiry there is a spiralling effect, and as they work with their essential questions and their data, it is expected that the focus of their inquiry could change. This comes about as new insights are learned as new data are collected or deconstructed. Educators are encouraged to make necessary changes to their essential questions, methods of data collection, sample sizes, and/or data analysis techniques.

How is teacher inquiry different from the daily activities of all classroom teachers? Teachers regularly engage in classroom assessments to determine the efficacy of their teaching and make adjustments to their instructional strategies. What distinguishes the

teacher inquiry process is heightened *clarity of purpose*, the *collaborative* nature of the work, and a *systematic approach*.

The origins of teacher inquiry are found in research from several fields of social psychology. Kurt Lewin, in the 1930s, contended that social scientific researchers must be continually working with practitioners, particularly in fields such as education, psychology, and medicine, in order to determine the impact of their research.

Donald Schön (1983) coined the phrase “reflective practice” to mean the habit of posing and exploring problems or dilemmas identified by the practitioners themselves. Over time, reflective practice has been widely accepted as an essential element for teacher growth in practice, given the action-oriented world that is the classroom. Reflection over time is a hallmark of the inquiry process. Teacher inquiry assists teachers with a deepened understanding of their practice (Hubbard and Power, 1999) through the act of determining an inquiry question, collecting and analysing evidence about that question, and drawing conclusions. This cycle heightens professional self-confidence and acknowledges teachers’ contributions to the knowledge base of the profession (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1996). There is a growing body of research indicating that *school-based* professional learning, which is often termed “job-embedded” (Joyce, Weil, and Showers, 1992), increases the possibility that new practices will be applied and used consistently within the classroom.

“Developing action research in the teaching profession, then, is not a matter of starting from scratch but rather of building on current practices.”

(Beck, 1998, p.51)

Author, researcher, and consultant, Douglas B. Reeves, founder of the Leadership and Learning Centre, works on several projects in the province of Ontario. In his recent large action research project conducted in the U.S. (Reeves, 2008), conclusions indicated the positive and lasting effects of classroom teacher inquiry:

1. Teacher researchers frequently (although not always) have a direct and measurable impact on student achievement, behaviour, and educational equity as a result of specific practices during their research.
2. Whether or not the teachers’ hypotheses are supported by their research, teacher researchers affect the professional practices of their colleagues.
3. Participation in action research and subsequent reflection on research results can lead to what Collins (2001) calls the “flywheel effect”. Effective professional practices are reinforced and repeated not only by the original teacher researchers but also by many other teachers who are influenced by these observations and practices.

“What is missing from the knowledge base for teaching, therefore, are the voices of the teachers themselves, the questions teachers ask, the ways teachers use

writing and intentional talk in their work lives, and the interpretive frames teachers use to understand and improve their own classroom practices.”

(Cochran-Smith, 1990, p. 2)

CHAPTER 2

THE PROJECT PROCESS

METHODOLOGY

Launch of the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project

The launch of the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project, in the English-language school boards, occurred at a series of regional provincial symposia in October 2005. A ten-member team from each district composed of both district and school-based educators attended the day-long session. The purposes were twofold: to build capacity so that interested school teams could complete the required Work Plan (the template for the Teacher Inquiry application form – see Appendix 1) and to provide foundational information on the teacher inquiry process itself. Each session was similar, with input, participant discussion, and question-and-answer time with the OISE research team and ministry Education Officers.

The Work Plan

Preparation of the Work Plan took place over a one-month period. The Work Plan had to include a description of the school context, a rationale for participation in the process, formulation of an essential question, a draft inquiry plan, and identification of school team members. A budget was also to be developed. District-level approval was required.

More specifically, the Work Plan requested that each school team first outline, as precisely as possible, why the boys in the school would benefit from a teacher inquiry project as well as determining an essential or focusing question for the proposed work. Generally, teams used a variety of large-scale data such as EQAO achievement quantitative data. In addition, many elementary applicants drew from commercially prepared measures they were using, such as the Developmental Reading Assessment. Some schools included information about their boys that was anecdotal and a few included qualitative data in the form of student perception surveys. Work Plan data and findings about boys' literacy were generally robust.

School teams applying had to identify targeted actions they would take in their inquiry, including methods of collecting data. The thirteen strategies from *Me Read? No Way!* were to be the framework for schools' inquiries. Finally, each plan was to include a request for up to \$20,000, along with a plan detailing how funds were to be spent. Budgets could be used for print and non-print resources for students or teachers, for school-wide capacity building. Expenditures for computer hardware or capital items were not allowable. Importantly, schools could allocate funds for substitute teacher coverage so that teachers could have the necessary time to collaboratively prepare and execute their inquiry. Since one criterion was that the teacher inquiry had to involve teams, allocations of teacher time were crucial for success.

Information in each Work Plan was not only useful in the selection process but also provided the OISE researchers with valuable information about teachers' overall understanding of processes related to teacher inquiry.

OISE researchers provided support to hundreds of school team applicants as they prepared their Work Plan submissions. Since the district teams that attended the regional symposia were not necessarily those that submitted a Work Plan, one-on-one capacity building was required. In several cases, researchers travelled to schools to offer face-to-face consultation and in one case made a second trip to a more remote area of the province to offer an in-service to interested applicants from groups of schools within several districts in the region. Several school teams reached out to community members and nearby university partners to assist with the preparation of their Work Plans.

Prospective school teams contacted OISE researchers with numerous questions related to the development of the Work Plan. Some of the most frequently asked questions were:

- *Is our essential inquiry question too broad in scope? How could the question be adjusted to better reflect the intent of the project?*
- *How much baseline or background data is required within the Work Plan?*
- *What would be appropriate types of data to collect throughout the process?*
- *What kinds of activities are best included within the inquiry process?*
- *What kinds of materials and resources can be purchased for inquiry work?*
- *What are some recommended currently available boys' resources?*

The overall impression was that school applicants from across the province had an abiding interest in and a strong commitment to learn more about ways to improve boys' achievement in literacy and to act on their new understandings.

Selection Process

Provincial reaction was enthusiastic and response was great with over one thousand teams submitting Work Plans. This response attests to a sincere motivation to improve student achievement in both elementary and secondary schools as well as a desire for resources that would be of interest to boys. Submissions were subjected to rigorous review by regional and central ministry Education Officers, using established criteria listed in the Work Plan. Final selections were made. OISE researchers were at arms' length from the selection process.

Outcome of the Selection Process

One hundred and three English-language projects were selected for funding. An inquiry project was funded in all but three school districts. A number of school districts, including several of the largest, had several projects. Provincial authority schools were also chosen. Early in spring 2006, letters of acceptance were issued and funds were disbursed to the district for distribution to the selected inquiry teams. A

letter reiterating the description of the project, including goals and directions for accountability, was sent out.

Inquiry Team Composition

Inquiry teams were generally combinations of both classroom teachers and other staff. Teacher librarians, special education support staff, teachers of English as a second language, literacy leaders, and Student Success leaders (secondary) were often included, and in some teams school administrators participated. In most cases, the team members came from a single school; other teams had members from several schools and some bridged two panels. Each team was to identify a key contact who could be a teacher or resource staff member and, in some cases, was the school principal or vice-principal. School teams ranged in size from two to twenty-eight, and the average size was seven.

Approximately 730 educators were involved overall and team membership changed somewhat over the three-year cycle due to attrition and transfers of staff. Most projects involved either all elementary or all secondary members, but there were also a few other scenarios. For instance, one project involved Kindergarten boys from nine different schools; several others involved boys in Grades 7, 8, and 9, spanning two panels. Some projects included the entire school's population of boys and others were more targeted. Some projects were focused on a division or department, while others focused on specific classes or courses within the school. Some projects included students who spanned a couple of selected grades.

Analysis of Strategies Selected

The thirteen strategies in *Me Read? No Way!* served as an organizer for Work Plans, and schools were asked to identify which strategy or combinations of strategies that would be the focus of their inquiries. Some strategies were chosen very frequently. As might be expected, enthusiasm for the acquisition of new resources appealing to boys led a significant number of schools to choose the strategy "Have the right stuff". Other popular strategies were: "Help make it a habit"; "Let them talk"; "Find positive role models"; "Keep it real"; "Build a school-wide focus; and "Be in their corner". Fewer schools targeted "Get the Net"; "Assess for success"; "Teach with a purpose"; or "Drive the point home". Very few schools selected "Embrace the arts" or "Read between the lines". Most school teams identified more than one strategy and many schools ticked them all! Since many projects identified a variety of strategies as part of their inquiry, it is impossible to numerically catalogue their original choices. Through the life of the project, inquiry teams became more focused and strategy choice narrowed to one or two.

A list of all the school teams, their districts, and their final essential questions is provided in Appendix 2.

Disbursement of Funds

Work Plans indicated that the majority of project funds would be spent on boys' literacy resources. This was timely as, in the past five years, there has been a

significant increase in the number of “boy-friendly” materials available commercially. Funds were also used to purchase less traditional reading classroom materials such as magazines and newspapers aimed at adolescent boys as well as newly available software. Graphic novels proved a popular choice due, in part, to the recent increase in availability. In the final year of the project, each team received an additional \$2,000 in funding to use as they saw fit to complete their project.

In addition, schools earmarked funds for speakers who could increase teachers' professional knowledge regarding boys and literacy. Community speakers and authors who were seen to be motivational for boys were invited. Links to parent/guardian and community resources were important, and expenditure in that area appeared to increase over time. Some schools, particularly elementary schools, purchased commercially available literacy assessment tools. Secondary schools chose interactive software for post-reading follow-up as well as software that allowed tracking of boys' reading choices and frequency of book selection. Professional resources were sometimes purchased in multiple copies for job-embedded staff development activities such as book study.

Appendix 3 identifies the professional resources highlighted either by inquiry teams in their Final Reports or through the OISE researchers in the Work Plan Support Booklets.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES AND AREAS OF FOCUS

The following section chronicles the knowledge mobilization strategies and main themes that emerged as foci for OISE researchers in their interactions with school inquiry team members. As mentioned earlier, alignment with all relevant provincial resource materials, instructional and assessment strategies, and school processes was identified as often as possible so that teachers involved in this project would see their teacher inquiry work as a natural extension of provincial goals and approaches, district directions, and school improvement plans.

Data Sources

Projects were underway by early spring 2006. OISE researchers drew from a variety of sources to determine the content of their support to schools. Current research related to teacher inquiry, experiences with large-scale action research from other jurisdictions, and new findings on how best to teach boys all contributed. Data collected by the school teams engaged in the inquiry process also informed OISE researcher decisions about how best to support their work. Significant data were also collected through the two Interim Team Reports of June 2006 and June 2007, and the template of promising practices required for the winter 2007 in-service mid-point in the project.

Data collection by the OISE team was accomplished through field notes kept for the duration of this project of all interactions by e-mail, face-to-face inquiries, and

telephone contacts. Researchers prepared templates to capture key points noted from the Interim Reports. Schools periodically sent in other materials such as videos and picture books, which were rich sources of data.

Throughout the project, participants' inquiries provided the researchers with information to guide future capacity building. In several cases, OISE research team members arranged a teleconference with individual school teams. Field notes were kept of interactions with the teams and extensive notes were taken during the winter 2007 regional symposia.

Nature of Support to Schools

The OISE research team realized that support to teams in such a large province as Ontario would include a wide array of methods, including print, video, and technological supports. Responses to questions occurred on an ad hoc basis in as timely a fashion as possible.

Regular outreach to each inquiry team would be a hallmark of capacity building along with purposefully targeted print and video. A listserv of all lead contacts with a generic e-mail, accessible by all OISE team members, was established. The Ministry of Education posted all materials online so they were easily accessible to all educators in the province after targeted distribution. Others in the province not part of the project were also interested in the materials. While face-to-face interaction was desirable, constraints and budget would render it infrequent. It was important that support be relevant, timely, and user-friendly as schools were involved in many other aspects of school reform at the school, district, and provincial levels.

OISE researchers sent regular e-mails through the listserv at the outset of the project. The listserv of all team contacts received a more limited response from busy teachers. It was decided that a call to each inquiry team at regular intervals would provide a personal outreach. Calls were personalized communication and thus successful; however, it was a labour-intensive approach. As time progressed, personalized calls were focused on teams that responded less frequently or had requested calls back and, finally, those that had experienced significant personnel changes over the three-year duration of the project. A teleconference series was scheduled towards the end of the project and proved a convenient way for inquiry teams to obtain information and receive answers to questions about completing their Final Reports. Relevant print materials were electronically distributed prior to the teleconferences.

After careful deliberation, several more traditional methods of distribution of support materials were used. For example, multiple copies of all print materials were initially mailed to the attention of each team contact, as were each of the four videos produced. This allowed researchers to track who had received materials and to ensure they were received. The many positive comments about accessibility led to the conclusion that these methods are still effective. An important part of the OISE researchers' work was to maintain a data base of all team contacts, participants, and school and district administrators. This proved challenging as a great many changes of teachers and

administrators occurred over the life of the project. Assisting with transition into the project became an ongoing task for OISE researchers and, increasingly, a topic of conversation with inquiry teams as well.

Regional Symposia – October 2005

These regional sessions were designed both to launch the project and to build provincial capacity for teacher inquiry processes. The sessions were led by OISE research team members. Sessions began with an update of current research on boys' literacy achievement and implications for literacy teaching and assessment. A description of how collaborative teacher inquiry supports increased data literacy and enhances teaching practice was presented. Within a context of relevant research, each session provided an overview of the five phases of teacher inquiry through video case study, discussion, and group activity. An additional goal was the development of common language regarding teacher inquiry.

A critical part of the day-long event was an intensive investigation of phase one of the inquiry process – determination of the essential question. Since the formulation of the “essential question” would drive all other components of the inquiry, a great deal of time was spent on this phase. Participants were asked to critique some pre-prepared essential questions and were also provided with district team planning time to formulate their own potential questions. As this part of the session gave rise to the greatest amount of discussion in each region, it was determined that this phase would need intensive support in upcoming months.

After a presentation of the Work Plan template (see Appendix 1), a question-and-answer period was designed to clarify the intent of each component of the Work Plan. Many logistical questions were clarified during this section of the day.

Work Plan Support Booklets – March 2006 to June 2008

At regular intervals throughout the project, Work Plan Support Booklets (WPSBs) were created and distributed. Twelve booklets were produced during the project life. Each booklet was relatively compact in size and ranged from seven to fifteen pages in colourful practitioner-friendly formats. Each booklet consistently contained sections with articles on instructional and assessment strategies and the specifics of a particular phase of the inquiry process as well as a selection of student and professional resources.

Drawing on recent research and best practices related to boys' literacy, each booklet focused on one aspect of differentiating instruction for boys. Several booklets addressed strategies related to writing, particularly using non-fiction; others focused on the effective use of drama as a means of encouraging reading responses; and others focused on explicit teaching using graphic organizers. In every way, possible connections to provincial initiatives were made explicit. For instance, several schools were using the powerful collaborative assessment strategy, *teacher moderation*. When the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat introduced the teacher moderation webcast, a piece was created for the next Work Plan Support Booklet providing a link to the

webcast. Each support booklet identified new resources related to boys' literacy and offered strategies for using them. Special features identified connections to other relevant Ministry of Education initiatives.

Articles about the phases of teacher inquiry often focused on collecting and analysing data. In early WPSBs these featured information, strategies, and processes related to determining the types of data needed and the development of an action plan to maintain focus and momentum with the inquiry teams.

There was always a component in the booklets related to collaborative processes – how to work successfully as a team. These were take-away type activities that teams could use immediately. Each of the Norms for Collaboration (Garmston & Wellman, 1999) was introduced in the WPSBs accompanied by practical team activities. For example, a section in one June volume, entitled “Reflect, Revise and Renew”, outlined a “carousel activity” giving ideas for end-of-year team activities. Over the course of three years there were many transitions of staff. Techniques for managing the transitions from one academic year to the next and for updating new team members/principals or the entire school staff were part of the end-of-academic-year issues of the WPSBs.

Specific sections appeared periodically that were directed towards the school administrator, who plays such a pivotal role in the teacher inquiry process. The booklets also elaborated on expectations for upcoming reports and the winter 2007 in-service and contained templates provided for the reports.

The September 2006 WPSB became a Progress Report. It provided an overview and status report on the progress of all projects as determined by data from the June 2006 Interim Team Reports. The Progress Report was meant to be a compendium of ideas for other inquiry teams beginning year two. It outlined team activities related to essential question formulation, early data collection strategies, and team processes. It also included promising practices related to boys' literacy teaching. The majority of schools were cited specifically. The Report included follow-up contact information for those teams working with similar strategies as well as a few “school stories”, which were case studies. With the release of each new video (see next page for details) there were suggestions for a team meeting and follow-up activities for viewing the video and discussion. One of the last booklets outlined specifics related to the completion of the Final Report and included the actual template for it.

Regional In-services – January and February 2007

Fall 2006 saw the preparation of face-to-face sessions, held regionally with all inquiry teams. The sessions were designed to support teams at the mid-point of the inquiry process, provide new instructional strategies particularly focused on classroom assessment, and give opportunities for inquiry teams to share best practices and learn from each other. In November 2006, a template was provided to all school teams. They were asked to collaboratively complete it and bring it with them to the regional in-service. This template was meant to accomplish several goals, including acting as an advance organizer prior to the in-service and providing a means for the OISE research

team to identify progress and challenges to date. Additionally, each inquiry team was asked to bring an example of a data collection tool it was using. Some inquiry teams provided samples of student surveys and classroom assessment tools, while others brought customized tools such as data walls. A video clip focused on collecting and using qualitative data was shown and the full version was sent to schools shortly thereafter. Plenty of time was spent sharing and reviewing all resources as well as listening to brief and specific “school stories” about instructional strategies and team processes that were working well. Teams left with a planning tool that could be used for further work. These sessions were strategically timed to infuse schools with new ideas and maintain momentum. Notes were taken throughout each session and these provided the OISE research team with valuable insights about where teams required support for the final stretch of the project.

Roundtables

OISE researchers conducted a limited number of additional face-to-face customized sessions for either single or multiple school teams. An early session was provided for a northern grouping of school teams that were working on their essential question. A few in-services were held towards the end of the inquiry project as the teams struggled with collecting data in a manageable way. Several boards with multiple team projects scheduled time to bring their teacher teams together.

Video Supports

Four videos were produced over the course of the project. They were meant to accompany the print materials, e-mails, and telephone support. Topics elaborated on key messages related to inquiry and boys' literacy strategies as they occurred during the project.

Video #1 Getting Started with Teacher Inquiry

Key message: Teacher inquiry is “doable” for classroom teachers because its methods capitalize on daily teaching and assessment in classrooms. In the video, educators Sandra Fraser and Dr. Megan Borner who had engaged in classroom inquiry outlined how it informed their practice and their growing sense of professional empowerment.

Video #2 A Conversation with Dr. Lynne Hannay: Collecting and Analysing Classroom Data

Key message: The inquiry process should include a balance of both qualitative and quantitative data. Classroom-friendly qualitative methods were explored. Dr. Lynne Hannay, who has a long history of field work in classroom inquiry, was interviewed in this video.

Video #3 Taking Stock in Year Three

Key message: Collaborative data analysis is an iterative process of investigation, collection of information, and adjustments to teaching. It is a teaching–assessing cycle. In this video, members of the inquiry team from Roden Public School discussed aspects related to the evolution of their action research on this tape.

Video #4 Read Anything Good Lately? Boys, Books and Reading

Key message: Successful literacy teaching requires that teachers understand boys' literacy interests, provide choices for them, and demonstrate a valuing of their reading and writing choices and interests. OISE faculty member Dr. Larry Swartz discusses reading and writing interests with a group of twelve-year-old boys and comments on strategies to engage this age group.

Feedback Reports

At the beginning of the last year of the project and following receipt of the second Interim Team Reports, each team received individually customized feedback. Promising instructional strategies were noted and teams were given advice as to how to match a manageable data collection strategy to their ever-narrowing essential question. Teams were invited to contact OISE researchers with any changes they were making to their inquiry projects.

Other Supports

Tele-conferences (fourteen in number) were held two months prior to the conclusion of the project. Response was very robust, as all schools wanted details and capacity building related to completion of their Final Reports. The template for completing the report was provided in advance as well as in an earlier Work Plan Support Booklet.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings compiled from an analysis of the Final Reports submitted by ninety-seven of the one hundred and three teacher inquiry teams and from the notes recorded by the OISE project team. The findings are organized within the following five sections:

- Conducting teacher inquiry
- Data collection
- Evidence of impact
- Instruction and assessment
- Collaboration

In each of these five sections the findings are discussed and, where possible, then illustrated by a variety of examples taken from the final team reports.

CONDUCTING TEACHER INQUIRY

This section identifies some of the issues related to conducting collaborative inquiry that teachers had to resolve. Although the understanding and skill level of teachers in each team varied, as they worked through the various stages of the inquiry process, distinct patterns and themes emerged over the three years.

These patterns and themes were related to the following issues:

- **Clarifying a common language related to the different phases of the inquiry process**

Regional symposia provided foundational information necessary for participants to prepare their applications to participate in the project. As there are many variations in the scope of teacher inquiry, it was important to provide a set of definitions for the Ontario Ministry of Education version. The phases of the ministry teacher inquiry process were described as follows:

- Phase One: Define the question known as the “Essential Question”.
- Phase Two: Create an action plan.
- Phase Three: Collect data.
- Phase Four: Analyse the data.
- Phase Five: Draw conclusions and determine next steps.

- **Emphasizing that teacher inquiry is doable for classroom teachers**

It was critical that teachers understood that collaborative teacher inquiry could be manageable in spite of all the competing demands on teacher/administrator time. This

very important message for inquiry teams was most evident in two phases of the project. In preparation of the “essential question” (phase one), most school teams began their inquiry with very general questions encompassing many strategies from *Me Read? No Way?* In early action planning (phase two), teams indicated they would use many data tools to collect information on their students’ response to their broad essential question. At the same time, school teams expressed concern as to whether their projects could be completed over time. OISE researchers provided assistance to teams so that they could manage their inquiry in a more focused way.

- **Using classroom assessment data and other board or school-wide measures in their projects**

Many teams needed reassurance that a solid conclusion could be reached in the inquiry process by looking more systematically at classroom data already collected. Such data might, for example, include the results of the Development Reading Assessment tool. Over time, school teams went deeper and focused their inquiry on specific areas measured by such tools.

- **Narrowing the scope of and, in some cases, the sample size for the inquiry**

Initially inquiry teams ambitiously selected many strategies and explored many paths to improving boys’ literacy achievement. A more focused approach allowed teams to manage the inquiry process better and to probe deeper. Specific and narrower approach led to practical and targeted findings. As a result more meaningful interventions occurred, and more meaningful conclusions were drawn, during the three-year period.

- **Understanding the value of qualitative data and achieving a balance of using both qualitative and quantitative data in their project**

While classroom teachers are adept users of observation and anecdotal evidence, there was a belief among members of many of the teams that only “numbers” matter. This belief formed part of the focus for the last half of the project as capacity was built on understanding the various methods for systematically collecting qualitative data and finding manageable ways to interpret and use these data.

- **Aligning the data collection scheme tightly to the essential question and determining conclusions from the analysis**

Mid-way through the project, as supported by a review of the second Interim Team Reports, most teams were employing too many strategies with too many data tools and experiencing challenges in managing their projects. As a result, capacity-building activities were designed to clarify design issues and link language and concepts with specific strategies in a meaningful and efficient way. Terminology such as “sample”, “triangulation”, “validity”, “reliability”, and “sample size” were explained and connected with practical inquiry strategies. For example, when trying to understand boys’ beliefs and ideas about a topic, triangulation can be a very helpful procedure. Not only does triangulation establish that validity has been met, it also enhances the integrity of inferences that are made. It can be achieved by using multiple data sources (e.g., student, teacher, and parent), multiple investigators, different theoretical perspectives,

multiple data collection methods (e.g., tests, interviews, and observations), or all of these.

DATA COLLECTION

This section presents five outcomes related to data collection:

1. Use of a wide range of data tools and strategies
2. Improved use of data
3. Public displays of student achievement data
4. Modifications and adaptations to data collecting
5. Realistic portrayal and use of data findings

- **Use of a wide range of data tools and strategies**

As the project progressed, there was a growing familiarity with a wider range of different data tools and strategies. As a result, school teams moved beyond commercially prepared tools and towards customized versions of rubrics and checklists reflective of the school context, demographics, and their particular boys' own needs. A variety of examples illustrate the wide range of data tools and strategies used.

The school team at [Queen of Peace Catholic Elementary School](#) used a range of data tools and strategies over the course of the project. Team members believed that their understanding and use of data increased over the three years. They reported, "We grew in our expertise in using a wide array of assessment strategies – observation, anecdotal notes, rubrics, and checklists. We also used a Writers' Attitude and Aptitude Survey." Similarly, members of the school team at [Roden Public School](#) came to appreciate the value of using complementary qualitative data to support their inquiry. As they explained, "Although we began our inquiry by looking at mostly quantitative data, we learned, over the course of our inquiry, that the qualitative types of data provided more meaningful insight into the benefits of using our software and reading samples."

At [St. Paul Catholic Elementary School](#) the project team "used a variety of types of data collection including tools aimed at understanding students' multiple intelligences, which aided differentiated instruction strategies across the school." [St. John French Immersion Catholic School](#) used quantitative data to show "increased level in reading and comprehension for all boys", while qualitative data was better for demonstrating a "new love of reading".

School teams customized assessment instruments and tools. For example, the team from [Queen Elizabeth, Admaston and Central Public Schools](#) developed a non-fiction conventions checklist that allowed teachers to monitor the understanding of various text features and the ways in which students use non-fiction books. At [St. Anthony's and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Schools](#), the team "began using one tool and had doubts about the validity." As a result, the team "switched to using another tool designed to

measure both comprehension and attitude” and “collected anecdotal evidence from an increase in check out numbers among boys, from our library.”

At [Southwood Park Public School](#) teachers consistently implemented diagnostic assessment data. Using this new information, teachers adjusted their teaching strategies to match student learning styles. The response from the school team at [St. Ann School](#) summarizes the excitement related to data use: “We have truly discovered that data can drive effective instruction.”

- **Improved use of data**

Inquiry teams developed a greater familiarity with the use of data, including qualitative and quantitative approaches. This enabled teams to communicate more clearly and to explore different tools and strategies. Teams went deeper in their collaborative analysis of student achievement results. One team explained, at a regional in-service in winter 2007, that frequent discussions, emerging from use of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in their primary division, provided an opportunity for different conclusions to be drawn.

The school team at [St. Peter Catholic School](#), for example, used moderated marking and a single consistent rubric to determine the level of students’ achievement and to provide feedback. These activities also helped to determine areas of instruction that needed reinforcement. At [St. Patrick’s School](#), DRA assessment had the greatest impact in guiding instruction, while anecdotal and classroom observations captured student excitement and engagement. Chronicling questions, developing interest inventories, and tallying reading logs transformed qualitative data into quantitative data at [Riverside Public School](#) where the Comprehension, Attitude, Strategies, Interest (CASI) assessment and EQAO scores showed a dramatic increase.

- **Public displays of student achievement data**

Inquiry teams increasingly used public displays of student achievement data and consistent collaborative analysis of data. A comment by the school team at [Queen of Peace Catholic Elementary School](#) captured the value of data and public displays of data: “Rather than ‘fearing’ data and viewing it as an ‘outside’ force, we have come to realize that we, as teachers, have always tracked and collected data and it should be ‘invited’ in and displayed proudly.”

Data tracking through the use of data walls was a strategy frequently used by teams. At [Holy Rosary School](#), where data walls were used to track students’ progress, the team stated, “We see assessment as the motor that drives our instruction and as the GPS that tells us where to go with each of our students.” [The Equal Opportunities School Group](#) said that the “data walls helped us to identify patterns and needs and plan for the focus of instruction and PD”. The school team at [Rosethorn Junior Public School](#) indicated that “a direct focus on assessment tools and analysis of results gave us direction in our professional development to best meet the needs of pupils, such as utilizing the expertise of our school literacy coach, sharing of instructional strategies, and developing a data wall”. Efforts to explore and understand these data were aided by a variety of

visuals. For example, at [Holy Family Catholic School](#), charts, graphs, and summaries were developed and clearly presented.

Teachers at [Oakwood Public School](#) engaged in consensus marking. The continual conversation about student results had a positive impact on teaching practices and led to more support being provided to meet the learning needs of boys.

Teams used consistent tracking over time. [St. John French Immersion Catholic School](#) used fewer paper-and-pencil tests and quizzes and used more checklists and anecdotal records, demonstrating growth in the use of qualitative measures. To sustain its project, the school used school-wide tracking charts. By developing a reading interest survey, [Sacred Heart School](#) was able to pinpoint when boys started to disengage with literacy.

Some school teams found that data can yield conflicting findings. At [St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School](#), 2007 EQAO data did not support an improvement in literacy achievement. However, other data, namely the level of students' acceptance and active participation in daily sustained silent reading, were seen as a positive outcome.

- **Modifications and adaptations to data collecting**

Teams used multiple mixed methods to collect data. In some cases where data were too encompassing, modified data samples and data collection strategies were used to achieve better alignment with the project questions. This improved manageability and increased facility in making mid-course corrections when data indicated that a changed approach was required.

At [Holy Rosary School](#), an assessment cycle was implemented using Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) goals. Decisions were based on precise teaching targets, reassessment of the effectiveness of strategies, and the need to make further improvements. Over the course of the three years, [Hawthorne Village Public School](#) teachers modified their data collection when one method proved unreliable. They also adjusted the depth and scope of data collection relative to the ages of students in the cohort. For instance, in Grade 2, the focus was on comprehension; in Grade 4 it was on comprehension and fluency. Data collected from standard assessments such as EQAO and DRA tests were often combined with attitude surveys and a range of checklists. In addition, qualitative data, such as library sign-outs and observations, were used to provide a complementary perspective.

- **Realistic portrayal and use of data findings**

Inquiry teams improved their ability to present realistic portrayals of data findings. Data were used as a stepping stone for making decisions and taking action. Data were also used to support a focus on teaching with purpose, including being more explicit, breaking tasks into manageable chunks, setting goals, and providing timely feedback.

In some cases, teams became more adept at working through the problem of two sets of data that appeared to point to different conclusions. At [Holy Saviour School](#), some data indicated that there was no improvement while other data demonstrated improvement.

As a result, the team is re-examining the validity of the results and the tools used to collect the data.

The [St. Michael Catholic School](#) team made adjustments to its literacy strategy when it was found that acceleration of student learning was low. This decision was based on collaborative organizing, analysing, and summarizing of data collected within the student profiles.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT: EXAMPLES FROM SELECTED INQUIRY TEAMS

The following chart provides a summary of data sources and results and of the methods used by a representative sample of inquiry teams to demonstrate the impact of the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project.

Inquiry Team	Data Sources and Results	Methods
St. Gregory Catholic School	<p>Regular surveys and observations – Boys' attitudes about themselves as readers improved. – Boys became more confident with their skills as readers. (Increase in junior from 48.1% to 81% and in primary from 52% to 71%.)</p> <p>Checklists</p> <p>Reading Logs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of a variety of materials • Talk as a response to reading • Teaching directly and precisely • Use of smart boards and computers
Holy Rosary School	<p>Reaching Readers Quick Comprehension Assessment – The Grade 5 data showed improvements in synthesizing and making connections.</p> <p>DRA – 10 of 11 at-risk Grade 1 students increased levels, one from level 3 to level 10.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART goals created • Read-alouds/think-alouds • Explicit teaching • Choice of a variety of materials
James R. Henderson Public School	<p>DRA for students at Provincial Standard in reading – <i>Grade 1 males</i>: 5% May 2007 to 15% in May 2008 – <i>Grade 2 males</i>: 24% October 2007 to 28% May 2008 – <i>Grade 3 males</i>: 15% October 2007 to 20% May 2008</p> <p>Parent surveys (boys assessed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-day planning • Shared reading framework • Reading strategy checklist • Teaching with a purpose

Inquiry Team	Data Sources and Results	Methods
	<p>from perspective of parents): – Boys who enjoy reading: increase from 63% in October 2007 to 88% in May 2008 – Boys image of themselves as good readers: increase from 55% in October 2007 to 76% in May 2008</p>	
<p>Chester Public School</p>	<p>EQAO Grade 3 – The % of Grade 3 boys achieving at levels 3/4 in reading increased from 39% to 43% by the end of year 2. – The % of boys with positive attitudes toward reading increased from 72% to 76% by the end of year 2.</p> <p>DRA – A small increase of 2% of students at DRA level 34 and above.</p> <p>CASI – Slight increases in CASI scores during each year of the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk • Use of non-fiction for information circles
<p>St. Jean Brebeuf School</p>	<p>CASI – An increase from 5 students to 23 students achieving at level 3/4 in Grade 6.</p> <p>PM Benchmarks – Grade 6 PM Benchmark scores increased from 13.3 to 18.3 over the duration of the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher modelling • Use of enjoyable reading materials • Use of divisional book cards • Reading for meaning and critical thinking • Teacher moderation • Literature circles
<p>Bellmoore Public School</p>	<p>EQAO Grade 6 – Boys achieving at levels 3/4 increased from 44% to 92% in reading and from 12% to 69% in writing over three years.</p> <p>EQAO Grade 3 – Boys achieving at levels 3/4 increased from 40% to 90% in reading and from 38% to 70% in writing over three years.</p> <p>DRA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap analysis of texts appropriate for boys • Pre-reading activities to activate prior knowledge • Explicit teaching, including reflective questioning techniques and making connections with texts • Use of computer technology with software such as Comic Life

Inquiry Team	Data Sources and Results	Methods
	<p>– Data support improvement in boys’ achievement by spring 2008.</p>	
<p>William G. Davis Junior Public School</p>	<p>EQAO Reading – 52% of Grade 3 male students in 2003-04 achieved levels 3/4. When the same students reached Grade 6, 85% achieved levels 3/4.</p> <p>Boys’ survey – Boys’ attitudes about reading and their interest in reading were inconclusive. There were no significant results in their opinions about reading or in their reading habits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent participation • Oral discussion • Use of wide variety of materials • Fathers/male role models
<p>Riverside Public School</p>	<p>EQAO Reading – In Grade 3, 44% of the boys achieved levels 3/4. For the same cohort of boys in Grade 6, 81% achieved levels 3/4.</p> <p>EQAO Writing – The same cohort increased from 31% in Grade 3 to 54% in Grade 6 at levels 3/4.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction including higher-order thinking skills – “answer, prove, explain” • Direct focused teaching • Visual learning – think literacy graphic organizers • Metacognitive strategies – e.g., GIST answer sandwich method • Boys’ input • Use of interesting materials • Use of assistive technology
<p>Egremont Community Public School</p>	<p>Mixed methods Anecdotal observation through the use of video taping of boys’ discussion during literature circles. Data showed: – increased talk by lower-achieving boys; – higher-level responses affected by nature of questions and time allowed for discussion.</p> <p>EQAO Grade 3 student perception data – The % of students responding “I enjoy reading at home” increased from 37% to 81% in one year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of accountable talk in partners and groups • Shared thinking prior to reading • Purposeful talk extended to content area subjects • Use of MP3 players – recordable stories • Encouraging critical thinking • Literature/information circles
<p>Smith Public School</p>	<p>PM Benchmarks – Average score for Senior Kindergarten boys increased over</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging parents through joint sessions with a specific focus on

Inquiry Team	Data Sources and Results	Methods
	<p>three years from 2.7 to 6.9.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Average score for Grade 1 boys increased over three years from 13.0 to 19.3. <p>Parent attendance at workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ranged from 72% to 100% at 14 workshops for parents of K/Grade 1 students. 	<p>literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction • Higher order Reading Star strategies • Language arts block expanded and language skills integrated into other subject disciplines • Skills not taught in isolation • Writing expanded to include broader genres, including procedural writing experiences
<p>E.C. Drury High School</p>	<p>Credit accumulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All cohorts exceeded board's success goal of 85% students with 16 credits at age 16 <p>Attitudinal survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Confidence levels rise 13%. – "Try new things" 15% more – "Read a book" 8% more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of choice • Small-group mentoring • Use of assistive technologies such as Dragon, Alpha smart • Reading selections related to personal experience • Use of assistive software for writing • Use of graphic novels
<p>A.Y. Jackson Secondary School</p>	<p>Reading interest inventory (boys in Grade 9 at inception of project and now in Grade 11):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reading non-fiction: 12% in Grade 9, 39% in Grade 11 – Reading novels out of class: 43% in Grade 9, 58% in Grade 11 – Reading songs and lyrics: 24% in Grade 9, 51% in Grade 11 <p>EQAO OSSLT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Results in 2006–07 exceeded provincial results by 8% with a 92% success rate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Element of competition – reading review raffles • Male role models • Boys' book club • Independent reading • Relating reading to social interaction • Choice and self-selection of texts • Use of technology • Peer and teacher modelling
<p>West Hill Collegiate Institute</p>	<p>EQAO OSSLT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In 2002, 67% of students were successful. – In 2007, 81.5% of students were successful. <p>Library check-out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At beginning of project, boys took out 1 book to girls 3 books. – In 2008, boys took out 4 books to girls 3 books. <p>Interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice in reading materials • Use of wide array of materials • Creation of a teen-friendly visual space in the library

Inquiry Team	Data Sources and Results	Methods
	<p>– Boys evolved in their tastes through Grade 9 and 10 from Manga/graphic novels to mystery and fantasy and developed a new interest in self-help books.</p>	
<p>Bishop Allen Academy</p>	<p>Credit accumulation – 78% passed in 2005; all students passed in 2007–08.</p> <p>Assignment submission – Almost 94%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports focus in Grade 12 course • Wide variety of learning strategies • Wide variety of assessment strategies • Open access to computers to capitalize on online current events related to sports • Outreach to community, particularly connections with the Toronto sports community
<p>Land of Lakes Senior Public School</p>	<p>Fling Cooter – Grade 7 and Grade 8 boys improved one grade level during a reading challenge over a four-month period.</p> <p>CASI – Results showed a similar increase for Grade 8 boys who did the reading challenge.</p> <p>Average number of pages read by boys – Increased from 862 in year 1 to 2,297 in year 3</p> <p>Attitude survey – In year 1, 12% of boys read at home 4–7 days per week; in year 3, 16% did so.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of broader range of materials, including magazines • Boys’ book clubs • Read-alouds – guided responses • Response journals – independent responses • Consistent independent reading • Reading challenge – element of competition
<p>McKee Public School</p>	<p>Report Card marks – Tracked progress of stage 2 ESL students who were mostly in Grades 4 and 5</p> <p>Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills – Oral reading skills at end of project equally distributed from Grade 3 to Grade 7 – Similar results for word-recognition skills</p> <p>Open-ended written responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on talk, using literature circles • Direct teaching, using the balanced literacy instructional model • Working in groups and allowing boys choice as to which group they would join • Metacognitive strategies whereby boys articulate the strategy that they are using

Inquiry Team	Data Sources and Results	Methods
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 15 of 19 boys in the project indicated positive opinions about talking within the literature circles. – 13 of 19 in particular found the “reading together” and “talking and discussing” very helpful in the learning-to-read process. 	
<p>Minto-Clifford Public School</p>	<p>EQAO Grade 3 Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In 2004–05, 21% of boys were at the provincial standard (level 3). – In 2006–07, 55% of boys were at the provincial standard. <p>EQAO Grade 3 Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In 2004–05, 34% of boys were at the provincial standard. – In 2006–07, 66% of boys were at the provincial standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-steps writing used consistently • Classroom practices aligned with new Language curriculum – curriculum mapping • Explicit skill-based instruction • Individualized feedback • Infusion of higher-order thinking within literacy for boys

INSTRUCTIONAL AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

This section identifies broad categorizations of instructional and assessment strategies employed by the inquiry teams throughout the multi-year project. After an analysis of all team reports, twelve instruction and assessment strategies emerged for improving boys' literacy skills and attitudes to reading and writing. These were:

1. Use a wider variety of reading materials.
2. Differentiate instruction.
3. Recognize the power of talk/oral language.
4. Mobilize the power of social and group activities/interaction.
5. Use the power of technology.
6. Listen to boys and provide lots of choice.
7. Encourage student engagement and motivation.
8. Use lots of tactile and kinesthetic responses to learning.
9. Use modelling and role models.
10. Differentiate and tailor assessment.
11. Engage parents/guardians.
12. Use single-sex groupings.

Most of these twelve broad strategies include a number of activities used by teachers to enhance boys' literacy. A wide variety of examples demonstrate how these strategies were used and what effect they had.

- **Use a wider variety of reading materials**

During this project, inquiry teams acquired and taught with a wider variety of reading materials. Eight specific activities were linked to this strategy. They included the following:

- a. Use graphic novels.
- b. Use non-fiction.
- c. Understand that non-fiction is not the “whole story”.
- d. Use classroom library bins and special library arrangements.
- e. Teach teachers and boys about genre, texts, and new media.
- f. Teach with the materials.
- g. Emphasize stories with some action, mystery, and problems to be solved.
- h. Provide uninterrupted, independent reading time.

a. Use graphic novels

There was a definite interest in using graphic novels. A graphic novel is usually described as a novel whose narrative is conveyed through a combination of text and art, often in comic-strip form, but with more complex storylines. Graphic novels are very flexible as they can convey complex ideas in a simpler way than by text alone. This was a growth area among many of the project schools. Through the three-year life of the project, many more titles for elementary and secondary students became available. Graphic novels represent new thinking about approaches to literacy, and teacher inquiry teams sought professional development in this new medium. Teachers sought ways to familiarize themselves with both the features of graphic novels and strategies for teaching with them.

A student from [Father Henry Carr School](#) eloquently conveyed the value of graphic novels: “I strongly agree that graphic novels aid in furthering the horizons of your imagination; they are useful to my learning because the more visually descriptive the story is, the easier it is to understand.” Another student, from [Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute](#), provided a similar testimonial: “Upon seeing the large Manga collection with 500 titles in the library, some new Grade 9 boys have been known to say, ‘I’ve died and gone to Manga heaven’.”

At [Armstrong Public School](#), working with the teacher-librarian, the school team purchased a wide variety of multi-genre texts, which were very popular with boys in the school. “We found instant impact in these new purchases as students were trying to withdraw new books from the librarian’s desk before she had time to get them bar-coded.”

At [Don Mills Collegiate Institute and Don Mills Middle School](#), teachers reviewed their curriculum in English and broadened the kinds of required reading to embrace new literacies. As noted in their report, “We needed to update our courses to match students’ literacy tastes and to adapt our courses to enhance the necessary skills related to them.” They went on to note, “We have less emphasis on our classes reading the same novel in

lock-step, and graphic novels were powerful. We have seen how graphic novels stir subtle, complex ideas and provoke discussion.”

At [Echo Bay Public School](#), one parent said, “Find the genre they love and they’ll be ‘in book’ before you know it and you won’t want to get them to do any chores [sic].”

Teachers increasingly became convinced of the value of graphic texts. As one teacher wrote, “When using graphic texts, students will submit a higher percentage of assignments, score significantly higher on writing assignments that are not essay based, and be more motivated and more engaged readers.”

b. Use non-fiction

Non-fiction books play an important role in supporting boys’ reading. The visuals and factual information tend to provide immediate and understandable connections to real life. As a student at [St. Mary’s Catholic Elementary School](#) said, “It is important to know that just because boys don’t like to read novels, it doesn’t mean that they don’t like to read or can’t read.”

At [St. Basil’s Catholic School](#), a Grade 3 student demonstrated the power of non-fiction books: “I really like history so I learn about Romans and Greeks. By having non-fiction books in my classroom, I could learn more stuff. Non-fiction books help me to be more interested in reading. Non-fiction books have maps, forts, and labels that make things easier to understand. The real photos make things look really cool. Non-fiction books rock!”

As a celebration of learning, three schools ([Queen Elizabeth, Admaston, and Central Public Schools](#)) had a sharing of the children’s final products. The final projects “reveal[ed] the power of using non-fiction in the classroom.” As the team’s Final Report indicates, the culminating products were inquiry-based projects “in which the students independently selected a non-fiction text to answer a question they [had] been ‘wondering about’. Students applied skills learned throughout the year to answer the question. Students [were] given wonder boxes in which they place[d] their questions. Near the end of the grade, students select[ed] one question to investigate and then present[ed] their findings as part of the project.”

At [St. Joseph High School](#), teachers capitalized on a class-wide theme related to sports with boys. Students used a variety of methods to demonstrate their learning – all related to the theme – such as the creation of posters, advertisements, banners, and team jerseys. Teachers in the project indicated that there was a sense of ownership and engagement among the boys.

c. Understand that non-fiction is not the “whole story”

Non-fiction is not the “whole story”. While an excitement and interest in non-fiction was deemed positive and successful in many schools, it was also recognized that boys differ considerably from one another and have many different reading interests in both non-fiction and fiction. Care was taken not to stereotype boys’ interests but to differentiate among them. There was a perceived need to broaden the Language Arts and English programs and value the interests of boys.

A student from [Tom Longboat Junior Public School](#) stated, “I prefer fiction because fiction has a lot of excitement and adventure. I like guessing how the problem is solved.” A similar message was provided by a parent from [San Lorenzo Ruiz Elementary School](#): “In the past, boys focused mainly on non-fiction; with the introduction of the Boys’ Literacy Program, there has been an increase in reading fiction books. I believe this is due to the storyline to which boys can better relate. Reading now has a ‘cooler’ perception amongst boys.”

In addition, inquiry teams had success using a variety of popular print materials, such as magazines, comics, and manuals, as a way to motivate boys, especially adolescents. These boys developed a renewed interest in reading and then extended their interest to other materials, including fiction. This approach was taken by the team at [West Hill Collegiate Institute](#) who “used popular short pieces as a hook and nudge towards other genres and back to fiction”. There was a move away from traditional texts in recognition of changing interests due to popular culture and changing demographics. More traditional texts were used as boys’ interests matured.

d. Use classroom library bins and special library arrangements

Classroom library bins are important structures for the selection and use of materials. They make resources accessible and support student choice.

The project team at [Holy Family Catholic School](#) found that “boys’ interest in reading is maximized when ... classroom libraries are sorted into genres/topics, series of books, or collections that allow readers to ‘see what’s up’ with characters they have come to care about”.

At [Bishop Macdonell Catholic High School](#), reading carts were used successfully for classroom reading libraries, which can present a challenge in multi-subject secondary school classrooms.

The teacher-librarian was very helpful at [Armstrong Public School](#) in establishing a broad collection of books and worked with the team to establish book bins, which required continual replenishing with boy-friendly titles.

The teacher-librarian at [W.J. Watson Public School](#) made specific changes to accommodate the literacy needs of boys. “I have made it a priority to concentrate on increasing the selection of high-interest books, including fiction and non-fiction; I have had the intermediate students pick books from our book fair for our library; I have made a primary non-fiction section so that primary students do not get ‘lost’ in the thousands of non-fiction titles around the library. I have also purchased many, many graphic novels which have grabbed the eyes of junior boys especially.”

e. Teach teachers and boys about genre, texts, and new media

Inquiry teams discovered that a clear understanding, on their part, of the features of new text and media translated into better teaching. The more they learned, the more precise their teaching became. Involving boys in this process is a strategy to consider.

At [St. Augustine Catholic High School](#) the inquiry team spanned the science department. Improvement was noted as boys were explicitly taught the features of science texts and other non-fiction reading materials.

[St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School](#) teachers used critical literacy as a means of understanding features of texts. Boys examined sex stereotypes evident in some reading materials.

f. Teach with the materials

Making a difference goes beyond the acquisition of resources and making them available to boys. Teachers must teach with them.

This idea was captured in a quote from the Final Report by the [Dr. G.J. MacGillivray Public School team](#): “Resources are not the solution. [We] need to alter teaching styles for both boys and girls in a class.”

At [Rene Gordon Elementary School](#), the team wrote, “We recognized that simply providing engaging, targeted resources was only a starting point and there was so much more that needed to be done and accounted for.” As the team at [Laggan Public School](#) indicated, “It is not enough to have boy-friendly resources available in the classroom.” Using materials well is an important step forward.

g. Emphasize stories with some action, mystery, and problems to be solved

Stories with some action, mystery, and problems to be solved help to engage and motivate boys. Such stories are exciting and real.

The inquiry team at [St Patrick Catholic Elementary School](#) emphasized, “Boys do like fiction!!!! However, they like action ahead of emotion and enjoy what the characters do! So thrillers, detective fiction, and series books are good. They like to read books which match their image of themselves.” Where possible, it is important to draw out real-life and real-world connections. As one Grade 2 boy from [West Glen Junior School](#) indicated, “When I read an adventure book, I feel like I am part of the adventure. I become excited and want to keep reading the book.”

h. Provide uninterrupted, independent reading time

Uninterrupted, independent reading time increases reading time and helps to engage students. If it is important to read, then it is important to make time to read.

At [Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute](#), boys read 2477 titles collectively. This was a marked increase on earlier records. And as the team at [Agnes MacPhail Public School](#) observed, “Free reading periods have never been so quiet and productive.”

- **Differentiate instruction**

Inquiry teams thought it was important to differentiate instruction to respond to boys' learning needs. Four specific approaches were identified for implementing this strategy:

- a. Use direct and targeted instruction.
- b. Use more precise teaching strategies.
- c. Connect and align instruction with other provincial initiatives.
- d. Foster metacognition through direct teaching of strategies.

a. Use direct and targeted instruction

Teams used a wide range of targeted teaching activities. These were informed by teacher observation and the tracking of individual progress and included a range of activities such as the use of computers and manipulatives.

For example, at [Bishop Allen Academy](#), teachers responded to the diverse needs of students by using “journals, movie reviews, independent study (choice), newspaper columns, sports columns, and poetry”. And at [James R. Henderson Public School](#), teachers tracked the progress of each child through their Reading Strategies Checklist for individualized instruction.

At [Kensington Community School](#), teachers believed that “one size does not fit all. All boys are not the same.” They made a chart of the impact of differentiated instruction on assessment and instruction. As a result, they were able to “provide clear and focused instruction aimed to meet boys ‘where they are at’.”

Direct instruction of reading comprehension strategies improved reading levels of students at [King’s Mastung Public School](#). At [San Lorenzo Ruiz Elementary School](#), the team reported, “A greater awareness of boys’ developmental needs and learning styles helped us stage instructional time, including adding movement, drama, and visual strategies. Teacher observation is powerful!”

The teachers at [Gladstone Public School](#) used focused teaching of computer skills and the provision of manipulatives to better meet the needs of boys. Their teaching was based on the belief that “all students can learn”. The impact on teaching is captured by this teacher quote: “Through participating in this project, I have had to rethink the way that I teach. When planning, I have become more aware of what all students needs are and have been trying to develop activities that get students excited. It has been an extremely valuable experience and, by the amount of enjoyment of the boys in the classroom, it has been well worth it.”

[Our Lady of the Valley School](#) explicitly taught writing using the *Six plus One Traits* writing approach. The rubrics of this program made assessments clearer in the Junior Division.

Teachers at [Robert Moore School, Donald Young School, and Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program](#) adapted their assessments for their Kindergarten boys, making them shorter and more frequent so that their teaching could be more precise.

At [Bear Creek Secondary School and Holly Meadows Elementary School](#), teachers learned to employ a three-step process to teach in a more focused way. They administered a student reading survey, then provided a broader range of teaching materials, and then used groupings (for example, by ability or sex) to teach them directly. Popular culture, music, and lyrics were “high-interest” and were used to help make connections to other resources the students were reading.

At [Western Technical and Commercial School](#), teachers assessed student's work individually. They noted that, by being involved in the analysis of the assessments, “boys really paid attention to their reading strengths and weaknesses”

b. Use more precise teaching strategies

More precise teaching responded to the specific needs of boys. Examples included more explicit instructions, use of exemplars and anchor charts, regular formative assessments, and oral rehearsals.

For example, at [St. Alphonsus Catholic School](#), “step-by step instructions with chunking of the material yield[ed] better results when working with some boys, particularly those achieving at level two.” [High Park Public School](#) established a school-wide framework for writing, using more precise instructional strategies such as anchor charts, writing topics linked to real life, and modelling of interactive writing strategies and oral rehearsals. At [Canadian Martyrs, St. Nicholas, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Mark Schools](#), “students were taught about ‘schema’ as we learned that background knowledge is integral to the development of student writing.”

The inquiry team from [St. Basil's Catholic School](#) concluded that there was an obvious need for explicit instruction for reading comprehension. The daily assessment of student progress and setting next steps were key components of teacher modification of practice.

At [Egremont Community Public School](#), teachers found that adjusting the pacing of their teaching allowed time for boys in the project to consolidate their learning.

At [St. Anthony's and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Schools](#), teachers worked on more targeted and focused teaching of reading strategies, which were reinforced during reading buddies time. They concluded: “We learned that sometimes when boys appear not motivated, it may really be a matter of them not knowing how to do something.” In addition, they reported, “All of our teachers pointed out that explicit and systematic instruction and a focus on comprehension strategies was hugely supported by their participation in this inquiry.” The team from [Foxboro Public School](#) also endorsed the value of precise teaching. One teacher wrote, “This experience has enriched and focused my teaching through collaboration with colleagues and in-depth analysis of student

work. Using EQAO exemplars as a guide for instruction has enabled students to become actively involved in their own learning. This process has validated both teachers and students.”

Graphic organizers and reading response journals were used, along with other strategies, for differentiated instruction, by the teachers in [Lansdowne Public School](#), [Sudbury Secondary School](#), and [Wembley Public School](#). The use of graphic organizers, read-alouds, inferencing, and visualization were key instructional strategies at [Father Leo J. Austin Catholic High School](#) and [St. Bernard Catholic School](#). They found that focusing on real-life situations and experiences engaged the boys.

c. Connect and align with other provincial initiatives

A number of complementary provincial initiatives provided the foundation for many of the inquiry teams’ high-yield strategies to support the development of boys’ literacy. Over the course of the three years of the project, continued efforts were made by the OISE research team to demonstrate alignment between these current curriculum reform initiatives and processes related to literacy and best practices for boys. The language used by teams to describe their teaching practice grew more precise over time.

The inquiry team at [Queen Elizabeth Public School](#) captured the merit of linking with other provincial initiatives: “A focus on boys’ literacy links to all other initiatives supported by the Ministry of Education. It is simply important to understand the connections between this evolution of practice as it pertains to groups of students who have varied needs, including boys.”

At [James R. Henderson Public School](#), teachers used anchor charts and explicit teaching based on a five-day plan during shared reading. They credit an uninterrupted literacy block as a key feature of their programming. At [St. John French Immersion Catholic School](#), teachers used a variety of strategies including shared reading using big books. Teachers there also recognized the importance of peer modelling, which they found raised boys’ confidence. Similarly, [Rosethorn Junior Public School](#) created a levelled book room and found that guided reading in particular increased boys’ self-confidence.

All teachers at [Holy Name of Jesus School](#) worked on developing a truly balanced literacy program – using read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading – and they remarked, “Our monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings were aligned to other provincial initiatives.”

d. Foster metacognition through direct teaching of strategies

Specific and direct teaching of reading and writing strategies before, during, and after reading improves achievement in literacy at all levels. Teacher modelling of reading and writing strategies, and targeted practice, develops the summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting that are part of the process of reading.

The cross-panel inquiry team at [Father Leo J. Austin Catholic High School](#) and [St. Bernard Catholic School](#) explicitly used inferencing and visualizing strategies with boys

before, during, and after reading. Teachers found that boys learned to identify those strategies that helped them with their reading.

Similarly, teachers at [Our Lady of the Valley School](#) specifically taught students how to “attack” various types of text. Students’ sense of confidence as readers grew throughout the project.

At [Riverside Public School](#), students worked with male mentors and were asked to chronicle questions and reactions they had about their chosen text as they worked through the shared reading process.

A parent from [Egremont Community Public School](#), where metacognition strategies were taught, commented, “My son tells me that conversations with his class give him lots of ideas. Then, when he’s reading, it helps him stay reading. He uses clues in his head that they have talked about to help him make sense of a book.”

- **Recognize the power of talk/oral language**

The opportunity to talk about and discuss issues stimulated interest and engagement among boys. Talking was a positive precursor to reading and writing activities. When it was purposeful, talk became an accountability strategy that helped develop norms for students to reflect on. Students could then use these norms to ask better questions and critically examine ideas. A culture of purposeful talk was promoted by using a variety of activities that allowed boys to debrief/discuss with a partner, in a small group, or as a whole class.

At [Sacred Heart School](#), the use of purposeful, accountable talk was a targeted strategy. The teachers were particularly inspired by a quote by Carmel Crevola (NOEL Project 2008) who wrote, “What you think, you can say, what you can say you can write.”

An administrator from [King’s Mastig Public School](#) captured the power of talk in the following quote: “Across the school we are seeing the ‘Power of Talk’ between students about the texts they are reading, talk between students and teachers around the reading strategies they are using, and talk between teachers around effective, successful reading instruction.”

Teachers at [St. Anthony’s and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Schools](#) “used many concrete materials and used purposeful, structured talk as part of reading buddies ... [W]e saw that the opportunity to talk supported oral language and resulted in more engagement, so we tried to incorporate even more opportunities for oral language.”

Talk is a precursor to other reading and writing responses. Talking about and through issues increases understanding and empowers individuals. It enhances student self-confidence. By focusing on accountable talk, teachers can help to develop norms for student talk and increase student initiative. At [St. Gregory Catholic School](#), the focus on reading and talking highlighted the value of asking better questions, comparing

opinions, re-sorting, and consolidating. Teachers modelled the strategies and looked for ways to improve prediction and retelling in greater depth.

At [Bishop Allen Academy](#), a teacher reflected on the power of talk and said, “I wish that I could have taken a course like this when I was in high school. The opportunity to be able to discuss sports in a classroom and earn a credit for it is very appealing to me.”

The team from [St. Edward Catholic School](#) noted that using lots of talk and discussion with their boys led to an increase in the number of boys in the Junior Division who participated in the annual public speaking contest.

Book talks by students provided important opportunities for teachers to understand the needs and thinking of boys. At [Laggan Public School](#), formal class book talks were important occasions. Informal talks and conversations were also important. For example, at [St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School](#), teachers said that “when silent sustained reading time was over... many students wanted to talk about the information they read in the materials provided and that these materials were often the springboard for good conversation and teachable moments”.

- **Mobilize the power of social and group activities/interaction**

When students work in social contexts, such as small groups, they have more opportunities to talk with different individuals and explore issues. As a result, understanding is increased and self-confidence is enhanced.

For example, [Chester Public School](#) teachers found that information circles were powerful for boys when non-fiction reading materials were combined with a social exchange of ideas. And teachers at [Rene Gordon Elementary School](#) concluded, “We learned that more frequent opportunities to work in groups and lots of talk time were supportive of boys learning.” At [James R. Henderson Public School](#), “teachers used multi-level groupings to enhance student self-esteem and risk-taking.”

At [McKee Public School](#), teachers found that teaching the roles required for student discussion through literature circles changed their boys’ attitudes and achievement and increased their sense of ownership about what they were reading. One team member recalled the behaviour of one boy as he returned to his group discussion: “He came bounding into the group meeting with a huge grin on his face exclaiming, ‘That was the best book I ever read. It was so funny! I can’t wait to talk about it!’” The teacher concluded, “What more can we ask for?”

Peer tutoring proved successful at [Don Mills Collegiate Institute and Don Mills Middle School](#), with the secondary school successfully involving students at the neighbouring middle school. As noted, “Peer tutoring helped penetrate the ‘anti-school’ boys’ code at the middle school by providing powerfully appropriate male role models.”

Boys’ book clubs supported boys’ reading and comprehension. They provided a context that encouraged reading as a rewarding and enjoyable habit. As one parent at [Hillcrest Community Public School](#) said, “The boys’ book club has helped support my son’s reading comprehension and has given him confidence with his reading.” A student from

[Parkdale Public School](#) expressed a similar view, saying, “I think that it’s a good idea to have a boys’ book club because boys don’t usually have a habit of reading. Boys can be nervous or shy in front of girls, but not so much in front of boys. The boys’ reading club helps me read in a really fun way.”

At [Rene Gordon Elementary School](#), “some teachers were surprised to find several of the boys now purchasing books for entertainment, when before the book club they showed little interest in reading beyond what was deemed necessary.”

- **Use the power of technology**

Technology proved a powerful resource when used with care and purpose. Technology accelerated reading programs by, for example, providing immediate feedback. The wide range of social networking strategies used in the schools, such as blogs, wikis, smart boards, audio books, Comic Life, and gaming motivated and engaged boys.

The project team at [Bellmoore Public School](#) found that the use of technology attracted and held males and reinforced visual–spatial strengths. At [Our Lady of the Valley School](#), teachers “focused on trying to bring the digital world into the classroom.” For example, blogs were used to engage boys in writing. And at [Holy Spirit, St. Kevin, and St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Catholic Schools](#), “boys gravitated towards a multi-genre approach and they responded well to interactive computer-generated reading materials.”

At [E.C. Drury High School](#) the focus on assistive technology (Dragon, Kurzweil, Write out Loud, Co-writer, Smart Ideas, and Alpha Smart) helped boys to become engaged in their learning. It also enabled teachers to see what students who are visual learners could do if they had the appropriate materials and resources. These tools were found to be highly effective for boys.

At [St. Gregory Catholic School](#), technology (such as smart boards, the Internet, and computer games) was used to motivate and engage boys. At [Roden Public School](#), electronic graphic organizers allowed all students to be included in classroom activities and encouraged higher-order thinking. In particular, “Kidspiration” software allowed for motivational and assessment differentiation. [Pineland Public School](#) ensured that all classrooms had a gaming centre and have now decided that each classroom will have four computers to embed other learning activities to engage boys.

Teachers at [Our Lady of the Valley School](#) explored alternative ways for boys to demonstrate their learning. At a recent Conference on Aboriginal Education, boys displayed their learning with photo essays. The focus was on teachers “trying to bring the digital world into the classroom with their boys”.

At [St. Edward Catholic School](#), teachers found that using technology expanded the various ways in which boys could demonstrate their learning and that technology “gives students freedom to chose in what media they wish to express themselves”.

At [W. J. Watson Public School](#), teachers found that using technology such as Comic Life aided student writing. One student remarked, “The computer makes it easier to get your work done.”

- **Listen to boys and provide lots of choice**

Inquiry teams found that it was essential to understand boys’ learning needs. This was frequently accomplished by listening to student voices and providing lots of choices. At [Laggan Public School](#), for example, the team “spent more time listening and observing the boys in our classrooms. The most significant thing we learned as educators throughout this is to listen to our students.”

At [W. J. Watson Public School](#), students were provided more choice in responding to reading during preparation of the summative task. The project team wrote, “Giving students as much choice as possible helps engage them. Let them choose not only reading material, but the method in which they will present their knowledge and be assessed. During literature circles, students were free to choose the book they would discuss with their circle. They enjoyed being able to tell each other about what they were reading. They were also given the option of completing tasks with pen and paper or using technology. The boys chose to use computers whenever they could.”

At [West Hill Collegiate Institute](#), teachers said, “We realized how much we need to involve boys in decision making about what they will be reading. We also learned more about their reading tastes by involving them in choices and then using purposeful direct teaching. There really was a ‘tipping point’ which enabled our boys to move into higher levels of reading.”

At [High Park Public School](#), a teacher’s comment supported the merit of student choice: “When given a choice on what to write about and the proper tools to improve their writing, students, especially boys, enjoy writing more. [They] show a more positive attitude and ownership over their writing.” Similarly, at [Sacred Heart School](#), a student endorsed choice with the following comment: “I love having reading as a free choice.”

At [Holy Name of Jesus School](#), the provision of student choice for reading led to increased interest and motivation. As one student exclaimed, “Miss, I can read! I love the book. Can I take it home and read it to my dad? ”

Using student surveys can drive teaching approaches, selection of materials, and choice of reading responses. At [West Glen Junior School](#), the Reading Attitude surveys “provided us with the important information which guided our teaching practices to improve boys’ attitudes towards reading.”

- **Encourage student engagement and motivation**

Boys respond well to activities that provide immediate feedback and relate meaningfully to everyday events. Sustaining student interest by using competitions, games, contests, and quizzes as well as using mainstream texts enhanced student

engagement and motivation. A few examples from the school reports show us how teachers implemented these activities.

Use of competition, games, and quizzes were motivators for some boys at [Five Mile School and Gorham and Ware Community School](#). One student explained, "I can read better when I play word games!" At [Sister Mary Clare Catholic School](#), "debates and games with reading were more stimulating than paper and pencil tasks." And at [Tom Longboat Junior Public School](#), boys "were motivated by short competitive contests."

At [St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School](#), the inquiry team stated, "Boys seem competitive in nature, so challenge them. One successful approach is placing them in a group of students with higher expectations; some boys like the challenge to not be outdone and therefore raise their own standards!" At [Riverside Public School](#), "the students who won the 'Battle of the Books' competition were also the boys who avidly spent time in the Reading Room and made use of technology and other high yield strategies."

There was notable growth in level of achievement at [St. Mary's Catholic Elementary School](#). The school team referred to "a strong connection between literacy achievement and student engagement as evidenced through teacher observation of on task behaviour, unsolicited rates of boys' participation, and willingness to be involved".

A Grade 9/10 teacher from [St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School](#) said, "We now see that being literate in the 21st century may require a shift away from the traditional texts and sources of literature towards more mainstream sources, especially for boys who struggle to become and remain engaged. There are those who will always need Shakespeare, but there are many who want the *Guinness Book of Records*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Time*."

- **Use lots of tactile and kinesthetic responses to learning**

When boys were involved in actually carrying out a physical activity rather than listening to a teacher or merely watching a demonstration, learning and engagement seemed to be enhanced. Having the opportunity to use hands-on materials and act out stories were other ways to encourage involvement and increase understanding.

[The Provincial Schools for the Deaf](#) used a kinesthetic approach that included manipulatives and puppets. And at [James R. Henderson Public School](#), teachers indicated that tactile, kinesthetic responses to text were important because boys felt more comfortable and confident.

More opportunities for exploration using conferencing and dramatization of acquired knowledge were noted at [Holy Saviour School](#). A teacher reflected, "Watching the boys act something out or demonstrate their learning through drama leaves me wondering if I should incorporate these strategies in math and science. The growth in student engagement is noticeable."

The inquiry team at [Graham Bell-Victoria Public School](#) discovered the positive effects of using visuals and physical space as boys responded to their learning. At [Hawthorne Village Public School](#), a student summarized the value of kinesthetic approaches this way: “When I see the actions in the words I am reading I understand much better.”

- **Use modelling and role models**

Boys were interested in knowing the role reading plays in the lives of other individuals. Role models, including school mentors, helped students improve their reading and understanding.

At [A.Y. Jackson Secondary School](#), male book reviewers, broadcasting internally in the school, provided a public model conveying the message that it is okay to read.

Working with role models and heroes inside and outside the school was another way to help students. The team at [Robert Moore School](#), [Donald Young School](#), and [Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program](#) involved “positive role models throughout our communities (fireman, police officer, principal, hockey and football players, dads, grandpas, etc.)”. The successful use of deaf male role models in the [Provincial Schools for the Deaf](#) was another example of involving the community.

The Boys’ Literacy Project has become part of the daily life at [Whitney Public School](#). The team wrote, “We have new understanding of the importance of [the] many people in the school community required to support children and their reading.” A student found role models particularly helpful: “I liked it when different male teachers came to read and came to the Boys’ Book Club.” And, a parent commented that it was “a one hundred percent change. My son didn’t enjoy reading before. Since the program he has been introduced to non-fiction as well as male-role models; his interest in reading as a hobby has blossomed.”

At [William G. Davis Junior Public School](#), a parent offered this example of modelling, “My husband participated in the Male Role Model Day. He read a story to my son and others... He then talked with them about his job and how he uses literacy to fulfil the requirements of his job.”

Other students can also be important role models. The project team at [West Hill Collegiate Institute](#) concluded, “We have learned that our own students can be our greatest allies when promoting literacy.” To illustrate, an administrator at [St. Paul the Apostle Catholic School](#) said, “During reading buddy time, I saw students focused and on-task. Lots of reading was happening as well as serious talk.” Similarly, an intermediate teacher at [Rene Gordon Elementary School](#) said, “Boys need these [positive role models] to take an active role in promoting and fostering the need to read in non-structured settings. Students were more likely to let their guards down and express what they feel and in turn [felt] less self-conscious about their levels as readers.” At [Lakeshore and Tecumseh Public Schools](#) a teacher commented, “It was amazing to see how focused our at-risk readers were when they met with their Grade 8 reading buddies.”

- **Differentiate and tailor assessment**

Teachers strategically selected an assessment strategy to suit specific situations and individual learners. Assessing for learning and providing frequent feedback significantly improved achievement for boys in the projects. Students were involved in target setting and understood the criteria for assessing their learning. More than one form of assessment, or assessment tool, was used to gauge individual learning. Teachers at [Holy Rosary School](#) remarked that, “assessment and teaching are inseparably connected. We see assessment as the GPS that tells us where to go with each of our students.”

Four specific assessment strategies used with individual students were as follows:

- a. Focused observations using locally developed checklists and rubrics
- b. Sharing of criteria with students and involving them in the assessment process through peer review, self-assessment techniques, and target setting
- c. Assessing for learning, giving students frequent feedback
- d. Using a broader variety of methods for students to demonstrate their learning

a. Focused observations using locally developed checklists and rubrics

Focused observations and locally developed checklists and rubrics were used in a number of schools. For example, [Minto-Clifford Public School](#) developed a checklist as a common assessment tool for collaborative marking, which became part of a shared frame of reference. In the nine schools of the Equal Opportunity School Group, common Kindergarten assessments, focusing on oral language development, were used throughout the school year. With teachers working closely together to consider student data right from the start, these data became a springboard for strategic teaching.

At [King's Masting Public School](#), team members used a common reading skills checklist, which was developed collaboratively by resource teachers, classroom teachers, and early literacy teachers. Using a common rubric, the large project team in [F.W. Begley, Northwood, Kingsville, Eastwood, Harrow Senior, and Lakeshore Discovery Public Schools](#) used oral assessments as a means for students to demonstrate their critical thinking skills.

b. Sharing of criteria with students and involving them in the assessment process through peer review, self-assessment techniques, and target setting

Teachers at [W. J. Watson Public School](#) provided more choice for students in deciding what assessment strategy could be used to demonstrate their learning. In responding to their reading and in types of summative assessment tasks, students had a much greater voice in deciding how they would demonstrate their skills.

At [Bellmoore Public School](#), teachers taught and modelled answering techniques for comprehension questions such as the “answer sandwich”. (That is, in the first sentence of their answer, students restate part of the question, in the meat of the answer, they provide evidence, and in the closing sentence, they refer to the question again.) Such explicitness resulted in marked improvement.

There was an increased use of high-yield strategies for language lessons as well as use of common assessment tools. At [St. Paul the Apostle Catholic School](#), “digging deeper provide[d] direction for instruction. Instruction [became] more closely matched to assessment.”

Boys at [Worthington Public School](#) engaged in peer assessments of their reading and writing. Teachers also used more observation of reading behaviours, including student focused conversations. All had an impact on student achievement.

At [Father Leo J. Austin Catholic High School and St. Bernard Catholic School](#), teachers discovered the power of setting targets. As boys became clearer about expectations and received immediate feedback, achievement improved. At [A.Y. Jackson Secondary School](#), team members established clear short-term targets that assisted boys’ understanding and were affirming for them when reached.

c. Assessing for learning, giving students frequent feedback

At [Echo Bay Public School](#), inquiry team members used diagnostic assessments more frequently, using the information as “starting points” in their literacy instruction as knowledge of boys’ learning styles, strengths, attitudes, and interests became clearer. Using formative assessment was instrumental in teachers developing, in their words, “intentional and deliberate targets for students”. Efforts were made to connect reading/writing and assessment so students could see the connections between these two literacy strands.

At [Father Leo J. Austin Catholic High School and St. Bernard Catholic School](#), there was a greater focus on assessing for learning. Reading comprehension was assessed through the STAR reading program.

At [Sister Mary Clare Catholic School](#), the school team wrote, “We learned that boys like to write short, to-the-point selections in writing classes. Then we worked with the boys to assist them in becoming more elaborate and explicit about details.”

At [W. J. Watson Public School](#), technology was used in the assessment process and students responded to the immediate feedback that was provided. As they worked through the project, teachers at [Robert Moore School](#), [Donald Young School](#), and [Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program](#), adapted assessment practices by shortening time frames between assessments and giving students more frequent feedback.

d. Using a broader variety of methods for students to demonstrate their learning

At [Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute](#), teachers found that incorporating more authentic assessments, particularly where Grade 9 boys could express their learning using a wider variety of assessment methods was effective in not only engaging the students but also in improving their achievement.

At [San Lorenzo Ruiz Elementary School](#), a selection of graphic organizers was used by the project team to demonstrate boys' comprehension.

Members of the [Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute](#), [Southwood Secondary School](#), and [Huron Heights Secondary School](#) inquiry team found that using oral language and technology made a difference in helping them assess and evaluate boys' achievement. In the project, teachers used oral assessments to gauge student learning. They also found that observations and note taking were powerful strategies for *assessing for learning*. Some students were video-taped in interviews, while blogs and wikis were also embraced enthusiastically by boys. Similarly, at [Holy Saviour School](#), teachers used student conferencing and dramatizing as methods for boys to demonstrate acquired knowledge. Teachers at [Bellmoore Public School](#) used conferencing with their boys about their reading as an assessment strategy.

- **Engage parents/guardians**

Engaging parents/guardians and the community in the learning process was a critical part of the project in many schools. Reaching out to parents/guardians, while time consuming, resulted in students receiving additional support and encouragement. In some cases, fathers and grandfathers were targeted to help with boys' reading.

At [James R. Henderson Public School](#), the team employed the support of parent volunteers. At [St. Andrew School](#), a parent wrote, "My son read his novels to me. We are both enjoying the action and the drama." Another way to reach out to parents and involve them in their child's reading was demonstrated at [Oakwood Public School](#). Here, providing boys with take-home book bags has encouraged literacy learning at home.

At [Robert Moore School](#), [Donald Young School](#), and [Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program](#), the project team found that having positive role models read to young children improved the children's attitude towards reading and seeing themselves as readers. The team observed that fathers had a positive effect on reluctant readers. Consider the following parent comment: "My son came home with the 'Hockey Sweater' book. I could not imagine myself reading it to him. His dad came home, saw the book, and immediately picked it up. Dad and boy went to the bedroom and spent the next 30 minutes reading and sharing the book together."

At [Smith Public School](#), the focus was on the home connection. A number of initiatives were made to connect with families. For example, efforts were made to involve fathers and grandfathers in reading to boys so as to encourage greater fluency and expression in the boys' reading. Also, there were literacy support sessions for parents new to the educational system who were unaware of academic expectations. There were parent-school partnerships in literacy development. A concerted effort was made by teachers to spend more non-teaching time communicating with parents, including use of phone, e-mails, newsletters, and personal contact.

The team at [St. Michael Catholic School](#) focused on engaging parents in their sons' literacy programs through the use of "tackle boxes". The team's final report noted that teachers "drew from the strategies in *Me Read? No Way!* to create focused literacy activities which were highly structured, scaffolded, and contained explicit instructional strategies for boys. Each box contained 'lures' which were fast-paced and hands-on."

Community engagement and parent networks provided powerful support to boys' literacy. At [Our Lady of the Valley School](#), staff made DVDs for parents/guardians of student work. Students were involved in the creation of these DVDs at all levels of decision making. For example, they made pictorial essays of a recent Aboriginal conference to celebrate Earth Day.

At [St. Ann School](#), a teacher summarized the value of the project: "This inquiry project has become the 'spring board' for our entire school to move forward to develop a new literacy environment for our students in [the] most positive way possible! Our boys are becoming accountable for their own learning and more interested in reading and our parents have shown more involvement in all curriculum areas of homework and school events."

- **Use single-sex groupings**

When sex-specific classes were used, they were generally perceived as having a positive influence on boys' reading. They provided a context for richer discussions about topics relevant to boys' interests.

Sex-specific classes were used at [Maynard Public School](#). The principal's assessment of their value was that "sex-specific grouping provided for much richer discussions". At [Howick Central Public School](#), the school team believed that sex grouping (first year) was worthy of further study: "Participating in sex different classrooms was considered a very positive experience by all involved." At [Dr. G. J. MacGillivray Public School](#), classes were split by sex for a 100-minute block for language and math. In the Grade 8 boys-only class, CASI scores increased by 10% over one year; however, report card grades were lower. The teachers felt that the boys did not have the modelling of work habits and behaviour that girls would have provided. There was some positive evidence from the girls' classes.

COLLABORATION

This section outlines recurring themes related to collaboration. Since teachers often work alone in schools, the requirements of this project to work together on improving boys' literacy resulted in very positive experiences. The collaboration insights can be summarized as follows:

1. Working together builds shared accountability.
2. Dialogue and discussion develop clarity.
3. Collaboration results in more consistent planning processes.

4. Collaboration facilitates refinement of the inquiry process and the teaching of literacy.
5. Working together increases self and collective efficacy.

- **Working together builds shared accountability**

Throughout the project there was evidence that working together built shared accountability. Teachers worked towards the common goal of improving boys' literacy and, as a result, supported each other by sharing best practices and resources. There was a commitment to critically examine teaching and learning activities, using data as a basis for taking action to improve practice.

At [Minto-Clifford Public School](#), the project team commented, "We are all in this together! The teachers did collaborative marking and 'the egg carton school walls' began to crumble." While initially there was substantive common ground and similarity of approaches, through discussion, teachers found that there was actually a great deal of difference in approach and technique. At [Bellmoore Public School](#), the project team may have initiated the project by submitting the grant application, "but by mid-year, the project belonged to everyone not just the team. The whole school participated in Boys Read to Succeed Kickoff. Data sharing became a focus for meetings with the data board being shared by all staff." As a team member at [A.Y. Jackson Secondary School](#) stated, "This inquiry project brought so many issues to the forefront for us. We saw the struggles of the male adolescent student. We tried to make a difference. We saw the need to work as a team like never before. For the [first] time in a long time, instead of being sixty staff captains directing our own ships, we actually sailed together."

At [Adelaide Hoodless Public School](#), the inquiry project created a renewed sense of purpose and energy as new instructional approaches led to success. At [Egremont Community Public School](#), the project team wrote, "We have grown together tremendously as a Professional Learning Community over the last three years. It was simultaneously energizing and exhausting to work through such a common focus [with] staff." The team also believed that "professional dialogue increased and deepened as we evolved from collegial to collaborative".

Collaboration occurred through teacher moderation and consistency of assessment at [St. Basil's Catholic School](#). There was also professional development on research-based strategies for teaching boys. At [St. Andrew School](#), an administrator said, "The Boys' Literacy Project provided a mechanism for our staff to build a collective vision that was clear, concise, and connected to teaching and learning. This collective vision gave us a focus regarding what was important; it motivated staff and students and increased ... shared responsibility." The team report also indicated that "refinements made to instruction related to boys' literacy had a positive impact on student performance and achievement".

At [Our Lady of the Valley School](#), the team report stated that it is "important to understand the differences between collegiality and collaboration. Teachers learned to distinguish the difference as the project got underway, and, where they thought common

ground was in place related to various teaching strategies and practices for assessment, it became apparent that there were differences in interpretation. Early agreement seemed to have more to do with comradeship and slowly a more collaboratively evolved explicit understanding of teaching practices was reached.”

At [Queen Elizabeth Public School](#), the project team wrote, “Teachers [are] engaged in curriculum mapping and have refined a language arts curricula which eases the transitions for students.”

- **Dialogue and discussion develop clarity**

Dialogue and discussion developed clarity around language, terms, and strategies. By sharing ideas with colleagues and reflecting publicly about instructional and assessment practices, teachers came to a better understanding of how to meet more effectively the literacy needs of boys. Regular discussions also supported the development of creative solutions.

At [Arthur Meighen Public School](#), a project team member said, “We all get a deeper understanding of the text when given the opportunity to talk about our thinking and to hear the thoughts of others expressed. Literature Circles offer a powerful learning tool.” At [St. Joseph High School](#), the project team said, “Collaboratively we thought reflectively about our practice and collectively we analysed data together, which allowed us to adjust our teaching as we progressed through a unit. Consensus marking of the writing was a new assessment practice.”

At [Parkside Collegiate Institute](#), teachers said, “It is important to work as a team to problem-solve.” At [Holy Name of Jesus School](#), the project team wrote, “Consistent meetings were established; teachers discussed what worked and what didn’t. Brainstorming then occurred to find collaborative solutions. Collaboration assisted tremendously with alignment of teaching strategies as identified through other provincial initiatives – e.g., guided reading, read alouds, and independent reading.”

At [Rene Gordon Elementary School](#), the inquiry team wrote, “Collaboration of teachers increased in the third year because of [teacher] learning teams, which enhance[d] knowledge and understanding.” At [St. John French Immersion Catholic School](#), “collaborative planning decreased the overlap of instructional strategies taught in both French and English streams of the school.” At [Sacred Heart School](#), the principal said, “Now as a staff we talk the same language and celebrate our improvements as a community.” At [Hawthorne Village Public School](#), “teachers engaged in collaborative lesson planning and collaborative student assessments, and developed consistency of approach and common language.”

- **Collaboration results in more consistent planning processes**

As a result of the Boys’ Literacy Project, planning processes tended to be more comprehensive and consistent; they included activities such as the use of SMART goals as well as alignment with school, system, and provincial goals. Alignment addressed

noteworthy provincial documents such as the reports of the Expert Panels on Literacy, including *Education for All* (2005), as well as significant provincial initiatives such as Student Success/Learning to 18, the School Effectiveness Framework, and the work of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.

At [King's Mastung Public School](#), there was close collaboration between staff and early literacy and resource teachers. They created SMART goals by grade pairs. At [St. Peter Catholic School](#), a board administrator said, "Over the past two years we have worked as a team during Professional Learning Community meetings to build consistent teacher practices in an instructional use of Literature Circles, use of accountable talk, posing higher-order thinking questions, and using instructional rubrics."

At [St. Paul School](#), the project team wrote, "We saw that our school focus was supported by the entire board with all teachers receiving in-service on differentiated instruction, instructional technologies, new language resources, and the introduction of literacy coaches." At [Queen Elizabeth Public School](#), the team report stated, "We continued across the team to link our initiative to the board's improvement plan." At [James R. Henderson Public School](#), the team report stated that, "Teachers engaged in collaborative planning to create a five-day plan for balanced literacy – including explicit teaching with strong, shared reading – growth of student familiarity, and comfort with text."

- **Collaboration facilitates refinement of the inquiry process and the teaching of literacy**

Over time, inquiry teams made refinements to the inquiry process and the teaching of literacy. Their understandings significantly grew and practices improved in declaring short-term goals, collecting data, and making continual adjustments to the course of the inquiry process and the teaching of literacy.

At [St. Alphonsus Catholic School](#), the project team wrote, "After reviewing a range of data, a need was identified, and a specific SMART goal was established for a six-week time frame."

A teacher in the team for [Holy Spirit, St. Kevin, and St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Catholic Schools](#) summarized involvement in the inquiry process this way: "We found that our past practices may have compromised our holistic understanding of data and reporting, and that, through this study, we became more aware of the learning skills of boys and discovered that our boys were less engaged in their learning than we had realized"

- **Working together increases self and collective efficacy**

Self and collective efficacy supported the dissemination of best practice. Teachers became more empowered and confident in helping boys improve their literacy skills,

and schools became Professional Learning Communities where knowledge mobilization characterized the learning environment.

At [High Park Public School](#), the “school development of a writing framework in 2007–2008 has led to development of a writing framework for the entire board to ensure consistency for all schools.” At [St. Joseph High School](#), the project team wrote, “During the project the classroom became a living lab as the teachers thought more scientifically about the work that we do as teachers. This was empowering.” At [W.J. Watson Public School](#), good partnerships were undertaken with more conscious engagement of the teacher-librarian.

Professional Learning Communities were important at [St. Michael Catholic School](#). The project team believed that it was “good to align [the] boys’ literacy project with [the] School Effectiveness Framework and School Improvement Plan and district initiatives”. At [Father Leo J. Austin Catholic High School](#) and [St. Bernard Catholic School](#), teachers went beyond the original goals of the project: “Cross-panel collaboration was successful; elementary teachers no longer felt intimidated by the secondary teachers. It became a reciprocal learning experience.” And at [St. Paul School](#), the project team wrote, “Communication between grades and divisions increased dramatically as boys’ literacy became a focal point for all grades!”

At the [Provincial Schools for the Deaf](#), the project team indicated that the “collaboration was refreshing for experienced teachers and new teachers as well”. At [St. John French Immersion Catholic School](#), a culminating event occurred when the “school shared its programs for boys’ literacy on local A-channel Breakfast TV. Students were filmed and teachers were interviewed.”

The inquiry team at [Bishop Macdonell Catholic High School](#) has expanded their project in two ways. The science department is now included in exploring the kinds of reading for learning strategies used in all science classes.

CHAPTER 4

BROAD IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE PROJECT

BROAD IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

Ten areas have been identified to describe additional broad impacts of the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project. A brief selection of quotations and testimonials from teachers, students, administrators, and parents are presented here to characterize each impact.

- **Awareness that the acquisition of professional and student resources that can impact boys' learning**

A member of the project team from [Lansdowne Public School, Sudbury Secondary School, and Wembley Public School](#) recalled the excitement of students when new materials arrived:

“My students have been excited to read. The first day that I had all of the new materials, the students raced into the classroom, grabbed a book, sat down and read. Needless to say, any lesson for that day was postponed. That was a moment I will never forget.”

At [Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute](#), the project team mentioned the quantity of books read:

“The acquisition of a core manga collection has resulted in a tremendous surge in reading, accounting for 35% of all circulation. In fact, 12 boys read close to 1000 titles over the year.”

- **Impact of teacher inquiry in creating a focus for work in the school**

At [Agnes MacPhail Public School](#), the project team believed that teacher inquiry should be a long-term commitment:

“[It is] important not to treat teacher inquiry as a one-time project but to nourish it and maintain it.”

At [Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute, Southwood Secondary School, and Huron Heights Secondary School](#), the team found that the project strengthened the instruction and learning process:

“Coming from different departments in different schools, we were able to find common understandings about boys and literacy. We feel this project is sustainable in other settings because the major skill is in the teaching–learning process rather than the purchase of resources.”

At [St. Andrew School](#), the inquiry team commented on the value of developing a collective vision:

“Our project provided a mechanism for our staff to build a collective vision that was clear, concise, and connected to teaching and learning. This collective vision gave us a focus regarding what was important, motivated staff, and increased a sense of shared responsibility.”

At [Land of Lakes Senior Public School](#), an administrator identified the inquiry project as a catalyst that supported other school initiatives:

“This study and the resulting program have driven a number of new initiatives within our school. We have an after-school program that delivers primarily language-based material. We have been using CASI scores, graphs, and charts to measure change ... and to adjust existing programs. It seems that Boys’ Literacy has been a catalyst for many other positive developments within the school.”

- **Growth of teacher efficacy – confidence in ability to change practice and positively affect student motivation, engagement, achievement, self-awareness, and personal growth**

At [Chester Public School](#), a project team member said:

“Information Circles allowed me to build relationships with the class early on in the year and helped me establish a framework to integrate social studies and science in a meaningful manner.”

At [Worthington Public School](#), a project team member summarized her involvement in the project:

“My thinking has done a 180-degree turn. I now allow boys to read what they like to read – non-fiction, graphic novels, report type books... I also allow them opportunities to share with a partner when they read. These allowances have made reading much more enjoyable for everyone in my class and easier for me to manage. It has made me much more aware of the fact that girls are not necessarily stronger or better readers or that they like reading more. Boys and girls often but not always approach reading differently and we absolutely have to make allowances for this!”

At [St. Anne Catholic High School](#), a project team member reflected on the project:

“I look at the boys in my class in a little different way – not ‘lazy’ or ‘unmotivated’, but just needing a different way to learn. I’m looking for ways in all my classes to go beyond the textbook and put control of the learning in the kids’ hands.”

An administrator at [Bellmoore Public School](#) wrote:

“We are very encouraged by the results gathered over the last three years. We have seen the gender gap decrease as well as seeing an increase in student engagement. These findings have reinforced the need for teachers to differentiate their instruction to

meet the distinct needs of our male readers. Giving boys access to the right stuff, in formats they like, along with practical hands-on activities, produced desired results.”

A teacher at [Rene Gordon Elementary School](#) said:

“It’s so great to work together and to talk about what we are doing in our classrooms. I feel more confident in my teaching and assessment practices. I feel more connected and in line with my team and I feel I am really making a difference.”

At [St. Alphonsus Catholic School](#), the principal commented on the value of the project:

“Our boys’ literacy teacher inquiry has been an amazing journey in discovering how changing our resources, teaching strategies, and assessment tools can have a direct impact on how well our boys perform.”

- **Growth of data literacy – increased ability of school teams to define success using multiple methods of assessment**

At [Rosethorn Junior Public School](#), the principal commented on the impact of the project:

“It was a challenge to begin the project because we were unsure of how to begin this action research. By the end of the project, teachers are much more aware of how assessment drives instruction. They are talking productively about strategies to support a variety of pupils in a balanced literacy program. The best of all – more boys are reading.”

- **Growth in understanding how to best work collaboratively**

At [St. Jean Brebeuf School](#), the project team wrote:

“We had many collaborative discussions to create school benchmarks, checklists, and rubrics.”

At [Worthington Public School](#), the project team wrote:

“[There was a] whole-school focus with each classroom represented. Teachers undertook to acquire a real awareness of boys’ learning and reading styles and needs.”

At [W.J. Watson Public School](#), teachers noted:

“Good partnerships were undertaken with the more conscious engagement of the teacher-librarian.”

- **Positive effect on teacher learning, leading to an increased respect for and understanding of boys as learners**

At [St. Paul Catholic Elementary School](#), a variety of strategies were elaborated:

“Choice, structure in the classroom, use of technology and boy-friendly lessons became a catalyst for changing the rigidity of the language program.”

At [St. Augustine High School](#), the inquiry team wrote:

“In our Grade 9 academic science courses, literacy strategies are now incorporated throughout the course and alternative evaluative practices (magazines, brochures, video presentations, multimedia) are now common place in our science classrooms.”

At [Graham Bell-Victoria Public School](#), the project team wrote:

“We learned about the different ways boys learn; surprised to discover the impact of visual and physical space.”

At [Smith Public School](#), a teacher reflected:

“I have been so deeply changed as a teacher... I will never generalize about the child.”

- **Increased use of targeted and frequent feedback to students by teachers, community role models, and heroes**

At [Worthington Public School](#), some of the strategies used included:

“Cross-school reading response strategy, APE (Answer, Prove, and Extend), and community outreach with adult literacy classes.”

- **Fostering of community networks and parent engagement as strategies to increase support for boys’ literacy**

At [Rosethorn Junior Public School](#), the project team wrote:

“This school has a strong sense of community with tremendous parent involvement.”

- **Use of heroes and role models in ways that underscore the importance of reading and writing in later years and adulthood**

At [Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute](#), highlights of the project were:

“A visit from Dwayne Morgan, a former Bethune student and Juno award-winning spoken word artist/poet, who gave an inspirational talk to the whole school on the importance of reading and writing; a visit from Svetlana Chmakova, a manga artist/author, whose new series ‘Dramacon’ is very popular; and a visit from Richard Scarsbrook whose YA novel ‘Cheeseburger Subversive’ is the funniest book on the White Pine reading list.”

- **Outreach to share learning**

At [Agnes MacPhail Public School](#), teachers and students together conducted a teacher in-service on “Answering Questions About Graphic Novels, Comics”.

At [St Patrick Catholic Elementary School](#), a newspaper article with key messages was prepared on the topic of boys' literacy on October 23, 2006 and shared within the community.

The team at [Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute](#), [Southwood Secondary School](#), and [Huron Heights Secondary School](#) delivered a “seed kit” to each school in the board (containing a student survey, book suggestions, a unit plan, and ideas for assessment).

The team at [St. Michael Catholic School](#) conducted an investigating project and related research with an Ontario university.

The team at [Upsala Public School](#) shared results with other isolated boards through the Northern School Alliance Conference.

The team at [St. Ann School](#) hosted a Literacy Camp at school during the summer.

Team members at [St. Augustine Catholic High School](#) shared the findings of their project with other educators across the province. “Teachers working on this project presented their findings at the Ontario Library Association Super Conference to provide teachers from across Ontario with strategies for improving boys' literacy skills. As this inquiry was also data driven, results were presented to leaders of the Greater Toronto Area Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA) initiative. Within our board, findings were presented to all high school principals to enable them to share our story of fostering, engaging, and promoting literacy strategies across the curriculum.”

CHALLENGES

Eight key challenges were identified by inquiry teams in the course of the project.

1. **Time:** There is never a sufficient amount of time to accomplish everything that needs to be done. Time is often viewed as a scarce and precious commodity. For many teachers time is a juggling act. So it is not surprising that project teams said that they had a problem finding time to collaborate, to observe and visit each other's classrooms, and to develop common assessments and analyse each other's marks and grades.
2. **School Structures:** Establishing school structures and Professional Learning Communities that support collaboration is a school-wide goal that demands commitment and support over time. Unless this is embraced by the principal and staff, opportunities for regular collaboration are difficult to find and sustain. While the project complemented the culture of some schools, it also posed

specific challenges for other schools. This was particularly true when trying to purposefully structure meetings for large teams.

3. **Staff Changes:** In a number of schools, staff mobility resulted in new staff joining the project. While this often resulted in more staff becoming aware of and involved in addressing boys' literacy needs, it did require an extra effort to bring these persons up to speed. Developing processes for job-embedded in-service for new staff members and administrators as transitions occur was a reality encountered over the span of the project.
4. **Finding a Focus for Teacher Inquiry:** Teachers have many competing needs. As a result, a major obstacle facing many project teams was to identify a meaningful and manageable project with a clear essential question. The challenge was to find a focus that was narrow enough for the manageable collection of data and broad enough to promote continual reflection on student learning.
5. **Disseminating Ideas and Promising Practices:** In a few schools the project was not a high priority and in others it was difficult to maintain interest over time. As a result, it was difficult to identify and/or to disseminate ideas and promising practices.
6. **Validity of Data Results:** Project teams were constantly challenged to explore the meaning and complexity of validity issues. The task for most, if not all projects, was to develop appropriate assessments for the many facets of boys' learning so that appropriate interventions could be undertaken.
7. **Technology Limitations:** Although technology and new media hold promise for engaging boys and enhancing motivation, a number of project schools encountered problems. In some instances, the technology was not generally available or technical issues prevented students from using available computers. Limited technical expertise was also another limiting factor.
8. **Funding:** Maintaining sufficient annual budgets to sustain resources in sufficient quantities posed challenges in a number of project schools.

CHAPTER 5

NEXT STEPS/SUSTAINABILITY

Having evidence and engaging in conversations will not, by themselves, improve schooling. Instead the merging of the process of deep collaboration with evidence and inquiry can create the conditions for generating new knowledge.

(Earl and Timperley, 2008, p. 2)

It is critical to sustain what has been learned about boys' literacy and about how teacher inquiry contributes to a professional community of practice within a school or a learning network beyond the school itself.

The overall impact of this three-year project is the promotion of instructional program coherence. Projects created a forum for the inquiry teams to draw connections among current provincial initiatives in curriculum, instruction, and assessment to differentiating teaching for boys. The work has been sustained and long term. Opportunities over time to collect and analyse student achievement data provided valuable lessons in assessment literacy. The longer school teams focused on their inquiry on boys' literacy learning, the more precise their instructional and assessment strategies became. Katz, Earl, and Ben Jaafar (2008) have coined the phrase "activity traps" to describe the tendency of schools to move quickly to solutions and action rather than engage in a thoughtful deeper investigation of the impacts of their teaching practice. In the three-year time frame of this work, school teams went deeper.

The collaborative nature of the inquiry provided a focus for school or multi-school professional learning activities. With the time to gather data, change practices, and examine the results for their boys, teachers saw improvement. The impetus was provided to create networks of ongoing relationships. In a sense, this teacher inquiry work provided the best evidence of how cooperative learning can make a difference for educators. These projects greatly contributed to teachers' sense of efficacy. School team members saw changes as directly related to their giving boys a voice and choice, providing a wider variety of materials for their reading and writing, and differentiating their teaching.

A negative can be viewed as a positive. The multi-year feature of the projects proved extremely challenging as schools underwent teacher and administrator changes over time. As one would surmise, these changes were reported as disruptions to their inquiry work. However, a positive outcome of this change was noted. Over time, school teams learned strategies for sustaining the momentum for their inquiry work. School teams made necessary plans for transferring their learning to include new colleagues. New administrators were given background information to sustain the projects over the three years and move ahead. This kind of intentional planning can be generalized as useful to many other provincial projects.

Through their boys' literacy teacher inquiry work, teachers and administrators had many opportunities to link their learning about effective ways to promote boys' literacy to the many other provincial initiatives related to working in groups, looking at student achievement data, and sharpening their teaching practices. It became obvious through the data that these inquiry projects were a catalyst for synthesizing all the learning that forms part of school reform initiatives to raise the bar and close the gap for all students in the province.

Based on the findings of this project, we have posited twelve actions that could be undertaken to sustain and extend learning. Some of the recommendations are at the provincial level, while others are directed at schools and school districts.

1. **Sustain and promote learning from this project by the creation of a sequel to *Me Read? No Way!*** This second boys' literacy guide would draw on the broad range of learning on boys' literacy emerging from the inquiry teams, using ideas and quotes from the inquiry teams' final reports and this research report. The sequel would promote, in a user-friendly version, specific strategies learned in Ontario schools over the three years of this project. Links should be made to other provincial work on literacy and instructional leadership.
2. **Hold a second symposium related to boys and learning in early 2010.** This symposium would create a forum for a sample of inquiry teams to share their learning across the province in face-to-face sessions in contexts familiar to Ontario teachers. Teams could demonstrate the wide range of promising practices through presentations.
3. **Create a series of video case studies involving a sample of inquiry teams.** In each video, teams would outline specifics related to the process of teacher inquiry in their schools, emphasizing collaboration, team building, and the data literacy techniques used. Specific strategies that improved boys' literacy skills would be highlighted in each video.
4. **Expand teacher inquiry to other specific school reform initiatives.** Funding of projects would require an eighteen-month to three-year time frame but could be a lesser amount than that given to the Boys' Literacy Inquiry Project. As part of accountability, schools would share the key findings and next steps. Since few of the projects in the Boys' Literacy Inquiry Project involved secondary schools, special consideration should be given to funding of a joint project involving two secondary schools working together.
5. **Consider funding a specific research project** that investigates the implementation of teaching and assessing practice related to boys' literacy in clusters of schools. Researchers would analyse and evaluate methods used to change teaching practices across a network of schools.
6. **Provide an annual grant, to school districts that apply, for student reading materials that have annualized costs, such as magazine and newspaper subscriptions, or represent non-traditional genres.** A criterion for disbursement would be that schools could apply for such funding by

demonstrating that they had surveyed specific groups, in this case boys, to determine interest in particular materials.

7. **Prepare and make readily available a series of reading interest surveys.** Prepared by the Ministry of Education, the surveys would be designed to determine the type of reading materials of most appeal to boys. Some schools have access to commercially prepared interest surveys; it would be better to have a variety of common surveys.
8. **Provide funding for secondary schools to prepare common assessments in English applied courses.** This would be done through Student Success initiatives, and these common assessments would be made available to all schools.
9. **Expand teacher moderation as a school-based professional learning strategy.** This could be accomplished through video casts and support materials. Focus should be on specific strategies for secondary schools.
10. **Provide specific professional development for K–12 teachers that:**
 - develops a series of case studies on **graphic novels** in elementary and secondary schools that would:
 1. identify the advantages of using these texts with boys of all achievement levels;
 2. explain the features of these texts;
 3. provide strategies for teaching with them;
 - focuses on strategies that use **oral language** as integral to student pre- and post-reading and writing;
 - explores the wide range of **non-written responses** students can make to demonstrate comprehension;
 - identifies ways of using **drama** as a vehicle for student response to their reading and writing; and
 - provides **specific tools** for teachers to determine **student interest** and **motivation** in reading through surveys, questions, and focus groups.
11. **Create a resource for elementary and secondary schools** providing specifics for elementary and secondary mentoring programs that would engage boys and reconnect them with schools and literacy.
12. **Create companion documents for schools and school councils with family- and community-friendly strategies for engaging students in literacy activities.** Start with the Junior Division in this initiative.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Work Plan Template
- Appendix 2: School Teams, including Essential Questions
- Appendix 3: Professional Resources
- Appendix 4: Biographies of OISE Research Team

Appendix 1

**BOYS' LITERACY
TEACHER INQUIRY
WORK PLAN
FALL 2005**

APPROVED BY:

SIGNATURE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

SIGNATURE OF SUPERINTENDENT

SIGNATURE OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

CRITERIA FOR CREATING A SUCCESSFUL WORK PLAN

1. Work involves a school team.
2. There is strong evidence that the work will build school capacity and improve teaching and learning related to boys' literacy skills.
3. The "essential question" relates directly to improving boys' reading and/or writing skills.
4. Strategies and budget items are directly tied to answering the "essential question".
5. Plans for collecting information/data are well formulated and are directly related to answering your "essential question".
6. Budget items are practical and, for the most part, are for items that can be used in the future to sustain work for improving boys' reading and writing skills.
7. Budget does not exceed \$20,000.00.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Title of Teacher Inquiry Work: _____

This Teacher Inquiry Work is new work or builds on existing work

This Teacher Inquiry Work is linked to another initiative Yes No

If Yes, please name the other initiative _____

Name of School Board/School Authority/
Provincial Schools Branch: _____

Director of Education: _____

Name of School Submitting Work Plan: _____

Name of School Principal
Responsible for Teacher
Inquiry Work: _____

(____) _____
Phone Number E-mail

Name of Superintendent
Responsible for Teacher
Inquiry Work: _____

(____) _____
Phone Number E-mail

Team Contact: _____

(____) _____
Phone Number E-mail

Total Funding
Dollars Requested

\$ _____ . _____

Date Submitted (dd/mm/yy)

TEACHER INQUIRY TEAM MEMBERS

Name	Grade/Role
Team Members: _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

SECTION B: FOCUS OF TEACHER INQUIRY

Essential Question: What question do you expect to answer through your inquiry?

Please check the key strategy(ies) described in *Me Read? No Way! A Practical Guide to Improving Boys' Literacy Skills* you plan to use to improve boys' literacy skills. If you plan to use some other strategy, please describe under "other" below.

- Have the right stuff: *Choosing appropriate classroom resources for boys*
- Help make it a habit: *Providing frequent opportunities to read and write*
- Teach with purpose: *Understanding boys' learning styles*
- Embrace the arts: *Using the arts to bring literacy to life*
- Let them talk: *Appealing to boys' need for social interaction*
- Find positive role models: *Influencing boys' attitudes through the use of role models*
- Read between the lines: *Bringing critical-literacy skills into the classroom*
- Keep it real: *Making reading and writing relevant to boys*
- Get the Net: *Using technology to get boys interested in literacy*
- Assess for success: *Using appropriate assessment tools for boys*
- Be in their corner: *The role of the teacher in boys' literacy*
- Drive the point home: *Engaging parents in boys' literacy*
- Build a school-wide focus: *Building literacy beyond the classroom*
- Other Strategy: _____

Students Impacted: Please indicate the numbers of students in each grade to be involved in your work for the 2005–06 school year.

JK–K	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

FULL DESCRIPTION OF WORK: Describe, in 500 words or less, details of your inquiry. What characteristics of your students/classroom/school led you to your “essential question”? What do you hope to achieve? What will your work look like in operation? What resources will you be using? Do you plan to include parents? Members of the community? Others?

SECTION C: INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

What indicators do you plan to use to measure the impact of your teacher inquiry work on boys' literacy skills and answer your "essential question" (e.g., test scores, Report Card marks/grades, attitudes, school attendance, credit accumulation, among other types of data)? Please note that your June Interim Report must include results related to these indicators.

Describe how you will collect information/data related to these indicators (e.g., EQAO test scores, response journals, surveys, records of books read, video clips of student interviews).

SECTION D: BOARD IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Describe how your Work Plan aligns with your school board improvement plans.

SECTION E: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have consulted our board officials for policies related to the ethics of collecting information about your students?

Yes ___ No ___

SECTION F: BUDGET

What are your proposed expenses for the 2005–06 school year (e.g., teacher time to plan, resources for boys, computer software, teacher training, data collection)?

Item _____	\$ _____
Item _____	\$ _____
Item _____	\$ _____
Item _____	\$ _____
Item _____	\$ _____
Item _____	\$ _____
Item _____	\$ _____
Item _____	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____

Appendix 2

School Teams and Essential Questions

School(s)	Board	Essential Question(s)
A.Y. Jackson Secondary School	Ottawa-Carleton DSB	How can stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators) create an environment in which boys can engage in literacy activities both comfortably and confidently? Does creating this environment improve achievement/attitudes related to literacy?
Adelaide Hoodless Public School	Hamilton-Wentworth DSB	Do more varied resources that are engaging to boys, such as an array of magazines, graphic novels, non-fiction, and novels, and the use of more inclusive teaching practices, such as guided reading and writing, help all boys, regardless of their level of competency in literacy, improve and become more engaged in literacy?
Agnes MacPhail Public School	Toronto DSB	How can the use of graphic novels in FRED time (Free Reading Every Day), when incorporated in curriculum areas and combined with instructional strategies, improve: (i) attitudes towards reading and writing, and (ii) reading preferences?
Armstrong Public School	Northern District School Area Board	How can we get boys to read more?
Arthur Meighen Public School	Avon Maitland DSB	Will the availability of a wide variety of high-interest, current resources geared towards a male audience, in conjunction with the implementation of more interactive teaching strategies such as literature circles, increase engagement and achievement for our Intermediate male students?
Bear Creek Secondary School and Holly Meadows Elementary School	Simcoe County DSB	How does the use of materials based on boys' preferences affect their attitudes towards reading and their reading comprehension in Grades 7–10?
Bellmoore Public School	Hamilton-Wentworth DSB	With the “right” resources in place and a deeper understanding of multiple learning styles, how do we develop stronger comprehension practices and encourage richer responses from male student-readers? Will division-wide, data-driven SMART goals in literacy acquisition provide the intervention needed for reluctant male readers? Will explicit teaching of specific comprehension goal-based practices increase comprehension and maintain engagement of boys? Will task-oriented workshops for at-risk/reluctant/disengaged male readers aid in reader engagement?
Bishop Allen Academy	Toronto CDSB	What is the relationship between engagement and performance for “at-risk” students in Grade 12 assuming that higher levels of engagement should lead to fewer lates and absences and therefore higher rates of assignment submission and achievement?
Bishop Macdonell Catholic High School	Wellington CDSB	Does empowering male students by allowing them to choose classroom resources and use them on a daily basis improve comprehension skills and attitudes towards reading?
Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute, Southwood Secondary School and Huron Heights Secondary School	Waterloo Region DSB	If boys are given the opportunities to choose their own reading materials from traditional and non-traditional text-based sources, will that encourage them to engage in and complete assignments? Will their attitude towards their own abilities to communicate change? Will the quality of their work improve?
Canadian Martyrs, St. Nicholas, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Mark Schools	Niagara CDSB	When “talk” precedes writing, children have the opportunity to explore, generate, and organize ideas. Talk helps students to clarify and express their thinking. This leads to more disciplined thinking, which in turn leads to more focused, purposeful writing. Purposeful talk therefore needs to be explicitly taught if boys and girls are to increase the level and quality of their writing. How can teachers best facilitate purposeful talk?
Chester Public School	Toronto DSB	Will participation in non-fiction literature circles improve boys' reading skills and attitudes?
Don Mills Collegiate Institute and Don Mills Middle School	Toronto DSB	If we find ways to honour and build on boys' out-of-school literacy, will our work have a positive spill-over effect on their in-school literacy and their attitude to learning?

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School(s)	Board	Essential Question(s)
Dr. G. J. MacGillivray Public School	Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB	Do single-gender classes in Language Arts make a difference for boys' (and girls') literacy achievement?
Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute	Toronto DSB	What are the effects on boys' reading habits when they are exposed to a wide variety of "high interest" reading materials?
E. C. Drury High School	Halton DSB	If we provide accessibility and ample opportunity to use assistive technology (Dragon, Kurzweil, Write: Outloud, Co Writer, Smart Ideas, and Alpha Smarts) and sufficient training to a focus group of Grade 9 boys, accompanied with appropriate resources, will these boys be more engaged, be more successful, and have an increase in credit accumulation in English, geography, math, and science courses over the next three years?
Echo Bay Public School	Algoma DSB	Does short, focused, hands-on reading instruction, matching individual learning strengths and needs, have a positive impact on the development of boys' literacy skills?
Egremont Community Public School	Bluewater DSB	How can accountable talk improve boys' attitudes towards literacy and their ability to communicate in writing?
Equal Opportunities School Group: Holy Family, Holy Name of Jesus, St. Ann, St. Brigid, St. Columba, St. Helen, St. Lawrence, St Mary, St. Patrick	Hamilton-Wentworth CDSB	Can improving the oral literacy of Kindergarten boys in schools where poverty is endemic increase their reading scores at the end of their Kindergarten year?
F.W. Begley, Northwood, Kingsville, Eastwood, Harrow Senior, and Lakeshore Discovery Public Schools	Greater Essex County DSB	How does an intentional instructional focus on critical literacy affect boys' literacy achievement?
Father Henry Carr School	Toronto CDSB	Do graphic novels promote boys' literacy?
Father Leo J. Austin Catholic High School and St. Bernard Catholic School	Durham CDSB	Will guided reading and targeted instructional strategies make reading and writing relevant for a controlled group of boys who are achieving at levels 1 and 2, and in Applied and Locally Developed courses? Also, can guided reading and changes in teacher practice improve student achievement levels in both reading and writing?
Five Mile School and Gorham and Ware Community School	Lakehead DSB	Will boys' reading increase with the daily use of active, brain-compatible learning strategies and will the use of these strategies increase boys' achievement levels in reading?
Foxboro Public School	Hastings Prince Edward DSB	What are the common reading and writing instructional practices for improving boys' written communication, specifically in the following areas: details, organization, voice, and connections?
George B. Little Public School	Toronto DSB	Will the DRA, CASI, and ultimately the EQAO scores of our male students improve after increased exposure to appropriate classroom resources?
Gladstone Public School	Upper Canada DSB	Do boys engage in reading more often and advance their reading skills further when their fathers and other male role models read to/with them?
Graham Bell-Victoria Public School	Grand Erie DSB	To what extent will the infusion of male-oriented literature into the classrooms and library of our school (in a socio-economically depressed area), accompanied by a variety of programs focused on expanding access to reading materials, improve boys' interest in reading and subsequently their basic literacy skills, such as reading comprehension, as measured by DRA and CASI?

School(s)	Board	Essential Question(s)
Hawthorne Village Public School	Halton DSB	What effect does the integration of drama/dance/music/visual arts in shared reading instruction have on 1. Student reading fluency? 2. Student comprehension of text? 3. Student motivation towards reading?
High Park Public School	Lambton Kent DSB	Will interactive writing strategies and direct instruction focused on authentic learning experiences improve the literacy skills of boys currently achieving at level 2?
Hillcrest Community Public School	Toronto DSB	Would a greater variety of current reading materials, teacher resources, teacher development, and participation in the arts help the boys at Hillcrest Community School to develop a more positive attitude towards reading and develop better reading skills? Would there be an effect on academic achievement?
Holy Family Catholic School	St. Clair CDSB	Do attitudes and scores increase if students are provided with opportunities to choose reading materials for their classroom library and receive direct instruction on comprehension strategies (e.g., asking and answering questions and making inferences), and if teachers receive professional development on independent reading?
Holy Name of Jesus School	Hornepayne Roman Catholic Separate School Division	Will the implementation of a balanced literacy program focused on boys' interests increase achievement levels in reading?
Holy Rosary School	Halton CDSB	How will we engage boys in reading and increase their achievement in comprehension and critical thinking skills through the use of literature that makes connections to their personal interests and activities?
Holy Saviour School	Superior North CDSB	Will integrating drama activities into classroom programs increase boys' reading scores from their pre-intervention assessment to post-intervention assessment? Will integrating drama activities into classroom language programs improve boys' reading attitudes?
Holy Spirit, St. Kevin, and St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Catholic Schools	Toronto CDSB	To what extent do specific instructional strategies and classroom materials that affirm boys' literacies improve (affect) their motivation and achievement in Grades 3 to 6?
Howick Central Public School	Avon Maitland DSB	Will boys' writing skills improve if their interest in reading is increased by the use of best teaching strategies for reading?
James R. Henderson Public School	Limestone DSB	What impact will enhanced instructional strategies, data collection, Professional Learning Community, and appropriate resources have on boys' attitudes towards and achievement in reading and writing?
Kensington Community School	Toronto DSB	If we provide materials that are of interest to boys and that they help select, will this change their behaviours and attitudes towards reading and "school literacy"?
King's Masting Public School	Peel DSB	Which strategies (e.g., making connections, questioning, inferring, synthesizing) have the most impact on boys' comprehension of a written text?
Laggan Public School	Upper Canada DSB	If we can change boys' attitudes towards reading, provide role models, and give them the opportunity to talk about what they read, can we improve their reading scores?
Lakeshore and Tecumseh Public Schools	Halton DSB	How will the influence of various role models affect the reading abilities and attitudes of Grade 2 students?
Land of Lakes Senior Public School	Near North DSB	By having appropriate reading materials for boys, and by providing boys with a regular opportunity for extended silent reading, can we narrow the gap between boys' and girls' literacy skills?
Lansdowne Public School, Sudbury Secondary School, and Wembley Public School	Rainbow DSB	How does the availability of a diverse selection of literature specifically identified as appealing to the interests of boys, and the implementation of specific reading engagement strategies (student conferences, silent reading time, literature circles, reading response journals), positively address reading attitudes, the amount of time spent reading, and the grades gap on the OSSLT?
Maynard Public School	Upper Canada DSB	Do gender-based groups affect student interest in reading specifically at the Grade 7 level? If materials are provided that match student interests, can we rescue disengaged readers? Does interest in material correlate with quality of written work?

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School(s)	Board	Essential Question(s)
McKee Public School	Toronto DSB	Literature Circles and Talk: What is their Impact on stage 2 ESL boys' reading attitudes and abilities?
Minto-Clifford Public School	Upper Grand DSB	Will the strategic use of graphic organizer writing frames, complemented by daily teacher modelling, explicit skill-based instruction, student practise (within specific time frames), and regular, targeted and individualized feedback lead to improvement in boys' writing performance?
Oakwood Public School	Halton DSB	Will comprehension skills and attitudes towards reading improve for boys in Grades 2 to 5 if we have guided reading groups made up of only boys, using boys' materials of choice, and the "let them talk strategy"?
Our Lady of the Valley School	Kenora CDSB	Will boys' literacy achievement improve if we adopt a common, whole-school approach to writing workshops?
Parkdale Public School	Toronto DSB	Is it possible, by focusing on specific genres of books not usually discussed or covered in the regular classroom, to positively affect the attitudes of boys towards reading?
Parkside Collegiate Institute	Thames Valley DSB	What is the impact of non-fiction texts on boys' literacy skills and academic success?
Pineland Public School	Halton DSB	Can we improve comprehension and make reading real by emphasizing instructional strategies that engage boys in hands-on activities, encourage discussion, and stimulate their imagination?
Provincial Schools for the Deaf	Provincial Schools Branch	Will the use of manipulative materials, the use of videos, and having parents as active partners enhance boys' communication skills?
Queen Elizabeth Public School	District School Board Ontario North East	Will offering a rich and varied mix of reading materials that appeal to boys build strong readers/writers who are engaged in a way that develops positive attitudes towards reading/writing, and positive self-images as readers/writers? (This question evolved to include a focus on improved reading scores as measured by CASI and DRA and the development of sense of purpose when reading and writing.)
Queen Elizabeth, Admaston, and Central Public Schools	Renfrew County DSB	Will achievement and attitudes of boys towards reading and writing improve through the use of non-fiction reading and writing strategies and materials?
Queen of Peace Catholic Elementary School	Windsor Essex CDSB	Will the use of graphic organizers, increased social interaction, and engaging resources affect boys' attitudes towards reading and writing and improve their literacy skills?
Regiopolis-Notre Dame Catholic High School	Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB	To what extent does personal choice in reading material affect one's literacy skills (reading, writing, and speaking)?
Rene Gordon Elementary School	Toronto DSB	How do regular professional learning team (PLT) meetings and the moderation of assessment to learn more about effective reading strategies and to plan instruction, affect teacher learning and student reading outcomes?
Riverside Public School	Trillium Lakelands DSB	Can a focus on differentiated instruction, combined with direct and focused teaching, effect positive change in boys' attitudes towards, interest in, and achievement in reading and writing?
Robert Moore School, Donald Young School, and Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program	Rainy River DSB	While "making a habit" and "positive role models" affect boys' literacy?
Roden Public School	Toronto DSB	Will student use of electronic graphic organizers improve junior boys' reading comprehension?
Rosethorn Junior Public School	Toronto DSB	By increasing student exposure to good literature through specific teaching strategies, can we increase the percentage of boys reading at grade level by June?

School(s)	Board	Essential Question(s)
Sacred Heart School	Northwest CDSB	Will specific teaching of reading comprehension strategies improve male students' attitudes towards reading for pleasure, increase their comprehension abilities, and improve their writing skills?
San Lorenzo Ruiz Elementary School	Dufferin-Peel CDSB	Will providing a broader range of choice in reading materials and frameworks for discussion significantly improve boys' attitudes towards reading and their achievement in reading? a) What materials will boys more readily choose to read? b) How do we best facilitate choice? c) How do we assess boys' reading skills and attitudes using a wider range of materials?
Sister Mary Clare Catholic School	Huron Superior CDSB	Can all students achieve higher literacy standards given sufficient time and support from teachers, the principal, parents, and the community and by teachers choosing appropriate resources for boys?
Smith Public School	District School Board of Niagara	Could making a connection with home, specifically with early primary (JK/SK/Grade 1) parents, increase student achievement? With this connection, could we decrease the gap between boys and girls literacy achievements in their early years?
Southwood Park Public School	Durham DSB	How can we help students, especially boys, redefine and expand their definition of reading so they understand that reading isn't limited to traditional text, and encourage them to apply critical thinking skills to all forms of text?
St. Alphonsus Catholic School	Toronto CDSB	Listen To My Story! Boys Demonstrate Higher Level Thinking Skills.
St. Andrew School	Dufferin-Peel CDSB	How can we develop a reading culture at St. Andrew School to increase boys' motivation and improve their achievement in literacy?
St. Ann School	Thunder Bay CDSB	Will engaging parents in boys' literacy through home-school activities improve St. Ann primary division boys' literacy skills?
St. Anne Catholic High School	Windsor-Essex CDSB	Will the use of "managed choice" text sets in classes traditionally having a high enrolment of boys (technology), a high failure rate (Grade 10 Essential History), and classes having fewer reading and writing activities (science and geography) result in a higher level of engagement and improved academic achievement for boys?
St. Anthony's and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Schools	Renfrew CDSB	How does serving as or having a male mentor as a role model result in greater achievement in reading comprehension and more positive attitudes towards reading for boys from Senior Kindergarten to Grade 7?
St. Augustine Catholic High School	York CDSB	How can the implementation of targeted instructional strategies be used to improve boys' reading and writing skills with non-fiction text?
St. Basil's Catholic School	Bruce-Grey CDSB	Does boys' achievement in reading improve by Grade 3 when teachers increase their understanding and application of non-fiction instructional practices?
St. Edward Catholic School	Toronto CDSB	Can we empower the boys, through a St. Edward Boys Book Club, to be comfortable, confident readers who are able to share and discuss their views and opinions in different settings?
St. Gregory Catholic School	Catholic DSB of Eastern Ontario	Will boys' attitudes of themselves as readers improve when they are offered a rich and varied mix of materials that are of interest to boys, in combination with a broadening of teaching practices?
St. Jean Brebeuf School	Dufferin-Peel CDSB	Will literacy levels improve if boys are provided with more enjoyable reading materials and if there is a focus on Reading for Meaning and Critical Thinking as instructional strategies?
St. John French Immersion Catholic School	London District CSB	How we can make 200 minutes of core English effective in a French Immersion School? By "effective", we mean closing the gaps between boys and girls in the literacy program for Grades 2 and 3.
St. Joseph High School	Windsor-Essex CDSB	What is the impact of incorporating soccer-themed activities in our multicultural school on improving boys' motivation to read, OSSLT pass rates, and course success rates of boys enrolled in the ENG 1P/L, ENG 2P/L, and ELS 300 courses?
St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School	Nipissing-Parry Sound CDSB	Will regular reading of materials that are interesting to boys increase their engagement in reading and their literacy results?
St. Mary's Catholic	Huron Perth CDSB	Is there a direct correlation for boys between literacy achievement and student engagement?

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School(s)	Board	Essential Question(s)
Elementary School		
St. Michael Catholic School	Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB	Could we improve boys' literacy (reading and writing) through the use of gaming circles?
St. Michael School	Ottawa Catholic CDSB	What effect does enhancing parental involvement have on boys' literacy skills?
St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School	Waterloo CDSB	If we provide high-quality resources appealing to boys and effective teaching strategies in both shared and guided reading, will we improve boys' achievement in literacy at St. Patrick?
St. Patrick's School	Atikokan Roman Catholic Separate School Board	How can we get boys to <i>want</i> to read and write, as opposed to <i>having</i> to read and write?
St. Paul Catholic Elementary School	Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington CDSB	Will the attitudes towards and skills in reading and writing improve over time for a class of 20 male students when they are given more opportunities to incorporate technology into their literacy program and more choice and selection in their reading materials and topics for writing, and are provided with male role models within their literacy program?
St. Paul School	Northeastern CDSB	Will improved access to engaging and relevant reading materials affect junior division boys' attitudes towards and motivation to read, and ultimately improve their achievement in reading?
St. Paul the Apostle Catholic School	Sudbury CDSB	Will a change in teaching strategies for boys affect attitudes toward reading and will there be a corresponding change in achievement?
St. Peter Catholic School	Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB	Will provision of student-selected resources and participation in literature circles for boys, in Grades 4 to 8, have a positive effect on boys' attitudes and skills in reading and writing for meaning?
Tom Longboat Junior Public School	Toronto DSB	Does the literacy level of boys improve when they are given a specific purpose and instructional support for their independent reading (i.e., providing greater access to age- and gender-appropriate books in the classroom, using oral and written reading responses, providing daily opportunities for oral sharing and demonstration of comprehension)?
Upsala Public School	Upsala District School Area Board	Will junior boys' involvement with interactive reading materials positively affect their engagement in reading and subsequent reading achievement levels?
W.J. Watson Public School	York Region DSB	How can we use boys' personal connections to further develop their productive disposition towards reading?
West Glen Junior School	Toronto DSB	Over a two-year period (Spring 06–Spring 08) what are the trends in boys' attitudes towards reading, specifically related to: a) how much they like reading, and b) their reading ability?
West Hill Collegiate Institute	Toronto DSB	If we give boys time in which to read and more choice in reading materials, will they read more and will literacy rates improve?
Western Technical and Commercial School	Toronto DSB	How can we improve the reading scores for high school students with learning disabilities, poor attitudes towards learning, and chronic attendance problems?
Whitney Public School	Toronto DSB	Can a comprehensive literacy program of non-fiction and fiction materials, selectively suited to meet the interests and needs of young male readers, improve their reading scores?
William G. Davis Junior Public School	Toronto DSB	Will raising the profile of male role models reading at home through a Book Bag program and at school with special events and Boys' Book Clubs improve boys' attitudes towards reading and student achievement?
Worthington Public School	Peel DSB	Will boys' attitudes and achievement in literacy (reading, writing, and oral language) change as a result of innovative instructional practices (such as games and drama) and the use of a wide variety of reading materials?

School(s)	Board	Essential Question(s)
Total: 97 reports		

Appendix 3

Professional Resources

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Other Professional Resources

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- Boys’ Literacy, <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>.
- Cambridge University Website, www-rba.educ.cam.ac.uk.
- Canadian Adolescent Boys and Literacy, <http://www.education.ualberta.ca/boysandliteracy>
- Educational Leadership, www.asdc.org.
- Florida Reading Association – An informative site for teachers, http://flare.ucf.edu/FLaRE_Presentations.htm.
- Inspire: The Journal of Literacy and Numeracy of Ontario, www.inspirelearning.ca.
- International Reading Association Comic Creation Page, <http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/comic/index.html>.
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Student Success/Learning to 18 and Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat,

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/studentsuccess.html>.

TD Summer reading Club, <http://www.te-club-td.ca>.

Think Literacy – Ministry of Education, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/thinkliteracy/.

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Web-casts Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and Ministry of Education, www.curriculum.org.

Appendix 4

Barbara Bodkin was principal investigator for the OISE research team, leading the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project. Presently, Barbara is Director of Continuing Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, responsible for providing customized learning and implementation models – both face to face and online – for individual teachers, teams, schools, and districts and for leading initiatives related to curriculum implementation and change. Barbara has experience in design and delivery of international programs, institutes, and projects involving donors and partners from universities, school commissions, and funding agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency and the World Bank. Previously, Barbara had a variety of roles in York Catholic District School Board, as a teacher, principal, and superintendent of curriculum and assessment, with experience in leading teams for school improvement and curriculum reform.

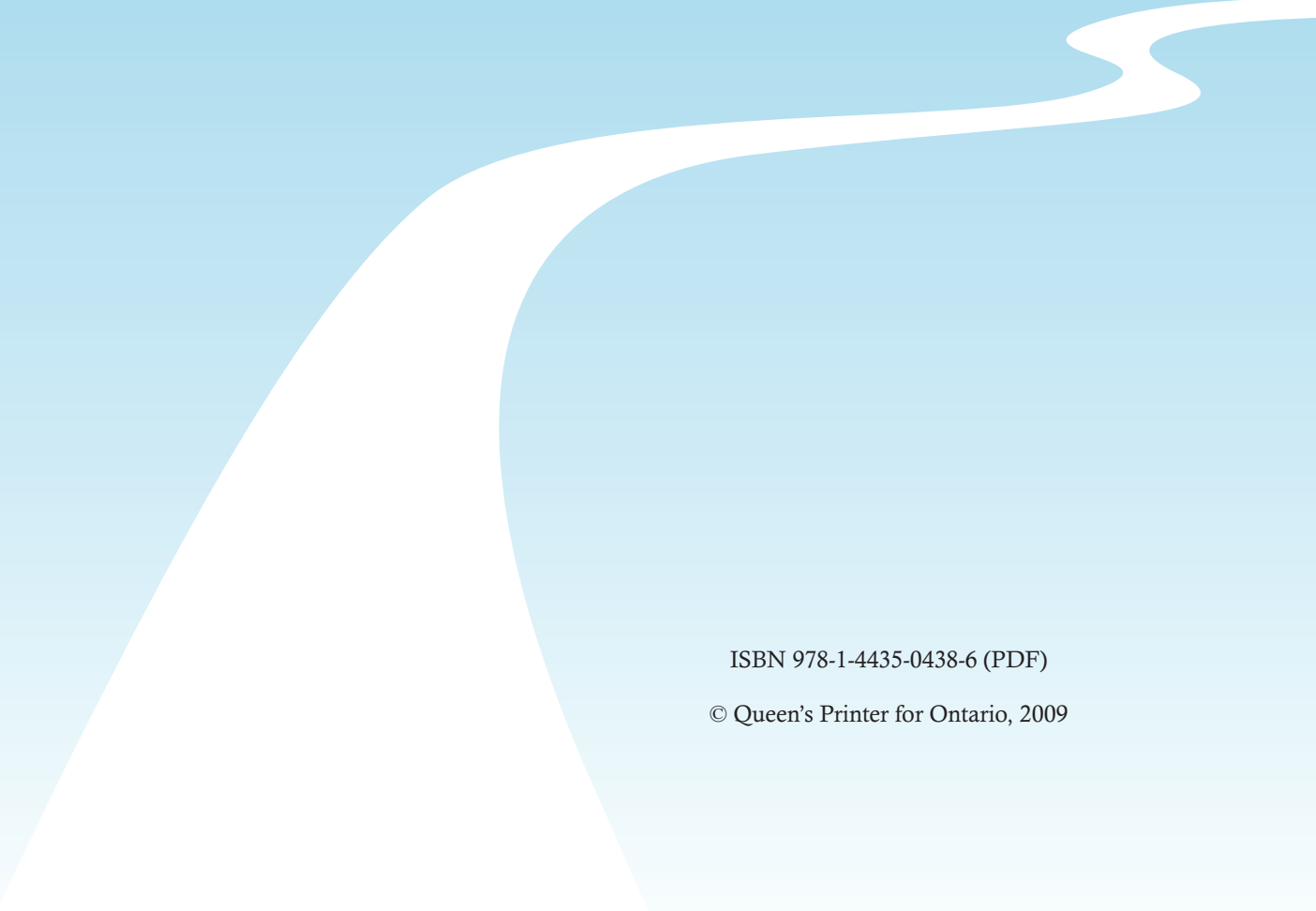
Micki Clemens is an independent education consultant. She has recently served as a coordinator for both the CODE Special Education Project and the EDU/OPA Project in the Dufferin-Peel CDSB. Micki's previous leadership positions include Instructional Leader in English, Language Arts, and Drama for the Halton District School Board; Education Officer for the Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO); and, subsequently, Education Officer for the Ministry of Education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch. Her leadership work with provincial and board teams, principals, and classroom teachers has involved researching best practices in literacy, curriculum, and assessment; assisting clients with the collection and analysis of data on student achievement; fostering collaborative networking initiatives; and building administrator and teacher capacity in literacy focused on reducing the achievement gap for all students. She has authored a student text, *The 10 Most Ingenious Fictional Detectives* (2007), published by Scholastic.

Rose Dotten is presently Chief Executive Officer of the Shelburne Public Library system after a career as a teacher-librarian working with classroom teachers and students at the elementary and secondary panels, as well as teaching in pre-service education and teacher-librarianship programs. As a consultant to the Ministry of Education, she worked on restructuring education and literacy initiatives in Bermuda and researched and developed the teaching and learning strategies on the ministry's Curriculum Unit Planner. Currently, she has been involved with the *Think Literacy Teaching and Learning Strategies* DVDs for the *Think Literacy* website, scripting and directing the projects.

Dr. Clay Lafleur is an established and highly respected educator and researcher. He has a wide range of national and international experience in public education, government, non-profit organizations, and postsecondary institutions. He is currently President of his own consulting company, Claymar International, and is also Senior Associate, Education Sector Group, of Parker Management Consulting Inc. Some of his past positions include Director of Policy and Research for The Learning Partnership; Curriculum Assessment Officer and Chief Research Officer for the Simcoe County District School Board; Manager of the Assessment Policy Unit for the Ontario Ministry of Education; Head of Evaluation and Research Services for the Educational Research Institute of British Columbia; and Education Research Officer for the South Australian Education Department. Clay is an Associate in the Graduate School, University of Toronto, and was formerly an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Dr. Shelley Stagg Peterson is an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE/University of Toronto. A former elementary teacher in Alberta, Shelley now teaches pre-service and graduate courses in literacy and children's literature. Her research interests include gender issues in writing and writing assessment, teacher action research, and teaching writing using digital technology and multimedia.

Dr. Larry Swartz is an instructor in the Initial Teacher Education program, as well as principal of Dramatic Arts additional qualification courses at OISE/University of Toronto. He has been a classroom teacher and consultant for twenty-five years for the Peel District Board of Education. Larry is the author of the teacher reference books *The New Dramathemes* and *Literacy Techniques* (2nd edition) as well as *The Poetry Experience* and has co-written several major language arts resources, including 6 *Bold Print* titles for classroom use. *Good Books Matter: A Resource Guide for Choosing and Using Children's Literature*, co-authored with Shelley Stagg Peterson, is his most recent publication. Larry is a popular conference speaker throughout North America. His interests include using children's literature to achieve expectations, reading response, the talk curriculum, drama and anti-bullying.



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