

SABBATICAL REPORT

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An opportunity to research further the variety of ways Primary Schools in New Zealand can address the underachievement of boys in literacy.

In Term 3, I had the opportunity of a sabbatical to explore further the achievement levels of boys, with a specific reference to their underachievement of boys in literacy in a Primary school setting. Much has been written about this subject both here in NZ and across the world; however most of the research looks more at the Secondary school context. I hope my paper is of use and interest to Primary schools in particular as it seems to make sense that if we are to change the way boys achieve the earlier we can do this the better.

This paper is the result of reading, research, discussions with teachers/principals and school visits.

I will structure my paper in 4 parts: what schools can do to lift the achievement levels; what individual class teachers can do; what the Government/ MOE can do ; what parents can do.

There is no single quick fix to this problem, rather I would argue it is the cumulative effect of some the following that will/ can make the difference.

I would also argue that boys underachievement in literacy levels can be reversed by systematic targeted intervention, excellent teaching and supportive school culture. These suggestions are also in no particular order

PART A

THE SCHOOL

- Addressing the achievement levels of boys and gender differences has to start firstly with the school culture and address the key question – “Why would a boy wake up each morning and be excited at going to school?”
- How stimulating is your school culture for boys – could your school be labelled as a boring place
- Do the boys in your school leave each day /each year with a sense of success or boredom
- A good school for boys- [M. Urwin]- strong emphasis on learning; celebrates excellence; encourages individual academic pursuit; strong traditions; has a sense of pride ; regular daily physical activity; strong eotc; equal emphasis on the arts and sciences; encourages student voice; has strong welfare and pastoral care ; has clear boundaries and protocols; has a social responsibility and sense of community; encourages parent participation
- How can we maintain that spark that we all remember as parents with our boy’s first starting school – the countdown the eagerness the anticipation – that first day at school. Why does this spark so often go out all too quickly for our boys
- How much emphasis do you place on health / physical activity; EOTC and sport? Literacy and numeracy do and always will dominate our curriculum but equally important is physical activity and health. We must protect this curriculum area
- Timetabling daily regular fitness; sport; interschool sport; camps; day trips so that it happens. Keeping boys in classrooms without a state change a chance to let off excess energy , without any physical movement is unhealthy and leads quickly to frustration
- Invest in sandpits – big ones! Our sandpits are the most consistent piece of play equipment daily for boys – just watch and listen to the play/ talk/interaction/focus/ the detail / the construction /the tunnels/castles/volcanoes/the creativity – wonderful play for boys; replenish

the sand once a year seems to do but if you need to cover it there are cheap ways of keeping the cats out with cloth

- The senior management must ensure these activities are happening in the school
- Lunchtime sport/ activities. The playground needs to be a busy, vibrant, active and keenly looked forward to time in the school day. If boys have had a constructive break been busy, active and happy during that break then when returning to class after a break they are more able to focus
- Break activities- might include – organised games; sports teams coaching; duty teachers released from normal duty to take organised sport, teachers aides /parents / senior students taking these; a school having a sports co-ordinator; ample quality sports gear available for boys to use at break times; adventure playgrounds; swimming pools open at lunch times; fitness trails; different equipment on offer –e.g. unicycles; moon hoppers; double dutch ropes ..
- An investment in play equipment and activities is essential – yes some will get lost and broken – but if it is being used it is an investment in the well being of the boys
- Developmental – the cornerstone of every junior classroom for decades must remain- the play dough, water trays, blocks, dress up box, shop, Lego etc must be a permanent part of every junior room at least.
- I AM NOT SAYING ALL BOYS MUST/DO LOVE SPORT – just giving them ample opportunities to move, throw, jump, run..... Provides a state change that then allows them to focus back in classroom. Burning up that excess energy level pays dividends
- The importance of play is just so vital. Many boys have come from a vibrant preschool environment then a switch is turned and they must conform to a desk and sitting on the mat and their bodies are just not ready or willing to do this for long periods
- These play activities don't have to be always sport related- some boys will have absolutely no interest in sport – so the outside chess club; maybe inside board games ; karaoke ; the library open at break times – schools need to be continually exploring opportunities for boys to get busy and involved outside of classroom activities
- As mentioned literacy and numeracy will always be important – always; you can tell my views on health and physical activity ; alongside this with also equal importance to these three are the Arts – music, drama , visual arts, playing and performing – the school band with cool boy on lead guitar or drums – the choir – with boys ; a boys only choir; the school production that puts forth boys who we never realised had that special talent ; I can still remember the school productions where boys had major roles and they weren't the stars of the school academically or on the sports field but they became stars overnight with their singing/ dancing /acting prowess
- We need to learn the lessons from mistakes made overseas where the curriculum has become so narrow that these subjects/activities/ experiences are no longer included – we must protect these subjects as a profession – protect with a passion
- EOTC – invest in PD ; reduce the barriers for teachers to not take day trips/ camps ; assist and support teams/ teachers to get out of the classroom ; strong leadership , strong modelling and feedback so this is a regular part of the school calendar ; EOTC has been a unique feature of NZ schools historically – we must protect this; these opportunities are where boys can and do shine; they often turn out to be the stars of the camp ; the student you didn't realise had special talents ; the student you instantly develop a special relationship with; importantly it is also the time when many dads make

themselves available to help out – a wonderful chance to get to know dad/
develop a relationship / model how good men behave

- We have to appreciate that EOTC creates a lifelong memory – at the 100th year reunion of your school and you are acquainted with a student from 20 years ago – they won't remember your fantastic maths lesson on Pythagoras but there is a high chance they remember the ski camp and the snowball fight where they got you a beauty!!
- Work hard at getting that gender mix in your staff- it happens at Secondary and Intermediate – it doesn't happen at Primary where it is so vital to have good males in and around a school. Schools have to widen this to caretakers, teachers aides, helpers so there is a gender balance. Refer my comments about what the govt could do in this area to make teaching an attractive career. There are good male teachers out there – not just males because they have to be excellent teachers first and foremost and if they are also male they are like GOLD to any school or staff.
- IT IS NOT THE GENDER OF THE TEACHER THAT COUNTS FOR BOYS- FIRST AND ALWAYS FIRST IT IS EXCELLENT TEACHERS WITH EXCELLENT PEDAGOGY – HOWEVER IF THOSE EXCELLENT TEACHERS CAN ALSO BE MALE – THIS NEEDS TO BE THE GOAL
- Expectations – much has been written about this topic. With National Standards upon us we need to lift the bar with our expectations of boys. Clear communication of the standard required the higher the better will surprise even the sceptics as to what can be achieved. We have seen a turn around at secondary where initially it was how many credits you got was the measure- now anyone can get credits the expectation is now how many merits and excellent you can achieve
- E.g. in a primary school – expectation that you are reading at your chronological age at 9; can stand and deliver a talk or a speech to the rest of the class on a topic of your choice ; can read every night ; can run the 2km cross country without stopping
- The skill of the teacher is then to state the expectation clearly in kids speak ; continually verbalising, modelling showing what high expectations look like; break it down into stages ; give ample opportunity to master those stages and then make it happen ; the boys must clearly know the expectation and why and – the link to the real world- the purpose
- We often frustrate ourselves when expectations are not met – e.g. the behaviour of boys during a sports exchange with another school – this could be prevented if the boys are clearly explained to beforehand – “these are our expectations when school X is here and if this happens this is what you do and this is WHY”
- Same applies to a simple familiar activity like a school assembly – “At assembly these are our expectations and this is what it looks and sounds like” ; or a quality piece of narrative or poetic writing – “these are excellent examples of narratives- these are the parts and this is what you are expected to be able to do” -
- Leadership modelling – who are getting all the awards in your prizegivings; who are being continually paraded at the school assemblies ; who have the lead roles at assemblies; productions; choirs and wider school leadership – there must be a gender balance in these areas so little Johnny sitting at a school assembly sees and has modelled what both boys can and do achieve – not just a parade of girls – creating a gender balance of excellence
- Schools must have clear expectations- rules- responsibilities- boundaries – and clear and simple rationale for these. Boys are looking for schools to be a safe place – a place that has no surprises – a school that stands for specific qualities I suppose embraced by the concept of school culture. For many

boys schools will be the only normal place in their hectic lives – a place of sanctuary – a place that protects them from a world that presents so many difficulties/ contradictions and mixed messages.

- Boys have difficulty with surprises – sudden change – they like the safety and security of routine. I suppose that is why we need to treasure our day to day relievers who often fill in for the one person the boy has a relationship with- and can often be a trigger for behaviour changes if they don't know the class or school culture
- Invite your neighbouring High Schools to get involved in your primary school
- We currently have a dozen senior boys from the Boys College coming in twice a week working with our younger boys- in the classroom and in the playground. I would argue it's a win win situation – for both sets of boys and all it took was an invitation at the start of the year to the College to get involved in our school Huge spinoffs – many of which can't be measured !
- We have been guilty over the previous decade of parading sporting stars only in front of our boys and send the message be like me. We should be deliberately parading a wide range of heroes for the boys- the artists; the poets; the authors; politicians; the lawyers; the engineers---sowing the seed that there is an exciting world of so many possibilities out there that are within their reach e.g. Such people like Peter Jackson; John Key ; Witi Iramaera to name but a few. And don't forget your dads – the expert hunter/ fisherman / mechanic / truck driver coming in and sharing their life stories
- A person in charge of co-ordinating the role models at school uses is an important school wide role
- Are you a sports orientated school – for boys this is absolutely essential ; join in the cluster sports activities your area offers; invite in the specialist coaches; have a quality lead in to the major sporting activities- cross country; develop that sense of competition; encourage the inter school exchanges –never underestimate how much boys look forward to these occasions – the anticipation/talk/banter /sense of satisfaction/ exhaustion afterwards – and the discussion reading – writing – research it can often lead to afterwards; we had the captain of the Silver Ferns at our school last year and she spoke of the first time she was selected for the primary school netball team – she slept in her netball uniform the night before – so much was she looking forward to the occasion; her teacher probably never knew that –
- Alongside this is stopping over competitiveness but just reinventing sport for enjoyment, as a great workout for self and social development and most importantly exercise
- Try and avoid the situation of punishing boys for misdemeanours in the classroom with consequences outside – you have not been working hard enough at writing time so you are not playing in the rugby team this afternoon – this sort of teacher attitude is plainly bullying and begs the question as to why they weren't working hard in class in the first place – ; certainly there will be times when serious behaviour leads to non selection – but exhaust all alternative solutions first because selection can be your buy in for better work habits before the next game!
- This also applies to camps- often the most difficult boy in the class can be thought of as a huge liability on camp; worry, concern, not being able to trust , what will he get up to ---- yet often that most difficult boy turns out to be the STAR of the camp – this happens often. Inclusion can lead to then another win win situation- the relationship with the class teacher is then seen in a positive light and they don't look back. Just imagine what non inclusion would have caused and the future battles for the rest of the year.
- Rough and tumble play – there are ways to include this in the playground; bullrush; scrag; dodge ball.... All rougher games maybe its a teacher in the

background ; maybe some starting rules; if its tackle rugby – again a teacher present helps; boys see the barging runs by our ABS or the big hits of a Warrior and they want to try this out - there should be opportunities for the rough and tumble

- Keep the expectations high across the school for your boys- academic, behaviour, social, cultural, emotional – you get what you expect. We have to lift the bar – the expectation level for boys as a school as a nation otherwise nothing will change
- At my current school we have had a boy's only class for last 5 years in the y3-4 area of the school. This class is taken by a female teacher just to prove that boy's only classes don't necessarily have to therefore be taken by a male. It is a successful option and one all schools should consider as an option – it suits some boys and some teachers and is now becoming a more common option other schools have implemented. Class programmes are centred on themes/topics that help to engage boys; the day is broken up into chunks; there are frequent energy/ movement breaks and it has a unique culture of its own with some lively discussions. It is certainly an option to consider and is not a big deal considering most of the boys will be back in a boys only environment when they start High School
- Other schools run single sex literacy classes – as an attempt to address achievement – again an option to explore
- Schools have run father/ son breakfasts – with a guest speaker ; again a chance to get the message out to the male community that dads/ males/ significant males are very important in the lives of boys; a chance to share dreams , aspirations and sow the seed there is a wonderfully exciting world out there just waiting for our boys; very importantly these role models continually sowing the seed that reading/writing/speaking – literacy is important
- My current school runs Blokes Camps - father/ son /or significant male in their live- a wonderful opportunity to do some blokes activities- eeling; abseiling; campfire cooking; bivouacs with a group of males. A chance to model how good men behave, interact and work together. We mix the group too with younger and older boys so there is also a mentoring effect. It is a small group of 16 boys often with 12 males to accompany them. Sometimes its dad/ stepdad/ uncle/ big brother/ granddad/ friend – again a very unique boys experience
- Use the mentoring concept within your school- boys mentoring younger boys- in reading; librarians; assisting with playground sport; school council; school monitors; running assemblies...
- Use the men on your staff to model how good men act and behave – respect/ humour; high learning standards, celebrating excellence – for many male teachers you are the significant male in boys lives - you have the potential to be a very powerful influence on them; being a male is not enough though
- It is of no use just having males on your staff and thinking this will now address boy's issues. There needs to be training of male teachers in the mentor role. Male teachers need to genuinely care for the boys; they need to understand the importance of caring for the spirit as well as the memory banks of their students. Some male teachers will be poor role models because they have never received the mentoring required to impart these skills- training needs to cover – counselling, conflict resolution, understanding of how lack of affection can often lead to aggression as a substitute, ways to care for fatherless boys, how to redirect energies into constructive ways, skills of tough love – and teaching thinking and problem solving as a means of self discipline

- Intervention reading programmes – will be dominated by boys- reading recovery; SAAR; rainbow reading ; buddy reading; paired/peer writing; talk to learn; toe by toe ; take home reading journals ; one on one specialist help in literacy; hpp; ppp; parent tutors; Jolly phonics
- The school library – needs to be a vibrant place; centres of interest; magazine section; posters; photos of boys reading ; boys as librarians ; the selection of books based on topics boys like
- I strongly recommend the PMP programme- perceptual motor skills programme- an activity based, hands on programme that develops those essential motor skills so essential for boys – this programme targets the junior school
- We have a construction group of boys who work with a T.A o set afternoons – on woodwork projects – not only learning woodwork but also social skills
- Schools in Australia have used the Rock and Water programme – focusing on self control and self management
- Some co-ed Secondary Schools have single sex literacy classes – maybe primary school could consider the same concept as an intervention programme to address underachievement by engaging them in literacy programmes that have material, approaches, teaching and learning styles and reading preferences
- With school wide data collection across a wide range of focus areas – social, academic, behaviour it is important to analyse this data by gender as well as other factors. Having a continuous picture of how well your boys are /not doing is important – ‘how are the boys achieving in your school – what evidence do you have?’
- Educate staff on how emotionally fragile boys are , how they hide their fragility in bravado, aggression and silence; part of this is giving them opportunities to express their feelings and the vocabulary to do this- hurt-shame, anxiety, frustration
- Staff need to be vigilant in seeking out the boys that are loners – who need help
- Bullying is a huge issue for boys – it simply needs to be eliminated from school – the effect of the bully on victims , other boys , other bullies – is huge
- We need to increase the affirmations that boys receive- staff to notice when boys do well – tell them – tell their teacher so they can tell them- we need to significantly increase the positive messages boys take in to at least offset the huge negative messages the media portrays
- Be totally optimistic about the future so boys will too. They fear the future , are anxious about their lives as men , often don't want to grow up
- Boys need hugs and this doesn't change as they get older-it is essential for parents and teachers connecting with boys that they are allowed to comfort them or touch them in an appropriate way – sometimes this might be a handshake, a hand on the shoulder , a pat on the back . Violence and aggressive boys are often the victim of being uncuddled and touch therapy is one technique used worldwide

Central to all of this is change – nothing will change for boys unless schools, teachers, controlling bodies change – doing the same old same old is not an option

PART B

THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

- Boys learn teachers not subjects – very powerful realisation for the classroom teacher.
- Once you have developed a positive relationship with boys – they like and respect you – you will be amazed as to what they can achieve. I have seen it with my own two boys who suddenly developed an interest in geography or economics. When we explored it deeper it was obvious they liked and respected the teacher who just happened to have an interest in these subjects but also took a genuine interest in – our case – their sporting involvements – ‘I watched your rugby game o Sat and wow what a great try
- Boys work harder for teachers they like- the programme involves an element of physical activity and challenge; learning is presented as new and exciting
- Ian Lillico advocates – teachers forming real relationships with their boys, encourage boys to think before they act, don’t lecture or berate in front of a class, balance negative media influences with heaps of positive messages, teachers should be free to physically comfort boys, bring in male role models to promote boys becoming better readers, a boys behaviour will only be modified through praise
- Michael Urwin lists these cares and respects the learner; builds positive relationships ; uses humour; collaborates and listens; helps; focuses on learning; encourages learning talk; activity bases; explains clearly; sets clear and high expectations ; uses co-operative learning ; gives specific feedback; recognises personal best ; has firm clear fair expectations
- I can still remember a very special male teacher I had at Intermediate for 2 years- Joe Harrison. Joe was strong on literacy and sport and later became a literacy lecturer at Teachers College. Not surprisingly I became very interested in reading/ writing and sport. I still have vivid memories of arriving at school each morning during summer at 7.30 am! To play cricket and to try and get Joe out or keep out his spin bowling. On Saturday afternoons we use to bike around Chch to where Joe was playing senior cricket and watch – Joe was a very powerful person in my life during that time in my life and beyond. I learnt Joe as a teacher/person first and foremost
- Boys are very perceptive- many are use to adults who don’t care; break promises ; violent ; don’t walk the talk – they can quickly scan a person to work out if that person is genuine- don’t ever underestimate their power of perception and this power is not age related they have this skill at a very early age
- Boys and girls are different –if anything is to change for boys we must do things differently- treating boys and girls as all the same is doomed to just continuing the status quo – in this respect the most important learner I the classroom is not the child it is the teacher
- Known differences include – brain development; language acquisition; hearing; interpreting facial expressions; anatomy of the eye; colours ; movement ; muscle development ; attention spans; need to move – the list goes on
- So what – the need to include physical activity ; visual stimulation and the need to be close to the action – close to the teaching focus not down the back where they will struggle to see, hear and lose attention quickly

- Strategies that help boys – visual classroom environment ; seating plans – they need a plan for seating but they don't need to be sitting next to the same child for the whole year; your own style needs to cater for their differences and might include the use of humour; you telling your life stories; your sad times and happy times ; real life experience that the learning is linked too ; the visual ; the dramatic - ; beware the sea of blah – the teacher talking and talking comes out as blah blah blah in a short period of time ; the skill is to bring them back from the sea of blah; breaking learning activities into manageable chunks – if its writing a quality narrative then setting the scene becomes a chunk ; breaking learning times with physical movement chunks as well ; boys love the chance of competition and thank goodness we are now realising this – competition is healthy it is real and we are now teaching children to be and handle competition in a healthy way – boys love the challenge – the edge of a competitive challenge
- Strategies to address boys reading achievement should be based on the reading interests the boys currently have- talk to your boys – what are their interests- what do they like reading about
- Look at the concept of reading incentives- bribery and corruption works fine in my school- whether its certificates, vouchers, take home reading nights recorded , reading mileage incentives- tying the reward /incentive into changing reading habits is the key – maybe this could be free time; special activities; reward vouchers; special video sessions[of course based on a good book] – the incentive scheme you run within your classroom is the key
- A books cover- title – topic can turn your boys on or off
- Promote excellent books for boys to read – through your teacher reading; promoting new books in the library; the class library ; just sharing good books – maybe it's the latest Paul Jennings ; Goosebumps; reading a very humorous section from a book and then having it available for boys to follow up on
- Listen to your boys – the adult world does not genuinely listen to young people- we all need to do more genuine listening and creating forums for boys to share their views. What is our response when a comment is made “this is boring miss/sir”
- Qualities boys made about teachers they liked- exciting/funny/ makes work fun; tells jokes; cheerful; friendly/ kind/listens/understands; has a long temper; not too strict; doesn't shout; is strict; has enough discipline; helpful ; explains well makes work clear; fair; gives you respect; gives you enough time ; makes lessons interesting ; has same interests; doesn't go on and on or talk for ages or talk about the same thing --- very much home truths these are probably qualities that we as adults admire in other adults
- Physical activity – fitness; sport lessons team sports must not be just timetabled it must be regular and it must happen. A teacher's age, gender , immobility or disinterest in physical activity must not be an excuse for this not happening as a normal part of a school day for boys
- Get out at break times and play with the kids; watch – observe encourage. By taking time to see their play in action you see another side of their makeup ; I heard of a school who asks all teachers to be out at lunchtimes in those first 3 weeks of a school year again just to get to know the kids- I would argue not just the first 3 weeks
- Have you got a developmental corner – not just a junior room concept-an area where boys can go to to play within the classroom – maybe in action before school; free time; early finish of work ; time out
- Day trips should be at least a regular term activity-e.g. museum/ art gallery/ animal park etc – planned linked to learning – get the parents[dads] along too;

weekly activities outside of the classroom- maybe the creative writing in the nature reserve/ the sketching of a local building

- Camps – plan and look forward to these; especially from year 4 up – yes they will be lots of work- yes you will be exhausted – yes there will be hiccups unplanned but that’s valuable learning anyway. But yes there will be rich dividends and returns for you as the class teacher as your relationship and knowledge of the boys is enhanced
- Lock the boys in your classroom at your peril!- no daily fitness/ health – no pe – no trips no visits- no experiences outside of the classroom then don’t blame it on the boys and say they can’t focus or concentrate or listen – blah blah – examine/ review and include an active EOTC programme as part of your class
- Every teacher should have a sound theoretical background in Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence theory, which should also be included in all teacher training. By having this background and then seeing the range of intelligences boys have and display rather than just the mathematical logical so traditionally aligned with achievement in schools. That boy who has wonderful personal and interpersonal qualities- empathy – able to help and lead; see a situation ; read the signs and make a judgement and decision on what they see and feel without an adult telling them - one of the many Gardner intelligences that are equally important as the mathematical logical. Gardner would also advocate that we as teachers ensure and check the boy knows they have this special SMART or intelligence
- Every boy has special strengths/ interests/smarts/intelligence – the challenge for us as teachers is to know our boys so well we are able to cater for these. How well do you know your boys
- It is now clearly evident relationships is the KEY – as already mentioned the boys radar can quickly scan the qualities they are looking for in teachers – teachers that care about them; they give clear explanations and take time with these instructions by chunking these into manageable chunks; they don’t just rely on the auditory but also include the visual, the kinaesthetic the hands on practical learning by doing; reduce the time of sitting passively listening – numb bums produce numb brains; continue to set clear yet high expectations; use praise and feedback signalling to boys when they are making progress; instil in the boys a sense of personal pride
- Boys quickly turn off teachers who yell - mind you everyone turns off people who yell
- The classroom routines, behaviour management techniques are crucial. Boys need to see the teacher is in control – fair and consistent in their application of these rules and rules that have a clearly explained reason
- Boys as Celia Lashlie has advocated need clear boundaries maybe the analogy of a fence is best – they want to know where the fence is , what happens if they cross the fence , they will challenge the fence and yes they will cross the fence – sometimes to see what happens next. It is vital that if a specific consequence has been told to the boys that if a rule is broken this is what happens next – boys will be watching astutely do you do what you said you would do – the link with speak and actions
- In all of this clearly defined rules and expectations are crucial
- Boys start to school must be successful – ensure there is much time set aside for play, for construction, for imagination for developmental activities. Judging the time when boys are ready for the formalities of reading and writing takes great professional judgement. Getting them happy , confident , interacting positively and familiar with the class and school culture is the important first step

- Be aware of the writing and reading topics that interest and engage boys – the crazy, the funny, the bazaar. I can vividly remember the boys who had a weird fascination with the mummification process of the ancient Egyptians as they removed all a persons internal organs with wire through the orifices of the body!
- Writing experts would agree – boys need to know in writing – the purpose – why are we doing this and who is the audience – who is actually going to read it
- At my current school we have a boy's only class – the readers the teacher chooses for instructional reading; shared reading; books they read to the whole class are so important in selecting and will be different than say the books chosen for a mixed class. Getting to know literature that captures the immediate interest of boys is vital
- As leading learners in our schools, we must live and breathe and speak learning. That is how our school community picks up the priorities in learning
- If you are lucky enough to have a high school not far away then invite these senior students to come and work in your class. The power of mentoring – older working with younger is immense. This can also be set up internally with say year 6 with year 2 buddy reading; but College boys are better. Seeing big year 13 boys sitting and reading with younger boys is a very powerful teaching situation
- That daily fitness session should be a non negotiable part of the day – the earlier in the morning the better – burn off some of that energy early –it helps the focus for the rest of the day ; and if the teacher can join in the better; look at the rest of your days programme and set aside break times to help chunk the learning – ‘ right run and touch 2 sets of rugby posts; 5 minutes on the adventure playground ; fast walking back to class and we are all seated by the time the big hand is on 5 – go “
- Counselling boys – some helpful strategies from M.Irwin – be shoulder to shoulder rather face to face; don't be afraid of silence – sometimes a calming down time is required; don't lecture – short brief statements; avoid sarcasm – put downs- shaming – keep the comments factual rather than emotional and the high moral ground – I hear you had a fight today and some punches were thrown; from reports it was you and Josh and maybe Fred--; give the boy the chance to offer solutions; offer choices; offer support – demonstrate you care – “how are things at home” be shoulder to shoulder with them rather face to face
- Sometimes in the heat of an incident we forget these useful strategies – another useful hint – don't talk /reason to an angry face – you are wasting your time ; give some space and time for the anger to dissipate – sometimes this is a 10 minute time and then you can have a discussion
- Yes there will be fights and acts of physical aggression- they are stressful / difficult to handle yet often a process of working through the incident, restorative practise can lead to the boys being the best of mates ; a few punches swung blindly , venting of anger , hopefully do no injury can have a positive side
- I have seen that boys like to know a pecking order exists- with school they need to know the teacher is in charge and has fair and consistent rules and expectations and if something goes wrong in class they deal with it ; they need to be aware there is a chain higher up – team leader/syndicate leader / deputy principal; then if you end up at the principal you have done something serious ; they will spot very quickly when a teacher doesn't deal with a class incident or a duty teacher a playground incident - ; if a teacher deals with an incident by sending the child straight to the principal then they give away the respect the child had for the teacher . They need order and can work it out

very quickly if this person has and deserves respect. That is why school culture is so important – and consistency across the staff in dealing with difficult situations; sometimes teachers from another area of the school will have difficulty with say a senior child- often because both don't know each other very well; part of the restorative process is getting to know the child better and the child clearly knowing this teacher has the same expectations of other teachers in the school. They will spot the consistency and they will also spot the inconsistency

- Pecking order in the playground – boys also need to know who is the toughest in the play ground , the person not to mess with , the boy who has the most mana and respect; and there will be a no.2 and then a no.3 – they are happy with the pecking order as that is part of routine of school. Sometimes this pecking order can get upset especially when a new boy arrives on the scene as he can challenge who is boss. It certainly helps the school if no.1 is not a bully himself – just big, strong, and fast with a nice nature to go with it – just so long as the boys know you don't mess with him. At my current school I have a big, strong, fast Tongan boy – he is no 1 and lucky for us he has a great nature. He doesn't have to be tough and threaten and bully – but he is no 1 and everybody knows you don't mess with Sosaia!. All this gives boys a sense of order which they need. This applies to the playground; the class and to home – who is the boss!
- Keep your expectations high in your class for your boys – you get what you expect
- R. Brown e suggests when planning consideration is given to these 4 elements that are important for boys- fun- playfulness, variety , celebration of learning, freedom-choices, knowing and choosing how I learn best ,power- recognition, being listened to, belonging- working together as a group
- Snippets from other teachers who have run boys only classes- enthusiasm initially is high then it needs harnessing; boys need for physical activity- inside /outside the class; “doing stuff with the boys is important – join in the 1km run each morning!; get a school vege garden going so the planting/weeding /watering can be done by boys get out at break times joining in their games or just being there to observe and encourage; reframing competition to personal best; boys love challenges- once you ignite that interest and enthusiasm there can be wonderful enthusiasm for learning; parent speakers coming into the class- dads coming in and showing their work as electricians/ builders/ mechanics ; lots of teaching of social skills and emotional intelligence ; lots of class meetings; modelling a positive focus – Good news talks- looking for the positive ; fairness and sportsmanship; admitting mistakes and learning from these; give clear instructions; consistent behaviour management within the class; lots of training in group skills
- Another teacher comments- most boys predominantly are kinaesthetic learners; reducing the length of sustained periods of learning – chunking; use the headlines from the newspaper each day to start discussions; have a 2000 piece jigsaw on the go – great activity for cooperative learning; furniture to read in /on- cushions for those who prefer the floor – lounge suite for loungers; lots of magazines- on wide range of topics- skateboarding- fishing – trucks----; using the team dynamics to change behaviour – one person lets down the team; catch them doing good things; one rule – do the right thing; focus on the 3rs- rights- respect – responsibility; behaviour addressed away
- Boys reading habits can be non fiction biased - - some titles and authors to get boys reading fiction- Janice Marriots Monster series; Jack Lasenbys Uncle Trev stories; Operation Terror by Margaret Mahy; The Goat Hunt by Daniel Rubinstein; and Canadian writer Gary Paulsen are good reads. As a teacher it's a matter of having wide literacy knowledge and sharing these

good reads with boys and also other teachers. Paul Jennings, Dahls, Raymond Briggs –“fungus the bogey man” or “how to eat fried worms”; John Marsden with his war series

- We regularly share as a staff – books boys would enjoy reading or having read to them. There are many many great books available now so it is important to have a forum that allows teachers to keep up to date. This should also be a part of Teacher training – so young teachers are aware of the importance of the literature type they make available for boys

PART C

PARENTS/THE HOME

- Destroy the play stations and x boxes!!!
- Monitor and control the watching of TV – it’s your TV – these are the TV times in the house; watch programmes as a family. Try turning off the TV and see what can happen
- Boys spending most of their leisure time in front of electronic gadgets have the potential to turn out monsters!
- Play – teach your children to play ; play with your kids; value and treasure those family holidays
- A traditional NZ holiday was the holiday in the seaside camping ground or just camping holiday – so rich in the social aspects of living> I am sure there must be a correlation between families that play together stay together – whether it be holidays or leisure activities or a wider sense of family where family occasions bring the wider family together regularly
- Get your boys involved in activities outside of school so they learn to mix, play and interact with others – whether it be scouts/cubs/ swimming club, drama tiddlywinks as long as they have a rich fabric of other activities outside of school and family . Sadly in NZ there are too many boys who have nothing – nothing to look forward to when a weekend comes or long holiday.
- Homework myth – a little bit of basic facts/ spelling and 10 minutes reading every night is all that is required. At primary school. Don’t judge a school by the quantity of homework given and the fancy photocopied homework sheets that must drive many families to despair. Maybe homework should include cook a 3 course family meal once a week; visit the old retired lady down the street offering to help in any way. Be aware of the myths around homework
- When the boys come home from school – don’t sit them down for another hour of schoolwork or babysit them for the next 4 hours of TV – turn the TV off- give them a snack and let them go out and play and burn up their energy levels
- There is a high correlation between sleep and an active physical day
- Make the most of our natural beauty and physical resources. Often we don’t realise how lucky we are until we travel overseas. No matter where we live we have easy access to the beach, waterways, the bush, the mountains – make the most of these. I know with our own children we spent much time at Ohope beach – a wonderful playground – walking, cricket, and swimming, sand castles – no cost – simple uncomplicated enjoyment – no arguments – especially if you had an ice block on the way home. We are so lucky to have these at our doorstep but sadly going to the river/bush/beach is a foreign experience for many of our boys –
- Boys need the rough and tumble – the cuts/ bumps and bruises- the outdoor play – not expensive – it might be a homemade hut; a sandpit; a pile of dirt; a hose ; old paint buckets; boxes ; a place to ride their bike; to do jumps ; to

make things; bits of wood a hammer/nails ; a place to play rugby scrag kick a ball run; be an all black pretender.....; a continuation of many of the activities that any preschool has to offer . It is simple , inexpensive and accessible ; they need the play fights with dad – the rolling around with dad – the tickling holding and as they get older dad needs a wider repertoire of holds or cheap moves to win!; boys learn that rough and tumble is not violence ; they earn fair play; restraint ; rough and tumble without hurting ; self control – sure there will be tears – and hurt feelings – and bumps but it is part of the learning

- I haven't met any boys yet who don't like fishing!; I congratulate those mums and dads [more so dads] who take their boys fishing
- Get the veggie garden going – learning all about growing harvesting – especially strawberries
- Talk about school when he is ready and look at the questions you ask him about school – avoid how was school today cos um might get a grunt or boring comment in return. By digging deeper with your questions are being specific – e.g. who did you play with today at lunchtime; what was your favourite learning today ; or following up on the learning if your boy starts talking about engines or cogs or machinery
- Preparing your son for that traumatic first day – if they have been to a preschool already this will certainly help- maximise the countdown /transition to school; by contacting the school early most schools allow previsits which are excellent ways to ease the transition; many schools then allow half days of enrolment – again just to ease into attending for a full day
- Visiting the school in the weekend and going over the classroom location; toilets; office ; hall play areas ; lunch areas; boundaries; bike stands; pool ; sandpit
- Building those routines of schoolbag, uniform ,hats – have dress up practise sessions well before the big day – boys don't like surprises- they need a routine and this preschool routine is so important – sadly we still enrol boys on their first day and there have been none of this – somehow they manage to survive but it must be tough
- Those early friendships make school a happier place; mates he knows from preschool, the neighbourhood, he plays with are very important links in to school; encourage mates coming home for play -; monitor the mates because a boys peer group are such a significant factor in their attitudes and achievement as they advance through school – in fact I would argue for many boys they are the single most important determinate- monitor their mates closely!!!
- Once you know your sons interests – join a club /a team- it s desirable if this is sports based – again just to burn off that energy, meet other boys, get into a routine of practises, meet another male [usually the coach] and this becomes a significant male in the boys life – which sometimes means dad is number 2 for a while, joining a team develops that sense of anticipation , the big game on sat , the talk in the car as you are travelling over , the talk on the way back home around the winning and losing and who was cheating or too rough or the great try /goal – it goes on – but importantly it's the talk that goes with the activity
- As Susan Devoy said to a group of educationalists recently the tragedy for boys in NZ at the moment is the dominance of play stations/x boxes/ video games – boys sitting on their bums on a Saturday morning when they should be out playing –
- We were lucky to have lived in a school house or close to a school for all our children's primary school years- their backyard was one huge playground- paddocks- pool – tennis court- a place to ride – build huts – visit farms – raise calves/lambs – at 3.00 they were home for afternoon tea then outside playing

until tea time ; tea/ bath / a selected TV programme then bed and they never had problems sleeping cos they were busy/active/occupied- maybe they thought of school as the gap between the next fun afterschool activity –; living in the country or country life as many advantages and disadvantages for bringing up boys

- Choose their mates carefully –I know with my own two sons their academic achievements were very directly influenced by their mates. Sure they got up to mischief as teenagers- but their peer group were all active – they skied/surfed /played cricket and rugby but when it came to the business end school [exams] they got down to it and studied hard. Their mates- their peer group all realised that it was those grades/passes that were s important at the end of the day – as parents you need to closely monitor/ encourage/ discourage your son’s mates. Get to know their mates – invite them for meals / holidays so you know them and they know your expectations
- Something we have not been good at as a family over the years but I now see the importance of family meals at the table – with TV off – and talking about issues/school /sport /whatever – a long tradition of NZ society that has quickly been eroded by our busy life’s, TV , meals on the run, meals in front of TV. We have lost that time of family talk around a meal table which are important times for debate/discussion , communicating values, humour ...
- Dads – yes for many boys these are missing in their lives; dads need to step up ; if a marriage breaks up sons still need their dads – probably even more; as Biddulph suggests boys need their dads especially so in those early years; sometimes by the age of 10-11 dad is not still God – maybe it’s the teacher/ uncle / the sports coach that becomes the significant male – they still need dad but he loses his number 1 ranking ; boys need significant males in their life’s to help model and mentor them especially through those difficult teenage years; it is very difficult – not impossible – for single mums to get them through these formative years. Creating male company for the boys is so important – sometimes the male teacher at Intermediate- their first male teacher ever becomes the influence or the sports coach where your son hangs o every word and dad knows nothing!- maybe its their favourite uncle who takes them fishing or MacDonald’s or both!; maybe the older brother . Importantly ensuring boys have some male company
- Food – often certain food types trigger behaviour changes – monitor the sugar/ food colourings/ preservatives/ chocolate – can often lead to hyper activity
- King of The house – an interesting concept. As a principal I often get amazed that a child is a darling at school and very difficult at home – sometimes vice versa but not often! Children have difficulty adjusting in school where they are part of a class, the teacher is in charge, the school requires a high level of conformity and they are simply not King of the house. Maybe at home they are use to getting their own way, can manipulate mum and dad with whining and tantrums and they have difficulty adjusting to school culture. It certainly helps if they are not king of the house at home too!
- Be involved in your sons life – visit school ; attend every parent teacher interview – which also includes dad; come to the productions, the special days , the sports days , the camps . A very satisfying time can be on the sideline on Sat mornings. Often dads end up being the coach – all I would say is the older they get the harder it is to be the coach still there comes a time when dads have to step back and let a different male take over. Biddulph would argue this is around 10-11. I know from personal experience after coaching my own two sons in soccer and cricket at an early age, they needed a new male as a coach at around 11 and I enjoyed going back to being a dad and not the coach. The difficulty for dads is if they don’t let go and carry on

- being the coach for long stints- some can do it, sometimes because no one else steps up but juggling both roles can be tough
- At home – boys should have set tasks around the home – maybe this is part of the pocket money contract. Setting the fire, keeping room tidy, bring in the washing ; family pets who maybe becomes the responsibility of your son; the vege garden;
 - Get them into cooking as early as you can. It might start with simple baking leading into cooking a 3 course meal – and cleaning up afterwards. It certainly helped in our household when the 3 kids had a night each on cooking. You will be amazed at their expertise and what a wonderful life skill you are providing for them
 - An after school job brings with it useful pocket money but also those responsibilities of being reliable – the paper run; the mowing lawns of the old lady next door..... All helps boys to gain independence and take on responsibilities. It also helps the household family budget as boys save towards their first goal- maybe a car
 - This leads to holiday work – there is no reason why boys can't get holiday work, rather than lounge around home all summer. The sooner they make these important contacts this can lead to future holiday work. Again all wonderful lifelong skills – independence / routine of work / responsibility
 - The teenage years can be difficult years- !- hang in there as a mum and a dad because they do get through it even if it does cause stresses and strains because it does. You talk to all parents and they experience the same. There are many books available on hints for the teenage years which is not the focus of this paper
 - Men/ dads you have got to step up your game. Boys need their dads right through life – being there , support, financier, coach, supporter, time
 - The greatest gift we dads can give our boys is our TIME
 - Keep your expectations high for your son – you get what you expect
 - Write up these 6 messages for your son- I believe in you; I know you can handle this; I trust you ; you are cared for; you are listened to ; you are very important
 - The more time a father spends with his son the better the boy does ; even if parents are separated- let son go to dads if they want to unless.....
 - 3 things boys need – heroes- good role models- a challenge
 - Boys need to know – who is in charge ; what are the rules; what happens if the rules are broken ; will these be enforced and what people say actually happen
 - Boys need to learn the 3 r's – respect- responsibility- resourcefulness
 - Meal table again – family occasions – maybe helpful starters ask boys what they think- what if – who is the coolest teacher and why ; or fairest; most respect ; funniest
 - Adults need to spend more time with boys and change their expectations of them. Boys can be encouraged to be caring rather than tough; Mothers can learn from fathers how to engage in sports and actively play with their sons and fathers can learn from mothers how to be more nurturing. What boys need most is the love and understanding of adults

PART D

MEN ARE MADE NOT BORN - IT IS EASIER TO RAISE BOYS THAN FIX MEN

THE GOVERNMENT/ MOE

- Developing successful boys must be a whole community and national focus. By doing so we will enrich and enhance our country and address many of the social problems so closely aligned with boys
- Every child in NZ should be attending some sort of preschool centre. This should be a mandatory legal requirement of raising children in NZ- every child should attend a preschool for at least 2 years. Sadly there are too many boys starting school who have not attended any preschool or very limited attendance and start with very limited oral language , low readiness to learn , poor social skills ; have no concept of play – then are asked to settle into a formal structure of a junior class.
- There must be a greater emphasis of pre school education for parents- the importance of early development of language skills, adult education on developing pre numeracy and pre literacy skills in both boys and girls; the gender differences within those skills the importance of talk and play
- We need to explore why we have the requirement for children to start attending at age 5 – although not legally required to until 6 when many other countries have a later start time – quite simply many of our boys are not ready at age 5 to start the formal structure of school
- We need to change our starting timing for entry to school. Why do we have students starting as they turn 5 – other countries have set start times – only once a year/ term so schools can effectively manage the junior enrolments; why not once a year – if you turn 5[if it is 5] at some time during 2010 you start in Feb of that year; or at the very least scale this down to at least one starting point in a term – e.g. if you turn 5 in term 4 you start at the beginning of term 4
- Why do we hold reading recovery as the first accessible reading intervention programme that boys can access[and it is mainly boys] when we know that at age 6 the research and more importantly our professional knowledge tells us that some boys are not ready to read ; The blanket acceptance that 6 is the cut off must be questioned
- The Government has an ideal time to now promote teaching as a career for males in primary schools. At a time of recession there are many graduates that are seriously exploring career options. Teaching in a primary school must be pursued and marketed and an extensive marketing / advertising/ promotion programme put in place. Attempts to date have not targeted the audience – teaching can and must be made attractive as a career for males – because it IS a very worthwhile career- with a clearly defined and accessible career path if you develop into an effective classroom teacher
- Attracting good males to Primary schools – with strong support programmes in/out of school; develop them into excellent classroom teachers and the career opportunities are then available; the teaching salary package and the career path allows competitive salaries –
- Maybe this could be addressed with scholarships; bonded teachers; incentives to reduce student debt like they have at the moment for only Secondary graduates for Secondary teachers
- Having 12 weeks holiday is SO attractive for males – whether they be dads; raising families; doing up their first house; be an active outdoors adventurer ; a traveller – 12 weeks break is as special feature of the career
- How can we make health and physical activity more possible in schools with an aging teaching population expected to teach every curriculum area – why not have Pe specialists like we do in secondary and some Intermediates ; and funding for this to occur
- EOTC guidelines when introduced were very prescriptive very regulatory and probably created a barrier for teachers exploring EOTC more. I think over time these have become more realistic and schools have put in good

practises to makes these guidelines more manageable. We must ensure regulations don't become barriers in themselves – god safe practise is vital – ways and means of achieving this must remain a realistic goal

- We must never go down the track of countries like the USA where litigation has meant camps/EOTC is not part of the school experience. ETC is a unique part of schooling in NZ and we must protect this
- Teacher education must have a component on genders differences in earning and therefore the implications for classroom teachers; again making more professional development available perhaps partly funded to create an incentive for schools to engage in the PD
- Measuring schools – if it moves measure it. In schools we tend to measure the things that are easiest to measure and these turn out to be the least important aspects of teaching and learning. The most important aspects are very difficult to measure if not impossible. Recognition has to be given when measuring schools that the heart the soul and the spirit of the child are just as important as academic achievement. Some programmes/ interventions / teaching can't be measured – their benefit might actually turn up years after as they become young adults or men. Just look at the focus of ERO these days – their scope needs to address a wide variety of measures that allows the heart/ the soul and the spirit of a school to be acknowledged
- Be aware of blindly following a path that is data driven on difference made – the most important things I education can't be measured
- All teacher training institutes need to include modules/ courses on gender differences in learning; multiple intelligence theory and the development of teacher pupil relationships
- The need to continue with further research on gender differences and its implications for teachers at the Primary level ; there is much research available for Secondary schools but I would argue the damage has already been done by the time boys reach secondary
- As a country we need a targeted long term education programme for men and fathers. We have too many boys with absent fathers – fathers that need to step up to the mark on what it means and how important it is to be a good father.
- Targeted funding for teacher PD; parent PD ; programmes schools can run for Boys e.g. B- Cool – John Winder; that addresses emotional issues and fluency

The underachievement of Boys can be addressed and rectified by powerful teaching, powerful school culture that engages boys into their learning, strong parenting and taking this issue to the wider community so it becomes a Nations focus.