

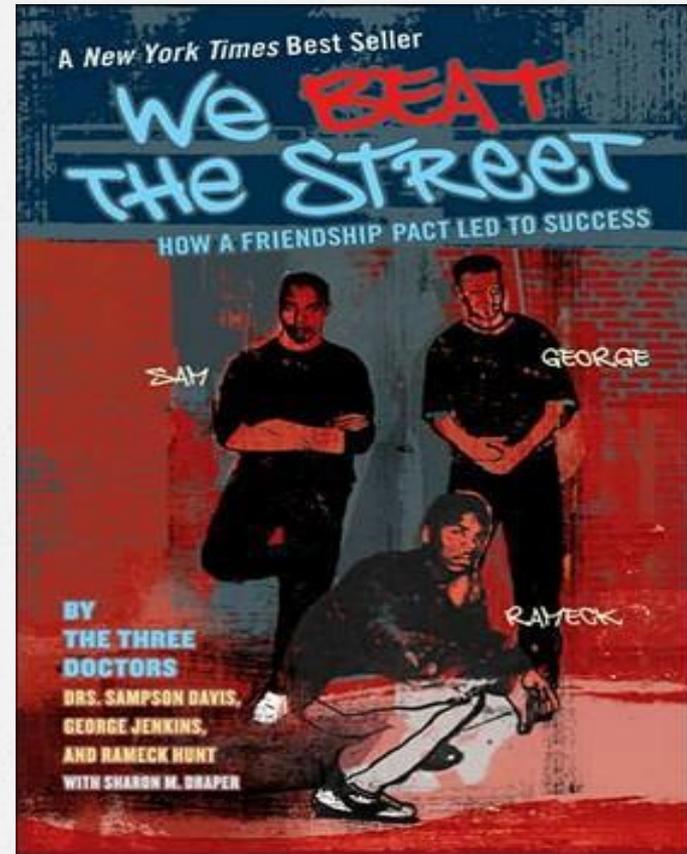
Closing an Achievement Gap:



Engaging African American
Boys in Literacy

Goals

- Present strategies for developing higher literacy rates and positive life outcomes for African American male youth.
- Provide professional development resources that can be used to further our understanding of how to support the literacy development of African American male youth.



With respect to achievement...

- Boys take longer to learn to read than girls,
- Boys read less than girls,
- Girls tend to comprehend narrative texts and most expository texts better than boys do,
- Boys tend to be better at information retrieval and work-related literacy tasks than girls,

With respect to attitude...

- o Boys generally provide lower estimations of their reading abilities,
- o Boys value reading as an activity less than girls do,
- o Boys have must less interest in leisure reading than girls do, and are far more likely to read for utilitarian purposes than girls are,
- o Significantly, more boys than girls declare themselves to be non-readers.
- o Boys...express less enthusiasm for reading than girls do.

“Boys’ underachievement is a major concern. Nationally, boys fall behind girls in early literacy skills and this gap in attainment widens with age.

The challenge of raising achievement directly addresses the learning needs of our students and the professional growth of our teachers, and enhances the role of the school as an agent of social change. We want to give boys and girls the best opportunity to become powerful learners.”

(UK Department for Education and Skills, n.d.)

Brain Science: Should schools teach boys and girls different subjects?

‘...parts of the brain processes information grows during childhood and then starts to pare down, reaching a **peak level of cognitive development when girls are between 12 and 13 years old and when boys are 15 and 16 years old**, generally speaking...’The girls have a level of organization where they’re doing complex scheduling and social arrangements, and making lists, Jensen said. ‘Meanwhile, boys at that same age, you’re lucky if they remember to bring their books home from school.’

Has there been movement?

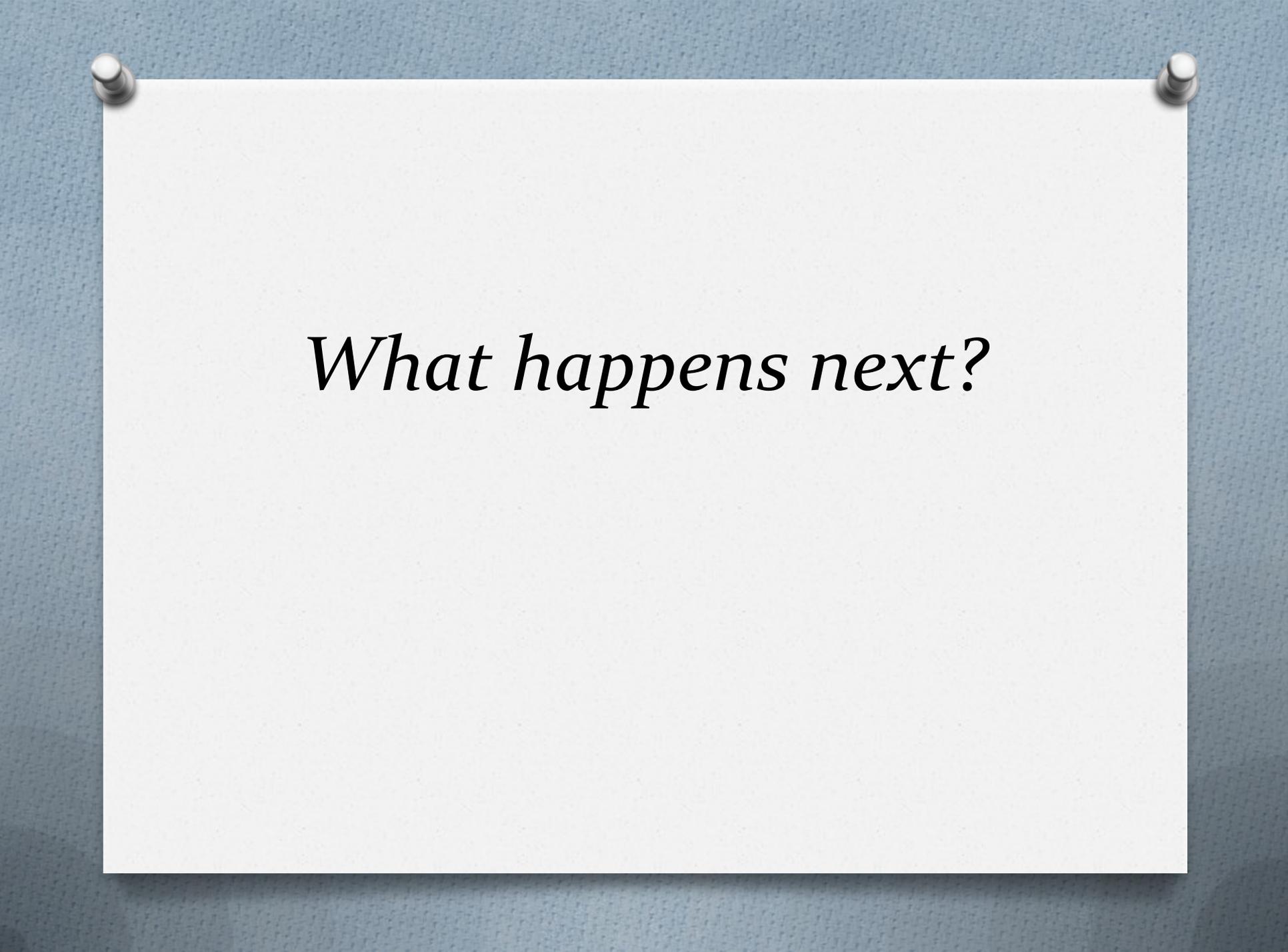
- Only 14 % of African American male 4th graders and 8th graders performed at or above the proficient level on national reading tests in 2011 (National Association for Educational Progress, 2011)

Achievement Gap – DC CAS

2014 Results by Student Sub-group (Reading)

	State			DCPS			PCS		
	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change
All	49.5	49.9	0.4	47.4	47.7	0.3	53.0	53.4	0.4
Asian	74.1	78.4	4.3	73.1	78.2	5.1	77.3	79.0	1.7
African American	43.7	43.8	0.1	38.7	38.5	-0.2	50.5	50.5	0.0
Economically Disadvantaged	42.1	41.9	-0.2	37.7	36.5	-1.2	48.4	49.1	0.7
English Language Learner	39.6	37.3	-2.3	36.8	36.3	-0.5	44.6	39.1	-5.5
Female	55.5	56.0	0.5	53.4	53.7	0.3	58.9	59.2	0.3
Hispanic	52.2	50.0	-2.2	51.1	48.6	-2.5	54.7	52.5	-2.2
Male	43.6	43.9	0.3	41.8	41.6	-0.2	46.8	47.3	0.5
Mixed Race	80.2	83.1	2.9	82.8	83.7	0.9	75.0	81.9	6.9
Special Education	19.3	19.7	0.4	18.2	17.6	-0.6	21.3	22.7	1.4
White	91.8	92.1	0.3	92	91.6	-0.4	91.1	93.9	2.8

Note: This slide excludes two subgroups: (1) Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander and (2) American Indian / Native Alaskan



What happens next?

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION



Division of Data, Accountability and Research

DC 2014 4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates, by Subgroup

2014 ACGR by Subgroup											
Sector	Overall	Gender		Race					Economic Disadvantage	ELL	SPED
		Female	Male	African-American	Latino	White	Asian	Multi-Ethnic			
STATE	61.4% (3129)	68.0% (1759)	54.5% (1370)	59.8% (2538)	62.2% (344)	85.3% (162)	85.2% (46)	79.1% (34)	60.1% (2520)	63.6% (227)	41.0% (467)
DCPS	58.3% (2089)	64.8% (1160)	51.7% (929)	55.2% (1585)	61.4% (267)	86.9% (>25)	84.6% (>25)	78.9% (>25)	55.4% (1540)	64.6% (>25)	38.0% (321)
PCS	68.9% (1040)	75.3% (599)	61.9% (441)	69.2% (953)	65.8% (77)	DS (<25)	DS (<25)	DS (<25)	69.6% (980)	DS (<25)	49.5% (146)

Notes: The number of graduates in SY2013-14 is included in the parenthesis (). Some subgroup graduates are suppressed (DS or data suppression) because they are below the minimum n-size of 25 students.

ARE OUR

CHILDREN BEING PUSHED INTO PRISON?

THE PIPELINE TO PRISON: THE U.S. HAS THE HIGHEST INCARCERATION RATE IN THE WORLD, AND ITS PRISONS AND JAILS ARE OVERWHELMINGLY FILLED WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LATINOS. THE PATHS TO PRISON FOR YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND LATINO MEN ARE MANY, BUT THE STARTING POINTS ARE OFTEN THE SCHOOL AND FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS.

FROM SCHOOL TO PRISON

STUDENTS OF COLOR FACE HARSHER DISCIPLINE AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PUSHED OUT OF SCHOOL THAN WHITES.

40%  OF STUDENTS **EXPELLED** FROM U.S. SCHOOLS EACH YEAR ARE BLACK.

70%  OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN "IN-SCHOOL" **ARRESTS** OR REFERRED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT ARE BLACK OR LATINO.

3.5 X  BLACK STUDENTS ARE THREE AND A HALF TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE **SUSPENDED** THAN WHITES.

2 X  BLACK AND LATINO STUDENTS ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO **NOT GRADUATE** HIGH SCHOOL AS WHITES.

68% OF ALL MALES IN STATE AND FEDERAL **PRISON** DO NOT HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL **DIPLOMA**.

FROM FOSTER CARE TO PRISON

YOUTH OF COLOR ARE MORE LIKELY THAN WHITES TO BE PLACED IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM, A BREEDING GROUND FOR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

50%  OF CHILDREN IN THE **FOSTER CARE SYSTEM** ARE BLACK OR LATINO.

30%  OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH ENTERING THE **JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM** ARE PLACEMENT-RELATED BEHAVIORAL CASES
(e.g., RUNNING AWAY FROM A GROUP HOME).

25%  OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING FOSTER CARE WILL BE **INCARCERATED** WITHIN A FEW YEARS AFTER TURNING 18.

50%  OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING FOSTER CARE WILL BE **UNEMPLOYED** WITHIN A FEW YEARS AFTER TURNING 18.

70% OF INMATES IN CALIFORNIA **STATE PRISON** ARE FORMER **FOSTER CARE** YOUTH.

THE COLOR OF MASS INCARCERATION



BLACK OR LATINO



OF INCARCERATED POPULATION

VS



BLACK OR LATINO



OF U.S. POPULATION



ONE OUT OF THREE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES WILL BE INCARCERATED IN HIS LIFETIME



ONE OUT OF SIX LATINO MALES WILL BE INCARCERATED IN HIS LIFETIME



Let's Talk Solutions

Categories of students who can read, but don't..

- the *dormant reader*: “I’m too busy right now!”
- the *uncommitted reader*: “I might be a reader, someday.”
- the *unmotivated reader*: “I’m never gonna like it!”

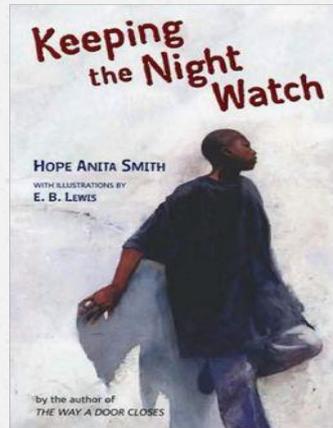
As they get older, boys increasingly describe themselves as non-readers. Few have this attitude early in their schooling, but, according to some experts, nearly 50 per cent describe themselves as non-readers by the time they enter secondary school.

In a study of 10- to 12-year-olds, Elaine Millard found that the following characteristics of reading programs in schools contributed to a reading environment that was more relevant to the interests of girls than of boys:

- discouragement of certain kinds of literature as unsuitable for classroom reading
- insufficient guidance from the teacher in choosing what to read and in helping students develop a range of reading strategies
- use of reading activities as a time-filler
- a limited selection of genres
- the disparity between students' sense of why reading is important (e.g., to give them a good start in life) and their perception of its purposes in school (e.g., primarily as reading stories for pleasure).

(Millard, 1997, p. 1)

Role of the Teacher



“Researchers . . . demonstrated that the largest major factor protecting young people from emotional distress, drug abuse and violence – other than the closeness they were able to achieve within their families – was ‘perceived school connectedness’.”

Letting boys in on the “secret”

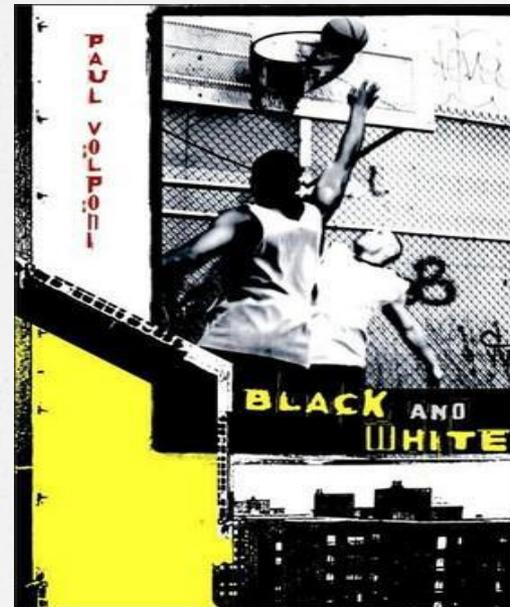
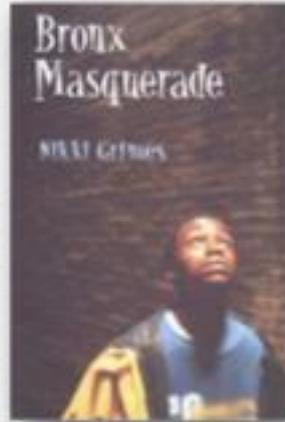
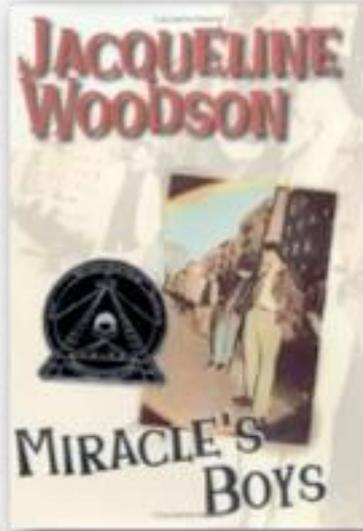
- “uncovering” the processes that good readers often use unconsciously
- For many boys, literature appears to involve a secret code, one that is understood by authors, teachers, and some students, especially girls.

“If we leave [the] processes of reading and writing cloaked in mystery, telling ourselves that it all either comes naturally or else it doesn’t, we surrender to voodoo pedagogy. In voodoo, privileged people, objects and rituals are invested with secret magical power, and to some of our students it certainly seems that there must be mysterious, unnamed powers needed to do well in English.”

Research shows that boys are more successful in school when their teachers:

- understand when to “break the rules”;
 - provide effective oral and written feedback on progress;
 - develop a classroom culture that encourages students to justify their opinions
 - accept the humorous responses and language play often evident in boys’ writing.
 - have a good knowledge of the texts;
 - flexible approach to teaching, but use explicit teaching methods for literacy strategies;
 - involve students in extensive collaborative work;
- provide texts that interest boys;
- offer a choice of writing formats when assigning a task;
 - continuously motivate and support students;

Choosing the Appropriate Texts

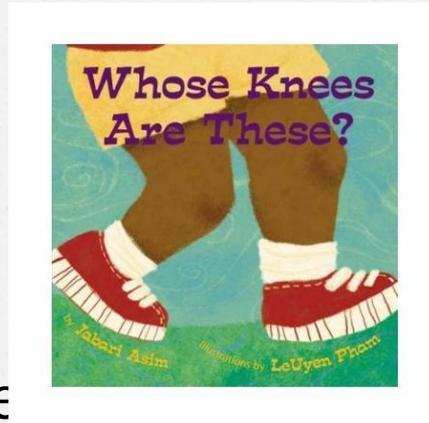


Utilize Culturally Congruent Instruction and Culturally Relevant Materials

- Increases motivation to read & write
- Provides purpose for reading and writing
- Increases engagement in literacy activities
- Improves recall & comprehension
- Increases phonological awareness & fluency
- Improves ability to navigate complex text

'Culturally Congruent Instruction'

- o Spirituality
- o Affect
- o Harmony
- o Oral Tradition
- o Social perspective
time

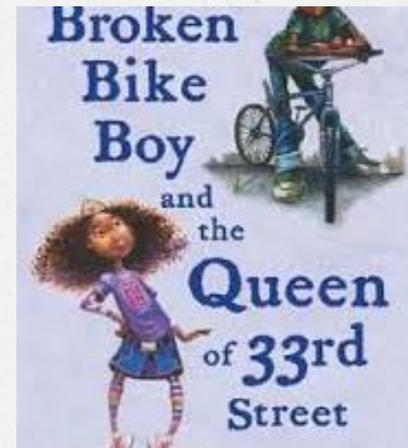


- o Expressive individualism
- o Verve
- o Communalism
- o Movement

How have you used culturally relevant instruction and materials with African American males? How have they responded? Where is the evidence in CCSS?

Enabling texts

- encourage and empower young men to take action in their own lives and the lives of others
- Include literary and informational texts
- May or may not feature African American characters or individuals

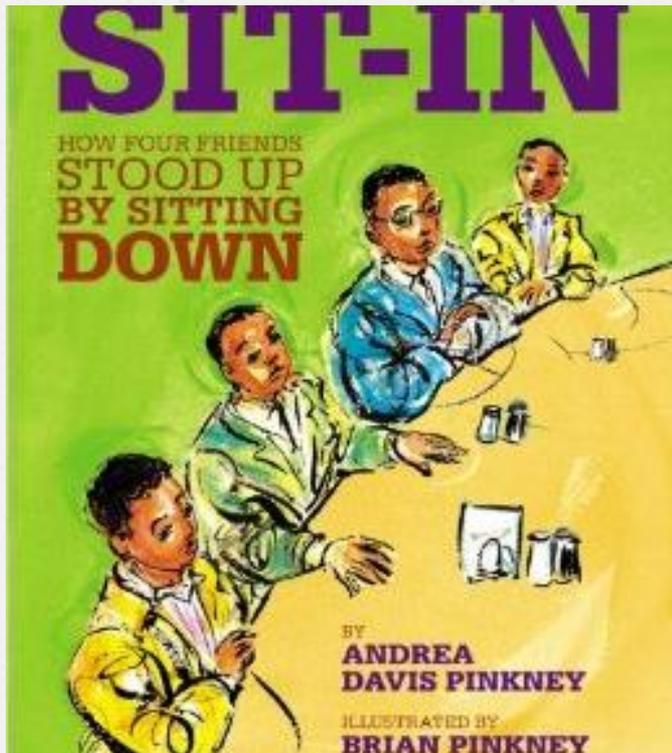


<https://youtu.be/Gy4u44FZk94>

Enabling Texts

- o Promote a healthy psyche (Tatum, 2009)
- o Reflect an awareness of the real world (Tatum, 2009)
- o Focus on the collective struggle of African Americans (Tatum, 2009)
- o Serve as a road map for being, doing, thinking, and acting (Tatum, 2009)
- o Recognize, honor, and nurture multiple identities(Tatum, 2009)
- o Demonstrate resiliency (Tatum, 2009)
- o Are interesting and provocative (Tatum, 2009)
- o Avoid caricatures (Tatum, 2009)
- o Include a mentor or a role model (Rawson & Hughes-Hassell, 2012)
- o Provide counter stories to the dominant narrative about African American male youth (Hughes-Hassell, 2013)

It was February 1, 1960./They didn't need menus./Their order was simple./A doughnut and coffee, with cream on the side.



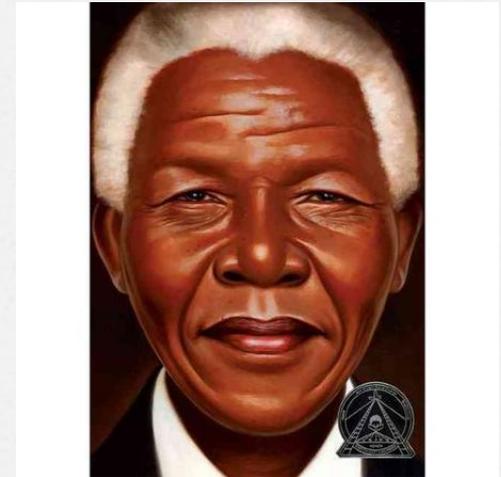
Courageously defying the whites only EDICTO OF THE ERA, four young black men took a stand against the injustice of segregation in America by sitting down at the lunch counter of a Woolworth's department store. Countless others of all races soon joined the cause following Martin Luther King, Jr.'s powerful words of peaceful protest. By sitting down together, they stool up for civil rights and created the perfect recipe for integration not only at the Woolworth's counter, but on buses and in communities throughout the South.

Boys like to read...

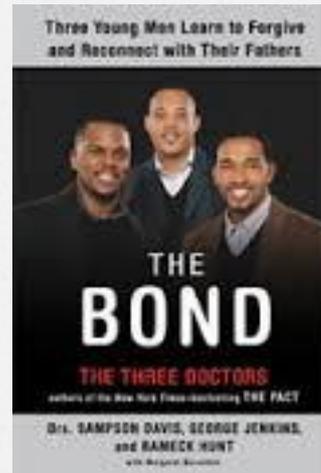
- o Books that reflect their images of themselves-what they aspire to be and to do,
- o Books that make them laugh and that appeal to their sense of mischief,
- o Fiction, but preferable fiction that focus on action more than on emotions,
- o Books in series, such as Harry Potter, which seem to provide boys with a sense of comfort and familiarity,
- o Science fiction or fantasy (many boys are passionate about these genres),
- o Newspaper, magazines, comic books, baseball cards, and instruction manuals-materials that are often not available in the classroom. Interestingly, when they read these materials, many boys do not consider themselves to be reading at all, precisely because these materials are not valued at school.

Well stocked classroom includes..

- o Fiction and non-fiction,
- o Non-print resources,
- o Text representing a wide range of formats and genres,
- o Popular as well as “traditional” materials,
- o Lots of easy-to-read books, to build fluency and to provide enjoyment



Critical Literacy Skills



“Becoming critically literate offers opportunities, for boys as well as for girls, to arrive at new insights into personal and social relations; to understand the construction of their own selves as contemporary social subjects; and to recognize the ways in which various social language practices have become naturalized and normalized within everyday talk and action.”

Critical-literacy practices include the following:

- Examining underlying meaning in texts
- Considering the purpose of a text and the author's motives for writing it
- Understanding that texts are not neutral, but represent a particular viewpoint
- Analyzing the power of language and persuasion
- Exploring interpretations of the text made by other readers
- Adopting a point of view about the text
- Exploring and clarifying personal values in relation to a text

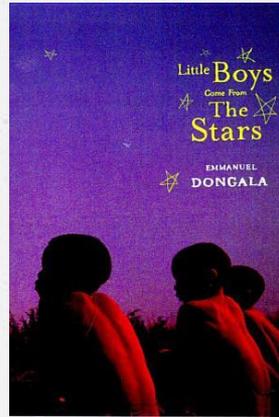
Encourage students to challenge assumptions

- o Crafted works in which realities are represented in certain ways
- o Encourages her students to consider the versions of reality that are presented and those that are not presented in the books, to relate the presented version to their own
- o Reality, and to imagine, discuss, and create other possibilities.
 - o What do writers say about girls, boys, and parents/guardians/caregivers in this book?
 - o What do adults think children like to read about?
 - o If you knew about families only from reading this book, what would you know about what adult caregivers do?

Challenging Stereotypes

- Have students compare the nouns and verbs used in two sports articles, one about a female athlete and one about a male athlete.
- Ask students, before they read any variety of texts, to consider how the lives of members of the opposite sex are different from their own.
- Have students explore their assumptions about gender by presenting them with texts that are written in the first person, and ask students to assign a gender to the narrator.
- Have students discuss the relationship between representations in popular culture and students' personal experiences of being male or female.

*Oral language is the foundation for
literacy development*



Let them talk!

- interact with others, both one-on-one and in groups;
 - engage in frequent, extended conversations with adults;
- listen and respond to stories read and told to them.

Literature circles are tailor-made for boys!

- o Boys need to be given choice in and ownership of their reading.
 - o Literature circles give boys opportunities to select what they will read. The small group structure of a literature circle encourages group members to take ownership of what they read.
 - o Book selection for boys should reflect their interests, backgrounds, and abilities.
 - o The selection of texts offered to students for literature circles should reflect their interests and should include a variety of genres, both fiction and non-fiction.
- o Boys need occasions for talking to others in meaningful ways about what they have read.
 - o The small-group discussion format of literature circles provides a nurturing and supportive environment for both peers and teacher, and encourages meaningful talk about the text being read.
- o Boys who are reluctant readers need to have successful reading experiences.
 - o Literature circles often involve mixed-ability grouping, providing boys with the support they need to focus on the “big ideas”, as well as on the words and the structure of the texts.

Get the Net

Using technology to get boys interested in literacy

“More than half the use a computer one hour or more per week for school work. Computer use for entertainment is much more prevalent, with more than half the students reporting three hours or more of such use per week. The most prevalent out-of-school writing activities are using e-mail and chatting on the Internet.”

Boys involved in a study using Animal Farm shared their reading experiences with boys in another school by e-mail. Researchers found that:

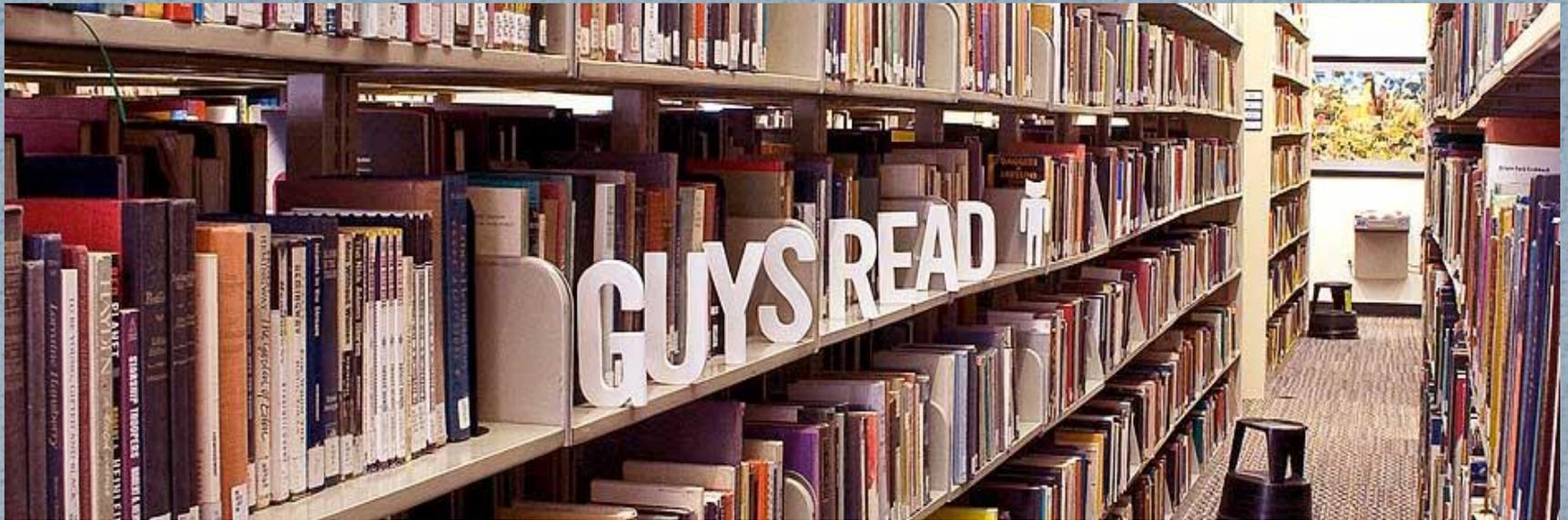
- o The boys, despite poor reading levels and low motivation, were enthusiastic about sharing their reading experiences by e-mail;
- o Sharing their reading experiences electronically enabled the boys to expand the range and purposes of their reading; the boys' teacher was able to use this experience to develop
- o Additional strategies for teaching and assessing reading.

Treasure Hunt

To develop students' knowledge on a particular subject, teachers and students can create "Treasure Hunts". The basic strategy is to find web pages that contain information (text, graphic, sound, video) essential to understanding the topic. Gather 10-15 links to the exact pages where students can find the relevant information. Pose one key question for each website, and include a culminating "Big Question" that allows students to synthesize what they have learned.

Filmed Book Review

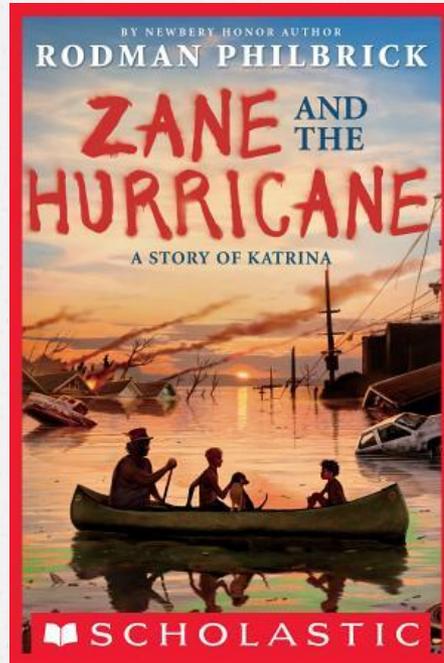
Students in Miramonte High School film MTV-style book reviews, which are screened in the school's library and on Blackboard.com. Students prepare a minute-long script, which they enhance with artistic camera work and creative soundtracks, to produce reviews of such books as Catcher in the Rye and Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.



Guys Read, a web-based literacy program for boys founded by and First National Ambassador of Young People's Literature Jon Scieszka. Our mission is to help boys become self-motivated, lifelong readers.

[Guys Read!](#)

Keep it real



Making reading and writing relevant to
boys

Using writing frames

- o Seeing a teacher model the use of writing frames or templates and using writing frames themselves helped students understand narrative structure.
- o Breaking text down to its skeletal outline helped students understand how writers develop a story.
- o Writing frames were most useful to students of average ability, but they also helped lower-achieving students, especially when those students used the frames in groups, with a teacher's guidance.
- o Writing frames built structure into the narrative writing task, improving boys' writing performance.

Working with reluctant writers

- to do last
- to do first
- never to do
- to change
- to keep secret
- to do before breakfast
- to do before leaving school
- to do slowly
- to do quickly
- I don't understand
- I'll never regret
- I'll never forget
- I'd like to forget
- about teeth
- you should try

Integrating the Arts

- **Writing** – for example, through the use of drama and drawing as strategies for rehearsing, evaluating, and revising ideas before writing begins
- **Language mechanics**, total language, and writing – as a result of students' participation in music and poetry programs total reading, reading vocabulary, and reading comprehension – for example, through role-playing, improvisation, and story writing
- **Higher-order thinking skills** and the ability to articulate ideas – through a comprehensive arts and language program

Studies have also shown that integrating the arts into language instruction helps to improve students' self-concept, cognitive development, critical-thinking abilities, and social skills.

Music to their ears

- o Use music without lyrics to inspire students to create word lists, phrases, lyrics, descriptions of feelings, word-images, letters, dramas or dialogues, slogans or protests, poems or chants, or an imagined description of the composer.
- o Use music with lyrics to inspire students to change words in a text, add a verse to a poem, invent a new song title, design a record cover, or write different lyrics on the same theme.



Ensuring Success

Community/Home Engagement

Community/Home Engagement

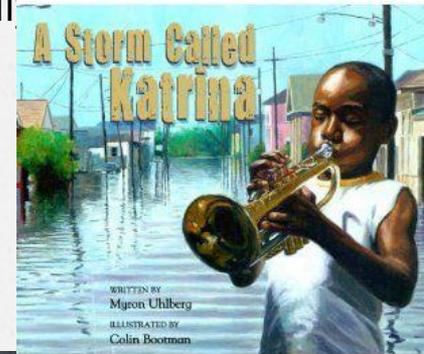
- o Talk to parents/guardians to learn how literacy is used at home (Lazar et al, 2012)
- o Provide professional development for parents/guardians
- o Create organizations modeled after the African American social club that allow parents/guardians to identify and share resources and cultural activities
- o Develop a book group for adult males (fathers/guardians/mentors) and boys. Make the meetings infrequent, perhaps once a month, and outside of school hours. To address boys' need for action-oriented learning, have the group engage in literacy-related activities (e.g., role playing based on the selected text) before or after the reading sessions.
- o Organize a boys' book club, pairing boys with other boys in the school or family of schools.

Parental Involvement 101

- o Home-school reading diaries are used to establish a direct dialogue between the teacher and parents about their child's reading development. Students record comments on their reading on one page of a double-page spread, and the other side is pre-designed for specific reading activities, providing space for students to:
 - o list new or interesting words;
 - o draw scenes or characters;
 - o record examples of good writing (e.g., similes, descriptions);
 - o record interesting facts;
 - o design a poster to advertise the book they are reading.

School Wide Involvement

- o Whole-school literacy policies (such as the establishment of a literacy team)
- o A welcoming and supportive culture
- o Processes and structures to help teachers monitor, assess, and analyze student achievement in detail, target strengths and weaknesses, and set new individual targets
- o A focus on developing specific skills, using clearly structured lessons
- o The use of a range of texts, fiction and non-fiction
- o Regular discussion of students' progress with their parents
- o The development of staff awareness of boys' needs, usually through in-service training



“Literacy is not just about decoding text. It is about becoming a superior human being that can act powerfully upon the world.”

-Ernest Morrell, Ph.D.



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