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Authors Note:

What makes this program unique is that RAP' goal is to instruct all senior apprentices in the methodology and delivery skills of the Association Method Part 1; University of Southern Mississippi; Dubard School for Language Disorders course. This instruction includes the 44 primary and 27 secondary sounds of the English language.

Deborah A. Kilmer-Mesure, B.A. B.Ed. Debbie graduated from the University of Guelph Ontario, in 1979. She majored in English and Drama. During her undergraduate career at Guelph University, she was a practicum instructor for the Department of Human Kinetics. From 1980 to 1995, Debbie was an occasional and substitute teacher with the Halton District School Board. During this tenure, she taught grades seven to twelve, alternative and adult education. Concurrently, she continued to upgrade her University Degree at the University of Guelph.

In 1995, Debbie embarked on her full-time career in education and attended Brock University Faculty of Education; Intermediate and Senior Panels. Between the years 2002–2006, she earned her Specialist in Special Education,

(Learning Disabilities), and Reading Parts 1 & 2. Additionally, she completed the summer course on the Association Method for Teaching Literacy Skills to Children, offered through William L. McMaster & Associates Incorporated. Currently, she is pursuing her Junior Basic Curriculum and Instruction Qualifications.

Since 1996, Debbie provided instruction in grades 7- 11 for the Halton Board of Education. Subsequent to this, she was seconded to the Ministry of Education Demonstration School in Milton, Ontario. Today, Debbie instructs 16-21 year-olds at *The Centre for Individual Studies* for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. She is a member of the KPRDSB Literacy Program Council, (POR), and the OSSLC, Moderated Marking Team.

Through her professional experiences she has observed the need for diverse programming and teaching strategies for struggling and dis-engaged students.

Boys Don't Read – It's True!

David Skuy

Few educational experts would disagree that school-aged boys are falling behind their female counterparts in terms of reading and writing, a gap that both increases with grade levels, and has increased in recent years. Recent studies suggest this trend is not isolated to one geographic region or demographic group. It is all boys across North America and Europe. As a father of a seven-year old son, I worry about my son reading as he gets older. As an author of a Young Adult book series for boys, I worry if there is a market for my books. By the time high school hits over half of all boys describe themselves as non-readers. To make matters worse, the publishing industry has figured this out - and 'Boy Books' have disappeared from the

shelves (apart from Harry Potter and its legions of copycats). The economic impact of poor literacy skills for half the population is self-evident. The spiritual impact of a child deprived of one of the great pleasures in life is less obvious, but perhaps even more detrimental to society.

As a young boy I grew up reading sports stories and playing hockey. So what better subject matter for my first foray into the children's lit genre? "Good luck trying to sell the idea let alone the manuscript," a publisher once told me told me. "Boys don't read."

Boys don't read? That was the first I'd heard of it. My daughter loved reading and I just assumed my young son would also. I be-

gan to research the subject - and sure enough, I found out my publisher friend was absolutely right. It seems that once boys hit eight or nine years old, they lose interest and stop reading.

In Canada, the Ontario government recently conducted an extensive study of literacy levels. In 2004, it produced a study - *Literacy for Learning - The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario*. The report shows that boys are dropping out of arts courses as soon as they can. In testing of primary school children, girls consistently outperform boys in reading and writing tests by a wide margin. This is consistent with international results. The same findings were reached in a recent study of 36 countries (see *Newsweek Magazine*, January 30, 2006). Business leaders are beginning to take notice, complaining that recent university graduates often lack basic literacy skills.

These same studies make it clear, if it was not already, that reading is an essential life skill. In the Ontario government report reading is described as "the search for deeper meaning" that enables children "to refine, extend, and reflect on their thinking" and will "result in high levels of learning." The study declares that boys who read often get higher grades in school and are less anxious about schoolwork. Most significant is the conclusion that boys who read turn into men who read.

Most literacy experts have zeroed in on one culprit: technology. There is too much television, MSN, computers, video games, the Internet, Game boy, and ipod. These mediums are winning the battle for the hearts, eyes and ears of our boys. The solution is equally clear - boys must be presented with books that strike them as equally meaningful and interesting as those other mediums.

We understand the problem. We have identified the culprit. We have a solution. So why haven't we reversed the trend? To put it bluntly, why is reading something girls do?

Before writing my novel, I took a few trips to bookstores to check out the competition. At first, I was greatly encouraged: There was no competition. Virtually every book was for girls. The depth and range

of these girl-oriented novels was impressive, and as a father of a twelve-year old girl, I was pleased. The few selections geared toward boys were non-fiction sports books - either biographical accounts of athletes or a catalogue of statistics. Small wonder boys don't read - there is nothing for them to read.

This disastrous cycle brought about by adults, teachers, writers and publishers must be broken. Boys do not read, so publishers do not publish books for them, so authors opt for the girl market. Boys complain they don't read because there is nothing for them to read, which only encourages publishers and writers to continue to avoid that market.

I want my son to read. I want him to be like my daughter. She will ignore several calls for dinner to finish a chapter, or will secretly turn on her nightlight to finish a book. I have a small cache of classics for him. But after we get through Tom Sawyer, what will he read?

More to the point, will he read at all - or just turn on the computer?

Solutions? While sparse there are books geared towards boys, especially in the early reader market. Buy them - and publishers will take notice. The key is to cultivate a love of reading. Don't nag! Boys read because they relate to the subject matter, not be-

cause you tell them it's important. If a boy loves science fiction or fantasy all the better - your search will be easy. Other interest areas can be more challenging. But there is something for almost any interest. Next, once you see a boy that's hooked, don't be afraid to introduce some older books. Twenty-first century boys will love Mark Twain or Edgar Rice Burroughs as much as their nineteenth-century brothers. Finally, try to stick to male heroes. Girls are open-minded; boys tend to shy away from female lead characters.

Boys will read if they love the book. Take all your practical arguments and toss them in the garbage. Cultivate a love for books, and watch them read - it works!

David Skuy is a lawyer, a university lecturer, and the author of *Off the Crossbar* (Young Adult - 8-13 age group), the first book in the Charlie Joyce Sports Series. The

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<http://www.charliejoyce.com>.

A study by Wilhelm and Smith referenced by K. Hyatt (2002, "Reading Boys", *U. Main Today*, 2(1), pp.12-13) reported that boys who were considered to be problem or highly reluctant readers in the classroom had very rich literate lives outside of school, and used various forms of literacy to pursue their interests and goals...In essence, none of the boys in Wilhelm and Smith's study rejected literacy. What they did almost universally reject was school literacy. From *Me Read? No way! A Guide to Improving Boys' Literacy* Ontario Government (2004), Queens Printer.