



# Literacy Matters

Keeping Parents Informed

HW CDSB

## Boys Will Be Boys Who... CAN Succeed



Over the past few years, there has been a growing concern over boys' lack of achievement in schooling, particularly in areas of literacy. Research suggests that boys tend to view schooling negatively, that they score lower on standardized tests like the OSSLT and EQAO, that they are more likely to drop out of school and, that they don't like to read or that they don't read very well. While there is considerable data to support these claims, perhaps a closer look at boys' interests, needs and attitudes might be warranted. For example, the idea that boys don't like to read may not be totally accurate. Perhaps it might be that boys don't like to read what they are presented in the classroom. In fact, boys like to read:

- fiction, but preferably books that feature action rather than emotions;
- science fiction or fantasy;
- books that make them laugh and that appeal to their sense of mischief;
- newspapers, magazines, comic books, instruction manuals. Interestingly, when they read these materials, many boys do not consider themselves to be reading, simply because these materials are perceived to be less valued than traditional school texts.

In addition, research indicates that for boys to succeed, they need tightly-structured, well-focused lessons with identifiable and achievable goals. Boys respond best when work is assigned in bite-sized, digestible pieces and is time-limited. Active learning opportunities like drama, the use of information technology, social interaction and investigation appeal to boys' learning preferences. Regular, positive and constructive feedback is essential to boys' success in school.

For further information and tips, see *Me Read? No Way!* at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca).

### Reflections in Practice

In the revised English Curriculum Document (2007), there is an expectation within each course that requires students to reflect on their learning and to develop reflective or metacognitive skills.

“Metacognition, the ability to think about one's own thinking, combines the interacting processes of self-appraisal and self-management and has been found to be critical in effective cognition and learning (Paris & Winogard, 1990). Students who are able to think and talk about the strategies they use are better able to draw from their own resources to problem-solve as they encounter difficulties in their reading.

Students need to be able to understand when, how and why they are applying a particular reading or writing strategy and what might be important to help them progress in their development (*Reflections on Literacy*, MacFarlane & Serafinie eds. 2006).

# Secrets For Student Success

According to a TIME magazine article entitled “Their Eight Secrets of Success,” it takes a combination of skills and attitudes to achieve academic success. Among these attitudes and skills are:

- **The Sweat Factor**—the value of perseverance, persistence and hard work supersedes even native intelligence. The Japanese call this attitude *Gambatte*. The literal translation means, “persevere, don’t give up.” While North Americans tend to wish people “good luck,” in Japan they say “gambatte,” indicating that opportunity or success is not due to luck or happenstance but to effort, persistence, and perseverance.
- **The Love of Reading**—Research overwhelmingly points to the importance of reading as an indicator of success. Parents who read will model this habit for their children. Make reading a routine in your home. It could be anything: magazines about cars, comic books, fashion magazines, drivers’ manual, cook books, etc.
- **The Joy of Learning**— Parents know that the love for school that most primary and junior children have quickly dissipates by the time adolescents get to the intermediate and high school grades. Why? Much of that lies in the development of the brain but also because school is competing with other interests like friends, hormones and technology. So, how can we get these kids back in love with learning? Research has shown that a respect for and interest in learning is grounded into the value that is placed into it at home. Students who are successful have a broad fund of knowledge. That is, learning has been incorporated into every day life—trips to museums, exploring other countries or cities, trips to the park, volunteer work, etc.
- **Time Management and Organization**—Learn to schedule enough time to complete an assignment. Track assignments on a monthly calendar. Work backward from the due date of larger assignments and break them into nightly tasks. Find out how your child keeps track of his homework and assignments and how he organizes his notebooks. Then work together to develop a system of organization that he is comfortable using.

(“Their Eight Secrets of Success” TIME, October 1998)



## Parental Involvement = Student Achievement

Research shows that parents’ involvement in their child’s learning results in improved student achievement, increased attendance, and better behaviour. However, as the child progresses through her intermediate and high school years, there tends to be a noticeable decline in parental

involvement. There are many reasons for this decline: adolescents tend to discourage their parents from being involved in the school; high schools tend to be bigger and farther from home; the curriculum is more demanding and sophisticated; and, adolescents are starting to develop a sense of autonomy and independence from their parents. Quite often, parents and educators view this growing sense of independence as a signal to back off. Yet, many studies show that high school students believe they can do better at school if they know their parents are interested in their school work and expect them to succeed. So, what can a parent do to stay involved in their child’s learning? Parents can:

- continue to monitor their teen’s homework and encourage him to keep reading;
- help their child make post secondary plans and select courses which support these plans;
- attend school events and maintain communication with the school, especially with teachers and guidance counsellors;
- participate on the school council.

For further information about ways in which parents can support their child’s learning, visit [www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123).



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