The Impact of Learning Styles on Boy's Motivation and its Effect on Reading Performance

Mayrola Rubio
St. John Fisher College

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Follow this and additional works at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations.

This document is posted at http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/77 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
The Impact of Learning Styles on Boy’s Motivation and its Effect on Reading Performance

Abstract
The present research focused on the ways in which boys learning differently and why it is that boys are falling behind in school and how learning styles exhibited by classroom teachers impact the boys’ motivation and overall learning performance in the classroom. The literature also focused on the different types of motivation that are exhibited by individuals. The purpose of this paper was to determine if teachers learning styles played a significant role on boys reading performance. The findings of this research showed no correlation between teachers’ preferred learning style and boys overall reading motivation. However, teachers can use this research paper to give them a better understanding of the boys in their classrooms and why it is they exhibit the behaviors that are deemed undesirable int eh classroom.

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
MS in Special Education

Department
Education

Subject Categories
Education

This thesis is available at Fisher Digital Publications: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/77
1-1-2007

The Impact of Learning Styles on Boy's Motivation and its Effect on Reading Performance

Mayrola Rubio
St. John Fisher College

Follow this and additional works at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at Fisher Digital Publications. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Masters by an authorized administrator of Fisher Digital Publications.
The Impact of Learning Styles on Boy’s Motivation and its Effect on Reading Performance

Abstract
The present research focused on the ways in which boys learning differently and why it is that boys are falling behind in school and how learning styles exhibited by classroom teachers impact the boys’ motivation and overall learning performance in the classroom. The literature also focused on the different types of motivation that are exhibited by individuals. The purpose of this paper was to determine if teachers learning styles played a significant role on boys reading performance. The findings of this research showed no correlation between teachers' preferred learning style and boys overall reading motivation. However, teachers can use this research paper to give them a better understanding of the boys in their classrooms and why it is they exhibit the behaviors that are deemed undesirable in the classroom.

Degree Type
Thesis

Degree Name
MS in Special Education

Department
Education

Subject Categories
Education

This thesis is available at Fisher Digital Publications: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/77
The Impact of Learning Styles on Boy's Motivation and its Effect on Reading Performance

Mayrola Rubio

St. John Fisher College
Abstract

The present research focused on the ways in which boys learning differently and why it is that boys are falling behind in school and how learning styles exhibited by classroom teachers impact the boys' motivation and overall learning performance in the classroom. The literature also focused on the different types of motivation that are exhibited by individuals. The purpose of this paper was to determine if teachers' learning styles played a significant role on boys reading performance. The findings of this research showed no correlation between teachers' preferred learning style and boys overall reading motivation. However, teachers can use this research paper to give them a better understanding of the boys in their classrooms and why it is they exhibit the behaviors that are deemed undesirable in classrooms.
Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.......................................................4 - 6

LITERATURE REVIEW.................................................6 - 33

METHODOLOGY.........................................................34 - 36

RESULTS.................................................................36 - 37

DISCUSSION............................................................37 - 40

REFERENCES............................................................42 - 46

TABLES.................................................................47 - 50
  • Table 1 (Overall Data).............................................47 - 49
  • Table 2 - Table 5..................................................50
The Impact of Learning Styles on Boy's Motivation and its Effect on Reading Performance

Introduction

The literature in this research paper will focus on the different types of learning styles exhibited by classroom teachers and the impact that these learning styles have on boys and their overall reading performance. The literature will also focus on the different types of motivation that are exhibited by individuals and how the relevance of each plays a role in a student's performance.

Research suggests that boys are falling behind in school because educators are not aware that boys actually learn differently than girls and therefore fail to teach and accommodate their instruction to benefit the boys learning styles. Research states that due to the fact that boys learn differently, most academic environments are not suited to meet their individual learning needs (Galley, 2002). Recent biological and neurological research states that boys develop biologically, developmentally and psychologically differently than girls (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Therefore educators need to become educated on boys’ learning styles and become more aware of how to implement differential strategies and modifications in their classrooms in order to meet and accommodate the learning needs of the boys within their classrooms.

Research also states that motivation plays a key role in boys’ reading performance. Research shows that boys with high levels of motivation tend to be more engaged readers (Guthrie et al., 2006). When educators foster a rich reading environment for the boys in their classrooms, boys tend to be motivated to try and tend to also be more willing to read. In order for boys to become motivated and confident readers they must be guided in the right direction by teachers and parents. Without motivation students who are currently not motivated to learn will
not be motivated to read and therefore encounter detrimental problems throughout their educational career.

Motivation plays a key role in students' reading performance. Research shows that boys' tend to fall behind in reading and lack the motivation to read whether for pleasure or knowledge in school (Welldon, 2005). That is why it is essential for teachers to understand and uncover their students' needs, the moment they enter into their classrooms. Teachers must also be able to recognize what drives their students' motivation. Is it the need for knowledge and further understanding of the world around them (intrinsic motivation)? Or is it just maintaining a positive self-imagine image? Achieving high scores but having no deep interest in what they learned (extrinsic motivation)?

In an article by Marlene Asselin (2003) it was noted that boys do tend to read more outside of the classroom but that what they read “is passed over as insignificant” (pg. 53). Therefore, teachers need to figure out what drives boys' interest to read and apply this knowledge to their instruction. By making the insignificant significant teachers can nurture and provide the necessary resources for boys reading motivation. Research also shows that if teachers help and guide their students, they can enable them to move from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation within the classroom as long as they are given choices (Scieszka, 2003). This shift in motivation plays an essential role in helping students become more engaged readers in school.

The first part of the paper will concentrate on how and why boys learn differently and under which learning conditions boys demonstrate at their highest level of performance within the classroom. The second part includes general information regarding student motivation. This section will define motivation and the two different types of motivation; intrinsic motivation and
extrinsic motivation in students as well as how interest influences motivation. Then the paper will address theories, teacher perspectives, and goals and strategies that influence student's motivation and interest in reading. The third part of the paper will define four different types of learning styles; Mastery Style, Interpersonal Style, Self-Expressive Style and Understanding Style. This section of the paper will also address which learning style is the most beneficial for the learning needs of boys. The conclusion of the paper will bring all of the literature together in order to understand the impact that learning styles have on boys' motivation and its effect on their reading performance.

**The Facts**

Studies have shown that there are several reasons as to why boys are falling behind academically versus their peer counterparts in school. First, the feminist approach and the passing of the 1972 federal law Title IX, which forced all schools to provide equal education opportunities for girls in their school, had a negative effect on boys (Tyre, 2006). During this time focus was placed on helping girls achieve both in the classrooms and in the playing field. In 1992 the American Association of University Woman claimed that Title IX had not completely helped because girls were still behind in math and science, so even more attention was given to girls in these academic areas (Tyre, 2006). The gap started to decrease but feminist groups still argued that girls were still at a disadvantage and they made sure that girls received all the attention and given the needed resources in order to help “catch” up to their male peers. The fate of boys' success in school was diminishing because they weren’t receiving the attention they needed and their problems were allowed to “fester” (Tyre, 2006). Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the academic environment is not suited to meet the learning needs of boys.
Over the past decades the education system has become very focused and narrow on how they quantify success. This "myopic" view is harming boys and it is considerably unfair to them because they don’t learn the same as girls (Tyre, 2006). The third reason is deemed the most obvious by researchers, boys develop differently than girls. Recent biological and neurological research suggests that they are biologically, developmentally and psychologically different than girls (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Other reasons include teacher’s preconceived notions and expected goals from their students. Today’s changing family environment is another reason why boys are falling behind. With more boys lacking a positive male figure in their lives or better yet a consistent male figure, which studies show play a significant role in their life (Clavel, 2005).

In an assessment taken it was found that boys are one and one-half years behind girls in reading and in writing (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002 as cited in Gurian & Stevens, 2004). This is supported by standardized test scores which show that boys score lower on the language arts portion (Taylor and Lorimer, 2003).

Further, statistics for the United States show that boys earn about 70 percents of failing marks in school and that less than half earn A’s and two-thirds of boys are diagnosed with a learning disability and receive special education services. This is supported by research which shows that four boys to one girl are diagnosed as emotionally disturbed, and six boys to one girl are diagnosed with ADD, and two-thirds of boys are given Ritalin (Clavel, 2005). Ninety percent of boys are disciplined five to ten times more often in school versus girls in elementary and middle school; 80 percent of boys drop out of high school and boys also only make up only 40 percent or less of the college population (Gurian, 2001).
Differences that Influence Learning

Biological Differences in Boys

Biological and neurological research states that boys develop biologically, developmentally and psychologically different than girls. Therefore educators need to become more aware of this and make the required accommodations in their classrooms in order to meet those differences. Boys' non-conforming behavior (restlessness, high energy, love of games and moving objects and competitiveness) which feminists once thought was due to their socialization, contributed and continues to play a key role in the over diagnoses of boys with reading disabilities, behavioral and attention deficit disorders (Liederman et al., 2005). "Boys dominate brain related learning disorders as ADD/ADHD, with millions now medicated in schools" (Gurian & Stevens, 2004).

Current research shows that boys' behavior is due to the biological make-up of their brains. Differences emerge in the first trimester when the boy fetus begins to produce male sex hormones that "bathe" his brain in testosterone; this exposure wires the boys brains differently (Tyre, 2006). Boys' brains have more cortical areas that contribute to spatial-mechanical functioning and less to verbal-emotive functioning, hence their interest in moving objects and constant motion. This is also supported by the fact that boys' visual system relies on type M ganglion cells, which are the cells that detect movement. That is why boys tend to rely more on pictures and moving objects when they write (Taylor, 2002 as cited in Gurian & Stevens, 2004).

Furthermore, boys' brains go into what is known as neural rest state by neurologist. SPECT scans show than when boys' brains get bored, some of their functioning shuts down while trying to remain awake. This is evident when teachers are too wordy or the classroom is not suited to meet the needs of the boys, and the boys' in the classroom as seen as inattentive and
disrespectful (King and Gurian, 2006). Boys’ prefrontal cortex which helps organize complex thoughts, control impulses and understand consequences is developmentally delayed, compared to girls who reach full maturation in that area of the brain by the age of 11 (Tyre, 2006).

Boys also have less serotonin and oxytocin which is the human bonding chemical. With less oxytocin boys tend to be more impulsive and aggressive therefore, being less resilient with bonding and lack the desire to please and comply with others (Taylor, 2002). They also lateralize brain activity, which means that their brains operate with less blood flow than girls brains. Therefore, boys cannot multitask as easily as girls can and therefore have more problems paying attention, making the required quick transitions between lessons and organizing the details of the class routine (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Research shows that because of these differences in their brain structure, boys’ concentrate better without any distractions when following steps and tend to become irritable when teachers require them to move through multiple tasks using multiple steps (King and Gurian, 2006). Therefore, teachers do not make the necessary accommodations for boys’ developmental levels and fail to recognize how unfriendly classrooms have become to boys (Clavel, 2005).

In an article written by Carol Lester (2004), he stated that scientist state that the pace at which boys brains develop falls behind that of girls by three to four years ahead of boys from age 7 to 22. According to his research men don’t catch up with women until they turn 29 years old. Many teachers research suggests have a hard time differentiating between natural male development and truly inappropriate conduct. This explains why there are so many differences between boys and girls and educators should become aware of these differences so that boys don’t get over diagnosed and left to cater to their own educational needs (Laster, 2004).

Environmental Factors
Based on further research, boys are also falling behind girls in schools because they lack male role models in their life. Due to increasing changes in family structure, high divorce rates and single mothers, have left many boys fatherless (Tyre, 2006). According to recent studies about 40 percent of all boys are being raised without their biological dads and without a positive male role model in their life. According to Matthew Clavel (2005) this has a negative impact on boys more so than girls, because the girls have their mothers, another female to look up to, whereas males don’t have a father figure to look up to. Psychologists argue that grandfathers and uncles may help out in raising a boy but that “a boy without a father figure is like an explorer without a map” (Tyre, 2006). This holds true for many boys who are marked as being “at risk.”

These boys usually come from broken homes, less than comfortable living styles and boys who only interact with their mothers. Fathers and positive and consistent male role models, model self-restraint, solid work habits, emphasis on getting good grades, and arriving to school on time. “An older man reminds a boy in a million different ways that school is crucial to their mission in life” (Gurian, 2001 as cited in Tyre, 2006).

Furthermore, in order for them to become successful fathers and future positive role models for the next generation they themselves have to feel comfortable and honored as men. Educators can help them in their journey by emphasizing traditional learning, research proven teaching methods and respect the differences and uniqueness of boys. Educators can also help boys learn how to express themselves and their needs without fear of punishment for their actions. Lastly, educators can help boys meet some of these needs by allowing them breaks in order for them to recollect themselves and be ready and willing to learn (Clavel, 2005).
Academic Environment for boys

Since research shows that boys learn differently, then a different learning environment is required that is more suited to meet their learning needs. Today’s educational system is very unfair to boys in that it fails to meet those needs. Research states that the education system has moved away from short-answered assessments and activities to more complex and lengthy assessments requiring boys to be attentive for longer periods of time (Hunsader, 2002). Areas where these changes are most evident are in math and science; where there is an increase in teaching student to use more writing and group discussions. These subjects now require students to write lengthy explanatory and descriptive essays (Gurian and Stevens, 2006). This in turn causes boys to get in trouble for impulsiveness, signs of boredom, fidgeting, inability to listen, and focus on the lesson (Gurian and Steven, 2004). For some boys, they need more time to mentally and physically prepare themselves to become involved in and complete classroom activities, because they need to adapt the lessons and expectations to meet their own needs (Blair and Sanford, 2004). When teachers use an excessive amount of words to describe a lesson the boys’ in their classroom will “zone them out” because they cannot take in all that information and adapt it to their needs.

Neurological research states that boys go into what is called rest state, where they recharge and reorient their brains, causing them to seem inattentive to the lesson, whereas girls brains can recharge without going into a rest stage, causing them to seem like the model student regardless of whether or not they are actually focusing on the lesson (Gurian and Steven, 2004). Furthermore, boys tend be more impulsive than girls and although they are capable of sitting still, many boys cannot willingly sit as long as most teachers would like them too. Teachers place a lot of emphasis on having all their students sit quietly, raising their hand and being model
students. This is where boys get in trouble and girls become "the gold standard and boys become more like defective girls" (Tyre, 2006). Therefore, it is important for boys to learn by having hands-on instruction, doing, rather than just sitting and listening (USA Today, 1998). Boys are wired differently and teachers need to understand those differences between the girls in their classroom and the boys in their classroom. "Boys report substantially less positive schooling experiences in terms of enjoyment, usefulness of curriculum and teacher responsiveness" (Rowe, 2000 as cited in Hunsader, 2002).

For this reason nearly two-thirds of the students who receive special education services in the United States are boys (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Research also shows that many teachers treat their students differently; treating girls in one particular way and boys in another. This negative gender role differentiation plays a key role in their academic performance and self esteem. Research states that boys do not and cannot learn to the best of their ability under those circumstances. Boys need frequent recess breaks, freedom to wander around the classroom, and hands on learning where they allowed to manipulate objects versus wordy directions and constant compliance (Galley, 2002). This is supported by research that states that boys who are given the opportunity to engage in physical activities during a lesson show an increase in motivation and skill development because it enables boys to actively question and explore (Taylor and Lorimer, 2003). These physical activities can range from role playing, debating, fieldtrips and investigations. This impacts their feelings concerning school and reading. However, when these finding are not taken into consideration, boys view themselves in a negative light, and have low and uncertain concepts about themselves as readers and learners. They tend to find school and reading difficult (Asselin, 2003).
Gurian and Stevens (2004) suggested that teachers need to move from a more traditional, unfriendly boy classroom to a more nature-based classroom. In the nature-based classroom setting, the classroom itself is used to help boys learn. The desks and chairs are arranged in a fashion that provides enough space for each student to spread themselves out and claim a space just for their learning purposes. As research suggests boys tend to need more physical learning space than girls, therefore having their own space they can claim is of key importance to their learning (p.25). Teachers need to understand that boys’ spaces will be much less organized and widely dispersed. This type of classroom setting would be boy friendly because it would meet their needs both as learners and individuals; because it would provide them with the movement they need to keep them focused. The classroom will also tend to be noisier and energetic than traditional classroom (Gurian and Stevens, 2004).

Boys as Readers

Research states that not only do boys learn differently and act differently within the classroom they also have different reading preferences (Asselin, 2003). Boys prefer books that are more informative than fictional, books that are packed with action, books that they can relate to; such as books that deal with their hobbies or their favorite sports. Boys also prefer books that are humorous, deal with scientific fiction and fantasy (Jones, 2005). As one librarian noted in an article, boys come to the library expecting to endure books about puppies, kittens and friendly endings, because they view reading as a girls things and not a male thing. Therefore, she provides them with books they want to read about such as dinosaurs, firefighters, bugs, frogs, sharks, spiders, tractors and trucks (Dahlhauser, 2003).

Research also sheds new light on the fact that some boys are indeed reading, outside of the classroom. However, some teachers fail to recognize this and view boys’ reading material as
Insignificant. This stands in the way of boys’ enthusiasm to read and relate to the materials that is require in school (Jones, 2005). It is important for teachers to recognize these interests and give boys choices in assignments and reading assignments that relate to their own personal interests. This in turn will lead to greater motivation in achieving literacy skills (Taylor and Lorimer, 2002).

Teachers need to become more attuned to what some researchers are calling metamorphosis in connection to visual and technology based activities that are transforming literacy into a new generation of literacy practices (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Teachers need to find ways in which boys can find personal interest, action, success, fun and purpose in the readings they are assigned. If this is accomplished, boys won’t view reading as only a girls thing, but as something that they can relate to in their lives. “We need to recognize the distinctly “boy-like” flavor of their lives, their humor and interest in action, their hunger to have something happen, their enthusiasm for the big climax” (Martino, 2001 as cited in Blair and Sanford, 2004).

Furthermore, educators need to be careful of what they restrict their students to read, because many of them are allowed to read certain topics at home, and this tends to turn boys’ off when they are not allowed to pursue their interest in the classroom; making it even more difficult for teachers to turn their boys’ into proficient and adamant readers in the classroom (Clavel, 2005). “Reading about valorous knights and fierce battles is not going to turn young boys into murderers any more than a Barbie commercial will make them want to wear a skirt” (Clavel, 2005). The point that is being made is that boys’ are interested in reading about certain things and if we restrict them then we are squashing their potential and their motivation to become readers.
Impact of Motivation on Reading Performance

Motivation is an essential part of students’ reading performance. Without motivation, students lack the necessary skills needed to become mature, effective readers (Gambrell, 1996). Reading motivation is also correlated with key cognitive outcomes such as increased reading achievement as well as the amount of reading that is done (Guthrie et al., 2006). Motivating students’ to engage in reading is a pressing challenge for teachers everywhere. Most students’ are characterized as either being motivated or not motivated. Those students’ who are motivated to read find school to be interesting because they have the necessary skills, which allows them to be successful in school. These students’ are viewed by researchers as engaged readers who are motivated, knowledgeable, strategic and socially interactive (Gambrell, 1996). These students’ are driven by achievement motivation, which is the desire to achieve accomplishment. Students’ who lack motivation when it comes to reading find school discouraging and boring because they lack the necessary skills that would allow them to become successful learners.

Reading is a key component to all academic areas. If motivation is lacking it affects whether learning is meaningless and superficial or understood and internalized (Gambrell, 1996). The amount of time students’ spend reading contributes to their knowledge of the world around them because they are able to explore the world of print where they are met with all kinds of valuable information, such as their history and world at large (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Therefore it is important for teachers and parents to work with their students’ and promote a rich reading environment so that even students who struggle with reading are motivated to keep trying. Every student has the desire and the need to be successful. When students’ receive positive feedback on their schoolwork from parents and caregivers they learn to associate
learning with positive emotions. This increases their motivation and interest in reading (Myers, 2003).

Boys require something that they can relate to in order to be motivated to read. That is why boys prefer nonfiction books, because they can connect to what they are reading because it meets their interests and accessibility (Guthrie et al, 2006). In a study conducted by Muir (2001) it was noted that when boys were given choices in assignments and reading materials, they often chose what interested them the most, this in turn led to greater motivation in achieving literacy skills (Murir, 2001 as cited in Taylor and Lorimer, 2003). Boys' are also more motivated to read if can physically act out their responses to what they read, by making or doing something rather than discussing it or writing a lengthy essay; this tends to shut them down (Jones, 2005).

Types of Motivation

Research suggests that there are two different types of motivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. “Intrinsic motivation refers to a person’s desire to engage in an activity, whether or not the activity has an external value to someone else,” (Sweet, Guthrie & Ng, 1998, p.211). “Extrinsic motivation refers to external factors that prompt a person to engage in an activity,” (Sweet et al, 1998, p. 211). These two types of motivation impact students' reading performance.

Intrinsic Motivation

Students' with intrinsic motivation choose to pick up a book and begin reading for the sole purpose of enjoyment. According to Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) students' who are viewed as having intrinsic motivation read because they are curious and hungry for knowledge, they do not view reading as work but rather as a pleasurable activity. These students' show high levels of
interest in the material that they are reading, which often leads them to lose themselves in the
text and loosing track of time (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

In an article by Suzanne Hidi and Judith M. Harackiewicz (2000), interest is defined as
an “interactive relationship between the individual and certain aspects of his or her environment”
(p.152). Individual interest is an essential part of students motivation when it comes to reading
and reading comprehension because without it students’ would not be motivated to learn or read.
Intrinsic motivation and individual interest are often times used interchangeably due to the fact
that one does not show motivation in a content area without the interest to do so and students’ do
not show interest unless they are motivated to learn (Hidi & Harachiewicz, 2000).

An example of a student with intrinsic motivation is a student who is always surrounded
by books and is constantly reading books without anyone asking them too. During sustained
reading times these students’ emerge themselves in the book they are reading. The types of
books these students’ read range from fiction to nonfiction. Some students’ even read book such
as textbooks or information books because they want to increase their knowledge on a particular
topic, for no reason other than then sheer notion of learning (Sweet et al, 1998). These students’
are viewed as having different dimensions of intrinsic reading motivation. These dimensions
include reading curiosity (reading and learning about a particular topic for individual
satisfaction) and reading topics aesthetically enjoyed (enjoying different types of literacy or
informational text) which research shows correlates with the amount of time students spend
reading at school and at home (Metsala, Wigfield & McCann, 1997).

Extrinsic Motivation

Students’ who show extrinsic motivation are motivated by external factors such as
teachers, parents, and rewards (Metsala et al., 1997). These students’ are only motivated to work
hard so that they are viewed in a positive light, but have no real interest in the material that is being presented. Teachers find that it is beneficial to reward these students' in order to keep them motivated in their school work, otherwise the students' do not find it necessary to excel unless there is a means to an end. On the other hand, teachers are pressed with the challenge of sparking interest in these students' so that the presented material can have some level of relevance (Sweet et al., 1998).

An example of a student who is extrinsically motivated would be one who is always seeking teacher approval in the classroom and competing with other peers on assignment completion. These students' are viewed as having different dimensions of reading motivation than intrinsically motivated students. The dimensions for reading motivation in extrinsically motivated students' include recognition reading (receiving a reward recognizing their reading completion), competition in reading (finding it necessary to compete with classmates) (Metsala et al., 1997) and reading for grades (the need for a high score on the report card and a positive evaluation from the teacher) (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). These external factors can be viewed as beneficial to the students' overall reading success, especially when students show no interest in the material. In this form, students are at least engaged in the task and the belief is that eventually the student will become interested in the material and become intrinsically motivated (Hidi & Harackewicz, 2000).

Boys’ Motivation

Current research suggests that boys have intrinsic motivation when it comes to their own personal needs. The primary reason that boys read at all is whether or not there is a purpose. Boys read for the purpose of getting information, figuring out how something functions, keeping track of sport statistics, current news that interest them and for staying connected with their
friends (Smith and Wilhelm, 2002 as cited in Blair and Sanford, 2004). Teachers need to take into account a wider range of texts that boys read and share such as newspapers, manuals, sport statistics, Yu-Gi-oh, Pokémon and the Internet, and adopt them into their classroom for everyday instruction so that boys achieve a sense of relatedness within the classroom agenda (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Boys themselves are transforming their literacy practices to better meet their needs in a rapidly changing world that teachers need to come to terms with in order to maintain their boys’ attention as well as their intrinsic motivation to be readers in the classroom (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Intrinsic motivation will also increase when teachers provide boys’ choices, introduce challenging and interesting text that interest them and also by letting them know that other males, other guys, enjoy reading as well (Scieszka, 2003).

Boys’ also exhibit extrinsic motivation when they want to gain respect from their peers. Research on how boys learn differently states that boys’ are naturally inclined to be competitive and aggressive (Gurian and Steven, 2004). Therefore, the opportunity for competition and the opportunity to gain public respect from peers and other individuals have allowed unmotivated boys to become motivated (King and Gurian, 2006). Boys’ are also extrinsically motivated if there is a purpose to what they are reading and if they can relate to the reading material and apply it to their everyday lives (Brozo, 2006).

Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) suggest that both external and internal factors influence the overall motivation and learning success of students’ reading performance. They stated that intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation could co-exist and should be looked at more in-depth in order to obtain a more informative view on student motivation. They further stated that once a student has become interested in a particular topic, external factors are no longer necessary because by then the student’s efforts are natural and self rewarding (p.160).
Theories and Perspectives

Self-Efficacy

Students’ come to school with individual beliefs of what they expect, as well as with knowledge of what they know and what they would like to learn. Robert S. Feldman (1999) describes Albert Bandura’s self-efficacy theory as the “learned expectation that one is capable of carrying out a behavior or producing a desired outcome in a particular situation” (p.347). This is crucial to student’s success in school because it helps motivate them to successfully master a task (Feldman, 1999). Jill E. Cole (2002) stated that the beliefs children hold for themselves are formed by experiences they have encountered throughout their life. Although not all children are aware of these beliefs Cole (2002) states, they become apparent once the students either excels in reading or blocks any further learning when it comes to reading due to negative beliefs about reading (p.328). Students who hold positive beliefs about their learning are viewed as more successful learners who are intrinsically motivated to learn. These students’ are viewed as being in control of how they learn and what they learn. They are internally driven by the need for further knowledge of sheer pleasure of a task.

Students’ who hold negative beliefs about learning, do not feel in control of their situation and therefore feel that no matter what they do they will not be able to succeed in school. These students’ will tend to quickly attempt to complete a task without much effort, give up quickly or altogether avoid the task or cause a disruption in the classroom (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). On the other hand, the key is to motivate these students’ by helping them to believe that they can and do have the capability to succeed (p.219). These students might also only be influenced by the tangible awards that they receive for successfully completing a reading
assignment. The information is never internalized because they do not find it relevant in their lives (Cole, 2002).

Margolis and McCabe (2006) state in their article that students get their sense of believe in themselves from a variety of sources. These sources affect their self-efficacy when it comes to their understanding of a particular task such as reading. The sources are; task performance (how well they believe they have completed a reading task or comprehended what they read in class), vicarious experiences (allowing students who are struggling to observe their classmates model the steps of the task or help guide them with their reading), verbal persuasion (giving student verbal cues, but still allowing the student to feel that the choice is theirs) and physiological reaction (helping the student feel comfortable and relaxed with the activity before, during, and after). These sources help to influence student’s self-efficacy (p.219-220).

Self-Determination

In an article by Anne P. Sweet, John T. Guthrie and Mary M. Nig (1998) self-determination is described as “the development of intrinsic motivation in terms of environmental support for the individuals needs for relatedness, competency, and autonomy” (p.211). Self-determination emerges when an individual has the ability to relate to the social and emotional well being of others. This sense of relatedness is then viewed as a motivator for reading because it encourages students to become active participants in the classroom and allows interaction with their peers, especially when reading out loud or sharing with the class what they read either during sustained reading or at home (Sweet et al., 1998).

Feeling a sense of competence is also a key component of self-determination. Students have the need to feel competent in what they are reading in order to feel that they too are key members of their class. However, students feel competent only when the reading task is most
advantageous to their learning. The reading task can neither be too difficult that the students become anxious and unmotivated to continue or to easy that the student does not feel that he/she is not being challenged enough (Sweet et al., 1998).

The last key component of self-determination is autonomy. Autonomy is giving students the freedom of choice and allowing them to make reading meaningful to them. Research shows that when student’s autonomy is respected by teachers, students have a higher level of self-esteem as well as a higher sense of competence in their work. These students set their own goals and usually tend to successfully surpass their own goals. However, some students do need autonomy support from their teachers. Although these students will still set their own goals for reading assignments the teachers gives these students’ a list of choices that they can choose from as well as expected goals if the students so chooses (Sweet et al., 1998).

Teacher Perspective

Teachers’ perspectives on student performance are a key motivator in students reading success. Research shows that teachers who demonstrate a love for books and reading will have students following in their footsteps (Gambrell, 1999). These teachers motivate their students to read independently, and encourage book talks with their students and provide students with a rich literacy environment. If a trusting relationship is formed between the unmotivated reader and the teacher, the student will gradually begin to express his or her underlying fears and beliefs about reading and the teacher in turn will help nurture the student’s abilities to becoming a successful reader (Clarke, 2006).

In another study by Guthrie, Wigfield, and VonSecker (2000), it was shown that teachers who demonstrated that they cared about their students well being and progress had a higher number of students with intrinsic motivation in their classrooms than teachers who cared more
about the curriculum than the well being of her/his students. This correlated with positive emotions that are present when students learn to associate reading with feeling positive about themselves and their accomplishments (Myers, 2003). Furthermore, teachers should also address struggling readers’ concerns in appropriate ways. Teachers who address these students’ issues to the whole class will further decrease the student’s motivation to read. Also, teachers should be aware of how much time they spend with the student who is unmotivated to read. Otherwise, the student might begin to feel that the teacher does not believe in his or her ability.

In a study by Jeff Wilhelm and Michael W. Smith (2006), they found that students were more motivated when the teachers gave them a sense of independence and handed over the control to them then when the teacher held all the control (p.30). The teacher’s job is to coach the student and to provide interest in students reading so that they can become motivated to read, not to provide further external motivation, which stifles student’s intrinsic motivation (Margolis & McCabe, 2004).

Learning Goals and Performance Goals

Allen Wigfield and John T. Guthrie (1997) stated that students have different goal orientation for achievement; learning goals and performance goals. Students with performance goal orientation focus more on their self image in the classroom. They will do whatever is required to have the least amount of negative evaluation from their peers and teachers. These students place greater emphasize on grades, test scores, rewards and recognition (Guthrie et al., 2000). Students with learning goal orientation focus more on what they will learn from an activity and how will they go about completing an activity while obtaining the most information (p. 421).
Guthrie et al. (2000) also found that when teachers emphasize effective teaching practices that foster learning goals students’ intrinsic motivation increases. Students in these classrooms will seek to achieve competence, skills, knowledge and mastery of the task at hand (p.332). In another research study by Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) they stated that these goals play a key role in the students motivation as well as the ways in which they respond to different situations in the academic setting. According to their research, students with learning goals allow students have a positive outlook on difficulty or failure on certain activities and the understanding that that everything requires risk and effort and without those factors achievement is not accomplished. On the other hand students who are performance goal oriented often find themselves avoiding difficult tasks which will shed a negative light on their image and will use superficial learning strategies to maintain a positive image (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000, p. 160). However, their research did suggest that performance goals are not always necessary negative, especially when interest is sparked in the students and they become motivated even if the end goal is to receive a high mark (p. 161).

Researchers suggest that boys have their own goals in regards to learning and literacy (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Boys’ select and read texts that allow them to connect with friends and family. Boys’ have transformed literacy into a social cultural capital that many teachers cannot relate to although they need to in order to meet the needs of the boys in their classrooms. Boys’ tend to express themselves in loud, boisterous comments across the classroom and often cluster around each other when engaged in an activity, such as a computer game, that they can all relate to and understand (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Literacy helps boys’ identify their own personal identity and personal growth. They also use literacy to make connections to themes that they can develop and share with their friends. This transforms not only the school curriculum but
they way in which they morph themselves into what is deemed “acceptable masculine beings” (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Teachers need to accept this as natural boy behavior and fight the urge to have these boys sit quietly at their desks and write an expansive essay on the novel of the week.

**Strategies for Increasing Motivation in Boys**

The underlying goal is to help motivate students’ to become active and successful readers. Research shows that there are multiple ways to help students become engaged and motivated to read. Some of the strategies listed in the research were promoting cooperation, choices, giving stimulating tasks, reading activities that were relevant and meaningful to the student’s lives and providing a rich literacy environment. It was also found that students with lower self-efficacy and low levels of achievement benefited more from choices in reading and writing in order to help maintain their attention and continued effort (Sweet et al., 1998).

Amanda Zadora (2002) listed several strategies that she found to be useful in her classroom. She described that students who were less motivated to read should be given book choices just as their more motivated peers are. However, she suggested that teachers have a more narrow selection of books for these students, which include books that will spark their interest, even if they are largely picture books. This will decrease their anxiety when choosing from a larger selection of books and increase their motivation to look at books in hopes that a certain topic will catch their interest.

Linda Gambrell (1999) described in her research that the way in which teachers label books also helps increase students’ motivation, especially if they do not feel they are as competent in reading as their peers. Gambrell suggested marking books in the classroom “hard, harder, and hardest” versus “easy, average, hard or difficult.” This will encourage the more
unmotivated readers to feel that they too can read a “hard” book (p.S11). Providing students with reading incentives such as certificates, rewards, stickers, ribbons, food and verbal praise also help increase students motivation to continue reading. These incentives could be used for all types of readers, because peers will encourage each other, which in turn will help unmotivated readers to feel they are active participants in the class (Edmunds & Tancock, 2003, p. 18-19).

Morrow (2004) suggests creating a literacy rich environment by setting up a literacy center with multiple types and genres of reading material and bean bags so that reading is inviting to students and not intimidating. Other research suggests that there are actually five essentials activities that help to motivate student’s interest when it comes to reading. The five essential activities are: talking (which encourages language development), playing (allows students to develop ways in which to express their understanding of information and it helps develop a sense of narrative), singing (helps the students pick up on verbal cues such as sounds, rhythms, word repetition and differences and similarities in words), reading (encouraging reading out loud both in the classroom and at home which will help the student develop good listening skills), and writing (helps students relate what they hear in words in writing) (Neuman, 2005, p.1).

Gurian and Stevens (2004) suggests several teaching strategies that are boy centered. They suggest the use of manipulatives to help promote fine motor development. Have a wide range of book placed all over the classroom so that they are always within reach and eye-level. They also suggest making sure that lessons are experimental and kinesthetic and that verbal directions are kept to no more than one minute. Research suggests that boy’s expand their verbal skills when they are actively engaged in an activity, and their language tends to be richer and more expansive (p.25) Another strategy to teaching boys is to personalize their space, such as
their desk and cubby so that they their sense of belonging and attachment is increased. Finally, they suggest “allowing boys’ to nurture one another through healthy aggression and direct” empathy (p. 25).

Guthrie et al. (2006) also identified seven instructional practices that teachers should incorporate into their classrooms to increase students reading motivation. The seven instructional practices include: making the content more relevant and purposeful to the students, allowing students to choose what they read, who they read with, and how they will reflect on the reading comprehension, setting content-related goals for students who are more performance goal oriented, providing a social and cooperative environment, being actively involved with the students activities, by allowing them to feel that they are understood and cared about, providing extrinsic rewards when needed but not too often as it might decrease the students intrinsic motivation, and finally placing emphasis on learning goals by modeling and encouraging students to find purpose in their reading, to further their understanding and comprehension (p. 233).

In a second study done by Margolis and McCabe (2006), they found that providing students with a safe and rich learning environment encourages student’s motivations when it comes to reading and reading comprehension. They found that classrooms that promoted intrinsic learning contained the following: a well organized classroom, which included organization on the students parts as well and a well stocked reading center with all types of reading material. Within these classrooms there was a sense of respect in the classroom, both from the teachers and the students. The teachers showed interest and enthusiasm in reading and in students’ reading skills and they helped students form text to world connections and text to self connections so that reading was meaningful to their lives. Through this, they helped keep
students interest and curiosity. They also provided students with choices, and gave students time to share with their classmates what they read and what how they felt about the book (Gambrell, 1999).

**Psychological Functioning**

Carl Jung attempted to categorize individuals in terms of their primary modes of psychological functioning. These functions provide an insight as to how individuals take in information and as to how they are aware of their surroundings. The functions play a significant role in how individuals’ learn and teach (Hilliard, 2001).

The first functioning is sensing. Through sensing individuals rely mainly on their senses to take in information. Their main goals are to look and listen in order to get to know the world around them (Boeree, 2006). These individuals take in information that is real and tangible. They are very observant about what is going on around them and are attuned to practical realities. However, because these individuals focus on details they tend to ignore the big picture. They tend to be literal and would rather do than think (Hilliard, 2001). There are two types of sensing individuals, the extraverted sensing type and the introverted sensing type. The extraverted sensing type is a realist who seeks to experience as many concrete sensations as possible. These experiences are seen as ends to themselves and are rarely utilized for any other purpose. The introverted sensing type reacts subjectively to events in a way that is unrelated to objective criteria (Daniels, 2005).

The second functioning is thinking. Through thinking individuals evaluate information and ideas rationally and logically (Boeree, 2006). These individual look at the logical consequences of a choice or action based on the basis of logic, analysis and reason. They are problem solvers. These individuals also follow their head rather than their heart, value truth over
fact and may appear blunt and uncaring about the feeling of others. Furthermore, they value
fairness over everything and they need a purpose (Hilliard, 2001). There are two types of
thinking individuals, the extraverted thinking type and the introverted thinking type. The
extraverted thinking type basis all actions on the intellectual analysis of objective data. They tend
to repress the feeling function and at times neglect their own personal interests such as health or
financial well being. The introverted thinking type tends to be impractical and indifferent to
objective concerns (Daniels, 2005). This sentence doesn’t make sense.

The third functioning is intuiting. Through intuiting individuals have a perception that is
very much like sensing except to a more complex degree (Boeree, 2006). These individuals tend
to seek out patterns and relationships from information they have collected. They tend to trust
their hunches and intuition and look for the big picture, which leads them to ignore the details.
These individuals would rather think than do (Hilliard, 2001). There are two types of intuitive
individuals, the extraverted intuitive type and the introverted intuitive type. The extraverted
intuitive type is viewed as a diagnostician and exploiter of situations (Daniels, 2005). These
individuals tend to see exciting and endless possibilities in every new task they encounter and
often encourage others to follow in their excitement. However, they do tend to become bored and
stifled by unchanging conditions. The introverted intuitive type is a person who has a vision for
the strange and mysterious (Daniels, 2005).

The fourth functioning is feeling. Through feeling individuals evaluate information by
weighing the overall emotional response (Boeree, 2006). These individuals tend to consider what
is important to them and to those involved. Appreciating and supporting those around them
energizes these individuals. They strive to create harmony and to treat each person as an
individual with unique qualities (Hilliard, 2001). There are two types of feeling individuals, the
extraverted feeling type and the introverted feeling type. The extraverted feeling type is viewed as following fashion and harmonizing in personal feelings that are deemed acceptable by society (Daniels, 2005). The introverted feeling type is viewed as brooding and inaccessible and true identify hidden behind a childish mask. They strive to be inconspicuous, make little to no attempt to impress and generally fail to respond to the feelings of others. Therefore making these individuals appears to be artificial (Daniels, 2005).

Learning Styles

Learning styles were defined by Carl G. Jung and Isabel Briggs-Myers. Research suggests that students have different learning styles, not just gender specific, but in the way in which they take in information. Research shows that students whose learning styles match the styles of their teachers, tend to retain information longer, apply what they have learned, learn more and have a more positive attitude towards learning and school (Hilliard, 2001).

Mastery style is a combination of sensing and thinking functioning. These individuals tend to be realistic, practical and matter of fact. They have a higher energy level for things that are pragmatic, logical and useful. These individuals need to be kept busy, (repetitive) and tend to be competitive. Therefore, these individuals like to complete their work in an organized and efficient manner. These individuals also need to be active and they need to be able to see tangible results from their efforts and be in control of their activities. They also tend to prefer step by step directions when given an assignment and become impatient if the instruction becomes too long and wordy (Silver and Hanson, 1998). Teachers whose dominant style is mastery provide students with strategies that require their students to remember facts or definitions. They also use sequences, and create categories and or procedures in their lessons (Dodge, 2005).
Understanding style is a combination of intuitive and thinking functioning. These individuals viewed as theoretical, intellectual and knowledge oriented. They prefer to be challenged intellectually and to think things through. These individuals prefer to work independently or with other thinking types and require little feedback until their work is completed. Intuitive thinkers tend to be avid readers and the written words along with technical illustrations are preferred sources for collecting data. These individuals also display a facility for language and the expression of their ideas (Silver and Hanson, 1998). Teachers whose dominant style is the understanding style provide strategies that encourage students to develop critical and analytical thinking by giving them cause and effect activities. They also help students develop analytical thinking by comparing and contrasting, summarizing, proving hunches, identifying patterns, concepts and proofs (Dodge, 2005).

Self-expressive style is a combination of intuitive and feeling functioning. These individuals are viewed as curious, insightful and imaginative. They prefer to find alternative ways of expressing themselves. These individuals are eager to explore ideas, come up with new solutions to problems and discuss moral dilemmas. Intuitive feelers are highly motivated by their own interests, are independent and non-conforming. However, they do not like time restraints or step by step directions. These individuals are flexible in their thoughts and actions and are not disturbed by changes in routine (Silver and Hanson, 1998). Teachers whose dominant style is the self expressive style provide students with strategies that emphasize and encourage visualizations and imagination. These teachers challenge their students to hypothesize, wonder, elaborate, use metaphors and or solve problems (Dodge, 2005).

Interpersonal is a combination of sensing and feeling functioning. These individuals are viewed as sociable, friendly, and interpersonally-oriented. These individuals are very sensitive to
people's feelings as well as to their own personal feelings. They approach learning from a personal point, meaning they work best when they are emotionally involved in what they are being asked to learn. Sensing feelers enjoy personal attention and need to be recognized for their efforts. They also need to feel relaxed, comfortable and they need to be able to enjoy themselves while learning. These individuals like to think out loud, work with other students, share their ideas and get reactions from their friends. To these individuals cooperation is more important than competition (Silver and Hanson, 1998). Teachers whose dominant style is the interpersonal style provide students with strategies that allow them to converse, deepen their personal relationships, explore their feelings and express their preferences and values (Dodge, 2005).

**Boys’ Preference**

Boys' preferred mode of learning does not fall into one particular or definite category. However because they are wired differently than girls, certain aspects of each learning style are beneficial and vital to their academic success in school. Therefore teachers who have a dominant learning style need to be able to incorporate a variety of learning style characteristics in order for all students to be successful. This ensures that all students learning styles are being met, versus expecting all students to abide by one definite learning style. In a study conducted by Gillian Wheeler (2007) it was noted that boys favored more kinesthetic lessons that included visual prompts. Boys also preferred more active, challenging and risk-taking lessons, which provided them with instant results (Wheeler, 2007).

Teachers need to be flexible and open to ideas and change that will increase learning motivation in the classroom. Teachers can engage the boys in their classrooms by switching from more traditional lessons such as lectures and lengthy notes to more project driven lessons. This includes reading lessons; boys prefer to draw and create what they read about versus acting it
out, relating to how it made them feel and filling in blanks on a worksheet. Gurian (2006) suggests that teachers should allow boys (and girls) to draw out what they just read about first, that way they have a visual aid which will help them formulate their thoughts and ideas more clearly. This also increases boys' motivation in language arts, because they are given choices and their needs are understood. Gurian (2006) also found that boys work well in small groups where they can have a one-to-one contact with the teachers'. Boys' don't do very well in classrooms where there are 30 students to one teacher. Small classrooms also allow teachers the flexibility to adapt their own learning style in order to teach to the learning style of more students in their classroom (Gurian, 2006). Other research also suggests that boys work well with confrontation by their teachers, because the direct challenge will motivate the boys to work harder (Taylor, 2000). Teacher should also address students by their last name (ex: Mr. Adams), because the formality of it increases motivation and discipline in boys. “If you treat boys like men, they are more likely to act like them” (Taylor, 2000).

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to determine if learning styles play a significant role on boys reading performance, and how educators can help motivate boys to become active and engaged readers so that they can increase overall student performance. The findings of this research will also be used to provide teachers with strategies and modifications/accommodations that can be used in the classrooms in order to help motivate boys to read in their classrooms.
Method

Participants

Participants for this research were elementary school teachers from a small elementary school located in East Rochester, New York. The teachers were identified by the grade(s) that they teach during the school year. All of the teachers have mixed grade levels. Grade levels are defined as Kindergarten to Sixth Grade.

Materials

The materials for this research consisted of a questionnaire and survey about the boys in each teacher's classroom. A learning style questionnaire was used to determine the teachers' teaching styles. This will be used to determine how they teach in the classrooms and if their teaching styles benefit the boys in their classrooms or if their teaching styles place the boys in their classroom at a disadvantage.

Design

The present research is educational research that will allow the participants and researchers to gain a better understanding of their own individual learning/teaching styles that influence the overall reading motivation of the boys in their classroom. The design of the research is naturalistic. The researcher is not interested in manipulating any of the variables rather to observe and gather information and data "as is" without any obtrusions. The data that was collected was taken from the Learning Style Inventory for Adults as well as the teacher survey. The data was collected and entered into excel spreadsheets. The data that was collected was entered into an overall table. From the overall table, several tables were then made in order to make more logical sense of the information that was collected. The tables included Table 1
Procedures

The present research was conducted throughout the course of the summer. The first part of the research consisted of a literature review in order to be able to obtain background knowledge on the topic. The actual research took place by giving teachers a learning style inventory. The teachers were handed a “Learning Style Inventory for Adults.” It is taken from Silver Strong & Associates, Inc.: The Thoughtful Education Press (1998). It was developed by Harvey F. Silver and J. Robert Hanson.

Teachers were also given a survey with 10 questions in order to gain a better understanding of the teachers perspectives used in this research. Some of the questions that the teachers were asked in the survey were:

• How old are you?
• How long have you been teaching?
• How many boys are in your classroom?
• How many of your boys can read?
• If your boys are in 5th grade...did they come in as proficient and strong readers?
• If yes how many? If not, how many?
• By the end of the year how many of your boys were reading? How many weren’t reading?
• What are some of the strategies and modifications you made in your classrooms in order to help the boys in your class be successful readers.
The questioner and inventory will allow the researcher to determine the teachers’ learning style as well as an understanding of their personal perspective of their classrooms. This will allow the researcher to determine if the teachers learning style match the research found on the types of teaching styles boys prefer.

Results

The data that was collected for this research came from the Learning Inventory and the Teacher Questioner. The data of the Learning Inventory gathered information on the learning styles of teachers. The mode defines individuals’ level of accessible learning style. The mode in this research paper is identified by dominant (most accessible style that is practiced), auxiliary (accessible style with additional effort), tertiary (least developed style) and inferior (not routinely practiced style). These styles are hierarchical meaning that individuals’ styles go from the most dominant to the most inferior. However, with time the inferior functions become more accessible. The score is obtained from the inventory. The score identifies where the individuals’ accessible level falls (mode). The type identifies what time of learner the individual is; sensing thinking (ST), intuitive thinking (NT), sensing thinking (SF) or intuitive feeling (NF). The learning style is identified by the four learning styles; mastery, self-expressive, understanding and interpersonal. Results indicated that five out of the 10 teachers who participated in the survey showed dominate style as interpersonal learners. Results taken from the teacher questioner showed that out of the average of five boys in their classroom, all five boys enjoyed looking at books even if they could not read. Results also showed that more than 3 boys in each teachers classroom, showed motivation in reading with and without extrinsic rewards. Therefore, results indicated in this study that there was no correlation in the teachers learning style and the
overall motivation on boys reading performance in the classroom. Based on the results the teachers dominant learning style did not influence where or not boys read or were motivated.

**Discussion**

Based on my current research my data did not correlate with prior research. Results did not show a significant correlation between the teachers’ dominant learning style and the level of motivation exhibited by students and their overall reading performance. There are several factors that affected the validity of this study. The first factor was the sample size. Only 20 surveys were handed out and of those 20 surveys 10 of them were returned. The second factor was the population of teachers that were used for this study. The teachers were all Special Education teachers, who worked with a variety of disabilities ranging from learning disabilities to Autism.

The third factor was the setting. The school was a BOCES school with self-contained classrooms; meaning that every teacher only worked with at most 8 students. The fourth factor was that most of the students in the self-contained classrooms were boys whose disability had significantly impacted their educational career. Therefore, despite the teachers learning style and method of teaching, their reading was not at an average level as compared to what one would find in a general education classroom and the data showed no significant results in the boys’ overall reading performance or their motivation to read. These factors all affected the validity and reliability of the study.

I was however, able to tie my observation and knowledge of the student body to prior literature on boys and their learning. The majority of the student body is made up of boys with disabilities. This correlates with the research, which stated that a large percentage of boys are diagnosed with a learning disability. Statistics for the United States show that boys earn about 70 percents of failing marks in school and that less than half earn A’s and two-thirds of boys are
diagnosed with a learning disability and receive special education services. This is supported by research which shows that four boys to one girl are diagnosed as emotionally disturbed, and six boys to one girl are diagnosed with ADD, and two-thirds of boys are given Ritalin (Clavel, 2005).

Based on this information and literature which states that boys learn differently, I hypothesize that the reason that my data did not show significant results, is due to the fact that the boys are all in self-contained classrooms with only 8 classmates one teacher and usually one or two other paraprofessionals. This set up allows for teachers to meet the needs of students by providing them with one on one instruction. The setup also places the boys in most cases in an all male classroom. This is supported by Gurian (2006) who found that that boys work well in small groups where they can have a one-to-one contact with the teachers’. Boys’ don’t do very well in classrooms where there are 30 students to one teacher. Small classrooms also allow teachers the flexibility to adapt their own learning style in order to teach to the learning style of more students in their classroom.

I found a lot of information on how boys’ learn differently because of biological and environmental factors. Based on observation and current research environmental factors influence the way in which boys’ learn. Research shows that boys are also falling behind girls in schools because they lack male role models in their life. Due to increasing changes in family structure, high divorce rates and single mothers, have left many boys fatherless (Tyre, 2006). Recent studies show that about 40 percent of all boys are being raised without their biological dads and without a positive male role model in their life.

According to Matthew Clavel (2005) this has a negative impact on boys more so than girls, because the girls have their mothers, another female to look up to, whereas males don’t
Boys have a father figure to look up to. This is evident in the population of boys that I have had the chance of working with. Most of the boys do not live with their biological fathers for a variety of different reasons; divorce, domestic abuse, other types of abuse, death, or because they are serving jail time. Therefore, they do not have a positive male role model in their lives. However, not all of the students’ fall into this category, some of them do live with their biological fathers or at least have the ability to spend time with them on a daily bases. Further observation showed that two out of the ten teachers who participated in my study were male teachers.

These observations also let me correlate my study to the research because it was found that due to the fact that a majority of the teachers are female, when it comes to reading, boys have no other choice but to view reading as a “girl” thing and not a “boy” thing. Jon Scieszka (2003) stated that seventy-five percent of elementary school teachers and about eighty percent of librarians are female. This supports research, which states that boys need positive and well read males in their lives if they are to view reading as a male “thing” and be motivated to read.

Teachers also have to be willing to give students choices when it comes to reading, because as much as we would like them to read “Ann of Green Gables” in class they would much more prefer about positive males in their world.

I was unable to find any research on the type of learning style that boys preferred. Learning preferences were found however, no research that I was able to access provided definite learning styles of boys according to the types of learning style on the Learning Style Inventory. However, I was able to find that many of the reasons that boys fail is due to the lack of knowledge of teachers when it comes to the ways in which boys prefer to learn.

My data showed that five out of the ten teachers had boys who were motivated to read. Two out of the ten teachers boys’ were not motivated to read. One out of the ten teachers boys’
were split evenly down the middle in terms of being motivated or not motivated. Finally, two of the ten teachers did not answer the question of whether their boys’ were motivated. Research states that boys themselves are transforming their literacy practices to better meet their needs in a rapidly changing world that teachers need to come to terms with in order to maintain their boys’ attention as well as their intrinsic motivation to be readers in the classroom (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Intrinsic motivation will also increase when teachers provide boys’ choices, introduce challenging and interesting text that interest them and also by letting them know that other males, other guys, enjoy reading as well (Scieszka, 2003).

This research supports my data collected from the teachers. Ten out of the ten teachers stated that their boys enjoyed looking at books even if they could not read. This correlated with the research that states that if boys see other boys reading, they will won’t view reading as girl thing but as a guy thing, because all of their peers are looking at books. In the school where I conducted my study, all of the teachers incorporate silent reading time in their classroom, so that during this time all of the students in their classrooms are reading and this might be a reason why all the boys enjoying looking at books. Researchers suggest that boys have their own goals in regards to learning and literacy (Blair and Sanford, 2004). Boys’ select and read texts that allow them to connect with friends and family.

Further research needs to be conducted on how boys’ learn differently. A larger sample size and a learning inventory should be handed out to both the teachers and the male student body. The male student body should also be given a survey in order to find out what they enjoy to read, if they enjoy reading at all, what their personal perspectives are when it comes to reading. Also finding out their likes and dislikes in the classroom when it comes to activities, lessons, and their overall rating of their teachers. In order to be able to gather all this information
one would have to have the necessary resources as well as more time to successfully complete this study.

Dissemination

The results of the data analysis and final report will be bound and submitted to the St. John Fisher College Education department. The findings will also be presented at a Roundtable Discussion Session at St. John Fisher College. The final report may also be shared with colleagues.

Disposition of Data

Confidentiality is a very important part of the research process. Therefore, when the present Capstone research project is completed, all data will remain in a secure location for three years and then destroyed by the researcher.

Consent Forms

A consent form was issued by the researcher for the present research to all of the participants in the study. Teachers received a consent form generated from St. John Fisher College (consent form attached). The consent forms were handed out with the inventory questions as well as with the surveys. All information will be kept confidential.
References


New York.


Washington, D.C.:APA.

Asselin, M. (2003). Bridging the gap between learning to be male and learning to read.


literacy practices. [Electronic version]. Language Arts, 81, (6). p. 252-262


Clarke, B. (2006). Breaking through to the reluctant readers.[Electronic version]. Educational

Leadership,February 2006.


Teacher Librarianm 30 (3), 29-32


motivation of fourth-grade students. [Electronic version]. Reading Research and

Instruction, 42(20), p.17-38.


Hunsader, P.D., (2002). Why boys fail and what we can do about it. Principal (Reston, VA) 82, 52-56.

Jones, J. (2005). Priority male; If we want boys to love books, it’s important to recognize what they want. [Electronic Version]. School Library Journal 51 (3).


# Table 1 (Overall Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers (male/female)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th># Boys</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Chapter Books</th>
<th>Motivate</th>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Reinforce</th>
<th>Enjoy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1 (female)</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2 (female)</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3 (female)</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4 (male)</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (Overall Data continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers (male/female)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th># Boy s</th>
<th>Readin g</th>
<th>Chapter Books</th>
<th>Motivate d</th>
<th>Voluntaril y</th>
<th>Reinforce d</th>
<th>Enjoy Looking @ books can’t read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5 (female)</td>
<td>Dominan t</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6 (female)</td>
<td>Dominan t</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7 (male)</td>
<td>Dominan t</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8 (female)</td>
<td>Dominan t</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (Overall Data continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers Mode</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th># Boys</th>
<th>Reading Books</th>
<th>Chapter Books</th>
<th>Motivated</th>
<th>Volunteered</th>
<th>Reinforced</th>
<th>Enjoy Looking @ books can't read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher 9</strong> (female)</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher 10</strong> (female)</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>Self-Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 (male to female teacher ratio)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 out of the 10 teachers are male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 out of the 10 teachers are female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3 (average mode scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>77.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4 (average types)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Dominant</th>
<th>Auxiliary</th>
<th>Tertiary</th>
<th>Inferior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sei-E-Expressive</td>
<td>2 out of 10</td>
<td>2 out of 10</td>
<td>4 out of 10</td>
<td>2 out of 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>2 out of 10</td>
<td>2 out of 10</td>
<td>3 out of 10</td>
<td>3 out of 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>1 out of 10</td>
<td>3 out of 10</td>
<td>3 out of 10</td>
<td>3 out of 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>5 out of 10</td>
<td>3 out of 10</td>
<td>0 out of 10</td>
<td>2 out of 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5 (boys information in regards to reading)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Boys</th>
<th># of Boys Reading</th>
<th>Chapter Books</th>
<th>Motivated to read</th>
<th>Voluntarily Picks up Books</th>
<th>Reinforced (extrinsic rewards)</th>
<th>Enjoy Looking at Books (can't read)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Boys 50**