BOYS’ LITERACY:
An Ontario-wide Initiative
Supporting Boys’ Achievement

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

International Boys’ Schools Coalition Conference
Haverford School, Philadelphia, June 28, 2010
Facilitators

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Philadelphia
Pennsylvania
Agenda

• Welcome/Introduction
• Minds On: Making Connections
• Ontario Educational Context/EQAO Data
• Boys’ Literacy—Ministry of Education Focus on Action Research
• Evidenced-Based Learning Strategies: *Me Read? And How!* A Whirlwind Tour
• Further Resources/Note Out the Door
MINDS ON: Making Connections

• Read the literacy quotation on the coloured card you have selected.

• Share, with a partner, what the quotation means to you.
Me Read? Me Read? No Way!
A practical guide to improving boys' literacy skills

Me Read? And How!
Ontario teachers report on how to improve boys' literacy skills

reach every student

Supports for Boys' Literacy
Three Core Goals are:

1. Higher levels of student achievement
2. Reduced gaps in student achievement
3. Increased public confidence in publicly funded education
• Government agency – established in 1995- responsible for large scale achievement testing for all students in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 10.

• Results indicate a pattern of underperformance in reading and writing for many male students in the province of Ontario
EQAO Primary and Junior Assessments 2009

• Grade 3 Reading: 65% girls vs. 56% boys

• Grade 3 Writing: 75% girls vs. 61% boys

• Grade 6 Reading: 75% girls vs. 64% boys

• Grade 6 Writing: 75% girls vs. 57% boys

The numbers represent the percentage of all Grade 3 and 6 students at or above the provincial standard.
### Results by Gender, April 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Female and Male Students</th>
<th>Fully Participating Female and Male Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female # = 74,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>61,348 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Successful</td>
<td>8,606 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Participation Rate**

- Female: 69,954 (94%)
- Male: 72,432 (92%)

**Absent**

- Female: 1,785 (2%)
- Male: 1,914 (2%)

**Deferred**

- Female: 2,616 (4%)
- Male: 4,113 (5%)

### Participation:
All Female and Male Students, 2009

#### Percentage of Students

Fully Participating: Female 94%, Male 92%

Absent: Female 2%, Male 2%

Deferred: Female 4%, Male 5%

### Results:
Fully Participating Female and Male Students, 2009

#### Percentage of Students

Successful: Female 88%, Male 82%

Not Successful: Female 12%, Male 18%
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

84% of Ontario's Fully Participating Grade 10 Students Pass the Literacy Test

Percentage of Students

% of Students Participating Fully

% Successful

Painting a Portrait of the Unsuccessful Students

If we were to look at the 16% of Grade 10 students who were unsuccessful on the 2010 OSSLT as though they were 16 students, then:

Gender
..10 students would be male
..6 students would be female

English Course
.. 9 students would currently be enrolled in an applied course
.. 4 students would currently be enrolled in an academic course
.. 2 students would currently be enrolled in a locally developed course

Special Education Needs
.. 7 students would have been designated as having special education needs

English Language Learners
.. 1 student would have been designated as an English language learner

Note: Some of above numbers might not add up to 16, due to rounding.
...this research...provides an overview of gender patterns in educational participation, performance, and attainment in post-secondary education (PSE) within the Ontario context and examines what implications these patterns have for the labour market choices and outcomes.

The report explores how gender patterns in students’ early educational experiences at both elementary and secondary levels may affect their decision to participate and succeed in PSE.”

Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, February 2010
Researchers using data from the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) found that gender differences in academic engagement in secondary school (school marks, time spent on homework, probability of repeating a grade) and social engagement (sense of belonging, ability to count on support of friends, parental or peer expectations) accounted for a portion of the gender gap in PSE participation, persistence, and achievement (Frenette & Zeman, 2007; Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007; Finnie & Qiu, 2008; Drewes, 2009).
In reading, boys are lagging behind girls in all states and these gaps are greater than **10% points**. In reading, girls outperformed boys in 2008 at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Although reading achievement gaps between boys and girls have narrowed ...boys have made less progress in catching up.

In math, girls are doing roughly as well as boys ...differences show no clear national pattern favouring boys or girls. In math, no consistent gender gap in 2008.
Boys’ Literacy-
Ministry of Education
Focus on Action Research

To promote student success in literacy for all students the Ministry of Education undertook several initiatives related to boys and literacy:

• *Me Read? No Way!* 2004

• The Boys’ Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project 2005-2008

• *The Road Ahead, Consultant’s Report, 2009*

• *Me Read? And How! 2009*
Boys’ Literacy
Teacher Inquiry Project
2005-2008

THE ROAD AHEAD
PREPARED BY THE OISE RESEARCH TEAM FOR
THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Purpose and Scope

• Intended to complement other provincial initiatives focused on plans to “raise the bar” and “reduce the gap” related to literacy achievement.
• Multi year effort - 2005-2008
• Meant to involve teams from individual and group of schools- 145 participating schools from English-language boards
• Teams were invited to apply for up to $20,000 funding.
• Framework for capacity building and accountability was made clear to all potential participants.
Overall Goals

- Build capacity among teachers and administrators for literacy instruction that supports achievement among boys, drawing on the strategies described in *Me Read? No Way!*
- Identify and recommend effective practices to improve boys’ literacy skills;
- Share effective practices across the province;
- Improve instruction and programs on the basis of assessment data; and
- Build sustainable, collaborative professional learning communities among schools for purpose of literacy development.
Reeves Video
Key Learnings

- Power of teaching with wide variety of materials.
- Role of social interaction
- Provision of choice
- Importance of student talk
- Value of differentiated approaches
- Importance of clear assessment strategies
- Benefits of information and communication technology
- Need to engage parents/community as partners
Key Successes

• Changes in the professional learning culture of schools e.g., more positive school climate, purposeful collaboration, increased deprivatization of teaching, etc.

• Growth of teachers in meeting the needs of boys e.g., in-depth understanding of literacy strategies, etc.

• Improvement of boys’ achievement and attitudes e.g., use of data, growth of data literacy within and between schools, etc.
Evidence-Based Learning Strategies

A practical guide to improving boys' literacy skills
“Canadian culture sends peculiar signals to its boys. Young boys receive a powerful message about the importance of hockey. They receive weak signals about the importance of reading.”

_The Globe and Mail, 2003_
Strategies for Success
13 Strategies

• Have the right stuff
• Help make it a habit
• Teach with purpose
  • Embrace the arts
  • Let them talk
• Find positive role models
• Read between the lines
Strategies for Success
13 Strategies (cont’d)

• Keep it real
• Get the Net
• Assess for success
• Be in their corner
• Drive the point home
• Build a school-wide focus
Ontario teachers report on how to improve boys’ literacy skills
Strategies for Success
13 +1 = 14 Strategies

NEW ONE!!!!!

• Split them Up
ACTION: A Tour of Me Read? And How!
“The MRAH Tour”
Instructions

• You each have a PASSPORT with your “Strategy Destination” - **ONE** of the **FOURTEEN** strategies.

• You are invited to visit that “Strategy Destination” in your copy of **MRAH**, to sample the information in that section and to answer **TWO QUESTIONS** on the post-its provided.
Questions

• Question #1. What ONE idea at this strategy destination did you like best? (BLUE)

• Question #2. What ONE challenge do you recognize in implementing this strategy? (ORANGE)
“The MRAH Tour”
Instructions

Explore your own “Strategy Destination” 5 min.

Respond to each question on the appropriate colour-coded post it. 5 min.

Post your TWO RESPONSE NOTES, one for each question, on the matching “Strategy Destination” wall chart.
Quick Gallery
Walkabout.

After the sticky notes have been posted on each of the strategy charts, you will be given 3 sticky dots.

Walk around and quickly review each of the strategy charts. 5 mins.

Identify (with a sticky dot) 3 ideas/comments that resonated with you and your experience.
“The MRAH TOUR” -
Sharing Highlights of the 14 Strategies
Postcard Home

1. As you reflect on your whirlwind tour of MRAH what comment might you write home to family, friends, colleagues?

   Some prompts:
   - Did you encounter anything new?
   - Will MRAH help you to address boys’ literacy improvement?
   - What questions do you have?

2. Record your comments on the Postcard Home and then “mail” your postcard in the receptacle provided.

THANK YOU!
What is your perception?

“The long well-documented history of male underachievement has helped contribute to an entrenched, popular perception and indeed an expectation, that many boys simply will not become thoughtful, accomplished readers.”

Brozo, 2002
“Not all boys are underachieving, nor are all girls out-performing boys; educators and policy makers need to address the question of which boys require help becoming literate and what kinds of help educators can provide….

The resulting approach would emphasize identifying productive pedagogies, developing an intellectually demanding curriculum and building safe classroom learning environments.”

Wayne Martino, “Boys Underachievement: Which Boys are we Talking About? University of Western Ontario, London, ON
“Take a typical classroom of 25 pupils, anywhere in Canada. At the back, seven boys and girls slouch in their seats, unable to understand most of what they read, or to express their thoughts in writing. The problem of poor literacy skills is a scandal in plain view.”
“Certainly it is important to challenge boys to improve their literacy performance and find ways to better engage boys in the reading process, but we need to better understand the processes that will help boys to meet these challenges. The observed variability of gender gaps in literacy achievement across schools and jurisdictions...suggest that these differences are not absolute and can be addressed through instruction and family support.” page 38

Towards an Understanding of Gender Differences in Literacy Achievement - Prepared for EQAO by Klinger, Shulha, and Wade – Woolley, Queen’s University, Kingston ON
On the other hand…

“Teachers who see potential in their male students discover ways of teaching and reaching them that are personally meaningful, culturally responsible and capitalize on the resources they bring to the classroom.”

Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert, and Muspratt, 2002
Access

- **The Road Ahead**
  - Available electronically

- The two resource guides
  - Available electronically on the Ministry of Education website:
    - [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)
  - Available on the CD-ROM **Supports for Boys Learning**
Supports for Boys Literacy
CD-ROM

1. **Read Me First**
2. Comprehensive Table of Contents
3. *Me Read? No Way!*
4. Themes
5. Supports
6. *Me Read? And How!*
Further Resources

• Recent Research:
• **Recent Research:**

  – Hattie's book is about the power of directed teaching, focusing on 'what happens next' through feedback and monitoring.
  – This is an approach that also informs the teacher about the success or failure of their teaching; making learning for both teacher and student 'visible'.
Further Resources

• Articles:
  – “I just like being good at it” - Smith and Wilhelm, 2004
  – “Why Boys don’t like to Read” – Lessons in Learning, 2009 Canadian Council on Learning
  – Letter from an Ontario Elementary School Principal, 2010
  – “Teacher research leads to learning, action”
    J. Richardson in Tools for School, 2000
A Note Out the Door

• One key learning about boys’ literacy I will share…

• One strategy I will use next year in my classroom or role…

• Additional comments:
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ENJOY THE REMAINDER OF THE CONFERENCE!