

SEND AWARE

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LITERACY SUMMER SPECIAL



By the time they reach school, many boys are already lagging behind in literacy: at age five, there is a gap of 11 percentage points between boys' and girls' achievement in reading. More and more boys struggle with reading and literacy as they progress through the school system and by age 16 girls are matching, or more often outperforming, boys in every GCSE subject except for construction. Boys are also less likely to enjoy reading and less likely to spend time reading outside of class.

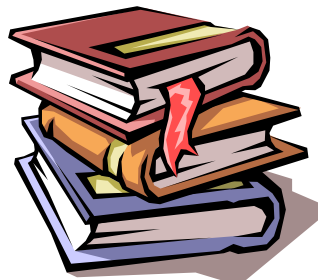
The Commission has found that the gender gap begins in the home, with parents supporting boys very differently



from girls. In school, what is taught and how it is taught and assessed all impacts on boys' achievement, while boys' gender identities, influenced by society's expectations and reinforced by their peers, can negatively impact on their attitudes to reading, the amount of time they spend reading and ultimately their reading skills. Unfortunately it is those boys who are least likely to be socially mobile who are often most vulnerable to these triggers. For example, white working-class boys are one of the groups with lowest achievement in literacy.

GENDER GAP IS AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE

Girls outperforming boys is not just an issue for the UK; far from it. International comparisons of 10-year-olds (PIRLS16) and 15-year-olds (PISA17) show that girls do better in reading than boys across all of the OECD countries. Encouragingly, the latest PISA results from 2009 showed that the gender gap is relatively small in the UK compared with other countries (only Chile and the Netherlands had smaller differences in assessments between boys and girls) and that the gap has narrowed slightly since the 2006 PISA survey.



Boys' favourites:

- *Ben 10
- *Famous Five
- *Secret Seven
- *Warhammer
- *Top Gear
- *Football Focus
- *Match
- *Video games magazines
- *Mad Maths
- *Horrible Histories
- *Lemony Snicket
- *Any horror stories

60 000 BOYS FAIL TO ACHIEVE AT AGE 11

The All Party Parliamentary Literacy Group Boys' Reading Commission was a joint venture with the National Literacy Trust from January to June 2012. The report says action needs to be taken in homes, schools and communities. The Commission's findings, published on Monday 2 July 2012, reveal that three out of four (76%) UK schools are concerned about boys' underachievement in reading despite no Government strategy to address the issue. Last year an estimated 60,000 boys failed to reach the expected level in reading at age 11.

The Commission's report, compiled by the National Literacy Trust, reveals the "reading gender gap" is widening and says action needs to be taken in homes, schools and communities, with recommendations including boys having weekly access to male reading role models.

MPs and Lords who sat on the Commission heard evidence from teachers, researchers, literacy experts and Michael

Rosen and Anthony Horowitz.

Boys' underachievement in literacy is not inevitable. It is not simply a result of biological differences; the majority of boys achieve in literacy and are fluent readers.

The Boys' Reading Commission has found that boys' underachievement in reading is associated with the interplay of three factors:

- The home and family environment, where girls are more likely to be bought books and taken to the library, and where mothers are more likely to support and role model reading;
- The school environment, where teachers may have a limited knowledge of contemporary and attractive texts for boys and where boys may not be given the opportunity to develop their identity as a reader through experiencing reading for enjoyment;
- Male gender identities which do not value learning and reading as a mark of success.

SO WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING?

*Schools should have access to an evidence framework to inform effective practice in supporting boys' reading.

*Every child should be supported by their school in developing as a reader. Crucially, schools must promote reading for enjoyment and involve parents (overtly fathers) in their reading strategies.

*Every teacher should have an up-to-date knowledge of reading materials that will appeal to disengaged boys.

*Parents need to be able to access information on how successful schools are in supporting boys' literacy.

*Libraries should target children (particularly boys) who are least likely to be supported in their reading at home.

*Social marketing and behavioural insight need to be deployed to encourage parents to support the literacy of their children – especially boys.

*Every boy should have weekly support from a male reading role model.

*Parenting initiatives must specifically support literacy and fathers.

*A cross-Government approach to literacy needs to be developed and coordinated.

Need more advice? Want to know more? Come and see DB!



Have a great
summer