

Helping Boys & Girls Learn

Vol 10 - Issue 5E

Parenting for Success in Elementary School

Are There Differences In Reading Achievement Between Boys & Girls?

The Center for Education Policy released a report in March 2010 that stated:

In reading, girls outperformed boys in 2008 at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Higher percentages of girls than boys scored at or above the proficient level on state reading tests at grade 4, grade 8, and high school; in some states, these gaps exceeded 10 percentage points.

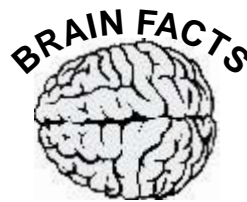
As we learn more and more about how boys and girls learn differently, the gender gap in literacy becomes an important place for both parents and schools to focus their attention. For parents of elementary age children, there are a number of specific strategies that can be implemented in the home to help boys be as prepared as possible for the world of reading and writing as they begin their journey through school.

Read to your child every day - both mom and dad. If both parents aren't available, have an older brother, uncle, grandpa, male friend read to your son. Boys need to see men reading, hear men reading, learn that reading is something guys enjoy doing. As his reading skills get better, take turn reading!

Make sure your son has a library card and make regular trips to the library to check out books--and let him choose! This is a great way to make sure there are books in your son's world even if you can't afford to buy a lot of books.

Buy books cheaply at yard and garage sales. For a fraction of the retail price you can build a nice library for your son's room.

Recommend books as birthday and Christmas gifts for your child from friends and relatives when they ask for suggestions. Learning to love and value books is a big step toward closing the literacy gap between our boys and girls.



The female brain has more cortical area designated for processing language than the male brain. Research shows that, on average, girls have a larger vocabulary when they start school than do boys. Exposure to language – lots of language – is one way to help boys expand their vocabulary. Talk to your sons (and daughters) a lot – while riding in the car, shopping, cooking, hanging out with them – encourage language development!



Check This Out

Resources for Parents

A great website with lots of helpful tips for parents on helping their children learn to read and improve their growing reading skills:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/earlyreading/index.html>

Summer Session

How can you help your child maintain the progress made during the school year over the summer break? Here are some suggestions we think you'll find helpful.

Sign your child up for any summer reading programs at the library.

Most community libraries have summer reading programs to encourage kids to read while out of school. Many include incentives and prizes. If your library has such a program, sign your child up and add your own incentives to motivate him or her to really read up a storm.



When you are planning your summer family vacation, let your child help. If you are traveling, have your child investigate your destination and find out about activities in the area. If you are going camping, let your child help plan menus, shopping lists, anything that will encourage reading and writing.



Design a plan for letting your child earn some extra spending money over the summer. Make a list of tasks he or she could complete on a periodic or regular basis, and decide how much that task is worth. Get a notebook, write the list in the front, and then have your child document each time the task is completed and how much you owe. In return, have your child keep a log of income and how it's spent. This work on not only language skills but math skills as well.



When your child wants to do something special (like make a visit to grandparents or go to camp for a week) have your child make the request in writing. Be sure the request explains clearly what the child wants to do, when, if there is cost involved, and why it's a good idea for you to approve! Make a written response. You can also discuss it, but making a written record helps your child learn how to express him or herself and make a good case for something wanted.



A-B-Cs

Boys generally develop language skills later than girls, so help your boy by including lots of words in his world. Talk to him, read to him, listen to him, play word games--and by all means possible make words fun!

Scavenger Hunt

Make a list of common things you can find around your house and yard. Determine a prize for finding all the things on the list, perhaps a trip to the ice cream store or a special outing.

Let your son play the game alone, or invite a friend or friends over to help. Have him gather all the items in a box or basket (depending on size). Make some items easy to find and make some a little more difficult.

This game includes both reading and problem solving and can be played again and again by just changing the list.

While girls tend to develop advanced language skills early, their spatial skills may be on a slower track. Including lots of spatial play in their play activities like those listed will be fun and promote early learning of math concepts and skills needed in kindergarten and elementary school.

1-2-3s

Celebrate Go Fly A Kite Day

Spatial awareness activities, like building and flying a kite, are great ways for girls to develop their spatial skills. Go Fly a Kite Day is celebrated in May, so visit this website:

<http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/mayholidays/l/blmay12th.htm>

and find patterns for building a kite with your daughter. Then find a nice open space at a park and let her fly! Your local library will also have books about how to build a kite.



