



Volume III, Issue 4

## Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Work Plan Support Booklet – June 2008

### Sustaining and Extending Your School Inquiry Team Learning

*“Teachers are at the heart of educational change - their consent is ultimately necessary for policy changes to be implemented and sustained system-wide. Capacity building is therefore critical, involving a wide range of players who can support schools and provide the critical friendship that will enable them to develop the confidence and independence to gather and use evidence wisely to enhance and sustain improvements in students' learning and teaching.”*

Louise Stoll and Gordon Stobart. *Informed Consent? Issues in Implementing and Sustaining Government - Driven Educational Change*. 2005.

This journey of teacher inquiry began with a similar quote about the centrality of teachers to closing the gap for students' achievement. The passage of three years has demonstrated, no doubt to you and colleagues working on this project, the truth of that statement. You have made a significant investment of time, energy and commitment, to improved boys' learning. Recent conversations and e-mails suggest you think that it was worth it. I know we do!

We hope that you take some time to celebrate your achievements! Your Final School Reports tell the story.

As three years have passed you have:

- honed and developed teaching and assessment strategies to support boys' literacy learning;
- developed new skills and understandings related to evidence-based learning and the powerful ways that looking collaboratively at student achievement data helps inform our teaching; and,
- become more comfortable working together in teams, and learned skills to bring to bear on the inevitable bumps along the way.

*“Sustainable improvement in schools therefore requires real commitment and participation by all the partners – teachers, administrators, boards, and the broader community.”*

Levin, Glaze and Fullan, *Sustaining Educational Change in Ontario*, 2007 ASCD.

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## What next?

With your newfound expertise, in this busy flurry to complete the academic year, it is important to find time for reflection on strategies to share your findings with others. It is also important to have a conversation with your principals and vice-principals.

- ◆ In what specific ways can your school team continue to contribute to the knowledge base about teaching boys?
- ◆ How might each individual member of your team share discoveries about boys' learning in informal ways (especially those new to your schools in September)?
- ◆ How will you explore together, for the next school year, some of the next steps that you outlined in your Final School Report?
- ◆ In the medium term, what lessons have you learned that you can share with others in neighbouring schools and neighboring districts?
- ◆ In the longer term, what could be your continued contribution to the knowledge base related to boys' literacy? A presentation? In-service? Journal article?
- ◆ What role might your board program resource staff play to assist in "continuing the conversation" about boys?
- ◆ How might your insights be shared with your parents/guardians and broader community, including your superintendents and school board trustees?
- ◆ How can you inform students about your work?

Our research report will be completed in early fall. No doubt you will want to find time to view others' reports when they are posted. What are the similarities of the findings? What are new understandings?

On behalf of all of us on the OISE research team, congratulations on your achievement and in persevering with your Teacher Inquiry over the last three years – we hope that you know, with confidence, that both boys and all your colleagues across the province are the beneficiaries!

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## Strategies for Reading Multi-genre and Graphic Texts

The overwhelming number and variety of visually rich media that we encounter in today's world has influenced and stretched the ways in which we make meaning with texts. Engagement with television, VCRs, DVD players, video and still cameras, video games, computers with access to the Internet, and magazines with scores of photographs mean that today's readers are continually exposed to the demands of interpretation of visuals and verbal text and how they work together. David Booth and Kathleen Gould Lundy (2007) remind us that "young people naturally are influenced by this visually saturated world and become dependent on it." (p. 39)

In recent years, a number of books featured at bookstore displays reveal a multi-genre approach to informational texts where instructions, narratives, poetry, lists, and diagrams are found between the covers (e.g., *The Dangerous Book for Boys* by Conn & Hal Iggulden). Books such as these tap into a variety of illustration and visual media, and are widely popular with many boy readers who have tuned into computer technology. Readers no longer simply decode, skim and scan, but they move across and among texts. Our teaching practice must therefore, overtly and critically, teach to new skills of visual literacy drawn from these new technologies.

Visual literacy implies that readers learn from pictures and diagrams as well as from print which is the recognizable format feature of the pages found within multi-genre books. Visual literacy can move boys beyond the concrete literal interpretation of what they see to deeper understandings that draw on background experience and knowledge and use strategies that call upon their skills to infer, question, and synthesize. Boys may be drawn to images that are enticing, but visuals "also offer assistance to readers who need that extra crutch to support them as they travel through the text." (Thompson, 2008, p. 19) If we want to help boys read information texts filled with pictures, we need to provide them with strategies to make meaning of the print as well as the visuals. A reader's prior knowledge, experience, and intuitive understanding of the visual components, will help him interpret the verbal components of the text, and vice versa.



## Developing Comprehension Strategies with Multi-genre Graphic Texts

Effective readers apply a range of strategies to construct meaning and to clarify understanding as they read. The following questions and suggested activities are designed to help readers practice applying the strategy when they interact with a multi-genre or graphic text.

STRATEGY	QUESTIONS	ACTIVITY
<b>Activating Prior Knowledge</b>	Before reading the text, and examining the illustrations, what do you already know about this topic?	Work with a partner to brainstorm facts that you know about the topic, prior to reading the text. Once completed, you and your partner can compare lists with another pair.
<b>Making Predictions</b>	After reading the title, what do you think this text is going to be about? What information do you expect to learn by reading this text?	Scan the selection. What grabs your attention? What do you think you will 'read' first?
<b>Making Connections</b>	Did this text remind you of others you have read? What experiences from your own life, or the life of someone you know, did this text remind you of?	As you read the selection, complete the following statements: This text reminds me of... This picture reminds me of...
<b>Visualizing</b>	Do the visual images support information that is given in the verbal text? What illustrations do you think might have been included?	Using information from the text, create a drawing that might be used to accompany the text.
<b>Questioning</b>	What questions do you have about the topic before reading the text? What questions came to mind as you read the text? Examined the illustrations?	Brainstorm a list of questions that you have about the topic. Find evidence from the text that answers your questions?
<b>Making Inferences</b>	Do the illustrations fully explain what is written in the text? What do we learn from the pictures that is not written in the text? When does the author give facts? Opinions?	Write new captions to accompany the different illustrations that appear in the text.
<b>Finding Important Ideas</b>	What are some interesting things you learned from the text? What are some surprising things you learned?	Make a list of three to five key pieces of information you learned. Compare your list with others. Which items were the most popular? Which information do you think is not as important to remember?
<b>Summarizing</b>	What might you tell someone else about this text?	Write a 50 word summary of this article? Repeat the activity, summarizing the article in 25 words.
<b>Synthesizing</b>	Do the words give you as much information as the pictures? If you could edit this piece, which text would you eliminate? Why? Which pictures would you eliminate? Why?	Imagine that the editor is only allowed one page to present the information of the text. Use words and pictures to synthesize the information from this text.
<b>Monitoring and Revising Comprehension</b>	What words or phrases were unfamiliar to you? What part(s) were difficult to understand? What did you do / can you do to help you understand the text?	Prepare a glossary (a dictionary) that would help others understand key pieces of information in this text.
<b>Evaluating</b>	How successfully has the author captured your interest? How did the format (arrangement of words and pictures) help you to understand the text?	Write a review of this article that would help others understand what you liked (or didn't like) about the way the information was presented.

### Ten Prompts for Responding to Multi-genre Texts

- How is the information organized on the page? Does the arrangement of words and pictures (format) help you understand the topic better?
- What information did you learn through illustrations (drawings, diagrams, maps, charts, etc.)?
- Which did you 'read' first – the pictures or the words?
- Do the visual images give you information that is not in the verbal text? Do the visual images support information that is given in the verbal text?
- What does the title tell you about the text?
- How do headings and subheadings help you find information in this text?
- What did you learn by reading this text? Did you learn this from the pictures or the words? Was there any information that was not as important as other information?
- How does the information in the text fit with what you already know? What surprises did you have as you read this text?
- What does this text make you wonder or think about?

### Resources

Booth, David and Lundy, Kathleen Gould. (2007). *In Graphic Detail*. Markham, ON: Scholastic.

Iggulden, Conn and Hal. (2006). *The Dangerous Book for Boys*. London, UK: HarperCollins.

Thompson, Terry. (2008). *Adventures in Graphica: Using comics and graphic novels to teach comprehension, 2- 6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse; Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.

## Video #4 - Read Anything Good Lately? Seven boys talk about books (and computers) in their lives

A group of seven grades four and five boys sat down and chatted about their literacy lives with educator Larry Swartz. This short video highlights their conversations as the seven boys talk about book choices, the role of computers in their literacy world, the importance of libraries, and reading outside of school. A brief episode shows the group drawn to the award winning graphic novel, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Sleznick and their response helps us consider the importance of sharing multi-modal texts to engage young readers. Key questions that frame the discussion include: What kinds of books have you enjoyed reading lately? How does the computer help you grow as a reader and writer? What's the hardest kind of reading you do? What's the most helpful thing that teachers can do to help students who have difficulty with their reading? How do you see yourself as a reader and writer?

Newest Video. Available on the web at:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/boysliteracy.html> after June 20.



## Boys and English Language Learning – A Growing Challenge

In the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project, the students selected for focus by their school teams have generally been those boys who are struggling with literacy. Given that, across the province, we are experiencing a growing demographic of diverse students, it should come as no surprise that a certain percentage of these boys might also be categorized as English Language Learners (ELLs).

Since all teachers are searching for effective teaching strategies for all their students, we offer a few perspectives on teaching ELLs, acknowledging that second language learning must be considered over the span of several school years and in multiple curricular contexts besides language and literacy.

### Background

Nine categories of instructional strategies, proven to be exceptionally effective in increasing student performance, were identified and presented by Robert Marzano in his book, *Classroom Instruction that Works*. The nine categories are:

- Setting objectives and providing feedback
- Nonlinguistic representations
- Cues, questions, and advance organizers
- Cooperative learning
- Summarizing and note-taking
- Homework and practice
- Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
- Generating and testing hypotheses
- Identifying similarities and differences.

In a new book, *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners*, the authors Jane Hill and Kathleen Flynn, ESL teachers in their own right, examined the nine categories of Marzano's strategies. They explored existing research on modifying these strategies for use with ELLs and outlined their recommendations for strategies that work. Their book is well worth exploring in depth; here we present some of their **key strategies** in connection with Marzano's category, "Cues, questions, and advance organizers".

### Cues and Questions

Teachers link new information to students' background knowledge by giving them cues - or hints - about what they are to experience. Questions can do the same thing. Cues and questions should focus on what is important rather than what is unusual and cues should be explicit to access prior knowledge. Teachers should use questions frequently throughout a lesson because doing so offers ELLs an opportunity to use their new language.

With ELLs one should take into account a student's level of English proficiency when offering cues or questioning. After determining the stage of language acquisition, a teacher can decide if a student can be expected to point, use one- or two-word responses, answer with short phrases, or produce longer sentences. For early level acquisition, ask questions that require a pointing or gesturing response. For students at a later stage of acquisition, ask yes/no questions, either/or questions, or questions requiring a one- or two-word response.

Higher level questions procure deeper learning than lower level questions. ELLs, because of their level of language acquisition, tend to limit their verbal and written output. Here are a few stages of language acquisition with appropriate teacher prompts for each stage.

### Characteristics of second-language acquisition and tiered questions\*

CHARACTERISTICS	STUDENT PROMPTS
The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Has minimal comprehension</li> <li>♦ Does not verbalize</li> <li>♦ Nods “yes and no”</li> <li>♦ Draws and points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Show me...</li> <li>♦ Circle the...</li> <li>♦ Where is...?</li> <li>♦ Who has...?</li> </ul>
The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Has limited comprehension</li> <li>♦ Produces one-word or two-word responses</li> <li>♦ Participates using key words and familiar phrases</li> <li>♦ Uses present tense verbs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Yes/no questions</li> <li>♦ Either/or questions</li> <li>♦ Who, what, and how many questions</li> </ul>
The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Has good comprehension</li> <li>♦ Can produce simple sentences</li> <li>♦ Makes grammar and pronunciation errors</li> <li>♦ Frequently misunderstands jokes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Why...?</li> <li>♦ How...?</li> <li>♦ Explain...</li> <li>♦ Questions requiring a short sentence response</li> </ul>
The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Has excellent comprehension</li> <li>♦ Makes few grammatical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ What would happen if...?</li> <li>♦ Why do you think...?</li> <li>♦ Questions requiring more than a one-sentence response</li> </ul>
The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Has a near native level of speech.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Retell...</li> </ul>

#### Advance Organizers

Advance organizers are organizational frameworks presented in advance of lessons that emphasize the essential ideas in a lesson or unit. Advance organizers are best used to structure information that is not well organized.

There are four main types of organizers: expository, narrative, skimming, and graphic.

1. Use **expository** advance organizers to describe new content that will be introduced. For example, a science teacher uses a variety of techniques to explain that he is going to float a potato in the centre of a beaker of clear liquid. He uses manipulatives, miniature objects, visuals, body movement, and pantomime.
2. Use a **narrative** story enhanced with visuals, pantomime, and simple vocabulary to encourage understanding .
3. Use **skimming** before reading – The Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review (SQ3R) has long been popular with ESL teachers. Provide students with the following directions:
  - Step 1: Survey what you are about to read. ELLs can look at bold print, pictures, and graphics
  - Step 2: Questions
  - Step 3: Read actively
  - Step 4: Recite
  - Step 5: Review
4. Teach students how to use **graphic** advance organizers.

\*Source: Adapted by Hill and Flynn from *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom* by Stephen D. Krashen and Tracy Terrell, Oxford, England: Pergamon, 1983 and published by the National Staff Development Council in the *Journal of Staff Development*, Vol. 29 No. 1. Winter, 2008, page 47.

*Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in every Classroom* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005) and a webcast featuring OISE Professor Dr. Jim Cummins, *Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Ontario* (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2005) provide practical suggestions and examples of how to support students' languages in the classroom.

**Resources:**

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., and Kucor, L. (2002). *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. New York: Guilford Press.

Diaz-Rico, Lynne N. (2008). *A Course for Teaching English Learners*. New York: Allyn and Bacon.

Hill, Jane D. and Flynn, Kathleen, M. (2006). *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, Robert J., Pickering, D. J., and Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

### **Ten Things the Mainstream Teacher Can Do Today to Improve Instruction for ELL Students**

1. Enunciate clearly, but do not raise your voice. Add gestures, point directly to objects, or draw pictures when appropriate.
2. Write clearly, legibly, and in print - many ELL students have difficulty reading cursive.
3. Develop and maintain routines. Use clear and consistent signals for classroom instructions.
4. Repeat information and review it frequently. If a student does not understand, try rephrasing or paraphrasing in shorter sentences and simpler syntax. Check often for understanding, but do not ask, "Do you understand?" Instead, have students demonstrate their learning in order to show comprehension.
5. Try to avoid idioms and slang words.
6. Present new information in the context of known information.
7. Announce the lesson's objectives and activities, and list instructions step-by-step.
8. Present information in a variety of ways.
9. Provide frequent summations of the salient points of a lesson, and always emphasize key vocabulary words.
10. Recognize student success overtly and frequently, but also be aware that in some cultures overt, individual praise is considered inappropriate and can therefore be embarrassing or confusing to the student.

Reed, B. and Railsback, J. (2003). *Strategies and Resources for Mainstream Teachers of English Language Learners*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.







## Boys' Literacy Achievement: The Impact of the Summer Reading Gap

You have made great strides this year in your work with boys' literacy and closing the achievement gap. However, as we reach the end of the school year, you might well ask, *What will happen to these boys over the summer and how will it affect their learning?*

Research has shown that struggling students, many of those with whom you have been working the past three years, experience a significant summer learning loss particularly in reading. Reading proficiency declines and this can significantly perpetuate the reading and achievement gap of students. What is really alarming, according to the research reported by Richard Allington, is that "by the time a struggling reader reaches middle school, summer reading loss has accumulated to a two-year lag in reading achievement." Obviously this will have significant impact on those boys as they reach secondary school.

Therefore, as it can impact the gains in the boys' literacy achievement that you have noted over the past three years, with a month left before summer holidays, this is an ideal time to develop plans to address these concerns and devise strategies for encouraging summer reading. According to a study by J. S. Kim, reading four to five books during the summer was potentially enough to prevent a decline in reading achievement. Making plans in the next month after you have submitted your Final Report can be a significant way of sustaining your work with your boys and providing opportunities to build on and sustain your Professional Learning Community work.

Linda Gambrell in *Reading Today* suggests four ways that classroom teachers can initiate and support summer reading and "make a difference". Extending those ideas and devising other creative ways to get boys reading over the summer would be a good strategy for your final Teacher Inquiry Team meetings.

Suggestions	Extensions/Modifications	Your Plans....
During teacher "read alouds", give a brief overview of a number of books - narrative and informational 15-20 minutes - introduce 12 to 15 books per week.	Have students start a reading log by listing the books they might want to read on the first pages of their log. In the last month they would have a list of 20 to 60 books.	
Weed your classroom collection and give older or duplicate books to students to take home for the summer... Ensure they are still appropriate and in relatively good condition.	You'll have the motivation and space to add new books to your collection over the summer and fall. Use incentive books from Book Fairs or duplicate books from such programs as the OLA Silver Birch and Blue Spruce programs (see <i>resources</i> ). Giving these books to students with a bookplate - "Happy summer reading from <u>teacher name</u> " will be a sure way for students to value those books and read them.	
Share just a few books a day or have your teacher-librarian give a short book talk on a few books.	This will encourage students to get excited about new books or ones they haven't seen before.	
Work with your administration and the teacher-librarian on plans to take a few books home over the summer, Take a class trip to the local public library and ensure that each student has a library card and is aware of Summer Reading programs sponsored by the Public Library (see <i>resources</i> ).  Work with local businesses to sponsor books that students can take home.	These ideas will take school - wide planning and support and may not all be feasible in your community.  Write a newsletter to parents to ensure they know about these summer plans and obtain their support.	

Initiatives such as providing a number of new books to each student to take home over the summer or mailing books to at-risk students twice during the summer are programs that require unique funding and solid planning but have proven to significantly increase reading achievement in studies conducted over three years (Allington et al. 2008).

Making access to books easy and convenient is the key and what you do during the last month of school to make this happen will make a difference and contribute greatly to ongoing reading and achievement success for your boys AND for all your other students.

## Summer Reading Programs - Summer Reading Club

One of the available programs that you can check out is at: <http://www.td-club-td.ca>

Public Libraries in conjunction with Library and Archives Canada and the Southern Ontario Library Service will again be offering a Summer Reading Club funded by TD Bank Financial Group free to all children. The theme this summer is **Laugh Out Loud/Lire aux larmes**. This theme will focus on fun books, stories, poems, hilarious jokes to tickle the funny bone, brain teasers, tongue twisters, games and activities that will have appeal to all children. In view of the work over the past three years, think of the appeal to your boys! The English version was prepared by the Toronto Public Library and the French version by the Ottawa Public Library and the Children's Services of Library and Archives Canada.

Children under the age of 12, once they are registered, are given a reading kit, which includes using stickers on a colourful poster to track their progress, The goal is to read nine books per summer and they receive a certificate once they have reached their goal. Check out the web site... there are tips for teachers for promoting the program and tips for parents to encourage and support their children. The website describes the advantages for children based on past programs and cites solid research. There is reference to the research that states that "reading six books per summer will help children maintain their reading skills and reading even more books will improve those skills."

Of particular value too, for teachers, is the English (and French) Booklist of recommended titles. This would be a great spring board to start on one of the strategies listed above. Connecting with this initiative and facilitating it for your students will enable you to support them over the summer too and bring them back in September, excited and raring to read!

So *Join the Club* and continue making a difference for your boys!

### RESOURCES:

#### WEB SITES

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

This site contains information for teachers and parents on summer reading incentive programs at public libraries throughout Canada. There are also Booklists and promotional ideas for use in classrooms.

Ontario Library Association. Forest of Reading. [http://www.accessola.com/ola/bins/content\\_page.asp?cid=92](http://www.accessola.com/ola/bins/content_page.asp?cid=92)

This site outlines the Forest of Reading Program that involves both school and public libraries throughout the year. The site also contains a Booklist with award winners, Canadian books, and information about the program.

#### PRINT

Allington, Richard and Franzen, and McGill, Anne. (2008, April). Got Books? *Educational Leadership*. 65(7), 20-23.

Gambrell, Linda B. (2008, April/May). Closing the summer reading gap: You can make a difference! *Reading Today*.

Kim, J. S. (2006). Effects of a voluntary summer reading intervention on reading achievement: Results from a randomized field trial. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 28(4), 335-355.