

Fall 2006

Strategies to Enhance Achievement for Boys

Susan Frick
Regis University

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STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE ACHIEVEMENT FOR BOYS

by

Susan Frick

A Research Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

August, 2006

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE ACHIEVEMENT FOR BOYS

by

Susan Frick

has been approved

August, 2006

APPROVED:

_____, Faculty Advisor

_____, Associate Dean, Teacher Education Programs

ABSTRACT

Strategies to Enhance Achievement for Boys

Gurian (1996) reported that brain research shows there are definite differences between the ways that boys' and girls' brains work. This applied project identifies some of the reasons why boys underachieve in school and includes strategies to assist and facilitate success in school; thereby, building responsible and confident adults. Effective strategies were combined in the guide book to enhance the way educators teach boys in school. The strategies are effective for boys at the elementary school level.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Differentiated teaching and learning is a term that is referred to, but not always implemented by teachers. The purpose of differentiated teaching is to make sure all learners can succeed in the classroom. The ability to teach a single lesson in many different ways is a difficult task; however, it can produce enormous results. Not only is it important to differentiate teaching strategies, but it is also important to make sure that each student is able to develop in all aspects of his or her life. A teacher can influence a student's life in many ways. For example, a teacher can: (a) empower a student to stay in school, (b) transform a student's attitude into a positive attitude toward school and life, and (c) establish an atmosphere to enhance the self-esteem of students.

Statement of the Problem

Gurian (1996) reported that many boys underachieve in the educational system and, consistently, they score lower in reading, writing, and spelling than girls; this has been demonstrated through standardized testing. Boys experience higher drop out rates; there is a higher percentage rate of boys who are placed in special education. Boys are more likely to be held back a grade in school. According to Gurian,

Females outnumber males both in college and in graduate school. Women are 55 percent of all master's degree candidates. Women are nearly 50 percent of the enrollment in American law and medical schools. In fact, women now constitute the majority of all graduate and professional students in American higher education. (p. 78)

Boys have their strengths; currently, there are questions about how boys are taught. For both educators and parents, there are effective strategies that can be used to meet the needs of boys in order to stop their downward academic and social cycle.

Purpose of the Project

Gurian (1996) reported that brain research shows that there are definite differences between the ways that boys' and girls' brains work. He also stated,

Evidence of male/female brain differences is so vast that responsible parents, mentors, educators, and social thinkers cannot avoid it if they are going to do right by children. . . Now we are able to see differences between a boy's brain and a girl's without saying, "So this means girls can't do what boys can do and boys can't do what girls can do." (p. 12)

Do educators recognize the needs of these different types of learners or are the same teaching methods being used with the expectation that both boys and girls will learn the same way? The purpose of the project was to identify some of the reasons why boys underachieve in school and to find strategies to assist and facilitate success in school, as well as shape them into responsible and confident adults. This was done by the development of a guide book for educators and parents that contains effective strategies to enhance the way educators teach boys in school. The strategies are effective for boys at the elementary school level.

Chapter Summary

Teachers make a difference in a student's life; they have the power to positively impact lives. Currently, boys score lower in reading, writing, and spelling on standardized tests. They are outnumbered in college and graduate schools. This author developed a guide book to assist educators and parents with strategies to enhance the

school life of boys, in order for them to be successful in school and in life. In Chapter 2, this author presented: (a) the history of gender differences, including achievement differences and behavior differences; (b) brain research; and (c) strategies for success, including motivational strategies and instructional strategies. In Chapter 3, this author presented the method, target population, procedure, and goal of this applied project.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gurian (1996) reported that there are differences between boys and girls and the way their brains function. Gurian found that boys and girls are so different that they may require a different way of learning in order to achieve in school. Educators and parents can accept these differences or deny them. They can either support teaching methods and ideas that promote achievement in boys, or they can leave them with the current system, in which they seem to be failing. A guide book was developed for this research project which presents research based methods to shape boys into more motivated, responsible, and higher achieving members of society.

History of Gender Differences

Achievement Differences

Francis (2000) and Gurian (1996) reported that, currently, more women enter higher educational systems. They receive more first or upper second class degrees than men and enter the workforce more frequently than ever before. In addition, girls have caught up with boys in mathematics and the sciences, and they outperform boys in the languages.

According to Newkirk (2002), in 1970, 43% of academic degrees were awarded to women; by 1997, the percentage had increased to 56%, which effectively reversed the ratio from 1970. By the year 2010, it is expected that the ratio of women in the

institutions of higher education will be 60:40. Newkirk reported that in some institutions such as the University of Georgia, the University of Florida, Boston University, and the University of New Hampshire, the gap between genders is even wider among African American and Hispanic American students, where the ratio is 2:1.

Newkirk (2002) also reported that between 1960 and 1990, the achievement gap between male and female performance in mathematics and science began to close. Previously, males achieved higher scores in the area of mathematics; however, in 1996, the gap closed even more and then became nonexistent in mathematics. According to Newkirk, although gender scores for mathematics and science are still relatively even, there is a huge difference for writing. Males receive much lower scores in written language than females.

Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (1994) analyzed report card data for immigrant boys, who had similar experiences in the United States educational system, even though they came from male dominated societies. The data demonstrated that immigrant boys who attended

middle and high schools in seven different districts obtain on average lower grades than do immigrant girls. Boys have a significantly lower GPA than girls in language arts, and lag behind girls in math, science and social studies. In fact, across every ethnic group in our sample, Chinese, Dominican Republican, Central American, Mexican, and Haitian- boys have statistically lower grades than do girls. Furthermore, girls are most likely to score in the highest grade range of B+ or better (24% of girls compared to 16% of boys), while boys are more likely to be represented in the lowest range of D- or lower (11% of boys compared to 8% of girls). Hence, immigrant girls tend to be the highest achieving students, and immigrant boys are more likely to be disengaged. (p. 10)

This is not an issue only for boys born in the U.S. Other boys, who move from male dominated societies, experience the same issues of underachievement in the current educational system.

In the Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) study, teachers were asked to respond to a series of questions that pertained to the differences between boys and girls who had immigrated with their families to the U.S. The teachers reported that the boys did more poorly in the areas of academics and social skills. Only 13% reported that boys did better than girls on the whole.

Also, girls and boys exhibit a difference in habits that may contribute to academic success or failure. Newkirk (2002) reported that girls, aged 8-18, spend 20 minutes per day less than boys in their exposure to media (e.g. reading print, movies, etc.). Boys spend more time watching television, playing video games, and playing on the computer. Girls spend more time with compact discs and tapes, listening to the radio, and reading printed matter.

In regard to printed matter and parental involvement, Newkirk (2002) cited Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) and stated,

on four of seven measures of parent involvement the researchers found that girls receive more assistance than boys; parents engage in more discussions about school work with their daughters than they do their sons. They attended more school events for their daughters. And, in general, parents have higher expectations for their daughters (e.g., they are more likely to expect them to go on to college and achieve advanced degrees). By contrast, parents are more likely to check the homework of their sons and to be in contact with their school (the author speculates that this is for behavioral reasons). Parents also place greater restrictions on the socializing of their daughters. (pp. 42-43)

Based on Newkirk's findings, he concluded that there is a double standard. He stated, "The pathway of success for girls is diligent school performance, while boys can still rely on the traditional assurance of male privilege" (p. 43).

Reading and Writing

Pollack (1998) cited Riley (1997) and reported that the ability to use basic reading and writing skills are not only a major predictor of academic achievement but these skills affect career and life choices. Riley stated, "Teachers will tell you that. . . (poor readers) . . . often get down on themselves. . . become frustrated, and often head down the road to truancy and dropping out" (p. 234). Then, things can get worse, "Some . . . begin to make the wrong choices about drugs" (p. 234).

Brozo (2002) reported that, to be successful in academics, boys must be able to use critical reading abilities. He cited Darling (1997) who reported that, unless used, the tool (i.e., skillful and critical reading abilities) can contribute to either a cycle of successful living or a cycle of difficulty and failure. Also, Brozo cited Donahue, Voelkil, Campbell, and Mazzeo (1999) who noted that reading ability is highly related to overall academic success. Moreover, Brozo maintained,

Good readers are better students in every subject area. It is also known that high academic achievement increases career and life options for young adults. Superior students perform better on entrance examinations, making it easier for them to access postsecondary educational opportunities and, ultimately, find better jobs. For instance, research done by Hofstetter, Sticht, and Hofstetter (1999) found that, regardless of their cultural background, people who achieve and exercise power over their lives spend more time reading than those who have less power or feel powerless. Reading, the authors assert, leads to knowledge, which is associated with power regardless of other barriers that citizens face. People who practice active literacy acquire knowledge more readily than others, and knowledge is the great equalizer in terms of access to personal and professional power. (pp. 12-13)

In addition, Brozo (2002) cited Hedges and Nowell (1995) from the U.S., Gambell and Hunter (1999) from Canada, Murphy and Elwood (1998) from England, and Alloway and Gilbert (1997) from Australia, all of whom reported that many adolescent and preadolescent boys experience reading failure. Brozo reported that these boys lack experiences with books, which can be unforgettable and identity affirming experiences. Through reading, they can learn about interests, which they might have never learned about in their lifetime, and they might learn about something which could motivate them in life and support career aspirations. Most of all, books can be used to stimulate the imagination which is lacking in the current times of video games and other mass media productions.

Warrington, Younger, and Mclellan (2003) cited Beard (1999) and Riley (2001), who reported about the National Literacy Strategy which was implemented in the primary schools in England and Wales in order to address literacy issues across the board. There were concerns that: (a) students' literacy was too low, (b) there were too many inconsistent ways of teaching, and (c) methodology was inconsistent between schools. Underachievement in boys in reading and writing was a major concern for educators, whereas girls enjoyed and engaged in writing activities more often than boys. According to Maynard and Lowe (1999, as cited in Warrington et al.), boys were less likely to write stories or to use figurative and descriptive language.

Boys are more likely to underachieve in reading. Warrington et al. (2003) maintained that this is because many educators cater to the reading needs of girls more than the needs of boys. Girls tend to focus on the reading of fiction and narrative. These genres are centered on emotions and relationships, which do not interest boys as much as

girls. Boys are more interested and motivated to read and enjoy nonfiction and comics. Boys are less likely to read at home. Females tend to read at home more than males and, often, it is perceived as a feminine activity. Warrington et al. concluded that the value and high status of reading is not appreciated by many boys.

Warrington et al. (2003) cited Mac and Ghail (1994), Ruduck, Chaplain, and Wallacy (1995), Salisbury and Jackson (1996), Warrington and Younger (1999), and Younger and Warrington (1996) who suggested that boys perceive school from a masculine attitude. They believe that they will not be accepted by their peers if they participate in class and conform to the rules of school. They do not look up to people of authority nor do they value academic work and formal achievement. Swain (2000) and Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, and Frame (2001, both cited in Warrington et al.) suggested that boys adjust their commitment level to school and work according to the expectations of their peer group and the values of the peer group for school. If the peer group does not value academic work and achievement, boys are less likely to achieve and motivate themselves to learn.

Special Education

Brozo (2002) cited the National Center for Education Statistics (2000), which reported that boys are three to five times more likely than girls to have learning and/or reading disabilities in school. Moreover, Liederman, Kantrowitz, and Flannery (2005) reported that there is a higher percentage of boys who are diagnosed with neurodevelopmental disorders than girls. These disorders include: (a) cerebral palsy, (b)

attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), (c) Tourette's syndrome, (d) autism, (e) speech and language disorders, (f) learning disorders, and (g) reading disabilities.

The focus of the Liederman et al. (2005) study was primarily on reading disabilities, which they felt were overdiagnosed in boys. Liederman et al. cited Shaywitz (1996) who maintained that male vulnerability to reading disabilities was a myth. Shaywitz reported that one reason why boys were overdiagnosed with reading disabilities by clinicians and educators was because they tended to experience more behavioral or attentional difficulties than girls. If this is true, Liederman et al. questioned whether there was an underdiagnosis of reading disabilities in girls since they do not display the attention and behavioral difficulties that boys do in the classroom.

Collins (2003) cited Artiles, Aguirre, Munoz, and Abedi (1998), Artiles and Trent (1994), Gutierrez and Stone (1997), Pugach (2001), and Trent and Kuan (1997) who reported that there is much research on: (a) special education; (b) the way professionals identify disabilities; and (c) how identification can be influenced by sociocultural and contextual factors, such as a student's perceived race, class, gender, language use, and the like. Collins stated that "The result of such inattention to sociocultural factors in shaping identification practices is that an inherently social process, the display and recognition of successful participation in classroom learning, has been largely portrayed as an objective means of identifying 'deficits' within individual learners" (p. 1).

Although Epstein, Elwood, Hey, and Maw (1998) did not agree with the idea that typically, boys fail in the current educational system. They reported that,

teachers may believe that their assessments are the best (or only necessary) means of decision making about special needs. But our research suggests that this is problematic. Such judgments are subjective and promote a relay into SEN of

common sense assumptions about different pupils' abilities and behaviour based on gender, class, and race. (p. 141)

Often, boys are perceived as having special needs based on their classroom performance, which may not be the best measure to identify students. As noted earlier, boys do not always display appropriate classroom behaviors or perform to the best of their abilities on classroom assignments. Often, their level of engagement in the classroom reflects the behavior and performance exhibited by other boys in the class.

Behavioral Differences

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) cited Bushweller (1994), Pollack (1999), Ravitch (1994), and Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994) and stated that,

Although girls are certainly involved in school violence--both as perpetrators and, perhaps especially, as victims--boys are at the center of the maelstrom. While statistics differ somewhat, available databases suggest that boys are four to six times more likely to commit suicide than girls; more than twice as likely to get into physical fights; three times more likely to be suspended from school; four times as likely to be diagnosed as emotionally disturbed, depressed, emotionally isolated, or suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder; up to fifteen times more likely to be perpetrators of violent crime. (p. 8)

Boys are stereotyped as the trouble makers in a school; they participate in more fights and use their aggression against others. This affects not only the way they perform in school, but the way that they are perceived by teachers and peers.

Behavior can have a major affect on achievement as well as teachers' judgments of students. Newkirk (2002) cited Hull et al. (1999) who reported that behavioral traits such as politeness, style of dress, speaking out of turn, and loudness of speaking voice are commonly used by teachers to make cognitive assessments and expectations of school

success. Often, boys do not exhibit appropriate traits in many environments, including school.

Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) reported that teachers felt that, in comparison to girls, boys were more likely to demonstrate poor to very poor attention in class. They were less motivated and made less effort. Boys exhibited more negative behaviors, such as noncompliance, and demonstrated poor writing skills. They also reported that teachers perceived girls in a much more positive light. Teachers perceived girls as being more willing to do their work, and they completed and submitted their homework. Consequentially, they perceived boys as being more distracted with a tendency to display antisocial types of behaviors.

In contrast, the staff of the American Association of University Women (1992, as cited in Newkirk, 2002) reported that boys have the advantage in schools because they require and receive more attention from the teachers because of their behavioral challenges. However, Newkirk disagreed with the term “advantage” because, often, the attention boys receive is a combination of criticism and reprimands. He continued with, “In fact, there is an extensive body of research to show that this ‘misbehavior’ is perniciously disadvantageous for racial minorities, particularly black males, who are quickly typecast as trouble makers and who are regularly consigned to low-achievement groups from which they never escape” (p. 31).

Epstein et al. (1998) agreed with the idea that boys receive the advantage of more attention from the teachers, even though it may be negative. They reported that boys will ask girls for support with academic tasks, but will not ask for support from each other. In comparison, girls will ask boys and other girls for support. Consequentially, the boys

compete for the teacher's attention, which is limited due to the other demands on teachers. Epstein et al. believe that, when boys do not get the teacher's attention, they are more tempted to get off task and/or respond in inattentive and disruptive behavior.

Newkirk (2002) described the attention that boys receive for misbehavior. This attention, although negative in nature, can be self-fulfilling and rewarding to some boys. Some boys seek the identity of the trouble maker, such as the class clown. They want others to see them in this light, and teachers reinforce their identity when they publicly reprimand them for their behaviors. Being seen as the trouble maker and class clown is less of a stigma than being seen as dumb or stupid by their peers.

Gay (2000) reported that African and Anglo American teachers perceive students in the same way. Both perceived African American boys more negatively and Anglo American girls more positively. Most African American males and some African American females were perceived as being uncooperative, immature, and destructive when they applied themselves to academic and social tasks. Also, teachers felt that these students needed to improve their physical appearance. By contrast, teachers perceived Anglo American females as cooperative, high achieving, well adjusted to school, and the ones who had winning personalities.

Males are seen in a different light than females and sometimes, seek negative attention. Newkirk (2002) stated:

This male cynicism about schooling may come from a powerful residual sense of male entitlement – an unarticulated belief that the traits of traditional masculinity (aggressiveness, competitiveness, physical strength, gregariousness, an outgoing personality) will more than compensate for any educational deficiency. These, after all, are the *real* traits valued in the *real* world. Males are more likely to view schooling in general (and specifically literacy) as artificial, even unmanly. By contrast, work, especially physical work, is authentic and valuable. (p. 44)

Boys grow up to value their traditional traits and the beliefs that they perceive what the world holds for them. They learn that reading is not a masculine trait, and the display of emotion and good behavior in class can be a feminine trait. Boys do not want to be seen as weak.

Pollack (1998) explained that boys are more emotionally expressive than females when they are babies. However, “by the time boys reach elementary school much of their emotional expressiveness has been lost or has gone underground. Boys at five or six become less likely than girls to express hurt or distress, either to their teachers or to their own parents” (p. 11). Pollack believes that this is an outcome of two problems that occur as boys become older. He reported that when boys are raised, the people around them use shame to make boys more tough. Often, they are taught to feel ashamed of their feelings and feel guilty, especially about feelings of weakness, vulnerability, fear, and despair. The second problem relates to the expectation that boys are expected to separate from their mothers sooner than girls are. Boys, like girls, have a natural tendency to separate at their own time, but boys are encouraged to separate sooner, which can result in emotional trauma for the boys.

The behaviors that boys exhibit in school can be a combination of many of these factors. Teachers and parents need to notice these behaviors and try to understand the need that is behind the behaviors. Covington and Teel (1996) stated that “some students are motivated to avoid failure by not participating at all, others to defy a system they believe to be irrelevant to their lives, and yet others to escape being evaluated on a narrow set of abilities and skills” (p. 3). All in all, there is a complex issue within boys

today. Most important, boys are not allowed to be themselves and often are perceived negatively in school systems today.

Brain Research

According to Gurian (1996), gender brain differences have an impact on achievement. Gleason and Ely (2002) studied the idea that boys and girls are born with differences in their brains that may affect the way they learn. Gleason and Ely reported that girls' brains have a larger portion of the left plenum temporal which, in later life, develops into Wernicke's area. This area promotes language skills, which may be why girls seem to have an earlier start with language. Moreover, because of the thicker splenium of females' corpus callosum, there may be more connections between their right and left brain than males. This means that it is easier for women to access the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere simultaneously, which helps with the understanding of language; this is the basis of reading.

Gurian (1996) also believes that brain differences affect learning how to read and understand language. He reported that boys have larger brains than females (as much as 10% larger); he also reported that the female's brain develops the cortex before the male brain does.

The left half of the cortex (the part of the brain that controls thinking) develops somewhat later than the right (the part that works with spatial relationships). In males, though, there is an even greater lag. As a result, one neurologist says that when the right side is ready to hook up with the left side (by sending over connecting nerve fibers), in the male, the appropriate cells don't yet exist on the left. So (the fibers) go back and instead form connections within the right hemisphere. You end up with extremely enriched connections within the right.
(p. 13)

Males' brains have an increased ability for spatial relationships. This may be why boys are more interested in building block designs than girls are in their early years.

Gurian (1996) also suggested that, since the female cortex develops faster, it allows the corpus callosum to be larger. Reading is an activity that requires the use of the right and left hemispheres. Therefore, females have more success with reading, because their right and left hemisphere are able to work better together due to their larger corpus callosum. Consequentially, there are a larger number of nerves that connect between the two hemispheres.

Maynard (2002) agreed with the information about the flow between the left and right hemispheres and supported the idea that females are more likely to be more fluent and articulate. However, she maintained that females tend to use language to try to solve abstract problems that require skills that are visual/spatial. Even though the male brain is less verbal and skilled in language, males are more likely to be able to solve a problem that requires abstract reasoning; also, they can see patterns better because of the way their brain works.

Gurian (1996) reported that brain scan equipment has been used to analyze the brain differences between boys and girls. Brain scan equipment can be used to make a photograph of the brain while the brain is in use, and it provides a colored picture of brain activity, to what degree the brain works, and where in the brain the activity takes place. Gurian cited Gur (1994) at the University of Pennsylvania who uses this equipment to analyze male and female brains. When required to do a spatial task, for example, to figure out how two objects fit together, most of the right hemisphere of the male is activated and lights up on the brain scan; scarcely any activity is noted in the left

hemisphere. In the female brain, the activity in the left and right hemisphere is more equalized in intensity. Conversely, when a verbal task is tested, the male brain uses much less of the overall brain, especially the left hemisphere. Gurian used an analogy to explain these differences in male and female brains. He said that the male brain turns on like a machine to do its task, then turns off. However, the female brain is always on and constantly works. This explains why males are so task oriented, and females can do a number of different kinds of tasks simultaneously.

Gleason and Ely (2002) suggested that there is another compelling biological difference between boys and girls in the area of language disorders, including stuttering and dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a term used to describe reading failure in children who are otherwise unimpaired. Children with dyslexia are of average or above-average intelligence; they have no significant social-emotional or cognitive deficits; and they have received adequate instructional support. Although they may also have trouble reading sentences and deriving inferences from them, dyslexic children characteristically have problems in phonological processing (e.g., segmenting words). Thus, it is not surprising that the reported incidence of dyslexia is much greater in boys than in girls, with ratios varying between 2:1 and 5:1, although some of this difference may be due to referral bias (Badian, 1999; Miles, Haslum, & Wheeler, 1998); Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Escobar, 1999). Possible reasons for the sex differences in the incidence of dyslexia include differences in brain lateralization and organization (Beaton, 1997). (p. 135)

This may be an explanation for the current over representation of males to females that currently are placed in special education.

The female brain also produces more serotonin, which controls aggressive behavior (Gurian, 1996). The male brain produces more testosterone. Consequently, the male has less serotonin and more testosterone, which results in a more aggressive person. According to Maynard (2002), the brain chemistry of the male is more likely to cause

more impulsive, impatient behavior; males are more easily bored and more easily excited with risk taking tasks. She attributed this to the prenatal exposure of males to testosterone. However, females are more sensitive to sensory stimuli and can connect, communicate and relate better in personal relationships. With the restricted flow of connections between the right and left hemispheres, it is difficult for males to express their emotions.

Gurian (1996) explained that the hunting and gathering era may have influenced male and female brains to work this way. Human ancestors spent millions of years hunting and gathering. The females were responsible for (a) care of the home and children, (b) local governance, and (c) gathering food. The males' responsibilities were to (a) inseminate the females, (b) form local alliances, and (c) hunt. In these activities, humans use and emphasize different parts of the brain. The female needed to

hear, smell, touch, taste, and see more minutely and effectively than the male because children's cues are more subtle than a lion's or a deer's, and because gathering roots and tubers, and figuring out which ones are poison, needs more sensory excellence as well. It is no wonder, too, that the female brain developed better handling of emotive data. Kids and local community life required more emotive processing strength than did large or very isolated hunting parties, which were single-task focused rather than multi-task focused. It is no wonder the male brain developed better abstraction skills. Hunter, then large-population society building and edifice building, required an acute sense of abstract design. Given, too, the daily necessity of the male to kill animals and, in war or other protection activity, humans, it is no wonder the brain deemphasized emotive and verbal skills, as well as empathy skills. (pp. 18-19)

Although it is important to be aware of the brain differences between males and females in order to understand why males may struggle more in school, it is important to understand that this is only a small piece of what influences a child (Gleason & Ely, 2002). In the analysis of brain research, it is important to be aware of several factors:

1. Social and cultural factors contribute significantly to the development and maintenance of gender dimorphic patterns of behavior in general, and this is true of language behavior as well.
2. Early in the child's life, parents and other adults, such as teachers, are important socializing agents; later, adults are supplanted by peers, particularly same-sex groups. Much of the socialization that children experience takes place indirectly, beyond the awareness of the socializing agents themselves. Practices that are out of awareness may be deeply embedded in a culture and not easily amenable to change. This may help to explain the phenomenon of cultural continuity in gender-role socialization and in socialization of the speech that marks gender.
3. Finally, where gender differences in language occur, they are likely to be situation and context sensitive. Thus, a small but nevertheless real difference found in one context may not be observed in another. This is an important consideration to bear in mind when evaluating empirical research that reports either significant or null findings. (p. 148)

Teachers and parents can make a difference in a child's life. Just because there are brain differences does not mean that someone cannot change the course of a child's life through the influences and the lessons that he or she learns throughout life.

Strategies for Achievement

Motivation

Covington and Teel (1996) reported that many classrooms are based on rules that promote an ability game. They cited Ames (1984) and Ames and Archer (1987) and stated that "the promotion of motives not necessarily to learn, but rather to outperform others in an effort to bolster one's reputation for ability – or the promotion of motives to achieve, driven out of the fear that others will do better" (p. 5). These are the motives that can be destructive to learning and can: (a) distract students from true achievement, (b) undermine the willingness to try, and (c) promote unpleasant comparisons among learners. This can result in a belief that learning is hurtful and abrasive. Who would

want to continue to feel this way in a classroom or society that is conducted this way? Many students (especially, low achieving students) give up because it is a failure prone environment; few can succeed, and the others feel dismissed.

Covington and Teel (1996) reported that the best motivators are those that are not based on ability, background; nor talent. They feel that every single student is an individual and cannot be compared to another. Therefore, motivators should be used so everyone can experience success and self-improvement. “For example, the act of satisfying one’s curiosity is its own reward. And because these rewards reside within the individual, they are open to all, inexhaustible in number, and largely under control of the individual” (p. 6).

Covington and Teel (1996) noted that it is a challenge for educators to “create a motivational parity for all students, with everyone striving for positive reasons by arranging incentives that promote curiosity, that establish meaningful payoffs for self-improvement, and that reward increased knowledge” (p. 6). There are two strategies that they promote. One is a reward for students who master their environment and strive for something better, for example, the ability to understand an assignment and explain it to the class. The other strategy supports the will to learn by the reward of curiosity and information seeking motives, for example, questions about the text that are not readily apparent in the text.

Instructional Strategies

Ginsberg, Shapiro, and Brown (2004) reported that many English and Language Arts teachers have favorite literature selections and relative sets of questions and writing

assignments. Many of the women teachers have similar interests to the younger girls; also, they have taught for a long time and do not want to change their curriculum.

Ginsberg et al. urged these teachers to begin to listen to their students and their interests. Students should be allowed to read material in which they are interested, as a result, they would read a variety of literature which could result in better learning for both girls and boys.

Moreover, Ginsberg et al. (2000) perceived the term, standardized instruction, as an

increasingly common one, as schools and school districts across the country are trying to create standards and benchmarks through which students from different educational institutions will graduate with basically the same knowledge and skills. Although many argue that this approach can be effective in combating racism, sexism and socioeconomic inequality because all students are held to the same high standards, it seems reasonable to question who will decide what those standards will be; whether they will include a wide variety of perspectives, approaches, and interpretations; and whether they will indeed be engaging and effective for all students. Perhaps most important, one must ask how teachers from vastly different professional backgrounds and experiences, with access to widely different sets of resources and working with students of varying expertise and special needs, will use them. And, as we have previously discussed, the notion of a “standardized curriculum” remains problematic if we accept the definition of curriculum as ever-evolving relations between the individual and the world. (p. 79)

The true test of a teacher is to take the standardized curriculum and add to it or improve it in order to meet the needs of all learners in his or her classroom. This is necessary in order to meet not only gender specific needs but, also cultural, racial, and socioeconomic needs as well. According to Ginsberg et al., the best teachers are those who pay closer attention to the gendered dynamics of their classrooms. These teachers are more likely to make other observations about children’s learning styles in different contexts. This will assist teachers in becoming more flexible and responsive, which will benefit all students.

Gay (2000) observed that some teachers try to identify the individual differences of students in order to establish an appropriate learning environment for all. However, they then feel they need to treat all students the same. This contradicts “the importance of ethnicity, culture, and gender in pedagogical decision making” (p. 57). Fairness in a classroom should not be defined as everyone receiving the same thing; rather, fairness should be defined as everyone receives what they need.

Francis (2000) cited Clark (1998), the Department of Education and Employment (1998b), and the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (1998), and stated:

In this discourse, girls’ improvements are often presented as having been at the expense of boys. Cohen (1998) has shown how low educational achievement among boys is seen as the result of external faults, such as the teacher, school, or methods of learning or assessment. So suggested remedies to improve boys’ educational achievement emanating from the “poor boys” camp tend to be based on a supposition that boys’ comparative underachievement results from a failure to make education sufficiently appealing to boys. Hence many educational initiatives include ideas such as providing more non-fiction reading material, using whole-class teaching methods and capturing boys’ attention by reference to traditional pastimes. (p. 123)

Teachers can make the effort to engage and improve boys’ achievement by the provision of reading activities which more directed toward their interests and needs.

Newkirk (2002) reported that reading, particularly book reading, is perceived by many as a female activity. “A recent survey asked students in various grades which parent read most often in their homes. Fifty-six percent reported their mothers read books more often, compared to 5.6 percent who designated their fathers (37 percent said both)” (p. 42). However, the students’ fathers were perceived as reading the newspaper more by similar numbers. As a consequence, reading in all forms is not perceived as a feminine activity, but book reading is. Book reading is the form of most school based

reading. Newkirk also cited Rousseau (1968), who suggested that children learn better from short stories and letters that affect their immediate interests, rather than from books. Hence, reading should not be treated only as a subject of instruction, but also as a practical social activity.

Newkirk (2002) reported that factors of length, genre, and isolation can be deterrents to reading as well. “Not only is the good reader a fiction reader, but she is one who reads a particular type of fiction. In fact, many students that see themselves as nonreaders actually read quite a lot; they see themselves as nonreaders because they don’t read extended works of fiction” (p. 74). Newkirk cited Smith and Wilhelm (2002) who reported that length is a primary deterrent for boys as well.

Yet for many readers, and particularly boys, the attraction of sustained silent reading is baffling. Nonreaders see it as a form of isolation that runs counter to every social instinct they possess. It calls for unimaginable disciplining of the body. Consequentially it is the perfect tool for a school system that must keep students still. (p.67).

In addition, Newkirk (2002) cited both Rousseau (1968) and Montaigne (1958) who noted the importance of physical activity combined with learning. Montaigne referred particularly to Plato who viewed participation in games, races, sports, dancing, and music making as being far more central to educational development than learning from books. Rousseau maintained that confining children was bad practice. He argued that the “physical exploration of the hands was central to later intellectual development – the fingers are extensions of the mind. He often hoped that the older Emile would have ‘eyes in the tips of his finger’” (pp. 56-57). Both Montaigne and Rousseau knew the importance of movement and learning.

Although there is a need for movement while learning, most schools are limited in regard to space (Newkirk, 2002). Newkirk cited Rosseau (1968) and Montaigne (1958), who argued that confining numbers of students with a variety of temperaments and interests with a common curriculum was an impossible task. Newkirk explained that, today, public schools are too crowded. “In almost any U.S town the most densely packed working spaces are the school, which are more crowded than prisons or office buildings, sometimes the equivalent of small towns housed in a few adjacent buildings” (p. 60). These types of conditions require a means of crowd control in order to discipline the numbers, which can detract from learning. Schools may not have the desired space. If teachers can create movement along with learning, they will be able to reach more students and their needs.

In conclusion, educators can be trained to make learning more interesting. They can learn to: (a) teach to the students’ interests, (b) engage them with powerful strategies, and (c) motivate them in order to enhance achievement. Most importantly, if teachers take the time to understand their students’ interests and needs, they will better understand the way they need to be taught. When the individual needs of students are met, the result will be better behavior and learning as well as more engaged and excited learners and citizens.

Chapter Summary

There are differences in the ways boys and girls learn. They are different in the ways which they achieve in school, and they are different in terms of their behaviors. Boys and girls also demonstrate differences in the way that their brains work. These differences require the use of individualized instructional methods. All learners need to

be motivated to learn on an equity based method and not an ability based method.

Moreover, the needs of all learners must be met; teachers should pay particular attention to the needs and interests of their students in order to meet the social, emotional , and academic needs of their students. In Chapter 3, this author presented the method, target population, procedure, and goal for this applied project.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project was to identify strategies to enhance learning for boys. Boys and girls learn differently; they achieve in different ways and behave differently in class. This author looked at the individual needs of boys and recommend specific strategies. Based on best practices, a guide book was developed to encourage boys in becoming more motivated, responsible, and higher achieving members of society.

Target Population

The groups or individuals that were interested in the guide book were parents and teachers. Teachers used the strategies to understand, reach, and teach the boys in their classrooms with more individualized methods. Parents used the guide book to better understand their sons in learning how to enhance the social, emotional, and academic needs of their sons.

Procedures

This author identified meaningful strategies that were presented in the literature. By reading these strategies, this author combined the methods and summarized the strategies to make it easy and applicable for teachers and parents to use. Once the author gained the desired information, she combined the information found into a systematic and easy to follow guidebook for teachers and parents to use. The guide book was available for teachers in this author's school to use and refer to as they identified issues

that pertained to boys. Also, the guidebook was distributed to parents in a monthly support group meeting, which was designed by this author.

Goals of Applied Project

The goal of this project was to inform teachers and parents about the differences between boys and girls. It is important to realize the differences and then practice strategies that can enhance learning despite the differences by applying them. Boys have unique needs and are falling behind in school, research noted earlier supports this notion. It was this author's goal to improve the achievement and engagement of boys in the current school system, which appears to be failing them.

Chapter Summary

Boys and girls learn differently, and they achieve and behave in unique ways. The guide book developed for this applied project was used by teachers and parents in order to improve the achievement and behavior of boys in education. Information for the guide book was researched by the author and summarized in a guide book given to teachers who work at her school and parents who attend monthly support group meetings. The systematic and informational guide book is presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, this author provided feedback, discussion, and recommendations for further research in this area of interest.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Gurian (1996) reported that brain research showed there are definite differences between the ways that boys' and girls' brains work. Do educators recognize the needs of these learners or are the same teaching methods being used with the expectation that both boys and girls will learn the same way? The purpose of this project was to identify some of the reasons why boys underachieve in school and to find strategies to assist and facilitate success in school; thereby, building responsible and confident adults. This was done by the development of a guide book for educators and parents that contains effective strategies to enhance the way educators teach boys in school. The strategies are effective for boys at the elementary school level.

The guide book contains the following: (a) information on how the brain works and how girls' and boys' brains are different; (b) what a purposeful classroom would look like for boys; (c) factors contributing to the gender gap; (d) strategies to improve behavior and social skills; (e) how to stimulate work at home; (f) ways in which schools can support the minds of learners; (g) the process of demystification; (h) practical considerations for parents; (i) setting up a student's home office; (j) alternative output pathways; (k) and how parents can serve as homework consultants.

Strategies to Enhance Achievement for Boys

by

Susie Frick

Brain Research

Michael Gurian, the author of Boys and Girls Learn Differently!, explains how boys' and girls' brains are functionally and structurally different. In this book he describes how the brain works, what the differences are between boys' and girls' brains, how the differences affect them in their own unique way, and what an ultimate classroom would look like for different types of learners. Gurian educates people, especially teachers, who can support boys in learning about their differences and who can teach them how to identify their strengths.

How the Brain Works

- **Adult brain**
 - 4 to 8 pounds of dense matter in three major layers
 - Cerebral cortex
 - Limbic system
 - Brain stem
 - The brain grows from the bottom up, the upper limbic system and the four lobes of the cerebral cortex (neocortex) developing later than the lower limbic system and brain stem

- **Brain Stem**
 - Where fight or flight response is stored
 - Most primitive part of the brain

- **Limbic System**
 - Where emotion is processed
 - Sensory information comes into the brain and the person experiences an emotive response to it

- **Four Lobes**
 - Top of the brain
 - Where thinking occurs
 - Left hemisphere
 - Associated with verbal skills-speaking, reading, and writing
 - Right hemisphere
 - Associated with spatial skills-measuring, perceiving direction, and working with blocks or other objects
 - While learning, emotional reactions can occur from the limbic system and slow down or shut off most thinking in the top of the brain, especially if the emotive response is caused by the lesson or content

Differences Between Boys' and Girls' Brains

- **Differences between girls and boys are not evidence of gender superiority or inferiority**

- **Developmental and structural differences**
 - Most female brains mature earlier and more quickly
 - Brain development starts in the right hemisphere and gradually moves left- movement starts earlier in females than in males
 - Girls may acquire more complex verbal skills as much as a year earlier than boys do

- Often, a preschool girl reads faster and with a larger vocabulary, and speaks with better grammar, than does a preschool boy
- Myelination (myelin coats nerves and allows electrical impulses to travel down each nerve quickly and efficiently- not done developing until young adulthood) is completed in women earlier than man
- The corpus callosum (nerves that connect the left and right hemisphere) is 20% larger in females than males
- Prefrontal lobes develop more and quicker in females- where regulation of emotion finds its executive decision making and where sensory processing often occurs
- Girls take in more sensory data than boys
 - Females tend to be better than males at controlling impulsive behavior
 - Boys are more likely to show physical aggression
- Girls are better at verbal abilities and rely on verbal communication; boys tend to rely heavily on nonverbal communication
- Males tend to have more development in certain areas of the right hemisphere, which provides them with better spatial abilities, such as measuring, mechanical design, geography, and map reading

- **Chemical and Hormonal Differences**

- Male brain secrete less serotonin which makes them more impulsive and fidgety
- Females are more dominated by estrogen and progesterone
 - Progesterone is the bonding hormone
- Males are more dominated by testosterone
 - Testosterone is the aggression and sex-drive hormone
 - Males receive 5 to 7 surges of testosterone every day, beginning in prepuberty (around the age of 10)
 - Moods change between aggressive and withdrawn

- **Functional Differences**

- Boys
 - Use right hemisphere more
 - Move emotive material down from the limbic system to the brain stem, where fight-or-flight material is stored
 - Males manage stimulants with more “task focus”
 - They want to stick to one plan at a time
 - Boys can store trivia for a long time better than girls
 - Spatial tasks and abstract reasoning are better functions
 - When boys store information it is more organized and has some coherent importance to them
 - Often they respond better to loud voices or closer to the front of the classroom (girls have better hearing)
 - Can see better in brighter light

- Girls
 - Use the left hemisphere more
 - Move emotive material upward to the upper brain where complex thought occurs
 - Memory and sensory intake are better functions
 - When girls store information it is random
 - Reactions are more acutely and quickly to pain, but overall resistant to long-term discomfort
 - Better hearing and can see better in darker light
- **Differences in Processing Emotion**
 - Boys
 - Male brains move emotive information to the limbic system and the brain stem so the male is likely to become physically aggressive or withdrawn (fight or flight)- this hinders the ability to learn because the attention is in the lower part of the brain
 - Girls
 - Process more emotive stimulants and verbalizes emotive information quickly
 - Female brains move emotive information from the limbic system to the four lobes, where thinking occurs- allows girls to process and talk about feels

How Brain-Based Differences Affect Boys and Girls

- **Learning Style Differences**
 - Deductive and Inductive Reasoning
 - Boys tend to start their reasoning process from a general principle and then apply it to individual cases
 - Boys are quicker with deductive reasoning which gives them an advantage in fast multiple-choice tests, such as SATs
 - Girls tend to favor inductive reasoning
 - Girls begin with specific, concrete examples and then build general theory, adding more and more to their base of conceptualization
 - Abstract and Concrete Reasoning
 - Boys tend to be better at calculating something that they haven't seen or touched
 - Boys generally do better when mathematics is taught abstractly on the board
 - Females tend to learn better with the use of manipulatives
 - Males like abstract arguments, philosophical conundrums, and moral debates about abstract principles- architecture and engineering are areas that males gravitate
 - Use of Language

- Females produce more words than males
- Girls use more words during learning
- Boys often work silently
- One or two boys, in a group, may use more words if they are the attention seekers
- Logic and Evidence
 - Girls are generally better listeners than boys and are more receptive to details in a lesson or conversation
 - Girls seem to feel safe with less logical sequencing and more instructional meandering
 - Boys tend to hear less and more often ask for clear evidence to support another's claim
- The Likelihood of Boredom
 - Boys are more easily bored than girls and need more and varying stimuli to keep them attentive
 - Once a child has become bored they are more likely to give up on learning and to act out in a way that disrupts the class and causes him to be labeled a behavioral problem
- Use of Space
 - Boys tend to need more space than girls when they are learning, especially at younger ages
 - Their spacial brains require them to spread their work out
- Movement
 - Movement stimulates male brains and helps them manage impulsive behavior
 - Low levels of serotonin and higher metabolism make boys more fidgety
 - Give boys something to touch while learning
 - Give boys chores in the classroom
 - Allow modeling clay and doodling
 - Use movement to introduce lessons
 - Allow breaks
- Sensitivity and Group Dynamics
 - Cooperative learning is easier for girls to master
 - Boys tend to focus on performing the task well without much sensitivity to the emotions of those around them
 - Social strata (pecking orders) are important to boys
 - Boys become fragile learners if they are low on the pecking order
 - Boys that are high on the pecking order secrete less cortisol. Cortisol can sabotage the learning process; it forces the brain to attend to emotional and survival stress rather than intellectual learning
- Use of Symbolism
 - Boys often rely on pictures for learning- mainly because it stimulates their right brain

- Use of Learning Teams
 - Boys and girls benefit from learning teams
 - Boys spend less time on managing the team process- they pick leaders quickly and focus on goal orientation
- **Learning Differences and the Intelligences**
 - Time and Sequence Intelligences
 - Focuses on remembering the past, connecting to the present, and anticipating what might come in the future- each requires the ability to rapidly process and communicate sequential information in a timely, orderly manner
 - Linguistic Intelligence
 - Lies in the left hemisphere
 - Speaking out loud and speaking to self while learning are equally important
 - Musical Intelligence
 - Processed in the right hemisphere- rhythm in the left
 - Music can be powerful because of the whole brain activity- can increase memorizing, expressing emotion, concentration, and boosting self-esteem
 - Logical-Mathematical Intelligence
 - Uses a lot of brain energy and functions (both hemispheres and frontal lobes)
 - Boys are dominant in logical-mathematics
 - Females, however, are nearly catching up in all areas of mathematics
 - Space-And-Place Intellegences
 - Spatial- tactile and visual abilities to perceive shapes and forms in one's environment
 - Engineers and architects use spacial intelligence
 - Bodily-kinesthetic
 - Boys have advantage because they are more active in their learning and are oriented to body movement, and self-stimulate their spatial abilities, thus increasing right-hemisphere development
- **Applying Brain-Based Gender Research**
 - Academic Performance and Classroom Behavior
 - On average, girls study harder, choose harder classes
 - Girls receive 60% of the As
 - Boys receive 70% of the Ds and Fs
 - Boys tend to be louder, more physically aggressive, more competitive, and more prone to attention-getting classroom behaviors

- Boys goof off more, are more impulsive, which results in more teacher attention
- Girls are more quiet, more passive, have longer attention spans and do not need to move interactively in the classroom
- Reading and Writing Competence
 - Girls are approximately one and a half years ahead of boys in reading and writing competence, at all school levels
 - Boys are dominant in certain aspects of math and science
- Test Scores
 - Boys score slightly higher on SAT and other college entrance exams
 - Male brains are better at storing single-sentence information and multiple choice questions
 - Female brains are better at inductive reasoning and essay questions
- Psychological, Learning, and Behavioral Disorders
 - More girls experience overt depression and eating disorders in the teen years
 - Boys are more likely to experience a learning, psychiatric, or behavioral disorder
 - Female brains secrete more serotonin which makes them less likely to have hyperactive disorder
 - Males tend to suffer more learning disorders- their brain lateralizes its activity and compartmentalizing it in smaller areas of the brain
 - 2/3 of learning disabilities are males
 - 90% of behavioral disabilities are males
 - Males are nearly 100% of the severely disabled
 - Males are 80% of the brain disorder and 70% of substance-abuse problems
 - For every boy that attempts suicide, four girls do; for every girl that actually commits suicide, four boys do
 - Special education and alternative education is dominated by males
 - Many boys are misdiagnosed as having ADD/ADHD and learning disabilities because we haven't understood their brains or created classrooms that help them deal well with their natural impulses, lateralization of brain activity, left-hemisphere disadvantage, and learning styles
- Maturity, Discipline, and Behavior
 - Female hormones mature earlier and guide them towards long-term attachments
 - Male hormones may guide the boy toward short-term experimental attachments
 - Boys cause 90% of the discipline problems in school
 - 80% of the dropouts are boys
- Educational Aspirations
 - Boys fear failure more than girls

- On average 8th grade and 12th grade girls have higher educational aspirations
- 60% of college students are female and college graduation is the most consistent indicator of stable future income
- Cultural Gender Bias
 - 90% of teachers are women and female learning and teaching styles dominate
- Sexual Abuse and Violence
 - Boys are 3 times more likely than girls to be victims of violence on school property (since males primarily victimize other males)
 - Girls are more often victims of sexual abuse suffered at the hands of teacher, parent, coaches, school staff, and other students
 - Boys dominate the violence statistics
 - The U.S. Department of Justice found that, as early as first grade, it can be predicted who the offender males will be. Most of these boys are doing poorly in school, which contributes to their self-concepts of shame and inadequacy and their compensatory aggression against others.

The Ultimate Preschool and Kindergarten Classroom for Boys

- ✓ Teach sewing and beadwork to help boys learn fine motor skills, an area in which they are weaker than girls.
- ✓ Have books on shelves and elsewhere around the classroom, so that boys who don't feel comfortable with reading can get used to the omnipresent book.
- ✓ Make everything experiential; have lots of blocks and other manipulatives for play and lesson learning.
- ✓ Keep verbal instructions to less than a minute before going to the activity.
- ✓ Have a permanent "feeling corkboard" on which balloons are taped about the words "angry", "sad", "happy," and "mad"; let the kids throw safe, plastic darts at the feelings they are having, which gives them an action for accessing and then talking about the feeling.
- ✓ Personalize the child's desk, coat rack, cubby, and other storage areas to increase the sense of attachment and identity with the environment.
- ✓ Bring in male mentors and other men from the community, or boys from upper grades to promote male presence; this is done especially to make male role models available to fatherless boys.
- ✓ Teach the child to use concrete, emotion-laden words such as "I don't like it when you hit me."
- ✓ Enjoy the boys' high energy and put it to work in cleaning the classroom, helping you move things around, and helping other children in their learning and work.

The Ultimate Elementary Classroom for Boys

- ✓ Support teacher training in male-brain development and the male learning pace, which is often different than the female's.
- ✓ Use "boy only" groups when needed.
- ✓ Encourage close bonding between teacher and student.
- ✓ Enjoy and navigate normal "Huck Finn male energy" toward academic focus and good character.
- ✓ Pay special attention to the more sensitive, less competitive or aggressive males in the classroom.
- ✓ Advocate for boys' issues in the school and community.
- ✓ Allow physical movement, as well as engaging in physical activity, from hugs and touch when appropriate to getting down and dirty at recess once in a while.
- ✓ Be sure there are men in the boy's educational life, especially from fifth grade on.
- ✓ Before third grade, never allow chairs to be kept in a row or nailed down, and always make available as much space as possible.
- ✓ Offer lots of storytelling and myth making in the classroom to help the male brain develop its imaginative and verbal skills through story making.
- ✓ Give boys lots of things to touch and otherwise sense, especially when reading and writing are being taught.

**Gurian, M. (2001) *Boys and girls learn differently! A guide for teachers and parents.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Factors Contributing to the Gender Gap

Jefferson County School District in Colorado consolidated research to help explain what is happening with boys in language arts. Experts attribute a variety of causes to boys' problems in language arts. Some of these are more valid than others. Also, please remember that they are painting in broad gender-wide strokes here. Each boy and girl is an individual with unique, specific strengths and needs.

Factors Contributing to the Gender Gap

Research about Boys' Learning

- Some studies show that boys simply develop learning capabilities slower than girls. Some experts even recommend starting them in kindergarten a year or later than girls.
- Studies show that boys' fine motor skills also develop later- which can affect a broad variety of academic tasks.
- Some psychologists blame the gender gap on pursuit of higher test scores, saying boys can't absorb that much information at a young age.
- Boys are less likely to tell teachers and parents when they are in trouble because they can't find the words or don't want to show signs of weakness.
- Boys tend to prefer active tasks, manipulating materials, or cartooning rather than talking, reading, or writing. Females tend to enjoy reading, writing, talking, and reflecting.
- One study showed that elementary teachers tend to attribute to "blind" papers- and give higher grades to papers they think are written by girls. They used linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural cues to determine a paper's "gender". Another study showed men were just as able to render significant detail in their writing, but because of their chosen subject matter, their work was deemed less "significant" or "reflective".

In reading, boys:

- May be less apt to empathize with characters different from themselves and less comfortable discussing emotional content.
- Can have trouble relating to the fiction used in many reading lessons. While girls can envision themselves in make-believe worlds, boys generally relate better to books describing real things. In fiction, boys like stories about duty, quests, honor, etc.

In writing, boys:

- Show strengths in pace and action, less so in characterization. Boys' writing is more violent.
- Prefer informative writing to the more emotive writing girls like.
- Focus on "contest", while girl's stories focus on community. Girls' heroes solve problems together, boys more independently.
- Prefer same-sex writing/editing groups even more strongly than girls. Boys tend to value conferencing less than girls, and their groups tend to be hierarchical, to be run by one leader, and to exclude lower-status members. Girls give more substantive feedback and take more ownership of their group's papers, while boys concentrate on minor punctuation and grammar issues.
- One expert argues that boys, as they develop their gender identity, try to distance themselves from the world of girls and women (teachers included). Boys' efforts to maintain a safe distance can include portraying themselves in written as anti-heroes or with irony, absurdity, or self-parody.

Strategies to Help Boys Bridge the Gap

In general:

- Set and maintain high expectations for boys. Don't write off sub-par reading or writing performance, sloppy penmanship, or poor behavior as "boys will be boys".
- As appropriate to your curriculum, allow boys more choices/options in their reading assignments or writing prompts. Science fiction, action/adventure, and humor may be more appealing to them, both in reading and writing.
- All students, but boys especially, do better when they're clear on lesson objectives, purposes, and assignment time limits. Break large tasks into smaller parts.
- Increasing numbers of boys may have few role models committed to reading and writing, so invite guest readers and writers into the classroom. When possible, include males and females who represent students' interests.

- Allow more built-in thinking or processing time for boys when emotional processing is required in a task.
- In your classroom generally, allow boys more movement and activity in their learning. During intensive reading or writing periods, allow movement options for stress release.
- Emphasize trust building in your classroom environment generally, but especially for reading lessons that involve in-depth or emotional responses and in writing assignments that involve emotion or group editing/discussions.

In reading:

- Provide reading materials featuring people of both genders in varying roles and of varying ethnicities, cultures, and social classes.
- Encourage boys to read more reflective, narrative pieces and girls to read more informational writing. Support their exploration of and responses to genres that are not their first preference.
- Balance quiet and active tasks. For example, after reading aloud, have students stand in a circle and silently portray various characters in freeze positions. Teachers call on a few students to verbally describe the character and position they are representing. This can work for nonfiction texts as well.
- Boys (and girls) respond well to reading a text, then periodically transforming it in some way (e.g., Reader's Theater, role-playing, poster and presentation, teaching to a partner).

In writing:

- Publish via drama, performances, and other social contexts to engage boys' preference for action, drama.
- In peer editing or writing groups, boys need more modeling and direction about giving and receiving feedback, as well as help with trust-building, in order to participate effectively.
- Teaching the writing process helps boys break large tasks into more manageable parts.
- Males are more motivated by writing for an authentic audience, such as kindergarten buddies, classmates, parents, video camera, etc.

- Give boys structure for self-assessing and evaluating their own writing by teaching effective use of rubrics (especially the Six Trait rubric).

Boys and Literacy

Research done in The National Literacy Strategy (1998-2002), made an impact on literacy, but revealed that there was a difference between boys and girls in the area of literacy and that this difference continues to be an issue. On The Lancashire Grid for Learning website it explains what some possible causes are, what teachers can do, what some preferred learning styles are for boys and what the least popular learning styles are for boys.

Boys and Literacy

Possible Causes Underachievement for Boys

- Peer Pressure
- English is perceived as a “feminine” subject
- Lack of male role models (in school/home)
- Presentation skills of boys are often lower
- Ability grouping can contribute to lower expectations
- Teaching and learning styles are more suited to girls’ way of working
- Exams and tests are more suited to girls’ learning styles
- Teacher expectations may be lower for some boys
- Certain groups of boys may be more likely to underachieve
- Boys often disguise learning difficulties behind behavioral problems

What to Do

- Use data to identify if underachievement of boys is an issue in your school
- Track groups of boys to identify particular areas of underachievement
- Ensure a whole school approach to tackling these areas
- Identify what boys are good at and develop these areas
- Discuss different learning approaches

Preferred Learning Styles of Boys

- Short, time limited tasks
- Active learning
- Group work
- Challenges
- Competitions
- Quizzes
- Sociable learning
- Oral work

Least Preferred Learning Styles

- Copying from the board
- Listening to the teacher
- Worksheets
- Writing on their own
- Reading on their own

Strategies to Improve Behavior and Social Problems

Richard Lavoie is a nationally known expert on learning disabilities. There are currently more boys than girls in special education; because boys tend to experience more behavior and social problems than girls; they are referred for special education testing more than girls. Richard Lavoie provides strategies to help improve behavior and social skills. Moreover, research has shown that when a child is underachieving, the child may exhibit more behavior problems because he or she is trying to either avoid doing the work or distract others from noticing that the work is difficult. Richard Lavoie explains how preventative discipline can create a predictable environment which anticipates many problems before they even begin. He also explains how to create an environment to support kids who often feel embarrassed or rejected in social situations.

**PBS Video
Learning Disabilities and Discipline
with Richard Lavoie**

**When Chips are Down...
Strategies for Improving Children's Behavior**

Positive and Negative feedback

- ★ Negative feedback-punishment, etc., stops behavior
- ★ Positive feedback- praise, etc, changes behavior

Changing Behavior

- ★ Behavior changes slowly
- ★ Behavior is inconsistent just like everything else (spelling, etc.)
- ★ **Successive approximations-** reinforces steps toward approximated behavior. Don't look for perfect behavior right away. Reinforce any small step the child is making toward desired behavior while explaining what to work on next.

Performance Inconsistency (behavior and academics)

- ★ Part of Learning Disability (LD) profile
- ★ Students will have good and bad days (not predicable)
- ★ Recognize it instead of using it as evidence for prosecution, for example, a boy has a good day and the teacher says, "I knew you were just being lazy" or "Now I know you can do it. Now I can expect it all the time".
- ★ How we deal with it affects the student's self-esteem and ego

Questionable Practices (not good practices)

- ★ Corporal Punishment- teaches students it's okay to treat someone aggressively
- ★ Time Out- (if used inappropriately) Not supposed to be a punishment. Need to set a time limit; child won't come out of time out on his or her own
- ★ Sarcasm- kids do not understand it
- ★ Forced apologies- asking the child to lie if they are not sorry
- ★ Confiscating Items- always allow them to get their item back. Make it tougher every time you have to take it away.
- ★ Cheap Shots
- ★ Imposing School Tasks as a Punishment- having to read an extra chapter, having to write the rules over and over

****Children learn from what they see. If you handle a situation by using a cheap shot, corporal punishment, or sarcasm, you are teaching children to do the same thing.

Preventive Discipline (teachers can be too reactive and not proactive enough)

- ★ Students with learning disabilities are dependant on the environment. Set up an environment where they can succeed
- ★ All students' behavior is different, but they all have the same problem with internal structure called **executive strategies**, for example, planning, etc.
- ★ Executive strategies:
 - Tight external structure
 - Predictable environments
 - Consistent rules (posted)
 - Structures and routines (decreases anxiety)
 - Daily agenda- you and the kids become allies in order to complete the list
 - Use voice effectively- when you yell the students do not hear the message, also they because they become immune to it
- ★ Dealing with arguing
 - Reasons kids argue
 1. To gain power and control
 2. Attention from others
 3. To derail lesson
 - Broken record technique: Repeat rule with low voice tone. Takes away reasons to argue and uses voice to calm
- ★ Praise
 - Descriptive and evaluative- use descriptive (more meaningful) praise
 - Think of different ways to praise- call home

Corrective Discipline

- ★ Teacher is primarily responsible for discipline, not other students, which becomes collective discipline
- ★ Use collective rewards- reward group when child and group does something right
- ★ Punishment- immediate or definite and fits the crime
- ★ Do not use disappointment- dangerous and hurts
- ★ Effective conferencing techniques:
 1. Begin positive, end positive, in the middle discuss ways to improve
 2. Pick the right time- don't be afraid to wait
 3. Pick the right place- principals office, classroom, neutral zone

Poker Chips (self-esteem)

- ★ Poker chips represent self-esteem
- ★ LD students are at an unfair disadvantage with other students because they are playing the game of school with few to no poker chips
- ★ Take away only what is necessary
- ★ Teacher job to send students home with more poker chips than what they came with

**PBS Video
Learning Disabilities and Social Skills
with Richard Levoie**

**Last One Picked...
First One Picked on:
Guide for Parents**

**Social skills- more important than anything else because it occurs in almost all environments and compensations skills are not available.

Children with learning disabilities needs everything taught to them, even social skills.

Social Skills to Teach:

- Interrogation skills: the ability to ask questions
 - 80% of 1st 10 minutes of a conversation between two unknown people is asking questions
 - Need to be able to ask questions in order to get help, instead students with learning disabilities (LD) make statements, which make teachers upset
- Attention Deficit Disorder: chronic restlessness and in ability to focus
 - Many misconceptions out there that interchange the definitions for distractability and attention span
 - Distractability: pays attention to everything
 - Attention span: pays attention to nothing (usually lower cognitive skills)
- Disinhibition: the inability to repress thoughts or actions that may be socially inappropriate
 - Inhibitory responses- ability to understand what is appropriate to think vs. what is appropriate to say.
 - Students with LD say what ever is on their mind
- Impulsivity: to act without considering the natural consequences of the action
 - “If I can’t do it right, I’ll do it fast”

Social Autopsy:

- The examination and inspection of a social error to discover the cause of error, determine the damage and prevent it from occurring again.
- Not a source of punishment. Use error as an opportunity to teach. Use positive social interactions for teaching too.

Parent Recommendations (what to teach):

- Types of children
 - Rejected- everyone seeks to pick on
 - Ignored- everyone leaves alone, no friends
 - Controversial- has a group of friends, but doesn't go beyond those friends
 - Popular- has friends, a person that others like even though they don't know him or her

- Positive Traits of Popular Children
 - Smiling and laughing
 - Greets others- extends invitations
 - Converses with others
 - Shares
 - Gives compliments
 - Good appearance

- No Sweats (people pleasing skills, in order to be more successful)
 - Be punctual
 - Establish eye contact
 - Participate in class (ask questions)
 - Use teacher's name
 - Submit work on time
 - Use required formats
 - Avoid crossing out
 - Request explanations
 - Thank the teacher

- Hidden Curriculum- unwritten, unspoken rules of school. The culture that makes one school different than another school.
 - Top Seven Mainstream Teacher Complaints
 1. Listening
 2. Following directions
 3. Staying on task
 4. Ability to get started with tasks
 5. How to get help appropriately
 6. Finish work on time
 7. Word attack skills

***First six complaints are all hidden curriculum
 - Finding the hidden curriculum

- ▶ Physical plant- how to navigate physical make up of school and surroundings
- ▶ Schedule- where and when to be there, best way to get there
- ▶ Administration- who is in charge of who, who to go to for what problems
- ▶ Extra curricular activities- very important
- ▶ Social Environment- what's in and what's out, who are the cliques

***Adolescence- 365 day, 52 week, 24 hour a day battle not be embarrassed about lack of knowledge about hidden curriculum

Trouble Shooting Other Problems:

- New social situation
 - prepare child- check it out first
 - prepare environment for child- talk to teacher, leader about specific accommodations
- Student with no close friends (physical disability)
 - Invite kids over so they can get to know him or her more personally
 - Set up artificial opportunities
- ADD behavior
 - Write a letter or talk to teacher about what noncompliant behavior looks like and what behavior is uncontrollable
- Kids need consistency
- ★ *Educators and parents need to look at the world the way kids do in order to solve problems that they are dealing with.*

A Mind at a Time

Mel Levine, M.D. is another nationally recognized learning expert. He is the author of A Mind at a Time and The Myth of Laziness. Both of these books explain how different minds learn in different ways. He promotes teaching children how to identify their strengths and weaknesses. While focusing more on a child's strengths, a teacher or parent can produce satisfaction and achievement rather than frustration and failure. In The Myth of Laziness, Mel Levine provides day-to-day strategies and support to help prevent output failure and, when necessary, to help children overcome their weaknesses and become productive, successful adults.

What We Should See in Schools for *ALL Kinds of Minds*

- ◆ Teachers who are well versed in neurodevelopmental function and as such serve as the lead local learning experts.
- ◆ Teachers who observe, describe, and respond to the neurodevelopmental observable phenomena of their students.
- ◆ Teachers who base their own teaching methods on their understanding of how learning works.
- ◆ Students who are learning about learning while they are learning.
- ◆ Students who gain insight into and are able to track their own evolving neurodevelopmental profiles.
- ◆ Students whose strengths have been properly identified and cultivated.
- ◆ Students who respect students whose neurodevelopmental profiles and personal backgrounds differ from their own.
- ◆ Parents who collaborate with schools and join forces to create and sustain schools for all kinds of minds.
- ◆ Schools that celebrate and foster neurodevelopmental diversity.
- ◆ Schools in which all students acquire and build unique expertise, maintain collections, and develop their affinities.
- ◆ Schools that make available multiple educational pathways.
- ◆ Schools that stress long-term projects over rapidly executed activities.
- ◆ Schools that help kids blaze their own trails for motor success, creativity, and community service.
- ◆ Schools that create and maintain an educational plan for each student.
- ◆ Schools that refuse to label their students.
- ◆ Schools where kids can learn and work at their own natural pace.
- ◆ Schools that offer a range of ways in which students can reveal their knowledge and their academic accomplishments.
- ◆ Schools that seek to be far less judgmental of students.
- ◆ Schools that provide students with mentors from the faculty or from the community.
- ◆ Schools that help to educate parents about neurodevelopmental function and a mind at a time.

**Levine, M, MD. (2002) *A mind at a time. America's top learning expert shows how every child can succeed.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

The Magical Process of Demystification

Demystification- helping a child to understand and then to discuss his or her dysfunctions that are getting in the way of success.

1. Taking the stigma out of the demystification

- ▶ Explain to the child that you are going to discuss his or her strengths and weaknesses; this is a talk that can occur with any child.
- ▶ Go over strength and weakness profile with them.
- ▶ Let the child know that sooner or later every person has to deal with his weak areas and decide what to do about them. The sooner the better!
- ▶ Since he or she is having troubles now, it is an excellent time to start thinking about his or her mind and its characteristics.

2. Celebrating strengths

- ▶ Before discussing weaknesses, it is always best to acknowledge individual assets.
- ▶ This has to be an honest discussion; nothing hurts more than false praise.
- ▶ Give specific examples when you saw evidence of positive traits.

3. Describing and putting borders around weaknesses

- ▶ Provide a short numbered list of weaknesses.
- ▶ For example, “Here are some things you need to be working on, those little brain gaps that get in the way and sometimes make it seem too hard to get work done. There are three things you need to work on. First, you’ve always had some trouble with the sounds in language, which we call the phonemes. Your mind doesn’t sort them out too well. It’s something like a radio with too much static or sounds that seem kind of fuzzy. Your sound problem makes it hard for you to read fast enough, and it’s affecting your spelling. Second, your fingers don’t always cooperate when you try to write. We call that a graphomotor problem. You have an awkward way of holding a pen. It

seems as if the tiny muscles down in your fingers have trouble getting the right messages from your brain while you write, so letter formation takes too much time and effort. That's one reason you hate to write; anyone would. The third thing is that you've become sad. You've lost interest in things you're great at, things you used to really enjoy. You might be a little depressed. It may be that school has gotten you down. You'd like so much to be a top student, and you are really discouraged. I can understand that."

- ▶ Looking at the numbered list of weaknesses, the student sees that the problems are not overwhelming. It becomes manageable and she has the words to describe what she needs to work on.

4. Injecting optimism

- ▶ Instill an upbeat attitude about life and school.
- ▶ Concentrate on the exciting possibilities that lie ahead.

5. Forming an alliance

- ▶ Express continued interest in the student's school career.
- ▶ State you are on their side, a coach, mentor or advocate as they begin their work.

**Levine, M., MD. (2003) *The myth of laziness. America's top learning expert shows how kids and parents can become more productive.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Alternative Output Pathways that Work Well

Sports

Musical Performance

Collecting

Leadership role in school or community

Apprenticeship

Artistic or craft activity

Caretaking (animals, older people, very young children)

Technology expertise and consultation

***Levine, M., MD. (2003) The myth of laziness. America's top learning expert shows how kids and parents can become more productive. New York: Simon & Schuster.*

Practical Considerations for Parents

- Informal conversations at home
 - Should straddle the borders between automatic and literate English
 - With some regularity, parents should provide and partake in discussions of abstract ideas, contemporary issues, and other matters that are removed from direct practical family agendas.
 - For example: “Well, kids, according to the news, they’re doing experimental surgery on monkeys to get tumors and then they’re trying out different treatments on them. That might eventually help doctors treat people with brain tumors. Do you think that’s fair to the monkeys?”
- Rich verbal interactions
 - Avoid using words like “stuff”, “thing” and “yeah”.
 - Encourage communication in complete sentences.
- Examine activities of child
 - Examine the extent to which a child’s entertainment and recreational life is monopolized by visual-moto ecstasy, nonverbal activities where rapid movement is the primary attraction.
 - Such intensely self-stimulating action relaxes children while helping them feel effective, but when there is an imbalance, when visual-motor ecstasy excessively entices their minds, it can be harmful and it certainly can stunt language growth.
 - Skateboarding, rollerblading, and video games are examples of highly seductive fast moving conveyors of motor gratification that are also mostly mindless.
- Model reading
 - Children need to see their parents reading; they need to read themselves as early as possible.
 - Young school-aged children benefit from responsive reading of stories with their parents.
 - Such literacy-nurturing activities have been shown repeatedly to foster optimal language development
- Out-of-school language-oriented activities

- Scrabble, crossword puzzles, and other word games that can be played on a car trip, and writing in a diary are examples of language application outside the classroom
- Strengthen summarization skills
 - Summarization lies in the middle of memory and language, and it binds understanding to remembering
 - Summarize activities, for example, the hockey game that you just attended
- Enhance language skills by reading, writing, listening and talking about interests
 - If a boy loves sports, he can use this interest to evolve into a prolific sports communicator. He should devour sports magazines, write about his favorite sport, teach sports to younger children, and talk (with elaboration and complete sentences) in sports talk.
- Formal courses on linguistics (2nd or 3rd grade)
 - Learn how language works
 - Have opportunities to manipulate and play games with sounds of their language and to create their own poetry and rhyming musical lyrics.
 - Word meaning, word orderings, and other parameters of language merit discussion and exercise
- Formal course in rhetoric or public speaking
 - Public speaking is a world wide epidemic of impoverished oral language skills.
 - Teaching this skill should begin in the elementary school level
- Verbal- visual associations
 - Children should be creating lively verbal-visual associations in their minds by listening to books on tape or attending storytelling sessions.

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Maintaining an Intellectual Life at Home

- ▶ Parents should demonstrate a powerful interest in what their child is learning. Children should have the opportunity to describe what they are learning in school. If the parents show excitement about what a child is learning in school, the student can feel more inspired and committed to the content.
- ▶ Passive activities, such as television viewing, should be limited to certain set times and not allowed to dominate the home environment.
- ▶ At home, adults can model intellectual activity by discussing ideas, problem solving, and other thorny issues with their children. Events in the news or problems at work or home can be good focal points.
- ▶ Children need to observe their parents reading- newspapers, magazines, and novels.
- ▶ Limits should be placed on heavily structured activities (such as soccer Monday, clarinet Tuesday, kung fu Wednesday, and so on), so that children get a chance to brainstorm, exercise creativity, and engage in imaginary play. They also need some “down” time.
- ▶ Parents should reward a child’s productivity rather than his grades on a report card. Children deserve the most praise when they work hard, hand in all their assignments, and study with sufficient durations and intensity.
- ▶ Parents need to seek ways by which to offer a child genuine praise for the work of his or her *kind of mind*. Such kudos often comprise the highest-octane fuel for intellectual activity during childhood.

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How Parents can Serve as Homework Consultants

- Help the student formulate a schedule or timeline for work before starting it
- Share in brainstorming (such as helping to pick a topic) without taking it over
- Motivate the child- provide a jump start (e.g., help write the first sentence)
- Assist in finding and arranging needed materials
- Make sure the environment is appropriate for brain work
- Be accessible to answer specific questions to offer encouragement
- Devise appropriate breaks from work
- Assist with self-testing and help with proofreading or quality control
- Show an interest in the subject matter; let the child try and tell you about what he's working on
- Isolate weak steps or components- when he exhibits a breakdown, for example in language, have him try to do it in basic form and go back to it the next day to revise it.

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Setting up and Maintaining a Students' Home Office

- Specific Areas for Items
 - Drawers, trays, and boxes should be used to store specific items (e.g., writing utensils, blank paper, paper clips, staples, and diskettes).
 - Mark each one clearly.
- Neat Desk Surface
 - Desk surface and chair should be kept neat at all times (few piles).
 - If necessary, a parent should keep the desktop neat for the child. Many children need to cultivate a taste for neatness; it's not a natural instinct for them.
- Few Visual Distractions
 - Especially above the desk.
- Small Bookcase
 - Devoted for storing books, not games, trophies, or models.
- Comfortable Reading Space
 - Other than the bed.
- Optimal Working Conditions
 - Quiet and free of distractions.
- Conduct Output Experiments
 - Conductive working conditions vary from child to child.
 - Some insist they need background music in order to work. Sometimes the music does reinforce a rhythm of output; sometimes it filters out other distractions.
 - Other experiments related to working after a snack and working with different amounts of sleep.
- Set up and Enforce Consistent Work Times
 - Set up specific times (set blocked out time) for mental workouts, which may or may not involve only homework.
 - Never allow TV time if they finish early. This is an open invitation to rush through work, thus rewarding the child for speed, not quality.
- Emphasize Time Management
 - Set up time (once a week) to schedule activities over the next several days.
 - Make use of a desk calendar or chart to list specific activities or tasks that will need to be completed along with estimated times of how long each might take.
 - Each night, the child should check off completed activities or tasks and how long it took to accomplish the activities or tasks.

- Limit TV viewing
 - Relaxation is a necessity, but high levels of brain-free relaxation are likely to be detrimental to output.
 - Violent and intensely exciting television shows resolve everything nearly instantly and effortlessly, which does not teach delayed gratification.
 - The ability to delay gratification while reading or listening demands sustained attention; strong attention controls are a key ingredient of output.

- Curtain other forms of overstimulation
 - Becoming too saturated with high-intensity instantly gratifying endeavors in the universe of electronics
 - Obsessive with incessant movement on skateboards, surfboards, bikes, or skis. All healthy pursuits in moderation, but destructive when they become obsessions.

- Document time spent and level of output

- Start early in life

- Help with prioritization and multitasking

- Foster more than one mode of output
 - Developing proficiency as an artist or musician- mental effort, strategic planning, delayed gratification, organization and self-discipline
 - Organized sports- in disciplined way- practicing regularly even when you don't feel like it
 - Kids should augment their academic output with one or more of these alternative modes

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Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

An extensive amount of research has and is being done since boys have and are underachieving in school systems today. Boys are struggling both emotionally and academically. The guide book, developed for this project, was designed to give teachers and parents a resource of information in order to meet the needs of boys, whether they are a part of the family or in the classroom. Teachers can use research and methods designed to support boys to increase their achievement socially and emotionally. Furthermore, parents can learn how to provide effective styles of parenting that can support their sons' achievements.. It was the intent of this author to provide various alternatives and information concerning the challenges that young boys face in education and the support they may need to succeed.

Objectives Achieved

It was believed that the use of this guide book was an effective way to provide information and methods to teachers and parents. This author had the opportunity to share this guide book with her peer teachers and parents of students with whom she works with. It was decided by a teacher in this author's school district to use this guide book as a supplement in a professional development course that was taught to district-based teachers. Because the guide book was developed during the summer semester, there was not time to implement the methods provided, however, teachers reported that the material was useful and meaningful to their classrooms and that they would use the

strategies in the upcoming year. This guide book was also distributed to a parent support group that was co-facilitated by this author and a parent from the community.

Limitations to the Project

The largest limitation to the project was the timeline as it related to completing the guide book. Since it was completed during the summer, it was more difficult to circulate it among peer teachers and parents. This author found it challenging to connect with teachers and parents. It was difficult to find available time for teachers and parents to review and discuss the material from this guide book.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research is still being done to explain why boys and girls learn differently and why boys are falling behind in school systems today. This author feels that future research is still important in order to learn more about all types of learners and not just ways in which boys learn best. It was through this research project and the development of this guide book that this author has a better understanding about individual learners and how every child is different and learns in his or her own and unique way. Information was provided in this guide book to promote teaching the process of demystification to children, the process in which individuals learn about their strengths and weaknesses. Future research is suggested in the area of how to use one's strengths to further his or her skills. When teachers and parents develop these skills, it will not only enhance their lives, but also the lives of their students and children. Demystification is a skill that encourages self-awareness and tolerance of diversity as it relates to the strengths and weaknesses of an individual.

Project Summary

The purpose of this project was to explore the various reasons why boys learn differently and what strategies might improve their achievement. A guide book was developed to provide teachers and parents with information regarding how boys learn differently; the guide book provided teaching methods to improve student achievement, both socially and academically.

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