Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry
Work Plan Support Booklet – February 2008

Support Booklet

Your Inquiry Makes a Difference!

Time does pass quickly! The next semester is underway for secondary schools and March break is actually not that far off! We have been receiving e-mails and calls from many school teams as year three progresses so what follows is vital information for your remaining work.

In the past months, we trust that you have sharpened your focus on the question: "How can we improve boys' literacy achievement?" and that you are gearing up for your school's Final School Report.

This Support Booklet is focused on preparations for your Final School Report. This edition contains a sample template and specific suggestions to help you mobilize your time and energy, to generate your findings and compose your Final School Report by **May 30.** As you will soon see, this final report is approximately the same length as the two earlier interim reports. The big difference is that we ask you to reflect on the past three years and draw some key conclusions about the impact of your teacher inquiry work on the boys in your school(s).

More Resources: An electronic version of this Final School Report template will be sent to your Team Contact in the near future, together with a video designed to elaborate on specific aspects of your data collection and analysis.

First Things First! A plan of action for the final stretch

Time in schools is precious and we advise considering these steps for February – May.

- Convene a meeting of your School Inquiry Team and create a map of the weeks ahead to include all steps leading to the submission of your report.
- Engage your district resource team member, literacy coach, consultant, or possibly your district research support (if available) to assist you.
- Consult your school administration – principal and vice-principal, if not already a member of the School Inquiry Team, for advice and support. Your principal can give you a heads up on school events that might impact the timing for completion of your final report and important other advice.
- Set a meeting (or two) to review your final data collection, to undertake your analysis of that data and to determine your key findings and key messages for your report. Identify a report writing team (some members of your school team) and a peer review group (other members) for both editing and refining your key points.
- In the last stages, meet again with school administration to determine: 1) How can we sustain and extend our key learnings with other school staff, our school family? 2) What are best strategies to communicate our key findings and key messages?
- Celebrate your achievements.
- Engage again with district program resource staff to consider extending your inquiry work beyond your school.

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Inside This Issue

Taking Stock in Year Three:
Components of the Final School Report

Your Final School Report is the culmination of three years' work. It is a way of sharing and presenting your results and their impact on your school, and allows you to specifically outline what you have learned throughout this action research project. You will no doubt be eager to share your findings with your colleagues, and your reports will be shared by the Ministry with colleagues all over the province. We thank you in advance for your continued professionalism and dedication to your own students and to the contribution you will make to the knowledge base of your provincial counterparts.

Each component of the Final School Report is elaborated below. The template for the report is shown on page 7. In addition, there are some key questions shown on this template version to prompt you in preparing your report.

Final School Report due May 30, 2008

The electronic version, <u>which you will actually use to complete your report</u>, will be identical, but will not contain the prompts.

Quick Tips

- **Some components ask you to list key points – section will indicate**
- **You are asked to use a narrative style in others**
- **Write in the 'first person' as though you are telling your story – and you are!**
- **Use Gill Sans MT font**
- **Use 10 point font size**

Essential Question: Post your most current and recent question in the box provided.

Component One: What Did We Learn?
How Did Our Inquiry Project Impact Our Instructional and Assessment Practices?
Use point form in this section, taking care to connect all of your findings to your data and your essential question. This is really the 'heart' of your work!

* Identify your most important conclusions and recommendations.
* Identify your most important findings related to the impact on both your teaching practices and also your assessment practices. There might be other very important findings and lessons learned, please list them as well.

"High yield strategies are powerful practices which have been verified by research."
School Effectiveness Framework, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat,
September 2007– June 2008

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Component Two: What is Our Story?

Use a narrative style, briefly outlining your teacher inquiry 'journey' over the last three years, characteristics of your school community, characteristics of your boys, and what you did as a team. Select from among these questions to prompt your thinking:

- What were the major highlights?
- What did your team enjoy most?
- What were your notable successes and challenges?
- How did your boys respond and participate?
- What stayed the same and what changed as the three years progressed?

Component Three: What Are Our Next Steps?

Use narrative style, briefly outlining your collective thoughts on extensions to your teacher inquiry work and how you intend to share your learnings with others in your school network.

- What are the areas, related to boys' literacy achievement, your school and board will continue to focus on to improve?
- Have you determined new questions that have emerged from this inquiry that you would like to pursue within this focus on boys' literacy?
- How best can you share your learning?

Component Four: What Evidence Do We Have to Support Our Findings?
Data Gathering and Making Sense of Our Data

Using narrative style, briefly describe the qualitative and quantitative methods that gave the most useful information.

- Which assessment methods seemed most revealing?
- How did each of these methods connect with your essential question?
- How did you conduct your overall analysis and interpretation of your data?

Component Five: Findings: What Does Our Data Show?

In this section, use whichever method works best to display your data – you can use charts, graphs, another visual depiction, or narrative. **If you need more than one page, the template provides two pages.**

- Provide a comparison of 'baseline' and 'final' results.
- Provide qualitative and quantitative methods to illustrate your conclusions.
- Be mindful to connect to your essential question.
- Validate your conclusions by using two different methods to reach them.

Component Six: What Was the Impact of The Inquiry Project on Us As Educators?

Using narrative, describe the highlights and insights related to your project:

- How did you evolve into a fully functioning professional learning community?
- What were your collaborative practices related to becoming more 'data literate' and new practices related to collecting, understanding and using student achievement data?

Component Seven: What Resources Do We Recommend?

- **In point form**, list two or three of your boys' favourite resources; do the same for key professional resources related to boys' literacy.

Component Eight: What is Our Favourite Photograph of Our Project? (optional)

A picture can tell a thousand words!

- Insert a photo if you would like, and ensure permission is granted for its submission.

Our Voices:

Collect four quotes which best describe your teacher inquiry work.

- Use one from a teacher, one from a student, one from an administrator, and one from a parent/guardian.
- There are four special boxes to insert your quotes.

> **"Networks operate on the belief that when professionals come together and share their expertise, they build new knowledge and that new understanding leads to change in practice"**.
>
> From *Professional Learning: Networking, www.curriculumservices.org*

Working with Data

Video: "Making Sense of Data"

At the onset of the video, you will see a brief overview of key questions to be reflected upon which then form the key points of your Final School Report. These questions are meant to scaffold your work. "Making Sense of Data," the next section of the video, is meant to answer some questions that you are likely facing in the final stretch of your inquiry.

Background to the "Making Sense of Data" part of the video... Members of the teacher inquiry team at Roden Public School talk about making sense of the data that their inquiry project has generated, facilitated by OISE Professor Dr. Shelley Stagg Peterson. Making sense of the mounds of data is, you know, hard work and in the words of noted action researcher, Ruth Hubbard, it is like **walking in a forest of fallen leaves**.

Teachers discuss the data they have collected so far, how their thinking has evolved over time, how they used their data to define a focus for their teacher inquiry and finally, how continual attention to student achievement data changes classroom practices.

Tips for writing your final report: data gathering and analysis

You will be writing your Final School Report for this project in a few months. Here are some tips for organizing and writing about your methods for gathering and making sense of your data.

What to Include
Possible Data Sources: test scores, students' responses to surveys/questionnaires, reading logs, interviews with students, observations of students, written work, and other evidence of students' learning.

When you describe how you gathered data, focus on the data sources that directly relate to your essential question.

One Scenario
Let's say that your essential question asked how boys' attitudes toward reading, their reading habits and preferences, and their achievement in reading are influenced by a new teaching strategy and by the use of new resources.

You may have gathered these types of data:
(a) students' written responses on questionnaires about their reading attitudes, habits and preferences;
(b) reading logs recording students' reading choices over a period of time;
(c) results of reading comprehension tests;
(d) your anecdotal observations of what particular students did during silent reading time; and
(e) results of writing test scores.

Because your essential question asked about boys' reading attitudes, habits and preferences, and reading achievement, the questionnaires, reading logs, observations, and reading test scores will provide you with qualitative and quantitative information to answer your essential question. The writing test scores are useful to you for your teaching, but they should not be included in your final report because your essential question does not reference improvement in writing achievement.

Of course, you can still change your essential question to ask about boys' performance on writing tests. However, if you choose to remain true to your initial essential question about attitudes, habits and preferences, and reading achievement you should include only the data that answer the question.

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How You Gathered Data

1. Identify each data source

Describe when and how often you gathered this type of data, and explain how the data address your essential question. For example, you might explain that you used questionnaires to find out about boys' reading attitudes, habits and preferences, reading logs to find out about their reading choices, and anecdotal observations to examine their reading habits during silent reading. You may have administered the questionnaires, conducted the observations, and asked boys to record their reading choices in reading logs before you tried the new teaching approach or the new resources and then again afterwards to see if there were noticeable changes in boys' reading attitudes, habits and preferences. You may have asked boys to complete reading logs for two months before the new teaching approach/ resources were introduced and afterwards for two months. You may have completed one 10-minute observation of each of six boys before trying the new teaching approach/resources and then an additional 10-minute observation of each of the six boys afterwards. You may have administered a pre– and post– reading comprehension test.

2. Describe each type of data

<u>Questionnaires</u>: Include the questions on the questionnaire and explain where the questions came from. Was it a ready-made questionnaire or did you develop your own questions? How did you decide which questions to use and/ or how did you modify the ready-made questionnaire to address your essential question?

<u>Reading logs</u>: Explain what kinds of information you asked students to write about the books they chose (e.g., date the text was chosen and date the text was returned to the library, title, genre/type of text, author/designer, number of minutes spent reading, whether students finished the text and why they did or did not finish it.) Your description of anecdotal observations should include what type of information you recorded (e.g., the number of minutes taken up in choosing a text and what texts the student picked up but did not read, whether the student read silently or voiced some words, whether the student consulted someone during silent reading time.)

<u>Test scores</u>: Include either the questions or the types of questions (e.g., five multiple choice questions asking students to identify details, a short-answer question requiring the retelling of the plot, a short answer inference about the character's intentions.) Whether you designed the test or you used a ready-made test, explain how you decided which questions to use and/or how you modified the ready-made test to address your essential question.

How You Made Sense of the Data

1. Forced-choice questions

You may have added the number of girls and the number of boys who responded with "strongly agree" and "agree" and the number of students of each gender who responded with "strongly disagree" and "disagree." You may have circled the key words/phrases that students wrote in response to open-ended questions, grouped the words/phrases that had something in common and then counted how many students wrote similar responses. (See the article in the previous newsletter, *What's To Be Done with All the Data?: A Guide for Analyzing the Information You've Been Gathering*, for an example).

2. Test results

You may have tallied the correct responses to multiple choice questions, organizing them by the type of reading comprehension process they assessed (e.g., how many analysis questions were answered correctly). For open-ended responses, you may have determined how many students' responses to inferring questions were narrowly based on text information, how many combined text information and the students' background knowledge, and how many showed an inaccurate understanding of the text.

3. Anecdotal observations of small numbers of individual students

You may have written a summary of each boy's behaviour before and after the introduction of the new teaching approach/resources, creating a profile of each boy. You may also have identified similarities and differences across a few boys before and after the teaching intervention.

4. Reading logs

You may have tallied the numbers of books that boys read of particular types (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, magazines, comics) to see if each boy was reading a wide range of materials or the same type all the time, or you may have identified the average number of books that the boys as a whole or that each boy read prior to the teaching intervention and again over the two months following the intervention.

"We must ask, where are we good and why did we get that way?" Doug Reeves, *The Learning Leader,* pg 32, ASCD publication.

This booklet has been developed with financial support from the Ontario Ministry of Education.

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Instructional Strategies:
Strategies for Literacy Learning

Within your Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry project, you are currently focusing on a selected number of strategies to support boys' literacy.

Marilyn Burns, in her article, "*9 Ways to help kids catch up*" in **Educational Leadership,** Nov. 2007, uses the following strategies for mathematics learning, which are equally relevant for all literacy learning and which tie in with the strategies in **Me Read? No Way!**

This brief review of some supports for literacy learning will help you to reflect and reinforce those strategies you are using now as you head into the final few months of the project. Use this opportunity to reflect once again on how your instructional strategies are integral to the data you are gathering and to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the strategies you have employed.

Teach with purpose
1. Scaffold the content:
- identify the skills and concepts you want students to learn
- divide the content into manageable chunks
- sequence the chunks
- teach each skill explicitly
- allow time for practice

2. Activate prior knowledge and make the connections visible:
- students need to build knowledge on what they already know and what they are learning in other areas

Help make it a habit
3. Manage the timing:
- students need the time and opportunity to learn, practice and then relearn if necessary

4. Provide the scaffolding and support on a consistent basis:
- use the processes of teacher modeling, student practice and whole class review and discussion that lead to independent work

Let them talk
5. Encourage collaborative student interaction:
- promote explaining and "teaching" concepts to each other

Read between the lines
6. Develop thinking skills:
- provide opportunities to predict, analyze and demonstrate comprehension using oral language
- help students document and track their thinking

Get the net /Embrace the arts
7. Provide practice that is relevant for the students through :
- retelling in their own words to reinforce concepts (role-playing)
- using technology to display and practice
- creating games to reinforce concepts (improvisation and computer)

Be in their corner
8. Use common language to talk about their learning:
- self-created dictionaries of vocabulary
- word walls to display common terms

Explicit and scaffolded teaching practices, and the use of relevant and meaningful materials in a collaborative environment are all research supported ways to contribute to the sustained and significant achievement of your students.

Final School Report

Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry Project

SCHOOL: _____

DISTRICT: _____

Teacher Inquiry Team
List your team contact name and the teachers on your team.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The following are the most important findings to improve boys' literacy emerging from our inquiry.
What strategies does your team recommend to the ministry and your colleagues across the province?

Note re spacing :
Your Final School Report (electronic version) will have approximately the same amount of space for your input as can be viewed on this sample template.

HOW DID OUR INQUIRY PROJECT IMPACT OUR INSTRUCTIONAL AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES?
What were the key lessons you learned that made a difference in your instructional practices?

Student Quote: **Provide one quote from a student to support your findings.**

WHAT IS OUR STORY?

What is the story of your project over the past three years? What was your overall plan? What were the major highlights and insights of your work? What did you enjoy the most? What were your challenges and how did you overcome them? What did you learn about your boys? How did your boys respond and participate? What did the parents/guardians think of your work?

Parent/Guardian Quote: Provide one quote from a parent/guardian to support your findings.

WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

What new questions have emerged from your inquiry with this focus on boys' literacy? What are the areas for continued focus within your school and board to improve boys' literacy achievement?

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WHAT EVIDENCE DO WE HAVE TO SUPPORT OUR FINDINGS?

DATA GATHERING and MAKING SENSE OF OUR DATA:

Describe the various qualitative and quantitative methods that gave you the most useful information to answer your essential question.

Administrator Quote: Provide one quote from an administrator to support your findings.

FINDINGS: WHAT DOES OUR DATA SHOW?

Provide a comparison of baseline and final results in terms of your essential question. If you have quantitative data, use a chart, graph or other visual depiction to show your results both at the beginning of your inquiry and at the end. What are examples of your qualitative and quantitative data?

CHARTS & GRAPHS: [EXAMPLE ONLY]
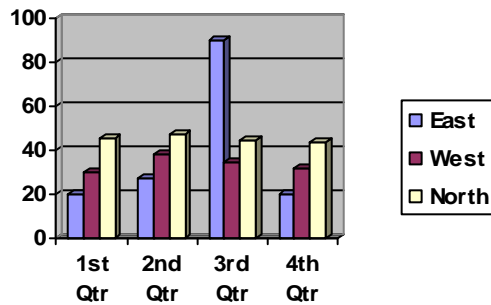
FINDINGS: WHAT DOES OUR DATA SHOW? (cont.)

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE INQUIRY PROJECT ON US AS EDUCATORS?

As you reflect on the inquiry experience over the three years, what are the major highlights or insights? How did you grow and develop as a school team? Did your practices related to collaborative work to use the data make a difference? What were your notable successes and challenges?

Team Member Quote: Provide one quote from a team member to support your findings.

WHAT RESOURCES DO WE RECOMMEND?

What are two or three resources we recommend for boys?

What are two or three resources we recommend for professional development?

WHAT IS OUR FAVOURITE PHOTOGRAPH OF OUR PROJECT?

Note: It is optional to include a photograph. If you choose to do so, be sure that you have permission from those shown in the photograph.

Photo   Describe

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