



Volume 1, Issue 3

June, 2006

Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Work Plan Support Booklet

"Instruction is most effective when it is personalized - when we sufficiently honour learners' interests, curiosity, strengths, contributions, and prior knowledge, making learners feel that they are an important part of something larger than themselves."

Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe

Greetings!

The final month of school is always a period of transition. As you sail into June (and have your eye on the summer ahead), now is a good time to review and reflect on your Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry work to date.

You may wish to review the Action Plan that you originally mapped out and determine, if school circumstances warrant, some revisions so that you are ready to start again in September. You may also wish to have each current member of the team highlight one key learning with this inquiry that could be recorded as part of your overall documentation on this project.

We will be making personal calls to connect with you, the team contacts, before the end of June. Questions to us have revolved around revising your essential question, designing student surveys, requesting more ideas for data collection, and specific resources. In this booklet, we hope to offer you additional support, building on Booklets One and Two. As you complete your Progress Report which is due to the Ministry on June 30, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We wish you a wonderful summer holiday, an opportunity to renew and reinvigorate yourselves. When you return to your schools in the fall, we hope that you will be excited about re-suming your learning through this teacher inquiry work and supporting your students with new resources, proven strategies, and challenging activities that will continue to foster their literacy improvement.

Inside This Issue

- Page 2. TRANSITIONS: Reflect, Revise, Renew
- Page 3. Carousel: Teacher Inquiry Team Strategy
- Page 4. Soundings on Boys' Literacy: Embrace the Arts
- Page 5. Summer Reading: Time to Renew
- Page 6. Ask Us... Tell Us... More Resources

TRANSITIONS

TRANSITIONS: Reflect, Revise, Renew

Considerations as you move forward ...

Transitions are about change and moving or bridging from one situation to another. People go through many transitions in their lives. In school, it is no different.

With the Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry in your school, you have initiated your inquiry and have been taking inventory of resources and adding new instructional materials; exploring the use of these new materials and new strategies, (e.g., small flexible groups, drama and role-playing); keeping a chronicle of your observations and reflections; and beginning to gather your assessment data.

As the school year comes to a close in June, you and the members of your inquiry team will need to meet and discuss the transitions that you face within the membership of your team (if this is a consideration) but also you will need to discuss how you will track the students whom you focused upon in this inquiry and who are moving on to the next grade and how you will continue to influence their improvement. You will need to plan as well for the new crop of students moving into classrooms where the inquiry is underway.

In terms of your team, there may be changes in the administrative leadership in the school or team contact within the group. Some of the teacher members may be changing grade levels or schools and, of course, the focus of the project itself, our students, will be changing their grade or even their school. What will all these changes mean to the continued progress and momentum of the teacher inquiry work in your school?

There are 3 steps to successful transition:

June: Reflect

Does our essential question, now that we have worked with it, require some adjusting?
 What worked? What have we accomplished so far? What could we have done better?
 Of the literacy and assessment strategies we have tried, which seem to have been most effective?
 What resources were acquired? used?
 What types of data were collected? used?
 How have we used our funds?

Interim: Revise

What are the issues or problems we face at this point in time?
 If there are new people coming on to the team, a new contact or new grade teachers, what do they need to know about what we have done?
 How will we share key information with new teachers? With our new principal or vice principal?
 What is our strategy for working with students who are new to the inquiry?
 How will we continue to track students as they move on to the next grade?
 What is the data we have collected so far beginning to reveal? How will we be able to use the assessment data collected this year to inform the instruction for next year?
 What do we need to do to increase our knowledge base? (See *Suggestions for Summer Reading in this newsletter*)

September: Renew

Who will be the key contact person? Do we need to rethink our roles within the team? Who is responsible for what?
 What is our plan? Who should be involved in the review and revision of the plan?
 Do we need to do a literature review to support our work?
 How often will we have meetings in the new year to discuss assessment and instructional strategies as a group?
 When will we collect assessment data on our students?
 How will we share progress reports on our inquiry activities? How will we share what we accomplish?
 How will we work to ensure collaborative activity amongst the newly reconstituted project team?
 How can we try to make every person on the team a leader in literacy?

"Change is a double-edged sword. Its relentless pace these days runs us off our feet. Yet when things are unsettled, we find new ways to move ahead and to create breakthroughs not possible in stagnant societies."

Michael Fullan

CAROUSEL: Teacher Inquiry Team Strategy

Wrapping up the Year : Completing your Progress Report and Planning for September

Carousel is an exercise that you can do with your Teacher Inquiry Team to work together to prepare your Progress Report as well as to set renewed directions for your teacher inquiry for 2006-07.

Using this strategy, a group can generate individual and group input quickly in a way which allows everyone to scan the thoughts and ideas of other team members. Through a final debriefing, together, the group can determine the most compelling issues.



Time: one hour

Group: this strategy works best with groups of 5 or 6 persons minimum.

Materials:

Chart paper
Markers
Coloured dots (optional)

Instructions:

1) On separate pieces of chart paper, place one of the questions from each section of the Progress Report on the top of each piece of paper. Depending on the size of your school team you could narrow this activity to include only two or three of the areas of the Progress Report.

For example:

- Describe any work your team has done to identify Indicators of Student Success.
- What are two highlights of your work together to date?
- Can you identify steps for your transition to 2006-7 school year? What should you remember? Keep track of? Focus on?

2) Post the charts around your working area.

3) Divide your team into groups of equal number. Provide a different colour marker for each group. The group will use that same coloured marker for the duration of the activity.

4) Each group gathers at a chart and discusses the statement, adding several comments with "their" coloured marker.

5) After 5-7 minutes, each group progresses to next chart, taking the marker with them. They repeat the exercise with this new statement, adding their comments to those written by the previous group.

6) Repeat the progression until all groups have had time to add to each posted statement.

Depending on the size of your team, next steps could be:

- Last group at each chart selects a spokesperson who will debrief key ideas for the entire team. An informal dialogue occurs with the team members, who through consensus, determine which points to include on the Progress Report.
- If the team is larger, each member is provided with coloured dots. Circulating to all charts, each member indicates the statement (one from each chart) which most resonates for them. At a whole team debriefing, the opinions of the majority of the team can easily be seen visually; i.e., points with most coloured dots.
- The team can retain these charts for review and possible revision in September.

Further thoughts for building collaborative teams ...

Norms of Collaboration

- Pausing
- Paraphrasing
- Probing for specificity
- Putting ideas on the table
- Presuming positive intentions
- Paying attention to self and others
- Pursuing a balance of advocacy and inquiry

Adapted from Garmston and Wellman.
The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups. 1999.

SOUNDINGS ON BOYS' LITERACY: Embrace the Arts

This section offers further information to deepen your knowledge of boys' literacy.

The right brain has arrived! This announcement along with considerable research support for his viewpoint is explored in Daniel Pink's new book, *A Whole New Mind*.

The research he presents emphasizes that the times are changing and that the future belongs to a different kind of mind. He states that we are moving from an economy and a society built on the logical, linear, computer-like capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathetic, big-picture capabilities of the new age – the Conceptual Age.

He describes the stages of our history as a three-act drama!

In Act 1, the Industrial Age, the lead character was the mass production worker who possessed physical strength and personal fortitude.

In Act 2, Information Age, information and technology fueled the economies of the developed world. The lead character was played by the knowledge worker who was proficient in left-brain or linear-directed thinking.

Now, in Act 3, Daniel Pink believes that the curtain is rising on the Conceptual Age. Here the main characters are the creators, the empathizers, the pattern recognizers, and the meaning makers, who are able to demonstrate right brain or holistic-directed thinking.

Pink says that the arts have been short-changed and neglected in our schools and we need to exercise our right brain to a much greater extent in order to be prepared for these new world changes.

The Ministry document, *Me Read? No Way!* (2005) speaks to the same focus when it directs teachers to embrace the arts for boys in the classroom. Strategy #4, which explores using the arts to teach literacy, is based on evidence-based strategies that have proven effective in increasing students' achievement.

Right brain aptitudes identified by Pink	<i>Me Read? No Way!</i>
Design – create something that is emotionally engaging	“Boys often enjoy working with readers’ theatre scripts which allow them to feel like active participants in a story.” p. 23
Story – fashion a compelling story	“Through the use of drama and drawing as strategies for rehearsing, evaluating and revising ideas before writing begins” p. 22
Symphony – synthesize disparate elements into a new whole	“Good drama activities invite students to step into the role and combine what they know (from their own lives in the real world) with the new or fictional framework offered by the drama.” p. 23
Empathy – connect with others in meaningful relationships; care for others	“Through the arts, boys can express and explore emotion in a safe context.” p. 22
Play – we all need to play - the benefits of games, humour, laughter	“To tell the truth” game enhances students’ understanding of stories, novels, and other texts.” p. 25
Meaning – look beyond material plenty to purpose, transcendence, well-being, and fulfillment	“Reading after drama is different...I can see things better and I feel like I have more choices.” p. 25

However, Pink suggests that the future is not a world in which we are either only left-brained or right-brained but that linear-directed thinking is just no longer sufficient to our purposes. We need a whole new mind using the human attributes of the right brain that we already possess but that were suppressed in the age of information.

Daniel concludes his book with a hearty wish, “Good luck in the age of art and heart!”

SUMMER READING: Time to Renew**JOURNALS**

Allington, R. L. (2002) You Can't Learn Much from Books You Can't Read. *Educational Leadership*, 60(3) pp.16-19.

Clarke, Bill. (2006) Breaking Through to Reluctant Readers. *Educational Leadership*, 63(5) pp. 66-69.

Hasselbring, Ted S. and Margaret E. Bausch. (2006) Assistive Technologies for Reading. *Educational Leadership*, 63(4) pp. 72-75.

VIDEOS/DVD

Brand, Max. (2006) *Conferring with Boys*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Harvey, S. and A. Goudvis. (2003) *Think Non-Fiction: Modeling Reading and Research*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Stead, T. (2003) *Time for Non-Fiction*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

BOOKS

Beers, Kylene. (2003) *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cox, Adam. (2006) *Boys of Few Words: Raising our Sons to Communicate and Connect*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Fullan, Michael, Peter Hill and Carmel Crevola. (2006) *Breakthrough*. NSCD, Corwin Press and Ontario Principals' Association.

Garmston, Robert J. and Bruce Wellman. (1999) *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Knowles, Elizabeth and Martha Smith. (2005) *Boys and Literacy*. Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited.

Pink, Daniel. (2005) *A Whole New Mind*. New York: Riverhead Books, Penguin Publishing.

Smith, Michael W. and J. Wilhelm. (2006) *Going with the Flow: How to Engage Boys (and Girls) in Their Literacy Learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Tankersley, Karen. (2005) *Literacy Strategies for Grades 4 to 12: Reinforcing the Threads of Reading*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

WEB SITES

Cambridge Study. Raising Boys' Achievement.
<http://www-rba.educ.cam.ac.uk/proj.html>

Canadian Adolescent Boys and Literacy Home Page.
<http://www.education.ualberta.ca/boysandliteracy.html>

Cummins, J. Research on the 4th Grade Slump.
<http://www.oiseutoronto.ca/research~cummins.html>

Inspire: The Journal of Literacy and Numeracy for Ontario.
<http://www.inspirelearning.ca>

BOYS' LITERACY TEACHER INQUIRY RESOURCES
soon to be posted on:**Think Literacy Web Site**

<http://www.curriculum.org/thinkliteracy.html>

- Support Booklets One, Two and Three
- DVD. (2006) *Getting Started with Teacher Inquiry*
- Additional Resources- Teacher Inquiry and Boys' Literacy
- Highlights of Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry work

ASK US...TELL US ...

We encourage you to continue to contact us and submit your questions and concerns and share your progress and your successes (however large or small).

We realize that you are meeting with some challenges as you try to implement your work plans. That is to be expected! Remember, teacher inquiry can be messy. However, flexibility and modification are essential components of this work and you need to keep that in mind as you strive to meet your overall goals.

You may wish to revisit some key resources from the Ministry of Education that are appropriate to your specific division. They are listed below. In addition, you will note that resources relating to Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry will soon be posted on the *Think Literacy* web site. We are sure that you will find this access very useful as you move forward.

Have a safe and relaxing summer!

Barbara, Rose, and Micki

Contact us: teacherinquiry@oise.utoronto.ca

MORE RESOURCES ...

We suggest reviewing the following Ministry resources.

- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2006). *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction. Grades 4-6. Vol. One. Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner.* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6.* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2004). *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario.* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2004). *Supporting Student Success in Literacy, Grades 7-12: Effective Practices of Ontario School Boards.* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2003). *Think Literacy Success: The Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario. Grades 7-12.* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2003). *Think Literacy: Cross-Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12.* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. Subject-Specific Documents, Grades 7-12. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.



*Moving along,
further steps...*

Developed with financial support from the Ontario Ministry of Education

Copyright 2006