What's With You Guys?

Sharon Campbell-Springstead

Issues about boys and literacy and resultant reluctant readers and writers are of great concern to the literacy Council. Research based on empirical observations and clinical assessments show that:

- Biologically, boys are slower to develop than girls and often struggle with reading and writing skills early on.
- The action-oriented, competitive learning style of many boys works against them learning to read and write.
- As a society, we teach boys to suppress feelings. Boys aren't practiced and often don't feel comfortable exploring the emotions and feelings found in fiction.
- Boys don't have enough male role models for literacy. Because the majority of adults involved in kids' reading are women, boys don't see reading as a masculine activity.
- Many books boys are asked to read don't appeal to them. They aren't motivated to want to read. (1)
- More boys than girls drop out of school due to poor literacy skills. (2)

While much of the work we do is at the preschool level and is preventative intervention that serves to inspire and educate parents about the importance of instilling a positive attitude toward reading and an appreciation for language skill development we are very much interested in

school age and teenage students who are struggling readers. Teachers can assist parents by providing support and encouragement to them and to boys who appear to be struggling with reading skills. It is important that boys in particular are provided with opportunities to read material that is interesting to them and that they are willing to discuss in class. The research shows that boys need to be motivated to read in different ways in order to sustain an interest in reading later in life. Boys who are reluctant readers are not necessarily behavioural problems although when they are disinterested and unmotivated this maybe the outcome. Nor are they necessarily poor learners. What may in fact be the case is that they have not been encouraged to read and encouraged to discuss what they read early in life. Later when they are required to demonstrate these skills it is difficult. Early intervention is the key to successful life long interesting reading.

What Can Parents Do To Help Their Sons With Literacy?

- Encourage your sons to read and remember that non-fiction reading is still reading. Magazines, newspapers, websites, biographies, science books, comic books, graphic novels, are all reading material.
- Be a model for your son-let him see you reading and writing. Dads - demonstrate that you are a proud masculine reader.
- Set aside time each day so that you and your son can enjoy a

bit of shared text.

- Build your sons interest in a topic by buying "book sets". For example if he is reading a book about a sports figure, you could augment that with information books, books full of records and statistics, and columns from the newspaper.
- Clip articles of interest and pin them on the fridge door.
- Read aloud interesting tidbits at the dinner table, or share background in the newspaper for a show you are going to watch.
- Purchase books, book vouchers or magazine subscriptions as gifts and encourage others in your child's life to do the same.
- When your son is buying a gift for another, suggest he include a book on soccer with a soccer ball, or book on hockey with a puck etc.
- Encourage other important male figures (e.g. grandfathers, uncles, neighbours, and coaches) in your son's life to act as reading mentors.
- Use family car trips as a time to enjoy read-alouds or taped books.
- Play board games with your son that require and celebrate word play-Scrabble, Pictionary, and Balderdash.
- Encourage your son to correspond by post card, letter and email.
- Play computer games with your son. Play-based literacies promote other types of reading and writing and help develop social skills.
- Acknowledge your son's computer efforts. Print out the screen so that you can see what has been accomplished.

Read, Tell And Share Stories To And With Your Children

Suggested Books for "Little Guys"

- Carrier, Roch. See the bibliography by Anthony Mollica on p.27.
- Cronin, Doreen. *Diary of A Worm*. Joanne Cotler Publishing, 2003.
- Faulkner, Kieth, *The Wide Eyed Frog*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 1996.
- Krause, Robert, *Whose Mouse Are You*. Young Readers Press, 1970.
- Lawson, Julie. *Whatever you do Don't go near that Canoe*. Scholastic Books, 1996.
- Munsch, Robert. *David's Father*; and *50 Below Zero* (plus 25 other books). Anick Press.
- O'Callahan, Jay. *The little Dragon, Orange Cheeks, Woe is Me, Bones Tulips*. Artana
- Pilky, David. *Dog Breath: The Horrible trouble with Hally Tosis; Dogzilla, Kat Kong and others*. Blue Sky Press, 1994.
- Scieszka, John. *Stinky Cheese Man, True Story of the Three Little Pigs* and other books. Penguin Group

- Slobodkina, Esphyr. *Caps for Sale*. Harper Trophy, 1987
- Steig, William, *Sylvester and the Magic Pebbles*. Aladdin Picture Books, 1987.
- Stinson, Kathy. *Those Green Things*. Anick Publishing, Reprint Series, 1995
- Viorst, Judith, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. Aladdin, 1987.
- Wick, Walter and Jean Marzollo. *I Spy Books* (25). Scholastic Books and Cartwheel Publishers, 1999.
- Wiesner, David. *Flotsam*. Clarion Books, 2006.

References:

1. Jon Scieszka. www.guysread.com
2. Chodzinski, R.T. (2005) *Bullying A Crisis in Our schools and our Communities* Welland, ON: éditions Soleil publishing inc.

Resources:

- Gail Lovely. *Strategies for struggling readers* [http:// www.gaillovely.com/](http://www.gaillovely.com/)

TEACHING & LEARNING

struggling readers/resources.htm

You read to me I'll read to you [Http:// www.childrensbooks.about.com/cs/readalouds/fr/you_readto_mei.htm](http://www.childrensbooks.about.com/cs/readalouds/fr/you_readto_mei.htm)

The natural Child Project: Resources for caring parents <http://www.naturalchild.com/guest/john-gatto.html>

Sharon Campbell-Springstead B.A., B. ED., ECE.C is a teacher and early childhood educator who has worked with children and families

for the last 25 years. Sharon is currently employed as the Early Literacy Consultant attached to the Ontario Early Years Centres in the Region of Halton. The goal of the Early Literacy Initiative is to monitor, support and strengthen early literacy and language development in the community.

On Line Resources for Boys and Literacy

Just type in Boys and Literacy and Boys and Readers or Boys and Books or any combination and searches will reveal a myriad of interesting sites and hyper links. Try starting your search with the following web sites:

Literacy for Learning (2004), and Me read? No Way: A practical Guide to Improving Boys Literacy Skills, Government of Ontario Special Reports at www.edu.gov.on.ca

Canadian Association of Libraries and associated divisions/book such as Canadian Association of Public Libraries at www.cla.ca/divisions

ABC Canada Literacy Foundation is devoted to promoting Literacy to the Canadian general

public and is an excellent resource for information, research, ideas and strategies. Contact Jim Pollock, Director of Communications at www.ABC-Canada.org

Guys Read, John Scieszka, www.guysread.com

Charlie Joyce Sports Series, David Skuy at www.charliejoyce.com

Canadian Adolescent Boys and Literacy Web Site, Heather Blair and Kathy Sanford, at www.education.ualberta.ca

Even Hockey Players Read: Boys, Literacy and Learning, David Booth, and Leap into Literacy, Kathleen Gould Lundy, Pembroke Publishers Markham Ontario www.Pembrokepublishers.com

Books for Boys Catalogues, Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia at www.books.bc.ca/index

American library Association home Page (search topics for Boys and books /literacy) at www.ala.org/ala/libraries

The Children's Village on line at www.childrensvillage.org/books_for_boys

Enlighten Me-Read Learn Explore at www.enlightenme/everyday.literacy

Books for Boys-Great books that boys like to read at www.booksforboys.com

Bungalo books at www.bungalobooks.com

Books for Boys /Curriculum Connections at www.curriculumconnection.net/books_for_boys