

IBSC Action Research Group Report
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The Grade 3/4 Team members:

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**Does the Use of Pre-designed Graphic Organizers in Reading Instruction Increase
Boys' Engagement and Level of Comprehension?**

In February 2005 the IBSC Board of Trustees launched an action research initiative as an expression of its mission to promote the professional growth and collaboration of teachers and staff in its member schools. Boys and Reading was chosen as the area of inquiry for the first year of the initiative. On-line applications were submitted and two international teams were selected in April 2005. Under the direction of Action Research Coordinator Mary Gauthier, the team members began to communicate through email before finally meeting in person in Washington D.C. prior to the 2005 IBSC Conference. The team members quickly discovered that, despite age, gender, experience, and geographical differences, we shared a common passion for not only engaging boys more effectively in the reading process, but also for participating in meaningful collaboration with other dedicated professionals around the world.

The team decided upon a precise research question and developed an action timeline before leaving Washington D.C. Upon returning home, team members, communicating via email, quickly learned that time zone and school calendar differences, combined with the daily demands of teaching young boys and balancing busy personal lives often proved to be as challenging as the research project itself! Over the course of the next few months, literature reviews were completed, and an action research plan was developed and implemented in three different classrooms united by a common goal.

Each class would read four novels over the course of the school year. Two of those novels would be taught using a "big picture" graphic organizer to guide the boys through the book. The other two novels would be taught without the use of the "big picture" graphic organizer. At the end of each novel, comprehension would be assessed in two ways: a teacher created end-of-book test including both literal and higher order comprehension questions and a written summary of the book assessed with a common rubric. Boys would also be asked to reflect on their use of graphic organizers. Each team member, while sharing a common focus in relation to the area of inquiry and adhering to these basic guidelines, was allowed some flexibility in the implementation of the process in her individual classroom.

By May 2006, the novels were complete and the process of analyzing and interpreting the data was underway. Emails became more frequent as team members reported and compared data. At this point, preliminary findings indicate that the graphic organizers did positively impact the boys' comprehension and level of engagement with the novels. The final conclusions will be shared at the IBSC Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa in June.

Participating in Action Research encourages educators to reflect on their current methodology while moving from the intuitive to the intentional in terms of teaching practices. Over the course of the past year, the members of the Grade 3/4 Team have had the opportunity to collaborate with other educators from around the world while participating in this rewarding and challenging process. As our year together comes to an end, the process also leaves each team member with new questions to answer and new problems to solve in our quest to provide an academically challenging curriculum designed to meet the specific needs of our students. That, of course, is the ultimate goal of action research.