

**A Quest for Awareness: Gender-Differentiated English Language Arts  
Resources and Instructional Techniques to Acknowledge the Needs and  
Passions of Fourth and Fifth Grade Boys**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New  
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
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## Abstract

# A Quest for Awareness: Gender-Differentiated English Language Arts Resources and Instructional Techniques to Acknowledge the Needs and Passions of Fourth and Fifth Grade Boys

By Todd Feltman

Adviser: Dr. Anthony Picciano

A major educational crisis has been transpiring among fourth and fifth grade boys over the last twenty years (Eliot, 2009; Whitmire, 2010). On average, fourth and fifth grade boys, regardless of racial background or socioeconomic class, are performing below girls, both academically in reading and writing. The Center on Educational Policy reports that boys are approximately ten percent behind girls in reading aptitude and standardized reading tests in all fifty states (Claiborne & Siegel, 2010; Carty, 2010; [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org)), with boys continuing to lag behind girls in reading achievement in most countries (Newkirk, 2002; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

This dissertation seeks to examine the degree to which the presence or absence of gender-differentiated English Language Arts resources, curriculum and instructional techniques used with fourth and fifth grade boys can help explain the crisis. The focus is not to create gender-neutral classrooms, but rather to acknowledge the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys, therefore producing gender differentiation with coeducational classrooms. This dissertation focuses on fourth and fifth grade boys because they are at the academic stage at which tasks within English Language Arts instruction, such as reading to learn non-fictional information, become more challenging (Zambo & Brozo, 2009; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009).

The methodology employed examines how fourth and fifth grade boys are unintentionally discriminated against within the elementary school classroom based on the use of several Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books, *Treasures* text selections, New York State Standardized English Language Arts test reading and listening passages, as well as the common core state standards within reading, writing, speaking and listening. Each of these English Language Arts artifacts was reviewed for gender appeal using a contextual evaluation tool.

The findings indicate that even though the literacy resources used within elementary schools largely meet the criteria to appeal to the boyhood culture, awareness by teachers and administrators must be a priority during the selection. The common core state standards were found to be lacking in gender differentiation; therefore I developed boyhood enhancements that would simultaneously support girls. Still, additional factors contributing to this gender achievement gap in literacy of boys must be further researched.

## **Dedication**

**This dissertation is in honor of:**

**Fourth and fifth grade boys** who do their best in school despite academic and psychological hurdles each and every day;

**All my teachers** who made a major difference in my life;

**Caine Monroy, creator, boss and owner of Caine's Arcade.** This ten-year-old boy has revolutionized the world with his talents by producing a fully operational cardboard arcade and through his amazing and savvy personality.

**My wonderful and supportive mom, dad, step mom, step dad and brother** who are my heroes.

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Throughout the completion and defense of this dissertation, I have remained passionate about the importance of acknowledging the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys. They deserve a voice in the classroom in order to improve their learning environment; through such efforts, it is probable that boys can develop into enthusiastic and proficient readers and writers.

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## **Chapter One** **Introduction**

A major educational crisis has been transpiring among fourth and fifth grade boys over the last twenty years (Eliot, 2009; Whitmire, 2010). On average, fourth and fifth grade boys, regardless of racial background or socioeconomic class, are performing below girls, both academically in reading and writing. The Center on Educational Policy reports that boys are approximately ten percent behind girls in reading aptitude and on the standardized reading tests in all fifty states (Claiborne & Siegel, 2010; Carty, 2010; [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org)), with boys continuing to lag behind girls in reading achievement in most countries (Newkirk, 2002; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). This reading and writing gender achievement gap has been clearly evident nationally seventy-five percent of the time, beginning in fourth grade (Sprung, Froschl, & Gropper, 2010).

I have carefully observed the micro-level manifestations of this global dilemma every day during my fourteen years as an elementary school teacher and English Language Arts staff developer. Fourth and fifth grade boys struggle academically, psychologically, and physically within the classroom in ways that are all too visible (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1998; Newkirk, 2002; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). Fourth and fifth grade boys will be successful and enjoy learning only if their academic, psychological and physical needs are acknowledged within the classroom (Whitmire, 2010). When boys do not receive meaningful, engaging and relevant English Language Arts instruction, then fourth and fifth grade will be an academic struggle and impact their overall development.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the degree to which the presence or absence of gender-differentiated English Language Arts resources, curriculum and instructional techniques used with fourth and fifth grade boys can help explain the crisis. Other potential explanations for this crisis will be identified for future research. A lack of gender awareness by teachers and school administrators will not prepare them for the various learning styles and interests of boys.

Another goal of this dissertation is to recognize and address the academic, psychological and physical discrepancies that exist between boys and girls, not the creation of gender neutral classrooms. A gender neutral instructional framework is defined as one that is taught with an assumption that boys and girls learn in the same ways and have identical interests. It appears that boys and girls need to be taught within a gender-balanced context rather than utilizing a gender neutral instructional methodological framework and curriculum (Van Manen, 1990).

Teachers must understand that they cannot use the same instructional resources and techniques to reach both genders and achieve optimal academic success and student engagement. A gender-balanced English Language Arts instructional and content methodology defined as a teaching prospectus that addresses the instructional needs and wants of boys and girls through gender differentiation would be extremely beneficial. As teachers utilize gender-differentiated instructional techniques with boys, positive academic results should be achieved (Legato, 2008; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009).

The puzzling question that continues to appear is why so many fourth and fifth grade boys are having greater academic and psychological difficulties within English Language Arts instruction than girls are. The arguments for the implementation of boy culture English Language Arts instructional techniques and literary resources will be critically delineated within

each of these six chapters. Boy culture can be clearly defined as lifestyles, passions and/or academic, psychological and physical challenges related to boyhood development (Steinberg, Kehler & Cornish, 2010).

### ***Research Questions***

These four research questions were formulated to investigate how to provide gender-differentiated and optimal English Language Arts instruction to fourth and fifth grade boys within coeducational classrooms. They will serve as the framework for my dissertation study that took place in two New York City elementary schools.

1. How is the concept of a “gender neutral” English Language Arts curriculum inherently discriminatory in not meeting the academic, psychological and physical needs of fourth and fifth grade boys?
2. How can boy culture gender-differentiated fourth and fifth grade instructional techniques within English Language Arts foster an optimal coeducational elementary school learning environment and promote a social justice framework for boys that also supports girls? A social justice framework focuses on fulfilling the educational rights (academic, psychological and physical) of students within a school setting.
3. To what extent do the fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books, *Treasures* text selections and New York State Standardized English Language Arts test reading and listening passages promote gender discrimination towards boys within coeducational classrooms?

4. How can the instruction within the fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening be enhanced to target the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys and as a preparation towards their success in middle school?

### ***Conceptual Thinking for Research Questions***

The conceptual thinking for the development of the research questions is based on the work of Joe Kincheloe who discusses the concept of “social justice” as a goal for teachers to aspire to in classroom instruction and professional responsibility. It is clearly explained in two of Kincheloe’s books, *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment* (2002) and *Critical Pedagogy* (2004). The primary focus for promoting social justice in elementary schools would be terminating the gender discriminatory practices against boys that occur in classrooms, especially those within the common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The integration of popular culture into English Language Arts lessons to engage students and foster achievement is highly recommended by Kincheloe’s social justice framework, as it is by Newkirk and Fletcher’s literacy frameworks as well. Teaching boys about the positive and negative aspects of popular culture, while simultaneously developing their understanding of that culture can contribute to a quality education.

Kincheloe suggests that if teachers listen carefully to the instructional feedback their fourth and fifth grade students provide, they can learn how the English Language Arts classroom is unfriendly to boys. Teachers can also find out why boys might feel unsuccessful in the classroom. By carefully listening to their male and female students and then implementing appropriate recommendations, teachers are promoting social justice. If social justice is present in elementary schools, it might prevent some of the adolescent reading and writing remediation

that takes place in later grades. The implementation of social justice within English Language Arts instruction is essential (Kincheloe, 2004; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009).

### ***Historical Discrimination Against Girls in the Classroom***

In order for me to coherently explore the ways boys are discriminated against within instructional practices in reading and writing, it is important to give a historical overview of the gender discrimination encountered by girls. Throughout Madeleine Grumet's award-winning book, *Bitter Milk* (1988), the role of gender within instruction is emphasized. One major theme of the book is the prevalent feminization of the teaching profession. In the United States, approximately twenty-four percent of teachers are male ([www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov)). Male elementary school teachers are even less prevalent: males account for about nine percent of elementary school teachers (Chmelynski, 2006; Whitmire, 2010; [www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov)). Another major theme is the importance of nurturing and supporting the gender-based requirements of all students. Fourth and fifth grade boys must be nurtured and have their diverse academic, psychological and physical needs acknowledged by a well-qualified and sensitive teacher of English Language Arts (Grumet, 1988; Tyre, 2008, p. 79-82).

The majority of studies on gender discrimination, which began in the 1970s, were focused on girls. Real world results arose from those studies. An obvious example is Title IX, enacted in 1972, ensuring equal opportunities for girls in schools, colleges and sports programs in particular.

Most policy, practice, and research on gender and education focused on girls and girls' issues. The focus is as it should be, for in every society women as a group, relative to men are disadvantaged socially, culturally, politically, and economically (Weaver-Hightower, 2003, p. 471).

Only in the last twenty years has the focus of gender discrimination concentrated on boys, even though girls continue to be marginalized in the classroom (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Whitmire, 2010). Ultimately, none of the movements, policies, or laws, however, addressed gender discrimination against boys, which transpires on a daily basis in the classroom through inappropriate curricular and instructional practices within English Language Arts.

To understand the ways fourth and fifth grade boys are discriminated against within English Language Arts instruction, an explanation of the gender bias encountered by girls in classroom settings must be provided. Girls are often recognized for their reputable and compliant behavior, such as raising their hands to speak, rather than their academic achievements. The intense focus on “good behavior” limits the possibilities of their participation because boys frequently call out the answer before the teacher can call on those who have raised their hands. As a result of the dynamics of the classroom, the teacher tends to respond to the boys calling out, rather than the girls raising their hands (Orenstein, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). According to John Goodlad, educational researcher and David and Myra Sadker, authors of *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls* (1994), and *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It* (2009), boys are asked more direct questions than girls are (Grumet, 1988; Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Also, boys receive more praise and criticism, help and attention to their work, and more receptivity to their ideas in classroom discussion. Although engaging them in classroom discourse may be a form of control, it is also a way of interrupting their gaze by breaking it with the specificity and animation of speech (Grumet, 1988, p. 114).

The preliminary studies of girls and discrimination in the classroom involved the gender bias of goals and practices within the literacy curriculum (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

In 1975, the *Women on Words and Images* research group conducted a study of “Dick and Jane,” identifying the well-known basal reader protagonists as “victims”. The researchers studied one hundred thirty-four elementary school readers from sixteen different publishers. The findings included five boy-centered stories for every two girl-centered stories, three adult male characters to each adult female character for every story, six male biographies for every one female biography and four male fairy tales to every one female fairy tale. These data reveal that within books, women and girls were minimally represented compared to men and boys.

An additional study conducted in the late 1970s looked at gender bias in teacher education textbooks. Each of the twenty-four teacher education textbooks was examined from cover to cover for any signs of gender bias. Twenty-three textbooks provided a discussion of gender equity, but only for less than one-percent of book content. A discussion of effective math and science teaching methodologies was rarely mentioned, suggesting that studying these two subject areas was not critically important for girls ([www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org); Sadker, Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Most significantly, “not one of the twenty-four texts provided teachers with strategies, or resources to eliminate sexism from the classroom” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 175).

Another gender discrimination study conducted in the 1990s investigated the attention the teacher gave in a classroom, using race and gender variables (Sadker, Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). The findings were not surprising given what various studies of social class and privilege have found over the years. The first students to receive attention from the teacher were Caucasian males. Those second to receive attention were minority males. The third group to receive attention was Caucasian females. The last group to receive attention

were minority females. Since receiving positive attention from the classroom teacher is very important for the academic and psychological growth of a student, this trend in teacher behavior was disturbing, particularly for female students.

A powerful and compelling anecdote from Sadker and Sadker's book, *Failing At Fairness; How Our Schools Cheat Girls* (1994) illustrates the gender divide in certain high school courses, evident prior to the 1970s. Myra Sadker and her friend registered for a woodworking class in high school. On the first day of class, the teacher accused them of signing up for the class just to get to know the boys and refused to let them enter the class as the entire class of boys laughed. The girls were too embarrassed and uncomfortable to even try to stay in the class. While Myra chose to take the copper class instead, she was constantly harassed by the male teacher. She kept the copper candy dish that she made as an emblem of the struggle she endured. At one point, her teacher told her to go to the closet to get some elbow grease, a silly and yet hostile prank that humiliated her. That particular anecdote exemplifies the blatant and transparent gender discrimination faced by girls, not boys (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker, D. & Silber, 2007). The gender discrimination boys endure in the classroom is not as blatant as what girls face as a result of their hidden academic, psychological and physical needs not being acknowledged (Tyre, 2008).

Based on the roles boys and girls eventually fulfill as adults, there were certain masculine and feminine middle and high school courses. Girls were required to take home economics in order to be good wives and mothers, while boys enrolled in auto shop or woodworking in order to be effective and handy husbands. In the 1920s and 1930s, the home economics program for middle school girls consisted of studying food, managing a household and making clothing. The high school instruction in home economics included

dressmaking, millinery, hygiene and home nursing. The implication was that girls would not be attending college. Ultimately, a girl needed to prepare for domestic work responsibilities and then become a high-quality wife and/or mother (Kliebard, 2004).

### ***Evidence of the Reading and Writing Crisis of Fourth and Fifth Grade Boys***

The academic, psychological and physical needs of fourth and fifth grade boys have not been thoroughly investigated. The investigation must discover the gender neutral instructional techniques that are failing boys within coeducational English Language Arts classrooms. The inappropriate literary resources disengaging the boy culture while diminishing school achievement must also be discovered. Ultimately, the methodologies that are used to provide gender differentiation in reading, writing, speaking and listening instruction and resources must not discriminate against either sex. The instructional techniques and materials used in fourth and fifth grade classrooms must be carefully analyzed for gender differentiation and then effectively incorporated into daily teaching.

The lack of pedagogical and curricular content focus on the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys in school presents a major problem for boys in fourth and fifth grade classrooms and beyond (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). The school-based needs of boys have been basically ignored because of the assumption that the current English Language Arts curriculum is biased in their favor. Gender discrimination is not a one-way street (Zambo & Brozo, 2009; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009) and is manifesting itself in the classroom through the ways instructional practices in English Language Arts are executed with male students.

Between 2006 and 2009, boys in the third, fourth, fifth and eighth grade scored below girls on the New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test. In fact, higher

percentages of fourth and fifth grade girls than boys received scores meeting standards and exceeding standards on the New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test.

Unfortunately, more boys than girls scored below standards and approaching standards on this test (<http://schools.nyc.gov>). For example, in 2009, 26.4% of fifth grade boys versus 22.3% of fifth grade girls scored a level two, which translates as approaching standards. In 2009, 7.7% of fourth grade boys compared to 4% of girls scored a level one, which is below standards. These test results are located in the appendix (Table 1.1). The results by gender on this major test indicate an educational dilemma that has been occurring for approximately twenty-five years. It clearly illustrates that boys are academically underperforming girls in literacy. The eighth grade standardized test results clearly demonstrate that a solid and engaging educational experience for fourth and fifth grade boys is a prerequisite for potential academic achievement within middle school and high school.

In 2009, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which measures reading achievement, showed that fourth grade boys are seven points behind girls compared to five points in 2004. The achievement gap in reading between fourth grade boys and girls has decreased from thirteen points in 1971 to seven points in 2009 (Mead, 2006; [www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard](http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard)). The discrepancy of the gender achievement gap is not statistically significant because of the high scale score value.

### ***Confounding Variables of Race, Ethnicity and Social Class***

With the aim of coherently presenting the gender achievement gap in reading and writing of fourth and fifth grade boys versus girls, the confounding variables of race, ethnicity and social class must be accounted for. The achievement gap in literacy of fourth and fifth grade boys occurs regardless of race, ethnicity or social class, however there is a larger

discrepancy within reading aptitude based on these confounding variables. The issues of race, ethnicity and social class make it difficult to acknowledge the primary cause of male underachievement in reading and writing. Despite this difficulty, the issue of male underachievement has to be targeted.

According to the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading of nine year olds (fourth graders), black and Hispanic boys as well as boys from low-income households scored lower than white boys. These specific groups of boys are facing serious academic difficulties. Nine-year-old white boys outscored black and Hispanic boys on the NAEP within reading. Furthermore, it is more common for black and Hispanic boys to have to repeat a grade than it is for white boys and girls from any particular community (Mead, 2006). The educational reform priority for politicians must be to narrow the racial and economic gaps of fourth and fifth grade minority and low-income boys. Once that critical component is tackled, then the focus can be moved to providing gender differentiation within a coeducational classroom.

Based on the 2009 NAEP reading achievement gap of nine year olds, white females performed at the highest level of achievement, while black males scored at the lowest level. The order of highest to lowest achievement on the NAEP reading included white females, white males, Hispanic females, black females, and Hispanic males followed by black males ([www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard](http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard); Mead, 2006). These data indicate that the achievement gaps between gender and racial groups are large.

### ***Black Male Initiative***

There is a major achievement gap in reading and writing between black boys and their peers of different racial backgrounds (Noguera, 2008; Kafele, 2009). The behaviors that are

often displayed by black males, which are misunderstood by teachers and school administrators, contribute to their alienation and lack of academic success in school (Monroe, 2006; Lopez, 2008). Even more disturbing is that in 2009, within New York City public high schools, sixty-two percent of black girls were graduating high school in four years compared to only forty-nine percent of black boys (Medina, 2010).

This particular quandary created a strong push to create the Black Male Initiative, an innovative program that was formulated in 2004 by the City University of New York. Both President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan support the Black Male Initiative (<http://www.cuny.edu/academics/initiatives/bmi.html>; Whitmire, 2010). In the last nine years, the Black Male Initiative has advanced critical work on the importance of the development of a strong foundation in childhood literacy. The principles of the Black Male Initiative are to

increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of under-represented groups in higher education, in particular black males. All programs and activities of the Black Male Initiative are open to all academically eligible students, faculty and staff, without regard to race, gender, national origin, or other characteristic (<http://www.cuny.edu/academics/initiatives/bmi.html>).

It is imperative that the Black Male Initiative does whatever is necessary to facilitate a positive and rigorous learning experience for fourth and fifth grade boys.

***Targeting the Racial, Economic and Gender Achievement Gap of Black and Hispanic Boys***

Based on my professional and educational experiences, the priority must be to target the racial and economic achievement gap between black and Hispanic boys and their white counterparts before focusing on the gender educational crisis within reading and writing. Once the racial and economic achievement gaps of black and Hispanic boys begin to be closed, then the gender-differentiated school-based needs of boys should be addressed (Mead, 2006). It is

highly unlikely and will take considerable amounts of time and money to end the racial and economic struggles of black and Hispanic boys. Considerable emphasis must be placed on high-quality literacy instruction both at school and at home. Therefore, the primary focus in elementary schools must shift to acknowledge the academic, psychological and physical needs of low-income and minority boys. As the gender achievement gap is acknowledged it will simultaneously target some components of the enduring racial and class disparities amongst boys. Ultimately, these three inequalities must be eliminated in order for black and Hispanic fourth and fifth grade boys to be proficient and engaged readers and writers (Mead, 2006; Whitmire, 2010).

### ***Educational Crisis within Reading and Writing***

Boys tend to be visual, spatial, tactile, kinesthetic learners, or a combination of these learning modalities (Sadker, 1994; Thompson & Barker, 2008). The educational priority of a gender-balanced English Language Arts curriculum that incorporates differentiated instructional techniques arose from an understanding of gender equity focusing on boys. This priority was a switch from the major emphasis on girls approximately twenty years ago (Gunzelmann & Connell, 2006; [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org)). For example, in the 1990s, fourth grade girls were scoring significantly lower on standardized tests in reading until instruction was changed to meet the learning styles of girls. Consequently, also in the 1990s, girls were still outperforming boys in reading aptitude (Mead, 2006). In turn, a new curriculum meeting the needs of girls' learning styles was developed. This new curriculum took into account the fact that many girls are verbal and auditory learners (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Mead, 2006).

Beginning in kindergarten, boys are expected to achieve a learning standard that favors the ways in which girls learn. The instructional methodology through which many girls learn

best consists of verbal and auditory techniques (Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). But because boys tend to be visual, spatial and kinesthetic learners (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Whitmire, 2010) it is evident that this instructional paradigm contributes to the lack of achievement in reading and writing of male fourth and fifth grade students. Also, the English Language Arts curriculum does not incorporate popular culture or the students' passions outside of school, which is a necessary component for boys' learning. When these particular elements are missing, most boys feel frustrated, unsuccessful and disengaged while learning within the walls of the elementary school classroom (Newkirk, 2002; Whitmire, 2010).

The lack of engagement and achievement within English Language Arts instruction of boys contributes to 65% of boys, versus 72% of girls, graduating from high school nationwide (Legato, 2008; <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu>). Based on the 2007 New York City Department of Education graduation statistics, 46% of boys and 59.6% of girls graduated high school in four years. In 2008, 54.3% of males and 67% of females finished high school within four years. In 2009, 56.6% of the male student population and 68.9% of the female student population completed high school in four years (<http://schools.nyc.gov>). Even though graduation rates for males are increasing, there is a large gap between the percentages of males graduating versus females graduating.

Developmentally, boys are six months to a year behind girls when they begin high school. Therefore, many boys are not cognitively ready for the reading and writing demands of the high school curriculum. This particular fact solidifies the push for gender-differentiated instructional techniques that support boys beginning in fourth and fifth grade and continuing through middle school. Lastly, girls are leading in academic achievement in reading and

writing throughout the senior year of high school (Homayoun, 2008; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008).

One major high school challenge is the prevalence of more boys than girls dropping out. In the United States, approximately thirty-two percent of boys drop out of high school versus twenty-five percent of females (Whitmire, 2010). In the New York City Department of Education High Schools' Class of 2010, there were 13.8% male dropouts compared to 10.4% female dropouts, while in the Class of 2011 there were 14% male dropouts versus 10.4% female dropouts. The dropout rate presents a difference of approximately three percent between boys and girls. Several factors that contribute to this male high school dropout crisis are the lack of student engagement, weak academic deficiencies especially in reading and writing and minimal instructional relevance to the world outside of the classroom (Whitmire, 2010). Reading is a basic necessity for life and paramount in each content area subject. Therefore, reading instruction must be carefully planned and structured beginning in the lower grades and continuing throughout high school to meet the academic, psychological and physical needs of both boys and girls.

Male students account for 42% of students enrolled in four-year colleges. The graduation rate of males enrolled in four-year colleges is also about 42% ([www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov); Whitmire, 2010). Approximately 58% percent of four-year college undergraduates and 58% percent of all masters' degree students who also graduate are female (Sax, 2007; Whitmire, 2010). This discrepancy between males and females attending and graduating from college can stem from an unsuccessful and disengaging academic experience in elementary, middle or high school (Tyre, 2008).

The following statistics emphasize the need for eliminating the educational challenges boys face in English Language Arts classrooms. These statistics cannot be ignored because they show that the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys are not being supported, beginning at the upper elementary school level. In the last twenty years, boys have received seventy percent of D and F grades. Fewer than fifty percent of boys receive a grade of A within urban middle and high schools (Legato, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). It is approximately ten times more probable for boys than girls to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Gunzelmann & Connell, 2006; Legato, 2008). Boys are also twice as likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities and comprise 75% of the one million children on medication for focusing issues and hyperactivity. They make up 70% of the students in high school special education classes (Sax, 2005; Tyre, 2008). Sara Mead, a policy analyst, suggests that there would be fewer boys enrolled in special education classes if schools focused on instructional methodologies and resources that support boys (Mead, 2006).

Furthermore, boys are disciplined approximately five to ten times more frequently than girls in elementary and middle school (Cavazos-Kottke, 2005; Gurian, 2009). Boys seem to be on the top of the list for misbehavior in the classroom, including teasing, play fighting, real fighting, acting silly, calling out and having side conversations with classmates while the teacher or other students are speaking (Feldman, 2005; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). Boys comprise ninety percent of the behaviorally challenged students in the United States (Legato, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Pedro Noguera, an urban sociologist, describes how schools in the United States punish minorities, males and low achievers.

Throughout the United States, schools most frequently punish the students who have the greatest academic, social, economic, and emotional needs. The students most likely to be suspended, expelled, or removed from the classroom for punishment

includes minorities (especially Blacks and Latinos), males, and low achievers (Noguera, 2008, p. 112).

These brutal educational statistics cannot be ignored. According to Michael Gurian, author, educator and therapist, “schools feminize boys, forcing active, healthy and naturally rambunctious boys to conform to a regime of obedience, giving them the message that boyhood is defective” (Kimmel, 2008, p. 71). The feminization of boys in the classroom is a recurring problem that causes fourth and fifth grade boys to be skeptical about what their true role is in the classroom (Kimmel, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). This component plays a role in the boyhood educational crisis because boys are not given the right type of support they need to be successful students.

The following poem clearly illustrates how fourth and fifth grade boyhood preferences for writing are misunderstood and not frequently acknowledged within the elementary school classroom.

*Unloved Stories: A Poem for Two Voices*

I can write, Mrs. Withers!

Of course, you can, Jon.

I know lots about tigers,  
And spiders and gore;  
I know all about fishing  
And monsters and war...

Yes, Jon, but surely you know so much more.

Well, I know about aliens;  
I know how they scream...

But Jon, tell me this: what is your DREAM?

I dream about beating Zach Feld in a race,  
And being like Superman,  
And flying through space...

But what does the rain feel like on your face?

The rain's only fun if it makes lots of mud.  
I love when my shoes get all stuck in brown crud.

Crud's not a word you should use when you write.

Now, write a spring poem how rain makes things all bright.

Ok, Mrs. Withers.

Well...

Start...

Jon...BEGIN!

I don't think I can write with this kind of pen!

(Durica, 2007, p. 2)

As a result of the teacher-student interaction in this poem, Jon dislikes writing and feels inadequate with his selection of writing topics. His teacher dismisses his boy culture writing ideas. It is probable that Jon's passion for writing has been diminished. Boys' lack of enthusiasm towards writing is evident in many elementary school classrooms. Boy culture writing topics such as violence and bathroom humor are discriminated against in many elementary school classrooms (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). The teacher-student dynamic in the poem is an example of the kind of dynamic that contributes to the dilemma of the major reading and writing achievement gap that fourth and fifth grade boys consistently face (Newkirk, 2002; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

The picture book *Through the Cracks* (1994), written by Carolyn Sollman depicts the boy culture educational dilemma in reading and writing. The text stresses that many students become bored in school watching and listening to the teacher if there are limited opportunities for interactive participation. Students begin to shrink as they become disengaged. They slowly fall through the crevices of the floor. The two described scenarios are portrayed through the text and illustrations. At the end of this picture book, those students who have fallen through the cracks witness first-hand engaging and authentic project-based learning occurring in underground classrooms. The students realize that classroom learning does not have to be boring and dreadful. The book emphasizes that too many boys are falling through the cracks of education, especially within English Language Arts instruction.

It is of utmost importance that well-qualified and motivational teachers rescue students, particularly boys, in order for them to receive an exciting, relevant, and evocative education (Sollman, 1994; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). There is no reason that English Language Arts cannot be engaging for boys once reading and writing instructional experiences are significant and fun. Whenever a boy reads a meaningful book or discovers passion in writing, then learning becomes a worthwhile endeavor (Fletcher, 2006; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

### ***Technology as a Positive Instructional Tool for Reading and Writing***

The yearning by fourth and fifth grade boys to utilize computers, particularly in English Language Arts instruction, results from many boys being visual, spatial, and kinesthetic learners (Fennema & Leder, 1991; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Technology is an area within and outside of academia that fourth and fifth grade students, especially boys, have a strong affinity towards (Legato, 2008; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). If students, particularly boys, are asked to raise their hands and state whether they like playing computer games, their answer would be “yes” with hands raised high in the air.

Smart Boards are very popular with boys because they are interactive and technological learning tools. Boys like interacting with the Smart Board because of the technology markers, and/or tapping the icons on the screen for desired functions. Many boys enjoy typing assignments on the computer. School administrators and teachers must understand that many students come to school technologically savvy, so integrating technology into the English Language Arts curriculum is vital for the academic, psychological and physical well being of boys and girls (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Gurian, Stevens, & King, 2008).

Outside of school, boys and girls do instant messaging or texting independently or with their friends. Many boys choose to do instant message or text message from their bedrooms or

a friend's home where they feel relaxed and not intimidated by the judgment of a teacher or parent. Boys find it socially rewarding to receive instant and text messages. When boys instant message and text, their spelling is often incorrect. They usually abbreviate words. Parents often get concerned about the content of what their sons are instant messaging or texting, as well as the misspelled words and lack of punctuation (Fletcher, 2006; Valkenburg and Peter, 2007).

Instant messaging and texting foster reading and writing development (Booth, 2002; Fletcher, 2006) and can help cultivate stronger friendships between boys, who are able to express themselves through written text. This connects to Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development," which is the difference in what a learner can do independently and what he or she can do with assistance (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Instant messaging and texting also become a social context for learning. Technology needs to be incorporated into fourth and fifth grade English Language Arts instruction. It will promote meaningful student engagement and prepare boys for careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The utilization of technology and its beneficial impact on the male population within the classroom will be further discussed in chapters two, five and six.

### ***The Quest for Meaningful Boy Culture Instructional Practices in Reading and Writing***

Reputable literacy specialists aware of academic and psychological challenges boys face are speaking up about the boy culture dilemma within English Language Arts instruction. Thomas Newkirk, author of *Misreading Masculinity: Boys, Literacy, and Popular Culture* (2002), suggests that teachers and school administrators need to discover what boys dislike about school, and especially why boys might have an aversion to independent reading. He states that the two leading boy characters, George Beard and Harold Hutchins of *The Captain*

*Underpants* book series visually demonstrate what boys despise about school. These two male characters despise not having equality within the elementary school classroom (Thompson & Barker, 2008).

Adults control the time, space, speaking rights, and choice of activities in school. Boys often are not allowed to read what they want, nor write about what interests them. Are teachers aware of what boys object to about school in particular? You bet they are! They hear it constantly and are keenly aware of the difficulties they face in getting boys excited about reading and writing (Thompson & Barker, 2008, p. 215-216).

School administrators and teachers must change the negative vision of school for boys into a positive one through implementing gender-differentiated instructional practices geared for boys.

Jon Scieszka, a children's literacy expert who specializes in the promotion of reading for boys, male adolescents and male adults, was selected in 2008 to become the first National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. Scieszka's position was cultivated to promote national awareness of the necessity of literature for young people, as it connects to literacy throughout life, a high-quality reading and writing education, and the improvement of life experiences of youngsters. Scieszka is also the author of numerous children's books including *The Stinky Cheese Man* (1992), *The True Story of The Three Little Pigs* (1996) and *Truck Town: Smash! Crash!* (2008). Scieszka also edited two texts called *Guys Write for Guys Read* (2005) and *Guys Read: Funny Business* (2010). Throughout both of these books, boys' favorite authors share their boyhood experiences and adventures. These books should be read and used in fourth and fifth grade, middle and high school classrooms.

Scieszka developed a website called "Guys Read" because he felt boys did not like reading. The website contains recommendations for popular boy books divided into categories for young guys, middle guys and older guys. The Guys Read website also provides boys with

male role models who promote reading within and outside of school. This website should be used by students, school administrators, teachers and parents ([www.guysread.com](http://www.guysread.com)).

According to Mr. Scieszka,

A lot of boys aren't too crazy about reading. I grew up with five brothers. I taught elementary school for ten years. I've been writing books for kids for fifteen years. And I've been thinking a lot about why boys might not like reading. Boys often have to read books they don't really like. They don't get to choose what they want to read. And what they do like to read, people often tell them is not really reading ([www.guysread.com](http://www.guysread.com)).

The purpose of the website “Guys Read” is to get boys enthusiastic about reading. Boys need to be encouraged and permitted to choose what they want to read in school, rather than just being assigned a random book. Scieszka wants to enlarge the over-arching definition of reading to include non-fiction books, graphic novels, comic books, comic strips, humorous books, newspapers, magazines and online text. He also would like to get boys to recommend books they enjoy reading to other boys directly on his website, by word of mouth, and through drawing and/or writing. Recommending books would be a positive and empowering interactive learning experience for both boys and girls.

### ***Existing Reading and Writing Solutions***

I will now focus on existing solutions that have been used to target this boyhood crisis in reading and writing. These solutions provide gender-differentiated learning opportunities and instruction in favor of boys. When boys and girls are situated in an optimal gender-based English Language Arts learning environment that takes into account their brains and hearts, they can be academically successful (Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). The educational foundation in instruction for boys needs to be an established priority before fourth grade in order for boys to become competent in reading and writing. The primary educational goals for fourth and fifth grade boys and girls are for them to become effective readers, writers, speakers and listeners.

Those academic strengths are all prerequisites for the academic rigor of college and success in the workforce.

Utilizing Scieszka's example of reviewing books as an existing solution, a classroom bulletin board could be used for boys and girls to post recommendations of pleasurable books they have read. As book recommendations are posted, the students could use the bulletin board to find out about potential books they would want to read. It would be beneficial if teachers facilitated classroom discussions about what makes reading enjoyable or not for their students. The teacher should learn about gender trends within reading and improve his or her instructional structure for read alouds and independent reading (Grumet, 1988; Tyre, 2008).

Lev Vygotsky, a social constructivist psychologist, argued that boys and girls can learn more by collaborating and talking about new literacy concepts with their peers than by solely coming up with the information independently (Klecker, 2003). He also stresses that collaborative-based learning employing the concept of the "zone of proximal development" encourages students to build on each other's knowledge. It is imperative that each student is engaged in group work and holding his or her peers accountable for the task at hand (Doolittle, 1997; Klecker, 2003). Boys would enjoy assuming different group roles within cooperative learning, such as note taker, questioner, summarizer, and/or timekeeper (Vermette, Harper & Dimillo, 2004).

Teachers must reflect on instructional practices in collaborative learning while planning lessons for boys in English Language Arts. It takes significant teacher preparation to carefully plan and prepare cooperative learning activities, such as literature circles or having students build dioramas of a self-selected portion of a book. Boys benefit from partaking in these

diverse and authentic learning opportunities. Teachers need to scaffold instruction during cooperative reading and writing activities based on the cognitive needs of boys (Booth, 2002).

It is imperative that teachers allow boys to write about their interests to keep them motivated (Newkirk, 2002; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Furthermore, boys should be allowed to write stories that contain violence because it is part of their culture, dialogue, fantasy, reality and what they discuss with each other (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). They often write to entertain each other, while girls write to please the teacher. Most boys, especially at the elementary school level, prefer to use kid-friendly language, rather than academic language in their writing (Tyre, 2008). In essence, the stories of boys can

be goofy, fanciful, sarcastic, funny and designed for the amusement of their peers. Unfortunately, teachers have a way of looking at the stories of boys, not as a virtue but as a problem. They complain that boys are always grandstanding in their writing that they are showing off to get attention and to see who can yuck it up the most (Tyre, 2008, p. 157).

Teachers should not think of this type of writing in a negative way. They should be analyzing the writing to pinpoint strengths, such as if the boy is able to connect with the ideas for the topic and thus provide concrete details (Fletcher, 2006; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

The population at the school where I worked at as a literacy coach, third grade teacher and fourth grade English Language Arts teacher for four years included significant numbers of struggling and reluctant male readers and writers. During one of my first schoolbook fairs at the school, I ordered additional copies of the New York Times bestseller *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2007) by Jeff Kinney, thinking it would appeal to both the boys and the girls. The book is written in a boy-friendly format that includes comic strips, stick figure illustrations and large kid-style font. Once many of the boys heard the school was selling this book, they were anxious to buy it. As seven new books from the series were published, students, particularly

the boys, were excited to buy them. Another book series that several of my reluctant, struggling and proficient boy readers also seemed to gravitate towards is the series *The Adventures of Captain Underpants (1997-2003)* by Dav Pilkey.

As the literacy coach for students in grades two through six in the 2007/2008 school year, one of the writing unit topics I created was mysteries. The boys were drawn to this unit as it involved suspense, detective work, violence (guns, bombs and blood), and exhilaration (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). Boys can read and write about violence as long as they are aware of the fatal consequences of utilizing a weapon. Teachers must ensure that boys have realistic and conceptual understanding of violence. The role of reality versus fantasy comes into action when educating about violence.

I planned for the mysteries reading and writing unit to begin three weeks before Halloween, so I decided to rename the writing unit *Halloween Mysteries*. I recommend that elementary school administrators and teachers create instructional units in reading and writing that are meaningful, rigorous and stimulating for both boys and girls. In turn, teachers will observe an increase in student engagement and academic improvement as a result of gender-differentiated curricula and instruction (Tyre, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009, p. 97-98).

High-quality instruction of English Language Arts involves understanding what particular topics interest boys and girls. For example, popular culture is very important to fourth and fifth grade boys. Often, literacy instruction within reading and writing leaves out that critical and motivational element, which for boys can include sports, music, television, movies and video games (Newkirk, 2002).

It is also imperative that teachers are aware of the genre preferences that boys might have. For instance, boys will enjoy reading realistic fiction novels with a lead male character.

Novels are just one category of literacy (Booth, 2002; Cunningham, 2007). Fourth and fifth grade boys also enjoy nonfiction books because they become engaged in learning about animals, other living things, planets, and how things work. These books also satisfy boys' curiosities about the real world by providing relevant information and authentic images. Many girls tend to like reading realistic fiction books that involve relationships (Booth, 2002).

Elementary school classroom libraries must contain an assortment of different genres of books that appeal to the reading interests of boys and girls, as well as books that are popular with both genders. The genres could include magazines, newspapers, comic books, novels, fiction and non-fiction books, how-to books, graphic novels, and picture books. These genres definitely fit into the category of school-based reading. Comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels are a popular choice of reading material, especially for boys who are described as disengaged, reluctant or struggling readers. Boys and girls must easily be able to find the location of these types of books. Teachers have implemented comic strips and comic books into classroom instruction and independent reading. There is also nothing negative about boys reading the sports pages from the newspaper because it promotes decoding and comprehension skills (Booth, 2002; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). For example, while reading the sports pages, boys can visualize and create meaning through the combination of images and text. The genres discussed have led to successful academic and psychological outcomes with boys (Booth, 2002). It is vital for teachers to get boys enthusiastic about reading. Unfortunately, enthusiasm towards reading in many elementary school classrooms is the missing component that inherently prevents boys from developing into proficient readers and writers.

One author notes that "publishers are hawking more gory and gross books to appeal to an elusive market: boys-many of whom would rather go to the dentist than crack open *Little*

*House on the Prairie*. Booksellers are also catering to teachers and parents desperate to make young males more literate” (Hechinger, 2008, p. A1). The plot or content of books has to appeal to boys to motivate them to read.

In order to get fourth and fifth grade boys exhilarated to read, literacy must be promoted now. “Thank goodness for the Harry Potter books-they gave every boy reader a chance to celebrate his reading in public, and even compete with others over who read the most recent book first in the shortest duration. The greatest gift to a boy’s identity is a boy like himself, who confirms that he is all right” (Thompson & Barker, 2008, p. 204). When a boy is hooked on reading and proud of his literary accomplishments, the book becomes a powerful conversational piece among his peers.

The “*Harry Potter*” series of novels are not simple reading texts, however many boys are able to comprehend and enjoy them. I recall seeing boys, even male reluctant readers, animated to read each one of those hardcover novels, which range from five hundred to eight hundred pages. Many boys would stay up late at night reading the books and be stimulated the next day to engage in book conversations with their friends. It was a big incentive for boys to be able to decode and understand each of the novels. As a result of reading and comprehending the *Harry Potter* book series, they felt a sense of pride in their major literary achievement.

After third grade teacher Kevin Bolger offered his book, *The Adventures of Captain Underpants*, to his students, they were instantaneously thrilled. As a result of this particular book’s success and the need for boy culture literature, he decided to write a children’s novel geared for children aged nine to twelve. The book was called *Sir Fartsalot Hunts The Booger*. Pearson PLC’s Penguin Group published it in May 2008. By the beginning of August 2008, the book was in its second printing, with 55,000 copies (Hechinger, 2008). The book is engaging,

contains boy-culture components, and is saturated with complex humor. Ben Schrank, president of Penguin's Razorbill children's imprint said, "The industry must publish fiction that will pull a boy away from a videogame" (Hechinger, 2008, p. A12). Bolger's second book, *Zombiekings* was published in June 2010. There are significant numbers of boys who choose to read that particular book because it captures elements of the boyhood culture in humorous ways.

It is beneficial for school administrators and teachers to understand that literacy is not just sitting reading a book quietly; rather it should be an interactive learning experience. For example, book conversations occurring in partnerships and small groups should be encouraged because that cultivates comprehension and social skills (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Boys live in their bodies, in their eyes, in the hidden emotional expressions of the heart that many times cannot find a voice in words or on the page alone. They need sound, color, and movement in order for the words to become real and relevant in the world (Gurian & Stevens, 2005, p. 191).

Boys need numerous opportunities to discuss and role-play what they are reading about.

I concur with *The Joys of Teaching Boys* that suggests boys utilize a thought book within the classroom to write in. It is practical for both boys and girls (Spence, 2008). The students can write about their ideas and life experiences in the thought book. Each day, several students could be provided with an opportunity to share their writing aloud with their peers and teacher. This sharing will help students with character education through learning about each other, developing connections, and cultivating friendships. The thought book can also support students with their oral language development. As a result of utilizing a thought book in the classroom, the teacher will learn information about his or her students as individuals that he or she previously did not know. Furthermore, teachers reading the writing done by boys can

cultivate dynamic connections leading to high-quality teacher-student relationships (Fletcher, 2006; Spence, 2008).

Fourth and fifth grade boys might display resistance towards keeping a “thought book” or writer’s notebook because they might feel it represents feminine thinking and actions, similar to a diary. Teachers can promote the thought book or writer’s notebook as an opportunity to encourage boys to record their thoughts, stories they’ve heard, or interesting artifacts of real life they observe or learn. Many boys would be enthusiastic to use it if they could also draw in it (Fletcher, 2006; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Their thought book or writer’s notebook could be personalized by decorating the cover with photographs, stickers, magazine pictures, cut-outs of words and letters and even hand-drawn pictures. There are concrete ways to make the thought book and writer’s notebook appeal to the boy culture. It does not need to be problematic.

### ***Overview of Upcoming Chapters***

Chapter two will be a critical review of the literature, emphasizing the potential causes of the boyhood crisis. This chapter is significant because it presents the academic, psychological and physical challenges of fourth and fifth grade boys within English Language Arts instruction. Many of the challenges boys face are not being acknowledged within the elementary school classroom. Teachers and school administrators are not recognizing the specific needs of boys due to a lack of knowledge of how boys best learn and the absence of gender-differentiated instructional techniques. As a result, the academic engagement and achievement of boys suffer. This chapter also will explain the importance of a relevant English Language Arts curriculum, including the conceptual thinking behind the immediate push for an abundant infusion of popular culture into instruction.

Chapter three will include some of the observations and perspectives I gained while teaching within the New York City public elementary schools during the last fourteen years. Following this personal framework of educational experiences that shaped my research, I will present the methodological framework. This methodology will include an explanation and example of each of the gender-differentiated contextual evaluation tools that were created based on research. The plan for the analysis of the boy culture components that could be embedded in literacy educational artifacts will be explained. The educational artifacts include Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books, text selections from *Treasures* a reading/language arts program, reading and listening passages from the New York State Standardized English Language Arts tests, and the common core state standards within reading, writing, speaking and listening. The racial and economic achievement gap in terms of literacy instruction will be integrated within the evaluation tools. Fourth and fifth grade instructional specialists within English Language Arts and I will provide constructive feedback of the evaluation tools.

In chapter four, the gender-differentiated contextual evaluation of the grade four and five English Language Arts educational artifacts including the Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books and text selections from *Treasures: a reading//language arts* program will be conducted. These English Language Arts educational artifacts will be investigated for transparent traces of the boy culture. Several fourth and fifth grade instructional specialists within English Language Arts and I will evaluate the findings.

In chapter five, the gender-differentiated contextual evaluation of the grades four and five English Language Arts educational artifacts will be conducted. These artifacts include reading and listening passages from New York State Standardized English Language Arts tests and the common core state standards within reading, writing, speaking and listening. These

English Language Arts educational artifacts will be explored for elements appealing to the boyhood culture. Several fourth and fifth grade English Language Arts specialists and I will assess the results.

Within chapter six, the conclusion of my four research questions will be revisited. I will report what I found as a result of the analyses of the English Language Arts educational artifacts and from the fourth and fifth grade English Language Arts instructional specialists. I will incorporate boy culture instructional enhancements into the existing common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening. I will also present that fourth and fifth grade boy culture English Language Arts optimal instructional techniques and resources must be prevalent and operational within all coeducational classrooms. In turn, meaningful gender-differentiated instruction must continue to prepare boys for the academic rigor and psychological demands of middle school.

**Chapter Two**  
**Critical Review of the Literature:**  
**The Academic, Psychological and Physical Challenges Boys Face within English Language Arts Instruction**

*Overview of the Boy Culture Reading and Writing Educational Dilemma*

The cognitive and academic needs of fourth and fifth grade boys in elementary school classrooms are not being acknowledged. The elementary school classroom climate impacts the way boys learn and contributes to their motivation towards school (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Thompson & Barker, 2008). When boys do not find success in school, beginning in preschool, the classroom can become a frustrating and unfriendly environment (Tyre, 2008).

In preschool, boys typically speak fewer words than girls do (Zambo & Brozo, 2009). For example, at the age of twenty-four months, a girl's average vocabulary is forty percent larger than a boy's vocabulary (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Tyre, 2008). Also, the fine motor skills of boys are not nearly as developed as girls. A lack of fine motor skills can make it difficult for a boy to use a pencil and scissors correctly (Tyre, 2008). Unfortunately, "the greatest natural deficit that little boys exhibit in preschool is their seeming inability to sit still" (Tyre, 2008, p. 66). Lastly, boys are usually six months to a year developmentally behind girls when they enter kindergarten (Legato, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Therefore, many boys are not cognitively and psychologically prepared to handle the heavy demands of the kindergarten English Language Arts curriculum (Sax, 2007; Thompson & Barker, 2008). The academic rigor of kindergarten today is like that of a first grade class of thirty years ago (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). When boys enter kindergarten, they believe they are smart. A boy's sense of self-confidence in regard to his intelligence can rapidly

decrease. This reduction in self-confidence originates with the classroom teacher's actions, which is usually meant as constructive criticism. For example, a teacher might pinpoint academic difficulties a boy is experiencing such as fine motor coordination, word/sound discrimination skills, and not being able to recognize the beginning, middle and, ending sounds of words. Two of these academic vulnerabilities mentioned are prerequisites for learning how to read. The other vulnerability will impact his ability to write neatly (Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Fortunately, within approximately six months into kindergarten, boys should begin to show progress in their verbal and fine motor skills (Legato, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

As a result of many boys being classified as spatial learners, boys might expand the workspace for them to learn. Boys will often spread their work out on a desk, occupying more space than girls do (Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). Furthermore, "boys are often noisier and more physically active" (Legato, 2008, p. 52). It is more difficult for boys to sit still and they are most likely to be labeled as hyperactive or restless by the teacher. The significant dissatisfaction with school for many boys is due to the fact of having to conform to proper behavior (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Schools typically require that school age children

sit still, speak fluently, color between the lines, use neat handwriting, work cooperatively, be neat and organized, and learn from a verbal rather than an experiential approach. They must also demonstrate mastery of learning through a standardized testing format. Testing is very difficult for many boys. Although some boys excel at standardized tests, it is far more beneficial to girls (Gunzelmann & Connell, 2006, p. 97).

In the primary grades, boys still have some curiosity towards learning and seem to find school exciting. Many boys crave the experiential learning in reading and writing that occurs in kindergarten, first, and second grade (Sax, 2007; Thompson & Barker, 2008). However, the excitement and curiosity in the third grade classroom seems to dissipate quickly. Boys lose

enthusiasm when reading and writing becomes challenging and less interesting. Students also have to partake in higher order literacy skills (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Legato, 2008).

An academic vulnerability in reading, especially decoding, fluency, and/or comprehension usually becomes evident in first, second or even third grade. Beginning in fourth grade, boys are supposed to be moving from learning to read, which incorporates mastery of decoding, fluency and comprehension, to reading to learn content-based information within social studies and science. Non-fictional reading includes analyzing and synthesizing of texts (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). It is imperative that teachers understand that reading to learn can present a major challenge for boys. Boys need to be able to verbalize their frustrations about reading to their teacher rather than misbehaving, or refusing to participate in the lesson. In turn, the teacher can develop an instructional action plan that will academically support boys with their specific reading difficulties.

Fourth and fifth grade boys who cannot read at the required independent reading level can develop a negative attitude towards elementary school. If a boy is having difficulty with reading independently, rather than asking for help, he might choose to misbehave. When a girl has a problem with independent reading, however, she may ask for help, remain quiet, and/or daydream (Sadker & Silber, 2007; Tyre, 2008).

The ways boys and girls internalize completing class work is diverse. Many girls are more motivated to complete their class work than boys are. Girls have an advantage in the classroom since they are also usually stronger and more confident in English Language Arts learning tasks than boys are (Gurian, 2001; Sax, 2005). In 2001, a survey was completed by three thousand male and female students in grades four through ten in the United States

(Booth, 2002). The results showed that approximately ninety percent of the boys and girls felt that teachers liked the girls better than the boys. This particular finding is noteworthy due to the fact that in most classroom scenarios girls like to satisfy the teacher while boys desire to make an impact on their peers (Pollack, 1998; Thompson & Barker, 2008).

### ***Racial and Economic Achievement Gap of Boys***

There must be multiple attempts to diminish the racial and economic achievement gap of boys before gender-differentiated instruction in English Language Arts can truly make an impact. Black and Hispanic boys living in low income households face academic struggles within reading and writing. Many of them are at an academic disadvantage within English Language Arts before they even enter a fourth or fifth grade classroom (Mead, 2006).

According to the 2005 Grade Four NAEP in reading, Hispanic males followed by black males are the lowest achievers out of Caucasian, Hispanic and black males and females (Mead, 2006; Noguera, Hurtado & Fergus, 2012). Racial and economic disparities, together with gender inequalities in reading and writing can initiate poor academic achievement. It is a dire emergency to rectify both of these challenging educational circumstances immediately.

### ***Hindrances within the English Language Arts Curriculum***

As a result of instructional adjustments to the English Language Arts curriculum tailored to the learning styles of girls throughout the United States approximately twenty years ago, fourth and fifth grade boys have continued to endure gender discrimination. The modifications to the English Language Arts curriculum geared to boys have been minimal (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). As a result, the fourth and fifth grade English Language Arts curriculum has been shortchanging boys.

The duration of recess has been curtailed in forty percent of elementary schools within the United States (Beresin, 2010). Several of the states that have eliminated recess include California, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The length of recess fluctuates within New York City schools. Based on the fifty-minute lunch period in elementary schools, recess should be at least twenty-five minutes, however that does not always occur. Boys suffer when recess is shortened or cancelled because they need physical movement and play throughout the day. Recess also contributes to a sense of physical and emotional well-being (Pollack, 1998; Sax, 2005; Whitmire, 2010).

The current gender brain-based research states that movement and exercise, especially in fresh air, supports boys in their academics. Daily recess helps both boys and girls focus within English Language Arts and cuts down on misbehavior (Gurian, Stevens, & King, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Adequate recess is necessary for brain function, psychological and physical development (Beighle, Morgan, Le Masurier & Pangrazi, 2006). It provides boys and girls with an opportunity for their brains to reinvigorate (Thompson & Barker, 2008).

Recess is an excellent chance for “boys to be boys” and have fun. Recess for children ten years old and under should be lengthy, involve active play and allow kids to be loud (lungs and muscles get stronger through physical exercise.) All children should be encouraged to participate in active play during recess (Tyre, 2008; Thompson & Barker, 2008). There should be a variety of resources including balls, jump ropes and sports equipment for boys and girls to utilize.

Educational policymakers should implement two daily mandatory twenty-five minute periods of recess (once in the morning and once in the afternoon) for all elementary school students. That amount of recess should help make classrooms more hospitable learning

environments for all students, particularly boys. It is imperative that school administrators, teachers, parents and students inform educational policy makers that some of the best developmental opportunities for learning and socialization transpire during recess.

Another deficit in the curriculum is the abundance of standardized English Language Arts test preparation in many fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Third through fifth grade students have to complete one standardized test in English Language Arts each year. The duration of this test is approximately sixty minutes per day for three consecutive days. The high frequency of paper and pencil test preparation hinders the school learning of boys (Greene & Melton, 2007; Whitmire, 2010). Test taking instruction in English Language Arts must be embedded into a practical and relevant curriculum. Many boys find it difficult to concentrate during test preparation and the actual test. Consequently, literacy testing may discriminate against boys “naturalistically” (Greene & Melton, 2007; Whitmire, 2010). Testing should not be abolished for boys; it just needs to be adjusted to suit the learning styles of boys within elementary school. Standardized test preparation decreases the time spent on essential content instruction in the English Language Arts curriculum (Greene & Melton, 2007).

The high frequency of test preparation discourages boys. The pencil and paper-based test preparation involves reading and listening to passages, answering multiple-choice questions, and responding to short and extended response tasks. It is not usually taught in a way that is compatible with the ways boys learn. Furthermore, test preparation could be considered a sedentary learning activity that takes the joy out of learning and can make the classroom a place most boys and many girls want to avoid (Greene & Melton, 2007; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). The way English Language Arts test preparation is instructionally

executed by the teacher determines how successful and engaging it will be with both boys and girls.

The skills required for standardized test sophistication should be embedded into the English Language Arts curriculum. In order for students to succeed on the test they must understand what types of questions will be presented and how to effectively answer the multiple choice questions, short response questions and extended response tasks. The students need to comprehend what each question is asking. It is imperative that students comprehend how to take the test and are familiar with the “testing vocabulary” (Greene & Melton, 2007; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Realistically, test preparation does not have to be done four months in advance. Teachers should provide students in grades three, four and five with twenty minutes of preparation daily one month before the test (Greene & Melton, 2007).

An additional component of the curriculum that has shortchanged boys is the lack of teacher and school administrator knowledge on effective instructional practices for boys within English Language Arts. Academic and psychological challenges arise for fourth and fifth grade boys to be successful and enjoy school when elementary school instruction is eighty percent auditory and written-language based. This type of language and text-based instruction truly supports auditory and verbal learners, which tend to be predominantly girls. In turn, most boys tend to be visual, spatial, and/or kinesthetic learners (Sax, 2007; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Many elementary school classrooms do not practice visual-spatial-kinesthetic instruction, which boys could gravitate towards (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). In fourth and fifth grade, when many boys are struggling with achievement in reading and writing, they might become resistant to school. The lack of instructional techniques used in the classroom geared to the different learning styles of boys poses a problem (Fletcher, 2006;

Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). Teachers and school administrators should be supporting boys to become stronger in their reading and writing development through research-based and proven boy culture instructional methodologies.

Competitive learning activities without the fear of failure belong in elementary school classrooms. Many boys are comfortable taking risks, so competitive learning activities should be a component of high-quality and rigorous instruction. Instructional games and contests is an area in which boys thrive; however, those activities occur infrequently. Competitive learning, when structured fairly, is a successful instructional methodology for engaging and motivating boys (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010).

Mental exploratory behaviors, which involve displaying a calm disposition while completing class work at desks or tables, are not considered active learning. Types of learning activities such as students quietly looking for books in the classroom library and independently solving puzzles are preferred in classrooms by many administrators and classroom teachers (Panksepp, 1998; James, 2007). Mental exploratory activities do not involve kinesthetic learning that many boys really enjoy and thrive on academically. Instead, kinesthetic exploratory learning, especially for boys, should be taking place in the classroom. There are usually only limited learning opportunities in the classroom where boys can physically learn through utilizing manipulatives or constructing something (Newkirk, 2002; James, 2007). Kinesthetic-based lessons can also benefit girls by exposing them to another type of instructional modality. In turn, girls might prefer this particular style of learning (Blum, 1997).

A relevant context is inherently missing from fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Students, especially boys, need to understand how a particular English Language Arts lesson is going to help them thrive in the real world (Dewey, 1915; Tyre, 2008). They should be

encouraged to ask their teachers how a particular lesson will support them in the real world. Boys should be encouraged by their teachers to make relevant connections between the content knowledge being taught (Dewey, 1902; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Literacy-based school learning and relevant learning need to be integrated because they will help motivate students, especially boys in elementary school (Dewey, 1915; Gurian, 2001). Classroom learning in isolation without relevance confuses boys about the purpose of education.

Boys' inability to use experiences outside of school within the classroom, itself based on Dewey's educational philosophy, decreases their engagement. Neither can boys apply what they are learning in school outside the classroom. Boys are expected to block the ideas, activities and interests that occur at home when they enter the classroom (Dewey, 1902). The following two questions arise: why does this disconnect of learning have to occur and why can't elementary schools use the relevant philosophy of Dewey for English Language Arts curriculum design and instructional planning? School as an agent for real world preparation for the workforce could help support boys' academic, psychological and physical needs (Whitmire, 2010). The potential relevance of school has the power to make learning a whole component of life instead of many fragmented parts (Dewey, 1915; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008).

Dewey argued that the curriculum should be relevant to the lives of students. He saw learning by doing and the development of practical life skills as crucial to children's education. Some critics assumed that under Dewey's system, students would fail to acquire basic academic skills and knowledge. Other critics believed that classroom order and the teacher's authority would disappear (Dewey, 1915). Dewey was not requesting that traditional goals of schooling be forsaken. Instead, he supported the importance of students collecting huge amounts of accurate knowledge (Dewey, 1915). Dewey wanted the normal objectives of

schooling to remain the same, however, the goals should be expanded to make learning relevant and engaging. Learning must not just focus on rote learning, lecture and constant drilling (Dewey, 1902; Dewey, 1915). Dewey's useful and relevant instructional methodologies need to be utilized in fourth and fifth grade classrooms. It is critically important that the curriculum be kept "alive" and relevant so boys can have an investment in their learning (Grumet, 1998). According to Grumet,

when curriculum is alive, it invites the students to reappropriate it as they reclaim their identity from its origin in his or her parents' look, grasping and dislodging and reclaiming its perspective. When the curriculum is a dead sign, all of us, teachers and students, stumble under its empty stare (Grumet, 1988, p.116).

Exciting and relevant curriculum has the power to engage boys. Boring and disconnected English Language Arts curriculum can shut down the motivation towards learning for boys (Dewey, 1902; Dewey, 1915).

There continues to be an absence of books in classroom libraries appealing to and designated for boys. The satisfying reading material for boys can include but should not be limited to popular comic books, graphic novels, non-fiction books, mysteries, and joke books. If boys are provided with genres of books and magazines that are exciting, connect to their relevant interests and meet their reading levels, they will relish reading (Booth, 2004; Routman, 2008).

Unfortunately, most of the fiction books read in elementary school classrooms involve more lead female characters than lead male characters (Tyre, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). On the 50th anniversary edition (2002) of her classic novel *Henry Huggins*, author Beverly Cleary shared that she wrote this particular book in answer to her difficulty in finding fascinating books for boys when she was working as a children's librarian. There were very few books on the shelves boys wanted to read. One day, a boy asked where would he find the books for boys

like him. Beverly Cleary realized there were very few books for him and this inspired Cleary to write more books for boys (Booth, 2002).

In the last twenty years, there have been many books published with male lead characters. Some of the relevant, enjoyable and highly successful children's literature for boys with male lead characters include *Bud not Buddy* (1999) by Christopher Paul Curtis, *Holes* (1998) by Louis Sachar, *Harry Potter* (1998) by J.K. Rowling, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2007) by Jeff Kinney, and the *Captain Underpants* series (1997) by Dav Pilkey ([www.guysread.com](http://www.guysread.com); ODean, 1998).

In order to support the reading interests of both boys and girls, teachers could select a read aloud picture book or novel with a lead male character one month and the next month they could choose a lead female character and so forth. It is critically important for boys to listen to and read books having male and female lead characters. Boys will become academically and psychologically grounded while reading about the life experiences and characteristics of both genders (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Based on the ways boys are taught English Language Arts, fourth and fifth grade boys are frequently misdiagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). ADD and ADHD are discussed in this dissertation because they can hinder English Language Arts instruction, especially for boys. Boys are approximately three times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than girls are. 11 percent of boys aged 4 to 17 years old were diagnosed with ADHD compared to 4.4 percent of females according to the Centers for Disease Control. These two types of behavioral disorders affect mostly boys (Gurian, 2001; Reiff, 2004; Gurian & Stevens, 2005). The diagnosis of ADHD is not surprising given that the negative behavior of boys in the classroom is so transparent. Boys

will often call out, get out of their seats, and have difficulty keeping their hands and feet to themselves (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Whitmire, 2010).

Boys are frequently misdiagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) when they are in fact just displaying typical boyish behaviors. The prefrontal cortex and frontal lobe of the brain contribute to boys being significantly more impulsive than girls are (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Legato, 2008). Teachers and school administrators must understand the natural impulsivity of boys so that this gender difference is not treated as a deficit in the ability for boys to learn. Boys might uncover what triggers cause them to become impulsive. They should be provided with ways to help them control their impulsivities (Tyre, 2008). A concrete understanding by teachers of the ways the brain differs between genders is beneficial and will help them understand a commonly misdiagnosed behavioral disorder (Reiff, 2004; Sax, 2005).

Traditionally, boys begin to be diagnosed with ADD or ADHD at six or seven years old because instructional tasks within reading and writing require more concentration and effort than tasks in kindergarten and first grade (Reiff, 2004). If boys and girls are diagnosed with this behavioral disorder, they must be treated properly or learning will continue to be difficult. Most of the teacher referrals for ADHD involve boys because of their disruptive behaviors in the classroom (Gurian, 2001; Sciutto, Nolfi, & Bluhm, 2004).

The diagnosis of boys with ADHD often arises because of the ineffective ways boys are taught. If boys were taught in more boy-friendly ways such as with visual, spatial, kinesthetic, or tactile instructional styles, ADHD diagnosis in boys should significantly decrease (Reiff, 2004; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Furthermore, whenever teachers infuse popular culture and the relevant interests of boys in instruction, boys become engaged and

focused in the classroom (Newkirk, 2002; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). It is of utmost importance to tweak or eliminate those areas in the classroom that are shortchanging fourth and fifth grade boys in reading and writing and connected to ADHD (Reiff, 2004; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009).

Astonishingly, “over four million American boys are on Ritalin and the United States uses eighty percent of the world’s Ritalin” (Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009, p. 34).

Medication is used to treat boys with ADHD, whereas behavioral intervention techniques are more frequently used with girls with ADHD. The combination of both treatments is the preferred method for helping both boys and girls, though there is no formulaic approach to treating ADHD (Reiff, 2004; Sciotto et al., 2004).

### *Academic Struggles*

#### **Gender Cognitive Research**

Studies of brain research suggest that the inner components of the brains of boys and girls are not the same and impact gender-based learning (Sax, 2005; Legato, 2008).

Neurological gender differences contribute to engagement or disengagement within learning.

Gender-brain research shows it would be beneficial for teachers to deliver high-quality instruction in different instructional modalities. A girl’s brain is typically more suitable for the type of verbal and auditory instruction that takes place in many elementary school classrooms (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Legato, 2008).

There is an abundance of differences between the male and female brain. Steven Pinker, professor of psychology at Harvard University, states that “there are sixty significant brain differences between males and females that have been discovered to date; some seem highly relevant on how we teach and raise boys” ([http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/debate05/debate05\\_index.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/debate05/debate05_index.html)). The human brain is divided down the middle into two hemispheres. Most girls favor using the left

hemisphere of the brain, while many boys rely on using the right hemisphere of the brain. The functioning of these two hemispheres is obvious in elementary school classrooms since girls usually speak more and are better listeners than boys are. Conversely, boys provide fewer details through spoken conversation and do not listen as well. Students, particularly boys who use the right hemisphere of the brain, seem to prefer visual, kinesthetic and/or spatial learning styles (Blum, 1997; Mead, 2006).

The increase of cortical activity in a boy's brain is focused on spatial-mechanical functioning. This increase in cortical activity links males to utilizing the spatial and kinesthetic modalities for learning (Blum, 1997; Sax, 2005). Girls have more cortical activity, which leads to verbal emotive processing. With this female strength in verbal learning, girls tend to have a wider vocabulary used in conversation and writing than boys do. Girls are better able to think more verbally and then engage in thoughtful discussion (Baron-Cohen, 2003; Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Sax, 2005).

The prefrontal cortex of a girl's brain is usually more active than that of a boy. The frontal lobe develops at an earlier age for girls than it does for boys (Blum, 1997; Sax, 2005). The frontal lobe and prefrontal lobe are the areas of the brain in which reading, writing and word knowledge are produced. These particular brain components are one of the reasons why girls are better at sitting still and reading independently (Blum, 1997; Sax, 2005). As a result of the brain maturing earlier in girls, they are usually able to read and write at an earlier age than boys are. With this reading and writing ability at a young age, girls tend to be more academically prepared. This superiority of girls to boys in reading skills such as decoding and comprehension as well in writing can be seen in kindergarten or first grade (Sowell, 2003; Sax,

2007). Once teachers become aware of gender differences within learning, they can begin to provide high-quality gender-differentiated instruction.

An early childhood classroom teacher can academically support boys in increasing their verbal ability by using the block area, which is essential for literacy development (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). The kinesthetic and visual learning process connected to block building contributes to the reading and writing development of boys once they enter fourth and fifth grade. When boys are constructing something with blocks, a teacher could ask them to provide verbal descriptions about what they are building. Since boys are involved in a kinesthetic learning activity, they will be better able to describe their actions. The language of boys will be more expansive when they are physically connected to the learning activity, instead of just writing a story about block building (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Detailed spoken language occurs as a result of greater blood flow in the cerebellum-the “doing” middle part of the human brain (Baron-Cohen, 2003). Each time boys are finished building with blocks, they can label their constructions using post-it notes. A child in the block area could verbally share his or her own construction. This kinesthetic-verbal instructional technique is critically important for teachers to utilize in order to help boys become triumphant learners.

Hearing contributes to boys’ difficulties in school. There is a major divergence in hearing between genders, which can significantly affect reading and writing instruction. Girls and women tend to hear better than boys and males do (Blum, 1997; Gurian & Stevens, 2004; Sax, 2005; Biddulph, 2008; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). Often, boys are not able to hear instructions from female teachers when the female teacher speaks in her normal speaking voice. Several reliable scientific and cognitive researchers have acknowledged the

discrepancy in hearing ability between genders (James, 2007; Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2007). Hearing issues are exacerbated when boys choose to sit in the back of the classroom, a common practice in middle and high school classrooms. When boys and girls are not able to effectively hear the teacher, they become less engaged. Teachers should make a purposeful effort not to seat the boys in the back of the classroom and explain why boys should sit closer to the teacher. A classroom discussion of cognitive gender differences would make a relevant and meaningful lesson for both boys and girls (Sax, 2005; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008).

The neural rest state of boys' and girls' brains differs as well. A boy might enter into what a neurologist calls a rest state several times during the day. This rest state can be seen when boys daydream or even fall asleep. Sometimes, boys will tap a pencil or move around in their seats to avoid entering this resting state (Blum, 1997; Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Unfortunately, teachers regard this particular behavior as disruptive rather than understand it as a way for boys to stay alert during class. Teachers must be cognizant of the rationale for these behaviors and structure their lessons in English Language Arts to be meaningful, enlightening and energizing. Anytime the need arises for boys and girls to stretch their bodies, it should be provided. When most girls enter the rest state they are able to take notes, avoid boredom and remain focused (Baron-Cohen, 2003; Gurian & Stevens 2005). Teachers need to consider how this distinct gender difference can be avoided, rather than let boys tap their pencils to stay awake and focused.

### **Learning Styles**

Bruce Joyce, learning styles theorist and researcher, argues that boys learn differently than girls do. Positive instructional methodologies integrated into a relevant curriculum within English Language Arts can provide educational opportunities amongst both genders. There is

no justification for fourth and fifth grade boys or girls to be marginalized based on gender (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004, 2009; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). Students should not be limited to single modes of learning. Instead, they should be provided with an array of instructional techniques incorporating diverse learning styles. The differentiated instructional techniques could support boys in becoming confident and successful learners (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004; 2009).

As fourth and fifth grade students begin to understand the content, skills, and dispositions being taught, they will be able to comprehend what mode(s) of learning they prefer to use. Joyce, Weil & Calhoun recommend that teachers shift away from the chalk and talk instructional method because it is not successful with most boys. In order to foster boy engagement, teachers should make their classrooms more inquiry-based. Within this framework, the teacher can ask students how they could accomplish the learning task instead of just telling them how to learn. This can promote student autonomy and responsibility, particularly in boys. All classrooms must be optimal learning environments where boys can utilize the learning modalities they prefer. One of the primary goals for teachers should be to enable students, especially boys, to be engaged and multifaceted learners (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2009).

Several of the preferred boy culture learning styles could be implemented during English Language Arts instruction. For example, a graphic organizer is helpful in strengthening reading and writing development in all content areas (Calkins, 2001; Cunningham, 2007). The picture-word inductive model is another tool that is useful for improving visual learning and vocabulary because it is investigation-based and scaffolds the students to achieve ever more difficult tasks (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004; Cunningham, 2007).

Boys will enjoy engaging in simulations within English Language Arts, social studies or science. A simulation is an adaptation of a real life activity that can foster quality learning through kinesthetic and visual teaching methodologies. Role-playing is also a practical instructional technique that supports boys academically and psychologically and also develops morality. Role-playing can help boys and girls solve conflicts and handle daily stressful dilemmas. For example, a boy will most likely feel less vulnerable when role-playing an unpleasant situation than discussing it. As a result of boys role-playing, they will be able to portray other points of view. Role-playing is effective for instruction in all content areas. It should help improve the self-confidence and public speaking skills of boys and girls (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004, 2009; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

The social structure of the classroom is extremely important to the learning styles of boys. In particular, boys prefer to learn through inquiry in dyads or small groups (Johnson, R. & Johnson, D., 2003). Discussions that encourage the exchanging of ideas are beneficial for boys. Cooperative learning, when the purpose of the assignment and the students' designated roles are clearly explained, can be an optimal learning experience.

Synectics is a creative way of problem solving amongst a diversified group of students and should be utilized to foster a community of learners. For example, if boys are involved in creating and maintaining an effective classroom society, they will be actively involved in their learning. In order for students to make mnemonics a positive learning tool, they need to be able to make meaningful and relevant connections to the material for memorization (Klecker, 2003; Taylor & Lorimer, 2003; Johnson, R. & Johnson, D., 2003).

Direct instruction in English Language Arts can be meaningful if the teacher presents it enthusiastically, coherently and succinctly. It must be followed up with guided practice,

independent work and sharing. During independent work, the teacher is facilitating learning by offering academic support.

Sitting down and learning in the classroom is just one type of learning. It does not work for all students, especially boys. James Britton, who along with his colleagues at the University of London, transformed language practice within elementary schools in the 1960s and 1970s, remarked,

...the idea that learning is something you do sitting in a seat is a high sophisticated notion and, to a young child, a very peculiar one. It symbolizes probably more sharply than anything else, the long-standing traditional distinction between school learning and the kind of learning we all undertake from time to time at home, in the street, in strange cities, in the countryside, and many places (Britton, 1993, p. 128).

The teacher should permit male or female students to stand up to complete independent work including reading. Studying while sitting down and listening does not fit all the learning styles of boys. Students should not be confined to learn solely through sitting. Furthermore, the sitting in the classroom for significant periods of time is difficult for boys, who are inclined to be physically active. A teacher allowing boys to stand up during a lesson can enhance academic achievement because boys are being more active by standing (Dewey, 1915; Britton, 1993).

One type of instruction does not fit all the learning modalities of boys. Therefore, boys and girls should not be forced to learn in only one directed way (Britton, 1993). If boys understand how they learn, they will feel more empowered academically (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2009).

### **Relevant Instructional Techniques in Reading and Writing**

Literacy intervention strategies such as collaborative group work and authentic real-life applications have been highly beneficial for boys. For example, a group of fourth and fifth

grade boys could read a fictional or non-fictional text about searching for a job and discuss the implications of this relevant topic. As an independent follow up task, students could write or type a letter applying for a classroom job. Unfortunately, this type of real-life application is missing in many coeducational classrooms. Boys and girls can become very engaged in relevant literacy instruction if it is presented in a meaningful and engaging way (Dewey, 1915; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). Teachers must link the teaching of writing with the teaching of reading (Taylor & Lorimer, 2003; Fletcher, 2006). An execution of a timely and meaningful curriculum in English Language Arts is a roadmap for engaging students in reading and writing (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Boys and girls like to be given a choice of the topics to read and write about. Several schools in the United Kingdom experienced great results when teachers demonstrated personal knowledge of boys' interests. These particular teachers provided reading texts that appealed to the boys' interests and gave boys as much choice as possible in reading and writing assignments. It is beneficial for boys if teachers encourage them to gather ideas for writing from non-academic experiences and within popular culture (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006).

Teachers need to determine what the writing interests, strengths and vulnerabilities of boys are through writing surveys, conferences and informal assessments. The three writing instructional methods that benefit boys include modeled writing, shared/interactive writing and guided writing because they are structured and visible (Spence, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). These three methods can encourage boys to engage in the writing process. Boys and girls should receive writing support without the risk of feeling unintelligent or humiliated (Spence, 2008; Tyre, 2008). In order to help boys become successful with writing, the instruction needs to be "sharp, explicit, and well-structured" (Spence, 2008, p. 44). Teachers should always

provide a realistic time frame for the completion of a piece of writing because it places fair accountability that fosters good work habits and time management skills, especially in boys. Additionally, a reasonable due date will help boys prepare for careers (Spence, 2008; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009).

If teachers allow boys to select their writing topics, boys will become more engaged in writing. Teachers need to be cognizant that the common core state standards require students to become proficient in certain writing pieces such as a personal narrative, persuasive essay, informational report and response to literature (<http://schools.nyc.gov>; [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov); [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)). These instructional writing tasks are non-negotiable, thus required for student accountability and mastery. The teacher can shape these mandatory writing assignments into motivational ones that would appeal to both boys and girls (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006).

There is a lack of research on drawing ideas before writing, but drawing as a prewriting activity is useful because many boys are visual and spatial learners (Fletcher, 2006; Spence, 2008). Drawing in advance of writing facilitates the development of ideas and can also increase motivation towards writing (Fletcher, 2006; Spence, 2008). The drawing can be utilized as a road map or graphic organizer for writing and help students provide concrete details. The production of high-quality writing can originate from teachers giving boys and girls an opportunity to draw first prior to writing (Fletcher, 2006; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009).

It is essential that teachers understand the ways boys internalize writing and the components that make writing meaningful and engaging. Many boys struggle with writing because they find handwriting, getting their thoughts down on paper, and the mechanics of writing difficult. As a result, they do not enjoy writing. It is not possible for teachers to ignore

this generation of boy writers. Writing is an important skill that no boy or human being can do without (Fletcher, 2006; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). It is critical to examine the writing process through the lens of a fourth or fifth grade boy or girl while focusing on his or her strengths and weaknesses.

### **Struggles with Handwriting**

The difficulty of handwriting for many boys makes the school day less enjoyable. Students are involved in some type of writing task during half the school day, a long time for boys who struggle with handwriting (Tseng & Chow, 2000). As a result of the rigorous common core standards, including the preparation for college and career readiness, there is no other choice. Meeting standards in writing is necessary for all students. Students should be able to complete an average amount of written work in the classroom in order to meet the demands of the English Language Arts curriculum.

Neat handwriting is difficult for many boys. The concentration required for proper handwriting can make it hard for boys and girls to get their thoughts down on paper (Booth, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). The producing of written text requires the connection of several interrelated skills, such as the coordination of forming letters, idea formulation and structure in syntax (Jones & Christensen, 1999). It is necessary for “automaticity in handwriting to develop which means that the scarce cognitive resource of attention is available for the more complex aspects of text generation such as ideation, sequencing of ideas, and monitoring for accuracy” to occur (Jones & Christensen, 1999, p. 45).

When handwriting is difficult, boys should be encouraged to type some of their assignments on computers. Boys and girls could find utilizing a computer for their written assignments fulfilling and discover future success (Booth, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). Completing

written assignments on the computer will help boys focus on the content of a paragraph or essay, rather than on forming letters.

If teachers constantly criticize their handwriting, most likely boys will not want to write at all. Teachers need to be non-judgmental and provide helpful suggestions to boys so they won't become unmotivated. Many boys are excited to learn manuscript and cursive writing using colorful and image-based workbooks so learning handwriting could be an engaging and meaningful classroom learning experience for all boys (Thompson & Barker, 2008).

### **A Relevant English Language Arts Curriculum**

*“Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results”* (Dewey, 1916, p. 161).

Dewey states, “Relate the school to life, and all studies are of necessity correlated” (Dewey, 1915, p. 91). When boys ask questions about the world they live in, the answers they receive can lead them to read books and/or using the Internet to gain knowledge. Dewey discussed engaging boys and girls collaboratively in relevant learning. He did not specifically focus on what works with one gender in the classroom. It is highly probable that Dewey's instructional methodologies could lead to classrooms that honor and differentiate the boy and girl culture. In turn, these instructional techniques can produce highly academic, engaged and motivated fourth and fifth grade boys and girls (Dewey, 1902; Dewey, 1915). The English Language Arts curriculum does not replicate students' lives who reside in a classroom for approximately a quarter of the day (Dewey, 1902; Gurian, 2009). The curriculum must not be a stagnant document, rather one that should change to fit the cognitive needs and interests of the students (Grumet, 1988; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Dewey argued that the student should be at the forefront of the curriculum. All the knowledge students take from their lives outside of school walls should not be thought of as dust needing to be cleaned up in order for real learning to happen. Dewey's vision of utilizing knowledge within scaffolded learning can be based on a student's personal hobbies, dreams or extracurricular strengths. Scaffolding within instruction involves teachers' constructing on the students' funds of knowledge. The utilization of the funds of knowledge includes making connections between students' everyday literacy and the English Language Arts instruction within the authorized curriculum. Dewey believed that academic and non-academic reading should be connected rather than disconnected (Cavazos- Kottke, 2005). Real world and school learning need to be integrated instead of two separate entities. It is crucial that the homes and neighborhoods students reside in become part of the classroom culture and English Language Arts curriculum. Meaningful student engagement, particularly for boys, should increase if students' lives outside of the school building are acknowledged (Britton, 1993).

Dewey increased the attention paid to the physical needs of a child and emphasized learning experiences outside the classroom. Dewey wanted students to spend time learning beyond the classroom in planting, building, neighborhood walks and excursions. He felt these particular authentic educational experiences would make classroom learning relevant and engaging (Dewey, 1915). Neighborhood walks and excursions could be preceded and followed by reading selections and self-selected learning projects.

### **Conceptual Thinking: Popular Culture and Relevance**

My research is based in part on Thomas Newkirk's concept that the literacy development of fourth and fifth grade boys is enhanced by an infusion of popular culture, coherently delineated in Newkirk's book, *Misreading Masculinity: Boys, Literacy, and*

*Popular Culture* (2002). This book draws on Newkirk's distinguished career researching the literacy needs, skills and practices of elementary school students (Newkirk, 2002).

After putting forth his thesis that popular culture is very important to the lives of fourth and fifth grade boys, Newkirk explains that literacy instruction in reading and writing leaves out popular culture, which includes sports, music, movies and video games (Newkirk, 2002). Newkirk's focus is based on the work of John Dewey who originated the need for "experience" as an essential part of school instruction. One can see how the current academic emphasis on school testing would be problematic for boys due to their academic, psychological and physical needs. Teacher knowledge of fourth and fifth grade boyhood popular culture as well as the boys' lives outside of school must be kept current. These two components must be immersed into English Language Arts instruction to make school significantly meaningful (Newkirk, 2002; Kincheloe, 2003).

In chapters four and five, the conceptual framework of Thomas Newkirk and Ralph Fletcher help investigate the gender-differentiated components of children's literature and the common core state standards within English Language Arts. Newkirk's literacy research, reported in *Misreading Masculinity: Boys, Literacy, and Popular Culture* (2002), examines student writing in grades three through six. The rationale for selecting the writing pieces of the upper elementary grades is that Newkirk noticed the stories boys and girls write are often in-depth, but not adult-friendly. His concern was triggered intrinsically as a result of students, especially boys, writing about violence and aggression. On a weekly basis, many boys are exposed to violence and aggression through popular culture in various media such as music, video games, television and movies. Newkirk states:

We have failed to support, or even allow in our literacy programs the tastes, values, and learning styles of many boys. More specifically, we have discouraged, devalued,

or even prohibited the genres of reading and writing that are most popular with many boys, stories that include violence, parody, and bodily humor” (Newkirk, 2002, p.xvi).

Newkirk’s concern was that in many elementary school classrooms, it was evident that fourth and fifth grade boys were not interested in reading and writing (Newkirk, 2002). Unfortunately, negative elementary instructional practices transpiring in English Language Arts can contribute to minimal engagement and low academic achievement when boys become adolescents. If fourth and fifth grade boys do not see some immediate success in reading and writing, they will learn coping mechanisms such as pretending to independently read and write or misbehaving. These particular coping mechanisms might continue to be used into adolescence unless constructive actions are implemented (Gurian, 1998; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

In Newkirk’s second study, he examined the writing of one hundred boys and girls in five New Hampshire elementary schools in which students were able to choose genres and topics for their writing pieces. Newkirk also interviewed the boys and girls. During the interview, Newkirk asked each student about his or her rationale for writing, use of violence in the story and understanding of what makes a good piece of writing (Newkirk, 2002). A section of Newkirk’s book is a guide for teachers on how to effectively teach writing to boys (Newkirk, 2002). Based on his examples, I have developed several gender-differentiated enhancements to the grade four and five common core state writing standards, found in chapter six.

In Fletcher’s study, he prepared a questionnaire for one hundred teachers, both those residing in the United States and those abroad, to complete regarding their perceptions of the boy writers they work with. Fletcher handpicked the teachers based on reports of their strong ability as writing teachers. He had conversations with boys about what they liked and what

they didn't like about writing. Fletcher also distributed surveys for boys to fill out (Fletcher, 2006). In *Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices* (2006) he stresses that the classroom writer's workshop where students engage in writing should be the "perfect arena for boys, tailor-made to their eclectic interests and boisterous energy" (Fletcher, 2006, p. 5). In chapter five, using Fletcher's work as a methodological model, I explain how fourth and fifth grade boys are discriminated against within reading and writing instruction utilizing the English Language Arts common core state standards.

### *The Psychological Learning Challenges of Boys*

#### **The Boy Code**

A major difficulty boys face in school is abiding by the "Boy Code" (Pollack, 1998). It is an unwritten cultural code that encourages boys to act tough when they are suffering emotionally from academic, social or family problems. The boy code indicates how society thinks boys should act: cool, strong and never display negative feelings in a feminine manner. Boys are never to cry in public if they are upset; only in extreme circumstances such as when their sports team loses or a family member or friend dies (Pollack, 1998, p. xxiii-xxiv; Eliot, 2009).

The boy code can interfere with classroom learning because it acts as an emotional straitjacket and prevents boys from displaying their true feelings (Pollack, 1998; Eliot, 2009). Within the classroom, it is common for girls to ask for help while boys *act* for help. For example, if a fourth or fifth grade boy is struggling with reading he is most likely not going to ask the teacher for help. Instead, he might act out, fidget, or go off task and consequently get in trouble. Many boys "would rather drop out by losing interest and misbehaving than show they can't perform" (<http://www.marvinmarshall.com/promoting-responsibility-learning->

february-2008; Biddulph, 2008). “A boy measures everything he does or says by a single yardstick: Does this make me look weak?” (<http://marvinmarshall.com/promoting-responsibility-learning-february-2008>). If he is weak in the learning activity or sport, the boy will not partake in it for the fear of potential ridicule by his or her peers.

It is reiterated through news documentaries and leading educational experts that the boy code can make elementary school cognitively and psychologically difficult (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). I have seen the boy code displayed in classrooms, cafeterias and outside. It is important for teachers to have discussions with fourth and fifth grade boys and girls examining the elements of the boy code. Teachers should ask boys in community meetings what would happen if they did not display boy code behaviors in the classroom. They could also ask how that will contribute to the learning environment. It is important that teachers and parents help fourth and fifth grade boys persevere during challenging academic and social situations within and outside of the classroom (<http://www.marvinmarshall.com/promoting-responsibility-learning-february-2008>).

The boy code is a cultural norm that begins in the home and is carried out throughout society. Parents might stress that boys should never be hit by another child without hitting back. Consequently, if a boy gets hit in school he most likely will hit back. The boy will not want to be hit without hitting back for fear of being called a “punk”, “pussy” or “wimp.” As a result, even if a boy hits back, he will still place blame on the child who hit him first. Both boys will get in trouble at school for hitting each other instead of using their words to resolve the conflict (Pollack, 1998; Gurian & Stevens, 2005).

Teachers need to be trained to understand the components of the boy code and be able to recognize when a boy is displaying the boy code. Teachers must successfully guide the boys

in their classes and maintain high expectations for their academics and behavior. They should not immediately reprimand boys for misbehavior but try to understand what is causing the negative behavior (Pollack, 1998). When teachers understand and sympathize with the pressures of the boy code, fourth and fifth grade boys will begin to feel accepted. In this way, the optimal learning environment can be achieved (Pollack, 1998; Biddulph, 2008).

The boy code occasionally appears in children's literature, which could motivate fourth and fifth grade boys to read. Boys might choose to read realistic fiction books containing elements of the boy code. Two examples of realistic fiction books with components of the boy code include the series *The Diary of the Wimpy Kid* (2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012) by Jeff Kinney and *The Adventures of Ook and Gluk Kung-Fu Caveman from The Future* (2010) by Dav Pilkey. The boy code is one of my criteria for judging the gender appeal of the Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books and text selections from *Treasures* found in chapter four.

### **Bullying**

Sometimes, boys will bully other boys or even girls. If a bully senses a physical or emotional weakness in a boy, that boy could become a target for bullying behaviors. Bullying is a theme in children's literature that boys might enjoy reading about because it demonstrates power and control. The bullying could be verbal, physical or even cyber-bullying, though physical bullying is the most common with boys and may include pushing, hitting, kicking, punching and even forcing the victim to perform humiliating tasks. It is imperative for teachers to be aware of the range of boyhood activities and how they can contribute to bullying (Meeker, 2008; Tyre, 2008). In order for boys and girls to handle bullies, they need to learn how to stand up to the bully or confidently walk away. School administrators and teachers

should be addressing bullying. They must institute a school-wide anti-bullying policy (Pollack, 1998; Kimmel, 2008).

Students must understand the various roles boys and girls may portray in bullying. These roles include the bully, victim, and bystander (Kimmel, 2008; Walsh, 2008). When a bystander witnesses bullying but does not report it to an adult, the bystander is considered guilty by school staff (Meeker, 2008). A boy who witnesses bullying might not tell an adult because he feels he will be breaking the boy code and fears he will become a victim himself (Gurian, 2001; Kimmel, 2008). If another boy or even a girl calls a boy a *wimp*, *gay* or *pussy*, the boy could feel inferior to his peers. Consequently, after a name-calling episode, a boy might feel that his manhood has been diminished (Walsh, 2008; Kimmel, 2008). Girls can also be bullies. When girls engage in bullying, they also develop a sense of power over their victims. The aftermath for female victims of bullying can include depression, low self-esteem, weight loss and trouble sleeping (Orenstein, 1994). Being bullied is emotionally devastating for both boys and girls.

### **Societal Construction of the Male Gender**

Beginning at age seven and sometimes as early as four, children start to comprehend the ways gender impacts life (Tsao, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). In the everyday world, “children learn early on that society has different expectations and standards for girls and boys” (Taylor, 2003, p. 308). The social construction of gender for both boys and girls is established on anticipated norms of male and female behavior. Society expects boys to be tough academically, psychologically and physically and not show weakness such as crying when they fail. On the other end of the spectrum, society insists that girls be attractive, polite, and emotive. These gender roles show up within and outside of fourth and fifth grade classrooms (Pollack, 1998;

Kimmel, 2008). It is imperative that teachers help boys navigate the challenging elements of the social construction of gender. As a result of teachers providing guided meaningful support, boys should become academically and emotionally savvy when dealing with success or failure.

In various contexts such as within elementary school, at home, with friends and via popular culture, boys and girls are taught formally and informally what it means to be male or female. Teachers need to be aware of the different ways boys act in the classroom. Fourth and fifth grade boys will choose to read and write about books that display masculine themes.

Most likely, boys will incorporate elements of masculinity into narrative, opinion and informational essays. Hegemonic masculinity, which forbids boys from showing any feminine behaviors, has a powerful effect in the classroom. This type of masculinity constructs a vision of what makes a boy or man (Young, 2001; Gurian & Stevens, 2005). In essence, “hegemonic masculinity dictates physical strength over physical weakness, heterosexuality over homosexuality and produces unequal relations among men and between men and women” (Young, 2001, p. 4). Consequently, boys who are frequently ridiculed and excluded based on lack of masculinity by their peers might become completely disengaged in school (Gurian, 2001).

Boys are often unable to distinguish between the positive and negative attributes of being a male in today’s society (Kindlon & Thompson, 2002; Gurian & Stevens, 2005). Teachers and school administrators should ask what it means for an elementary school fourth or fifth grade boy to have masculine qualities. The following question should also be asked: how do boys get portrayed in the classroom and throughout the school? When students are asked to describe what it means to be a boy or girl they are able to use a variety of concrete nouns, images and adjectives in their descriptions (Pollack, 1998; Kimmel, 2008). Teachers

could instruct students that the ways boys exhibit masculinity is based on the standards of societal expectations (James, 2007).

In order to help boys understand what it means to be a man, a boy will enjoy and benefit from having a male teacher. In turn, boys would be able to see how masculine qualities are accentuated through the personality and actions of their teacher.

### **The Impact of Male Teachers**

Male teachers are needed in kindergarten through twelfth grade classrooms, especially in the early childhood and elementary school levels, to foster meaningful relationships with boys by acting as role models and mentors (Chmelynski, 2006; Kehler & Martino, 2006). Research suggests that a male teacher can make a positive difference in the elementary school learning experience (Kindlon & Thompson, 1998; Whitmire, 2010). Female teachers can do a phenomenal job of supporting the academic and psychological development of boys, however a male teacher for a fourth or fifth grade boy can be extremely valuable.

Male teachers can make a difference with boys in helping to raise student achievement (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). A male teacher in the classroom might convince boys that men are interested in reading and writing (Kehler & Martino, 2006). Since many fourth and fifth grade boys do not see men reading and writing, they think these activities are meaningless and boring. If a fourth or fifth grade boy becomes interested in reading and writing, middle and high school might be less academically problematic. The male teacher as a classroom leader can also support boys in understanding the relevance of school (McClure, 2007; Whitmire, 2010). He can discuss the positive and negative implications of being a boy in today's society. A male teacher can also support the psychological needs of boys because he once was a boy and then grew up into a man. Even though female teachers are able to conduct these

discussions, they do not have first-hand experience of what it is like being a fourth or fifth grade boy in an elementary school classroom (Gurian, 2009; Whitmire, 2010).

Regrettably, there are increasing numbers of boys growing up with few to no men in their daily lives (Tyre, 2008). “According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 30 percent of boys don’t live with their biological fathers” (Tyre, 2008, p. 243). The lack of male teachers in elementary school classrooms might be difficult and traumatic for those boys without fathers because of the instability caused by having no male figures at home or school (Noguera, 2008; Whitmire, 2010, p. 85-88).

Currently, the teaching force in elementary school classrooms is approximately ninety percent female ([www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov)). Fewer than twenty-five percent of all teachers are male in United States public schools and in 2006, the number of male teachers in public schools reached the lowest number in forty years. In elementary schools, approximately nine percent of teachers are males (Chmelynski, 2006; Whitmire, 2010) while thirty-five percent of the teachers are males in middle and high schools (Tyre, 2008). Male teachers are significantly more prevalent in middle and high school classrooms than they are in elementary classrooms (Whitmire, 2010).

The first reason for the limited number of male elementary school teachers is the common belief that males go into the classroom to teach a specific content area rather than to nurture the students. A second reason is the social status of living on a teacher’s salary (Chmelynski, 2006; Kehler & Martino, 2006). The third reason is that parents can be suspicious of potential pedophile activity when male teachers are present, especially in kindergarten or first grade classrooms (Tyre, 2008).

Caucasian male teachers are sparse; African-American male teachers and male teachers of any other race are even less prevalent. African-American males make up 2.4% of the 3 million United States kindergarten through twelfth grade public school teachers (Noguera, 2008; Kafele, 2009). It is critically important that research is conducted on how colleges and universities could recruit males into early childhood and childhood education teaching programs. The hiring of male elementary school teachers should assist in cultivating the appeal of elementary schools to the boyhood culture (Kehler & Martino, 2006; Whitmire, 2010).

At Clemson University in South Carolina, a program was created entitled “Call Me Mister.” Mister is an acronym for Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models. This particular program recruits men from diverse backgrounds into teaching at the lowest performing elementary and middle schools in South Carolina. The male teaching candidates who partake in this program receive a full teaching scholarship ([www.callmemister.clemson.edu](http://www.callmemister.clemson.edu)). This recruitment program should be implemented nationwide to augment the number of male teachers within public elementary schools. Boys benefit from having male teachers and developing a positive rapport with them.

### **Positive Student-Teacher/ School Administrator Relationships**

I selected the following poem to begin this section because it stresses the importance of building positive student-teacher relationships, which are essential for the academic, psychological and physical well being of fourth and fifth grade boys and girls and create meaningful engagement and achievement in English Language Arts (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008; Eliot, 2009).

*My Teacher's Smile*

I'm not a kid who actually likes school stuff.  
It's hard to sit in desks and "keep it down."  
There's only so much interest you can summon  
about fractions, or who wore an English crown.

But in spite of all my struggles with this set-up;  
I must confess I walk the extra mile.  
Not for the grades, or for some added credit.  
It's just because I love my teacher's smile.

She seems to know just when I've reached my limit,  
And she catches me before I break the rule.  
Then the smile she gives me whispers: "Ok; calm down."  
Hey, it's that smile of hers that's keeping me in school.

I bet she thinks it's all the words she tells me:  
Like how smart I am; how she knows all I can do.  
But she doesn't know how safe she makes me feel  
When she smiles at me like I belong here, too.

Yeah, I don't like the "projects" or all that homework.  
And for me, behaving sure can be a trial.  
I won't get used to straight lines in the hallways.  
But I'll work at it because it makes her smile.

I'll never be the poster kid for school days,  
But I think I'll stick this out for just a while.  
And I'll work in spite of all my sound objections,  
'Cause there isn't much that I won't do-to see my teacher smile.

(Durica, 2007, p. 78)

The cultural and societal characteristics of being a boy affect the cultivation of a high-quality relationship with the teacher. Throughout history and within literature, elementary, middle and high school boys are often described as loud, fidgety, physical, aggressive, mischievous and restless. Two books that depict these characteristics are *Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1885) by Mark Twain. It is imperative for schools to have caring and committed teachers. They must be able to teach effectively and passionately with an

understanding of the abundance of boy energy, aggressive male personalities and the diversified ways boys learn.

It is important that teachers and school administrators are aware of this biological gender difference. For males, the brain activity affiliated with negative emotion begins and stays in the amygdala (Schneider, Habel and Associates, 2000; Sax, 2005). The center of emotional control stays fixed in the amygdala (Killgore, Oki & Yurgelun-Todd, 2001). The amygdala tends to be larger in males, making it more challenging for boys to think through, handle and express their negative feelings in an appropriate manner. The amygdala plays a key role in the psychological development of boys, therefore impacting teacher and administrator relationships (Eliot, 2009).

Teachers and school administrators in today's public coeducational elementary schools don't always understand the needs of boys, even though it is not their intention. Often, teachers and school administrators are not familiar with the psychological needs of boys and often misunderstand why boys are misbehaving, perhaps believing that the misbehavior is intentional. Frequently, teachers and school administrators will judge the misbehavior of the boys as solely a discipline problem rather than considering other causes (Pollack, 1998; Tyre, 2008). Helping boys cope with their psychological issues is frequently a far more efficient way to prevent misbehavior (Pollack, 1998; Sax, 2007). Teachers and school administrators must receive professional development training on the diverse psychological needs of boys, though that's not a typical focus of professional development within public elementary schools (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Tyre, 2008).

Positive student-teacher/school administrator relationships raises the academic achievement of students within English Language Arts and motivates fourth and fifth grade boys (Tyre, 2008; Eliot, 2009). It is important for undergraduate and graduate courses in

pedagogy and professional development workshops to teach emotional literacy which should help teachers and school administrators develop positive and sustaining relationships with their students and recognize that their students struggle with the socio-cultural components of gender (Raider-Roth, Albert, Bircann-Barkey, Gidseg, & Murray, 2008).

Boys who are connected with their teacher are usually more engaged, complete more learning activities and feel a sense of belonging and trust in the classroom (Noguera, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). As a result of the numerous positive roles teachers play, such as attachment figures, educators, role models, disciplinarians and facilitators of students' academic performance, teacher-student relationships are very powerful (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Sax, 2007). These roles impact the positive and negative academic and psychological experiences of fourth and fifth grade boys (Gurian & Stevens, 2004; Tyre, 2008). "In elementary school, children's reports of the quality of their relationships with teachers predict their perceived control, positive coping, relative autonomy and engagement in school" (Furrer & Skinner, 2003, p. 150). The interpersonal teacher-student connection could provide boys with academic motivation and achievement, which tend to occur more frequently with male students who have developed high-quality relationships with teachers (Pollack, 1998; Thompson & Barker, 2008).

Students who do not have strong attachments with a parent or grandparent could struggle to connect with the classroom teacher. Fourth and fifth grade boys need to feel acceptance in the classroom even if they act independently and do not seek academic help. They also need to be keenly aware of the perpetual teacher connection when they are not engaged in classroom learning and/or misbehaving (Gurian & Stevens, 2004; Sax, 2007). If a boy feels the teacher does not like him, he might display frustration, boredom and apathy

during English Language Arts lessons and independent learning activities. Once the negative image of the boy is removed, he should improve his behavior and progress in his academics (Pollack, 1998; Mead, 2006). Teachers should not be intimidated by boys who disrupt the class on a daily basis, yet instead investigate. It is imperative that classroom teachers are significantly cognizant of the positive and negative behaviors boys display and focus on becoming positive authority figures to their male student population.

A positive relationship between a student and a teacher can make the classroom a welcoming place. The hospitable relationship is fostered based on the way each boy is greeted when he enters and leaves his teacher's classroom every single day (Tyre, 2008; Raider-Roth, Albert, Bircann-Barkey, Gidseg & Murray, 2008). Since fourth and fifth grade boys are getting ready to make the challenging transition from elementary to middle school, the requisite for a connection to teachers is more important than it is for girls. Girls, who are commonly relational-based, are more successful in developing positive teacher relationships than boys are (Raider-Roth, Albert, Bircann-Barkey, Gidseg & Murray, 2008).

In a study conducted within Australia and the United States that looked at quality teacher components according to student interpretations, boys reported that an excellent teacher embodied the following specific traits, competencies, and skills (Kehler & Martino, 2006). These components included

an ability to teach well and to engage students through providing a relevant curriculum; setting firm boundaries in terms of managing classroom behavior; establishing a friendly and warm approach in the classroom; relating to students as people and explaining concepts (Kehler & Martino, 2006, p. 121).

The pedagogical practices must be relevant and engaging for boys to successfully learn the content within English Language Arts instruction. Unfortunately, teachers often use curriculum, classroom materials, and pedagogical practices that do not connect to how boys learn. Small

group and independent teaching enables students to connect to school and succeed academically (Schieff & Tatar, 2003; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). The cognitive and psychological needs of boy are acknowledged when they receive small group academic assistance and one-on-one support (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010).

It is essential that teachers listen to boys' conversations in order to provide them with a meaningful and engaging education (Newkirk, 2002; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Teachers need to offer opportunities throughout the day for boys to talk about their learning. As teachers listen to the dialogues of boys, "they better appreciate the life worlds of boys and cultivate teaching to be more responsive to their experiences and perspectives. When boys feel their input matters, they are motivated to participate constructively in their education" (Zambo & Brozo, 2009, p. 103). Well-qualified teachers are not only effective in developing relationships with male students; they also play a positive role in fostering an optimal learning environment for fourth and fifth grade boys.

### **The Need for Well-Qualified Teachers**

Well-qualified teachers are able to provide gender-differentiated instructional techniques within English Language Arts based on the common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening. A well-qualified and engaging teacher must have clearly articulated and relevant lesson plans. They must also have strong knowledge of the curriculum. The enthusiasm of the teacher when presenting any content must be obvious to students (Kafele, 2009; Whitmire, 2010). Teachers need to be patient with students, especially boys when asking comprehension-based questions. They must carefully observe the body language and participation of boys to check for understanding. If the students do not grasp the material

the first time around, then the teacher needs to re-teach the material utilizing a different instructional methodology (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008).

Well-qualified teachers understand the learning styles of all of their students. Teachers must search for meaningful instructional opportunities to incorporate kinesthetic learning and physical movement that boys crave and need. Without these two essential components, classroom learning can become boring (Thompson & Barker, 2008; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). Well-qualified and engaging teachers are strict yet fair and do not allow students to disturb the learning of other students. Teachers with these important qualities can make learning meaningful for fourth and fifth grade boys. They also support boys by steering them on an academic progression from fourth grade to fifth grade to middle school (Lopez, 2003; Schieff & Tatar, 2003).

### ***Physical Struggles of Fourth and Fifth Grade Boys***

Play is an important contributor to the academic, psychological and physical development of boys and girls. Boys might choose reading selections and writing topics based on their experiences of play. Constructive playtime needs to be integrated into the common core state standards within English Language Arts and used as an instructional technique in reading and writing that will simultaneously engage and academically benefit fourth and fifth grade boys.

The ways that many boys engage in play fit into the discourse of masculinity (Kimmel and Messner, 2007; Eliot, 2009). In early childhood classrooms, boys like to participate in active play, including using their bodies, blocks, LEGOs, or different transportation toys such as trucks, motorcycles, police cars, fire trucks or ambulances. On the other end of the

spectrum, many girls like to engage in the dress up area, drawing and playing house (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Gurian & Stevens, 2005).

When fourth and fifth grade boys are asked what they like to do for fun, often their answer is play (Biddulph, 2008). During playtime boys are likely to behave in flexible and creative ways, such as running in circles, acting funny and building cities or weapons out of LEGOs or unifix cubes. While boys are engaged in play, they are often able to relax, have fun and portray their true selves. They could be playing sports, video games, with toys or even play fighting. When boys engage in the social context of play there is usually a considerable amount of noise, whereas girls tend to be quieter when involved in play (Fabes, Martin, Hanish, Anders, & Madden-Derdich, 2003; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Boys like to play in larger public spaces and with less supervision than girls do. For many boys, playing without limited boundaries is important for their socialization development and competitive nature. Many girls like to play in areas where the teachers are located and visible (Fabes, Martin, Hanish, Anders, & Madden-Derdich, 2003; Eliot, 2009).

When boys partake in play, there is usually physical and verbal playful contact with each other, such as rough housing, play fighting, cheering and/or teasing. Physical play is popular among many fourth and fifth grade boys and is not permitted in classrooms and schools.

Rough-and-tumble play and play fighting seem to be the most fun of all playing for many boys, who enjoy reading books involving both. Rough-and-tumble play and play fighting can sometimes lead to real fighting and then anger and fear might be displayed, which is why rough-and-tumble play and play fighting are not allowed at elementary schools. Rough-and-

tumble play and play fighting are seen as disruptive and dangerous, yet both are an essential part of human nature (Panksepp, 1998; James, 2007).

Many girls tend not to engage in play involving physical contact, perhaps because girls are much less physically aggressive than boys are. Girls are also more cooperative and verbally proficient problem solvers, which helps them play and handle difficult social situations (Sax, 2005; Wood, 2007).

Boys prefer to play solely with other boys rather than girls in kindergarten and this preference intensifies through fifth or sixth grade (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Furthermore, “by age eleven, in public play situations most boys choose to play only with boys-never with girls” (Thompson & Barker, 2008, p. 199). Boys and girls must learn how to play cooperatively together within and outside of school. Positive socialization practices between boys and girls contribute to an optimal learning environment (Gurian, 2001; Fabes et al., 2003).

When the physical needs of boys, including play, are met during the school day, classroom learning will be more tolerable for boys. The physical needs of boys are not being accommodated in many elementary schools because of minimal recess and limited opportunities for movement within the classroom. Structured and free play during the school day helps students concentrate and raises academic achievement (Medina, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). The lack of physical activity and play in school is an issue that educational policymakers must continue to research thoroughly.

It is crucial for teachers to understand what physical needs fourth and fifth grade boys have within the elementary school classroom. Teachers must deal with the challenge of boys remaining still on a daily basis. Testosterone enhances the need for boys to want to move

(Biddulph, 2008; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Many boys are kinesthetic learners and thus enjoy hands on learning, physical play and/or movement during the school day (Gurian, 1996; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). Creating opportunities for physical movement during lessons can motivate boys and hone academic skill development (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Sax, 2005). The well-qualified teacher knows when and how to integrate physical movement into English Language Arts instruction (Sax, 2005; Legato, 2008).

Building on the strengths of boys in the classroom is essential to their well-being, self-confidence, and sense of purpose within school and throughout life. It is vitally important that teachers acknowledge and honor the strengths of boys, whether they are academic, psychological and/or physical (Gurian & Stevens, 2004; Gurian, 2009). If the strengths of boys are frequently recognized, their academic achievement should improve and negative behaviors will decrease (Newberger, 1999; Whitmire, 2010). The lack of physical activity within elementary school could contribute to the non-stellar results of fourth and fifth grade boys on the New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, fourth and fifth grade boys and girls are entitled to a gender-balanced, engaging and relevant English Language Arts instruction. It is imperative to prevent boys from falling through the cracks of achievement (Sollman, 1994; Tyre, 2008). If the instructional techniques in coeducational elementary school classrooms were gender-differentiated, then fewer boys would struggle in fourth and fifth grade and there would be fewer high school dropouts. In the next chapter, the methodological framework for the gender appeal evaluation of the English Language Arts' artifacts is presented.

### **Chapter Three** **Methodological Framework**

#### ***Observations and Personal Perspectives of Teaching within the New York City Public Elementary Schools***

During my fourteen years teaching elementary school within the New York City public school system, I have observed numerous fourth and fifth grade boys in classrooms. My perspectives of the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys have not only increased through research but also while watching boys involved in learning experiences.

As a third grade classroom teacher, fourth grade literacy teacher, writing/journalism teacher, literacy coach, teacher mentor, and supervisor of graduate student fieldwork, I have witnessed the gender discrepancy of the English Language Arts curriculum and reading resources. This particular inequity is a result of the academic needs and interests of fourth and fifth grade boys not being acknowledged within coeducational classrooms. I have observed several fourth and fifth grade boys experience difficulty in finding chapter books and picture books that appeal to them within classroom libraries. I have also seen boys produce less detailed writing than girls. These observations confirm the global trend of male gender educational inequities (Tyre, 2008; Sprung, Froschl & Gropper, 2010; Whitmire, 2010).

I have become an effective specialist in educating boys by acknowledging their needs, frustrations and passions. My high-quality relationships with fourth and fifth grade boys have helped diminish many of the negative attitudes that they bring into the classroom and my observations of fourth and fifth grade boys support the need for building on student successes and targeting vulnerabilities in supportive and boy friendly ways. There is a dire need to

academically, psychologically and physically sustain fourth and fifth grade boys as they navigate the elementary school continuum. The following two anecdotes illustrate strengths and enduring struggles of fourth and fifth grade boys.

***Anecdote #1: Relevant Instruction and Building Relationships***

Dewey's philosophy of relevant instruction has impacted my instructional methodologies as an elementary school educator and teacher developer. Several years ago, on a Monday afternoon in May, I volunteered to cover a fourth grade class for another teacher who had a personal emergency. It was almost the last period of the day, which can be a difficult period to teach, especially on a Monday or Friday because students are usually restless, chatty, tired and ready to go home. I wanted to ensure that this last period of instruction would be engaging and meaningful. I decided to read an excerpt from an instructional non-fiction picture book about the attributes and lifespan of cockroaches. Before and during the reading, students were engaged and enthusiastically participating and they enjoyed sharing their prior knowledge about cockroaches.

At one point when I paused, an intelligent and conversational boy stated that school is a waste of time. He shared this remark in a quiet voice to me, not speaking to the whole class. I did not take offense but instead was pleased that he was sharing his opinion. He also explained that eight hours of school was too long, even though one hour of his day was spent at baseball practice, which he was proud to be a part of and loved. I did not follow up this important topic with him at that time because I did not want his comment to deviate from the lesson. Instead, I planned to continue with him at a later point because it was a worthwhile comment.

Many times when boys are asked if they like school, they will respond, "No, I hate school." I believe parents and teachers are disappointed hearing this common response. Boys

probably feel this way because other boys do as well and they think it is appropriate. They also become tired of having to remain in the classroom for most of the day. On Mondays through Thursdays, the majority of students in New York City public elementary and middle schools are in school for approximately seven hours each day. On Fridays, students are in school for approximately six hours and twenty minutes (<http://schools.nyc.gov>).

Another reason fourth and fifth grade boys state they hate school is because the school environment can feel feminine as a result of the predominant population of female teachers (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). Also, the verbal and auditory instructional approaches impact their negative attitude towards school. It also can be humiliating for boys to observe how successful the girls are in academics, especially in reading and writing. Many fourth and fifth grade boys struggle to keep up with the girls academically, which contributes to psychological dissatisfaction with school (Legato, 2008; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009).

During the reading aloud of the non-fictional book about cockroaches, I encouraged students to read a section or two to the class. It turned out that three boys were selected to read because no girls volunteered. The boys enjoyed reading aloud. It kept them engaged throughout the lesson and we had a meaningful discussion about cockroaches. Since the book content was relevant to the lives of both genders, boys made relevant connections and enthusiastically participated (Dewey, 1915; Biddulph, 2008). I relished teaching this spur of the moment meaningful literacy lesson.

Immediately following the read aloud, I taught the students a game known as “Chief” which several of the students knew as “Detective.” This particular game stressed paying attention and repeating physical motions. It also involved kinesthetic learning, risk taking and teamwork. The students, especially the boys, were very involved in the game and cooperated

with one another. There was no arguing after the game was over because I had announced the last round in advance. When fourth and fifth grade boys are given enough of a warning before a learning activity or game is about to end, they are better at transitioning to the next activity (Ferguson, 2001; Gurian, 2009).

In order to motivate students to pack up before the extended day school program began, I created a mental math problem for each of the students to solve. If the student got it right, I told him or her to pack up. Before I stated the math problem, I asked the students to make a particular hand motion if they were strong, average, or struggling in math. I used this boy culture kinesthetic instructional technique in order to carefully create the appropriate level of challenge for each student. Because I had created a risk-free environment where the students, especially the boys, could freely share information, there was no fear of embarrassment. I judged my unexpected classroom coverage to be a successful period of learning for the fourth graders and myself.

***Anecdote #2: Kinesthetic Learning is Essential***

The following story emphasizes boys' need for physical challenges and the integration of kinesthetic learning tasks into English Language Arts instruction. In celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the New York Road Runners Club in June 2008 at a New York City public elementary school where I worked as the literacy coach, fifty students in fourth and fifth grade ran and/or walked one mile the equivalent of six laps around the schoolyard.

On that particular Monday morning in the gymnasium, the energy and motivation of the students was palpable. The students were given race number bibs to pin onto their shirts just like actual races. I told the students that they were able to both run and/or walk the distance of one mile, which eased the anxiety of those students who feared they might not be able to run a

full mile. As a result, the students knew they could complete the running/walking challenge. More boys than girls participated in the fun walk/run. The attempt to run or walk a mile without stopping is the type of challenge that boys thrive on outside of the classroom (Kulinna, 2004; Gurian, 2009). Running and walking a mile was a major accomplishment for the fourth and fifth graders.

I ran with the students during the entire mile because I wanted to support their initiative and involvement. I also sought to demonstrate I cared about running. As the sole pace setter, I let all fifty student runners know that they should not pass me. Two boys, both fifth graders, were determined to run right behind me, even beside me at times and complete the one mile run without walking. I ran at a slightly faster pace than those two fifth graders. In the middle of the sixth and final lap, one of the boys wanted to sprint. I granted him permission to begin sprinting nearing the end of the final lap. The other boy close to him also sprinted. The first boy who sprinted won the fun run, even though the intention was to have no winners or losers. Throughout the entire fun run, he displayed determination and self-confidence.

The boy who won the mile fun run/walk was a fourteen-year-old fifth grader who struggled with reading and writing. It was challenging for him to follow the school's rules. The boy disliked elementary school because he found it boring. He did manage to score a level two on the New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test, which translates as "approaching standards," and is considered passing, according to the New York State and New York City assessment criteria standards ([www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)). His extracurricular strengths included running and playing baseball. This particular boy was not considered a strong academic student by any means, yet he had mental strength, fortitude and commitment.

These two anecdotes have been selected to serve as a frame of reference for my research.

### ***Research Questions***

These research questions, originally presented in chapter one, have been used as an evaluation inquiry for the methodological framework.

1. How is the concept of a “gender neutral” English Language Arts curriculum inherently discriminatory in not meeting the academic, psychological and physical needs of fourth and fifth grade boys?
2. How can boy culture gender-differentiated fourth and fifth grade instructional techniques within English Language Arts foster an optimal coeducational elementary school learning environment and promote a social justice framework for boys that also supports girls?
3. To what extent do the fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books, *Treasures* text selections and New York State Standardized English Language Arts test reading and listening passages promote gender discrimination towards boys within coeducational classrooms?
4. How can the instruction within the fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening be enhanced to target the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys and as a preparation towards their success in middle school?

### ***Methodology***

The methodology examined how fourth and fifth grade boys are unintentionally discriminated against within the elementary school classroom based on the use of several medal-winning books, text selections, standardized test reading and listening passages and the common core state standards within reading, writing, speaking and listening.

This dissertation focuses on fourth and fifth grade boys because this is the stage at which tasks within English Language Arts instruction, such as reading to learn non-fictional information, become more challenging (Zambo & Brozo, 2009; Gurian, Stevens & Daniels, 2009). Male students are also in the final stage of childhood before the tumultuous period of adolescence begins. At this pre-adolescent stage of development, the lives of boys are challenging enough without facing unrealistic academic, psychological and physical obstacles within the classroom (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008; Tyre, 2008).

In an attempt to identify and assist in rectifying instructional discrimination, the present study explores and examines the case for gender-differentiated instruction within a coeducational elementary learning environment. The goal is to maintain the ideal of a classroom in which gender discrimination is non-existent. School administrators and teachers need to comprehend how boys learn best and know their interests. Educators must carefully design the English Language Arts curriculum and instruction while selecting appealing reading and writing pedagogical resources. The following question must be asked and answered by all teachers and school administrators within elementary school: In terms of English Language Arts instruction and resources, how are fourth and fifth grade teachers supporting the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys? School administrators and teachers must acknowledge that there are two genders in the classroom and teach each accordingly. Teachers cannot instruct boys and

girls with the exact same instructional methodology and expect the best academic results (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010).

Furthermore, a gender neutral instructional framework will not be successful for all boys. Such a framework might make fourth and fifth grade boys frustrated and disengaged (Gurian, 2001; Newkirk, 2002). Such a framework does not acknowledge that boys learn differently from girls, nor does it focus on components of the boy culture or girl culture (Sanders, 2002; Whitmire, 2010). There is a significant urgency to support fourth and fifth grade boys to reach significant levels of achievement in reading and writing.

Gender differentiation within the English Language Arts curriculum and teaching practices is non-existent in many elementary school classrooms. When the teacher is providing gender-differentiated instruction and utilizing gender-based resources, meaningful student engagement and participation should be observable (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). As gender-differentiated instruction and resources are implemented, teachers and students will feel empowered. Student motivation and achievement will be fostered in classrooms when boys and girls are reading texts and writing about topics that interest and excite them. Teachers must explore a broader and more organic definition of boy culture English Language Arts pedagogy and incorporate it within the classroom on a daily basis (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher 2006).

A gender differentiated curriculum and instructional practice should combat the discriminatory practices that occur against fourth and fifth grade boys. Unfortunately, many coeducational classroom environments do not address the ways boys prefer to build knowledge. As a result of a targeted focus to enhance fourth and fifth grade classroom instruction and engagement for boys, teaching should dramatically improve within elementary

schools (Tyre, 2008; Whitmire, 2010). Innovative boy culture teaching techniques, such as utilizing visuals and incorporating a relevant connection for each lesson, can potentially benefit the academic needs of girls as well. It is probable that girls will not be discriminated against because the emphasis is on implementing optimal instructional practices supporting the ways both genders best learn (Sprung, Froschl & Gropper, 2010; Reichert & Hawley, 2010).

### **Evaluation of the Seven English Language Arts Artifacts**

I examined the seven English Language Arts artifacts using several tools presented later in this chapter. The evaluation is based on the potential contribution of each of the artifacts to a gender-differentiated curriculum that acknowledges the learning styles and interests of fourth and fifth grade boys. The artifacts are necessary to evaluate and identify which ones cultivated fourth and fifth grade boyhood appeal. I also reviewed each of the artifacts for its ability to potentially narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys and promote meaningful engagement. Within this chapter and the remaining three chapters I refer to boys as Latino rather than Hispanic because the New York City Department of Education focuses on this race classification within the achievement gap. I used a similar analytic lens while evaluating my curricula artifacts based on the research conducted by Newkirk and Fletcher on the incorporation of student interests and popular culture into writing. A carefully selected panel of teachers and school administrators conducted a critique of the artifacts using a Likert scale. The rationale for the second evaluation is the verification of my own findings for accuracy, reliability and validity utilizing certain criteria on a Likert scale. My research methods are based on grounded theory that is connected to the scholarship of Thomas Newkirk and Ralph Fletcher.

### Context4 for the Location of the Study

There are several reasons why I chose New York City as the location for my study. New York City is the largest school district within the United States, with over 1.1 million students. The population of struggling and disengaged black and Latino boys is increasing within the New York City school system. I have taught solely in the city for fifteen years in private and public coeducational elementary schools and worked extensively with fourth and fifth grade students and teachers.

### Choice of Schools

The evaluation of the artifacts was conducted at two public schools in New York City. School #1 is located in Hamilton Heights, while school #2 is situated in Inwood. I have taught at both of these schools for a combination of six years. According to the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 progress report, school #1 received a grade of B while school #2 obtained a grade of A. The annual progress report grade is primarily based on student progress and student achievement on the New York State Standardized English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests. School environment also affects the progress report grade. The focus of the annual progress report of each public school is on student progress, student achievement and school environment in a given year. Table 3.1 shows demographical and socio-economical data of both schools from the 2011/2012 school year.

**TABLE 3.1: Demographical and Socio-Economical Data of Schools**

School	Total Population	Grade Levels	% Free School Lunch	% English Language Learners	% Hispanic	% Asian	% Black	% White
#1	362	PreK-5	90	29.28	89.78	0.55	7.46	1.93
#2	526	K-8	77	15.02	79.47	3.42	4.18	12.55

### Selection of Teachers, Assistant Principals and Principals

I organized a panel of four fourth grade teachers, four fifth grade teachers, two assistant elementary school principals and two elementary school principals who are members of the International Reading Association (IRA) to actively participate in this evaluation. The purpose of the International Reading Association is to maintain continuous worldwide research-based literacy instructional practices ([www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)). The teachers, assistant principals and principals were selected based on their expertise in upper elementary reading and writing instruction. Table 3.2 presents background characteristics of the teachers. Table 3.3 displays information about the two assistant principals and principals.

**TABLE 3.2: Background Information about the Grades Four and Five Teachers**

<b>Classroom Teachers</b>	<b>Gender M= Male F=Female</b>	<b>Grade Teaching</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Experience at that particular grade</b>	<b>School</b>
#1	F	4	5	#1
#2	F	4	4	#1
#3	F	5	2	#1
#4	M	5	15	#1
#5	F	4	7	#2
#6	M	5	4	#2
#7	F	5	4	#2
#8	F	4	2	#2

**TABLE 3.3: Background Information about the Elementary School Administrators**

<b>Elementary School Administrators</b>	<b>Gender M= Male F=Female</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>School</b>
#1	F	Principal	2+	#1
#2	M	Assistant Principal	6	#1
#3	F	Principal	8	#2
#4	F	Assistant Principal	13	#2

### **Role of Teachers, Assistant Principals and Principals**

The role of these panel members was twofold. The teachers and school administrators critiqued the practicality of the criteria on my developed tools used to evaluate each of the seven artifacts. I created the evaluation tools using categories incorporated from the conceptual frameworks of Newkirk, Fletcher and Joyce. I implemented a five category Likert scale, ranging from *not useful* to *very useful* for the panelists to complete for judging the evaluation criteria. The middle category I included was neutral. I chose to use a Likert scale instead of a *yes* or *no* format because it is more reliable and valid and forced the panel members to respond carefully to the criteria with five specific choices. The only drawback to using the Likert scale was the additional time commitment, compared to a *yes* or *no* questionnaire. I used the Likert Scale in a quantitative, qualitative and interpretative manner to evaluate the judging of the artifact tools. I carefully reviewed the panelists' judging criteria feedback for my original evaluation tools and tallied up the results. If the majority of the panelists circled *useful* and *very useful* and a minimal number of *neutrals* for the seven English Language Arts artifacts, I knew that my judging criteria was meaningful and valid. I made the necessary modifications to the Likert Scale, such as providing a written explanation of the boy code directly on it.

Participants also critiqued a sampling of the artifacts, which included one Newbery medal-winning book, one Caldecott medal-winning book, one *Treasures* text selection, one New York State standardized test reading or listening passage and one common core state standard in reading, writing, speaking or listening. The panelists agreed to complete the evaluations on three separate sessions during lunch and after school. They were given the reading materials in advance of the evaluation sessions and were notified that I might contact them via e-mail to discuss their provided information for clarification. The tools evaluation's

Likert Scale results and completed gender-differentiated contextual evaluation charts by the panelists are presented within the appendix. The findings from their evaluations of the tools and artifacts are located within chapters four and five.

### **Artifact #1: 2005-2009 Five Newbery Medal-Winning Books**

The first English Language Arts educational artifacts investigated were the 2005-2009 Newbery medal-winning books purchased by the New York City Department of Education and used within grade four and five classrooms for read alouds and independent reading. The American Library Association awards the Newbery medal each year for the most notable American children's book published during the prior year ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)).

I developed and completed the gender-differentiated contextual evaluation chart (Table 3.4) shown in the appendix based on the conceptual thinking of Newkirk and Fletcher, discussed in chapter two (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). The Newbery medal-winning books are reviewed using three categories: literacy, psychological and cultural. The three categories connect to the schooling experiences of fourth and fifth grade boys and girls. The panel of teachers and school administrators evaluated the criteria on the boyhood engagement Likert scale evaluation tool (Table 3.5) I created, displayed in the appendix. The findings of the gender appeal components of each medal-winning book will contribute to the development of a modified gender-differentiated boy culture English Language Arts curriculum that is both meaningful and rigorous. The tables in the appendix specified which panelists evaluated them.

In the evaluation of each Newbery medal-winning book, I identified the genre, the gender of the lead character(s), the length, the number of illustrations, and the relevant connections. I pinpointed evidence of the boy code in each book and determined which of the books would satisfy the passions of boy culture, girl culture or both gender cultures. These

books were also placed on a gender-specific recommended reading list for fourth and fifth grade teachers, boys, girls and both genders. An individual and collective book comparison examining the gender-differentiated components and literary appeal is presented in chapter four.

### **Artifact #2: 2005-2009 Five Caldecott Medal-Winning Books**

The second English Language Arts educational artifact that was examined included the 2005-2009 Caldecott medal-winning books purchased by the New York City Department of Education and used in grade four and five classrooms for read alouds and independent reading. The Association for Library Service to Children, a part of the American Library Association, awards the Caldecott medal annually to the illustrator of the most outstanding American picture book for children ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)).

I developed a gender-differentiated contextual evaluation chart (Table. 3.6) based on the conceptual work of Newkirk and Fletcher discussed in chapter two (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006) and found in the appendix. The Caldecott medal-winning books are also reviewed utilizing the same three categories as the Newbery medal-winning books. The panel critiqued the evaluation criteria on the boyhood engagement evaluation tool (Table 3.7), located in the appendix. The tables in the appendix displayed which panelists evaluated them.

In the investigation of each Caldecott medal-winning book, I identified the same components as specified in the judgment criteria of the Newbery medal-winning books. These medal-winning books were also placed on a gender-specific recommended reading list for fourth and fifth grade teachers, boys, girls and both genders. An individual and combined book comparison examining the gender-differentiated components and literary appeal of the Caldecott medal-winning books is presented in chapter four.

**Artifact #3: Six Grade Four Text Selections from  
*Treasures: A Reading/Language Arts Program (2009)***

Artifact #3 was a sampling of six fourth grade fictional and non-fictional text selections contained in *Treasures: A Reading/ Language Arts Program* published by McMillan/McGraw-Hill. It is a reputable research-based reading and writing program. My rationale for selecting *Treasures* for evaluation is its frequent use within many New York City public elementary schools.

From 2008 to 2011, while I was a literacy coach and a third grade teacher, *Treasures* was used within my school for grades two through five. During that time, I observed both boys and girls engaged in reading the various text selections. *Treasures* fostered student achievement in decoding, fluency and comprehension and helped raise student achievement on the New York State Standardized English Language Arts test. As a result of the high-quality textual and instructional components of the program during the first and second year of implementation, it was purchased school-wide for the 2010-2011 year and utilized in all the kindergarten through fifth grade classes.

The evaluation chart (Table 3.8) found in the appendix was used to review each text selection. It was also developed based on the conceptual work of Newkirk and Fletcher (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006). Each of the *Treasures* text selections have been reviewed utilizing the same categories that were also used to judge the Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books. The evaluation of six grade four text selections from *Treasures* included a complex review of a variety of literary components like the Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books. The text selections also were investigated for integration of popular culture.

Similar to the other artifacts, I have determined which text selections would satisfy the boy culture, girl culture or both gender cultures. Based on this determination, the text selections

have been placed on a gender-specific recommended reading list for grade four teachers and students in chapter four. The panel critiqued the evaluation criteria on the boyhood engagement evaluation tool (Table 3.9).

**Artifact #4: Six Grade Five Text Selections from *Treasures: A Reading/Language Arts Program* (2009)**

Artifact #4 was a variety of six fifth grade fictional and non-fictional text selections contained in *Treasures: A Reading/ Language Arts Program*) published by McMillan/McGraw-Hill. The evaluation chart (Table 3.10) in the appendix is utilized to review each text selection. It was created based on the conceptual work of Newkirk and Fletcher (Newkirk, 2002; Fletcher, 2006).

The evaluation included a complex reviewing of a variety of literary features for each text selection including the incorporation of popular culture. The majority of the evaluative criteria are similar to the ones used to review the other artifacts. Similar to the other artifacts, I have discovered which of the text selections would satisfy the boy culture, girl culture or both gender cultures. The text selections have been placed on a suggested gender-appeal based reading list for grade five teachers and students in chapter four. The panel critiqued the evaluation criteria on the boyhood engagement evaluation tool (Table 3.11), found in the appendix.

**Artifact #5: Grades Four and Five New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test Reading Passages**

Artifact #5 consists of fourth and fifth grade reading passages from the 2007, 2008 and 2009 New York State Standardized English Language Arts tests that have been reviewed for boyhood gender appeal. Within each test, two random grade four and five reading passages have been examined. I have created a gender-differentiated evaluative framework chart (Table

3.12) found in the appendix. The reading passages were evaluated to determine the genre, gender of the lead character, frequency of illustrations, length of passages and the specific ideas appealing to the interests of boys, girls or both genders. The evaluation criterion was based on Bruce Joyce's methodology on models of teaching, discussed in chapter two. Joyce's picture-word inductive model helped determine the importance of the number of illustrations found within reading passages. The panel critiqued the evaluation criteria on the boyhood engagement evaluation tool (Table 3.13). The results appear in the appendix.

Reading passages containing high-interest boy culture topics will increase student engagement and boost the achievement of fourth and fifth grade boys. Some of the boy culture topics from the reading passages might also interest the girl culture. It is essential that the selections of reading passages are gender-balanced in order to enforce reliability and validity for standardized testing. There is no reason to suspect that the boy culture topics will diminish the rigor and accountability of the New York State Standardized English Language Arts test. A list of grade four and five reading passages appealing to the boy culture, girl culture or both gender cultures was generated and is found in chapter five.

**Artifact #6: Grades Four and Five New York State Standardized English  
Language Arts Test Listening Passages**

Artifact #6 includes fourth and fifth grade listening passages from the 2007, 2008, and 2009 New York State Standardized English Language Arts tests. They have been reviewed for boyhood gender appeal. There is only one listening passage per test. I wanted to determine if gender differentiation was acknowledged in the listening passages and I constructed a gender-differentiated evaluative framework chart (Table 3.14) similar to the one for Artifact #5 located in the appendix. The picture-word inductive model is a primary focus when discussing the lack of illustrations within the listening passages, which were evaluated to determine the genre,

gender of the lead character, non-existence of illustrations, length of passages and the specific components appealing to the interests of boys, girls or both genders. The boyhood engagement evaluation tool (Table 3.15) completed by the panel is found in the appendix.

Listening passages just like the reading passages also with boy culture themes will support student engagement and achievement of fourth and fifth grade boys. It is essential that the choices of listening passages are gender-differentiated in order to enforce reliability and validity of standardized testing. There is no reason to think that the boy culture themes will weaken the rigor and validity of the New York State Standardized English Language Arts test. Instead, the boy culture topics for the listening passages will improve the test design. A list of grades four and five listening passages appealing to the boy culture, girl culture or both gender cultures was developed and is found in chapter five.

**Artifact #7: Grade Four and Grade Five Common Core State English Language Arts Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**

For artifact #7, I was originally planning to evaluate the New York State English Language Arts standards, which New York City had adopted many years ago. However, as of the school year that began in September 2011, kindergarten through twelfth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, literacy in history/social studies/science and mathematics began to be integrated within New York City public schools and nationwide. The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers organized the common core state standards initiative. The development of these common core state standards was based on effective instructional models from the United States and internationally and collaboration among teachers, school administrators and educational experts.

The first goal of the common core state standards is to provide a clear and coherent framework to ensure that all children are academically prepared for college and their future

careers. The second goal is to supply teachers and parents with a common understanding of what all students across the United States are expected to learn and achieve at each grade and to align what students are expected to learn and master at each particular grade level.

The common core state standards appeared to be created based on the belief that they were gender neutral. An important critical notion to explore is whether a gender neutral standard, curriculum and instructional practice are essentially discriminatory, given the diverse learning styles and needs of boys and girls. Teachers and school administrators should investigate positive components of teaching in gender-differentiated methodologies that also reflect a position consistent with significant and high-quality pedagogy.

I created an evaluation chart (Table 3.16) for analyzing the grades four and five common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening in the appendix. Five reading, writing, speaking and listening common core state standards in both grades will be analyzed. Each standard explains what students are expected to be learning. These standards are intended to facilitate high-quality instruction, student mastery of learning and authentic assessment. The standards were reviewed utilizing the same three research categories as the first four artifacts. Several of the judging criteria include a variety of instructional techniques used, choice of writing topics, gender neutrality, and incorporation of physical movement.

The chart was developed based on Bruce Joyce's research on learning styles and instructional tools (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004, 2009). Joyce's qualitative research included creating numerous highly effective models of teaching. He solidified his research by stating, "There are many models of teaching, some for only one or two purposes, others for a larger number, some equally good for certain objectives" (Joyce, 2009, p. xv). The boyhood

engagement evaluation tool (Table 3.17) found in the appendix was completed by the panel of teachers and school administrators.

In chapter five, I verified whether the academic requirements of each of the standards are feasible and coherent for a fourth or fifth grade boy. School administrators and teachers need to evaluate if what the academic standard demands is developmentally appropriate for a fourth or fifth grade boy to master. For example, what does the standard of “listen attentively” mean for a boy? The goal for each of the common core state standards must be to support the academic, psychological and physical needs of both fourth and fifth grade boys and girls in an optimal gender-balanced instructional framework.

Each of the standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening must reflect gender differentiation. If the standard is proven to display gender bias towards the academic, psychological and/or physical needs of boys, I have explained the deficit(s) in chapter five. I have also developed an improved male-differentiated instructional technique for each particular gender-biased standard in chapter six. The instructional enhancements will promote student achievement, support the ways boys learn and honor the ways they should be taught in the classroom. Most boys and girls will benefit from the inclusion of optimal boy culture instructional techniques. Girls should also academically prosper. The instructional enhancements to the common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening will have a significant impact on gender differentiation towards boys within the classroom. Those instructional enhancements will acknowledge the learning styles and passions boys bring into the classroom.

### ***Organization of Findings***

I carefully reviewed each of the evaluations of the seven English Language Arts artifacts. The findings criteria that were weighted the most were the gender of lead character(s), sense of relevance, depiction of gender within illustrations if applicable and themes appealing to a particular gender. If these four findings emphasized the boyhood culture, then I determined that the individual artifacts would appeal to and acknowledge the interests of fourth and fifth grade boys.

### ***Conclusion***

The seven English Language Arts artifacts, along with their corresponding evaluation criteria, were presented. The findings from the evaluation of each of the artifacts are in chapters four and five, and feedback from the panel of fourth and fifth grade teachers and school administrators is also within those two chapters. This quantitative, qualitative and interpretative methodological framework provided validity and reliability regarding which English Language Arts artifacts acknowledge the academic, psychological and physical needs and interests of fourth and fifth grade boys.

**Chapter Four**  
**Findings:**  
**Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation of**  
**Grades Four and Five English Language Arts Educational Artifacts #1-4**

***Contextual Evaluation Tools Judging Criteria: Feedback Provided by the Panel of Grades Four and Five English Language Arts Teachers and Elementary School Administrators***

The twelve panel members evaluated the criteria found in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7. There were only eight evaluators for Tables 4.3 and 4.4 because the *Treasures* text selections are grade specific. The fourth and fifth grade teacher panelists evaluated the *Treasures* text selections for their designated grade. The results from the evaluation of the seven English Language Arts artifact tools by the panel members revealed that the majority of the judging criteria categories were deemed *useful* and *very useful*. There were a few ratings of *neutral*, which did not diminish the validity of the criteria. Based on these data, I did not have to revise the evaluation tools I developed. Since the boy code was unfamiliar terminology, I included an explanation in the specific evaluation tools so that panel members would have a concrete understanding of the boy code. The results of the evaluation tools criteria by the panel of teachers and administrators are found within the appendix (Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 & 4.7).

***Overview***

The summarized findings from the gender-differentiated contextual evaluation of the Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books and grades four and five *Treasures* text selections are presented in this chapter. Within this chapter, the aforementioned components of curriculum were critically evaluated for gender differentiation. Chapter five includes the

qualitative data from the gender-differentiated contextual evaluation of the New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test reading and listening passages and the common core state standards within reading, writing, speaking and listening. That chapter functioned to provide a gender-differentiated critique of passages from standardized English Language Arts assessments and standards.

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #1: 2005-2009 Newbery Medal-Winning Books***

I evaluated the five Newbery medal-winning books for gender differentiation and then asked the panelists to complete the same evaluation. Those books include *Kira-Kira* (2005), a two hundred seventy-two page realistic novel with two lead female characters by Cynthia Kadhota; *Criss Cross* (2006), a three-hundred sixty-eight page realistic novel with one lead female character by Lynne Rae Perkins; *The Higher Power of Lucky* (2007), a one hundred sixty page realistic novel with one lead female character by Susan Patron; *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* (2008), a ninety-six page historical anthology containing nineteen monologues with lead male and female characters by Laura Amy Schlitz and *The Graveyard Book* (2009), a three hundred thirty-six page fantasy novel with one lead male character by Neil Gaiman. After my evaluation of the Newbery books, I determined that *The Graveyard Book* will appeal to the boy culture. *Kira-Kira* and *Criss Cross* will interest the girl culture. *The Higher Power of Lucky* and *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* will appeal to both gender cultures.

***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The panelists' summarized boyhood engagement contextual evaluation charts are found in the appendix (Tables 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 & 4.12). This gender differentiated contextual analysis provided insights for teachers and students into the rationale of the Newbery medal-

winning books that gravitated towards the boy culture, girl culture or both gender cultures. Realistic and historical fiction is likely to appeal to the girl culture, while the fantasy genre will most likely engage the boy culture (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). However, the historical fiction anthology, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* included monologues about boys and men, so it also will appeal to the boy culture (Table 4.11). These monologues included *Hugo, the Lord's Nephew*, *Simon, The Knight's Son*, *Drogo, The Tanner's Apprentice* and *Giles the Beggar*.

Most boys are interested in reading books that only have lead male characters and often do not read any book that contains lead female characters (Brozo, 2010). Girls are usually open to reading books with lead male or female characters (Booth, 2002; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008). *The Graveyard Book* is the only Newbery medal-winning book with a solo lead male character (Table 4.12).

In order to truly enjoy a book, boys and girls must personally connect to what they are reading. Several topics presented in the Newbery books that might foster relevant connections include racism, illness, hospitalization, adoption, history and death (Tables 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 & 4.12). It is academically beneficial that boys make connections to other books they have read, their own lives and to the world. Girls have an easier time making connections to books than boys do because they tend to be verbal and auditory learners (Tyre, 2008). It is critically important to the educational needs of boys that they relate to what they are reading so their interest and comprehension will increase (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

The lengths of these books vary from ninety-six pages to three hundred sixty-eight pages. Boys prefer novels that are shorter in length unless the cover or blurb on the back of the book captures their attention (Tyre, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Each of these books has few

to no illustrations. An abundance of illustrations is not common in Newbery medal-winning books ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) and only two of the novels, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices From A Medieval Village* and *The Graveyard Book* contain illustrations of males (Tables 4.11 & 4.12). Illustrations are very valuable to boys because many boys are visual learners and pictures facilitate comprehension. In addition, illustrations of males instead of girls appeal to the boy culture (Taylor, 2003). If the cover of a book has an illustration or a photograph of a girl, a boy will likely not want to read it. However, if the cover of a book depicts a boy, a girl may not want to read the book. Usually, girls have no resistance to reading books with illustrations of boys (McClure, 2008; Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Several themes found in the books that appeal to the boyhood culture include sensing danger, risk-taking, running away from home and hearing about a murder investigation (Tables 4.10, 4.11 & 4.12). These boy culture themes captivate the interests of boys because they might have been involved in similar circumstances or scenarios. Books that appeal to the girlhood culture include an abundance of dialogue between characters, strong relationships and an explanation of running away from home. Girls typically prefer a wealth of dialogue because they enjoy engaging in deep conversations with friends. Theme and style are important components when reviewing books for gender appeal.

The three books that textually displayed the boy code include *Kira-Kira*, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies: Voices from a Medieval Village* and *The Graveyard Book* (Tables 4.8, 4.11 & 4.12). Examples of the boy code include displaying physical aggression, demonstrating strength by hunting and killing a boar, and portraying fearlessness during turbulent happenings. Within these episodes, it is evident that a male character is encountering a trigger that places emotional

pressure on him. When elements of the boy code are discovered within books, boys should be eager to read them (Pollack, 1998).

*Kira-Kira* and *Criss Cross* have literary elements that will appeal to the girl culture. Consequently, these two novels would be unappealing to the boy culture. Since *Kira-Kira* features only lead female characters (Table 4.8), most boys would not want to read this novel. In *Criss Cross*, even though a lead male character is paired with a lead female character (Table 4.9), boys will not be anxious to read it based on the components appealing to the girlhood culture. The fifth grade English Language Arts teacher panel member pointed out that the lead male character in *Criss Cross* did not display the typical characteristics society expects of a boy, such as acting masculine, showing athletic prowess and displaying aggression (Table 4.9).

The genre of both these novels is realistic fiction, which girls should gravitate towards (Tables 4.8 & 4.9). Boys would not enjoy reading these books because they do not focus on attention-grabbing boyhood culture themes, while they emphasize girl culture themes including family relationships, boyfriends, girlfriends, navigating life and buying clothes. Therefore, these two books are not recommended reading for boys based on their literacy preferences and passions.

The genre of *The Higher Power of Lucky* will engage girls; however, because the novel describes surviving a dust storm, boys might choose to read it. The thrill of surviving a dust storm and encountering challenges that the lead female character faces would fascinate boys (Table 4.10). Lucky displays some tomboyish characteristics that boys could relate to. A theme that would interest the girl culture is family relationships. The themes that would excite both gender cultures include running away from home and being involved in a series of adventures (Table 4.10).

The themes in *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* will engage both boys and girls. The specific role of each character, such as the doctor's son and/or the runaway would interest the boys and they would like reading about the misfortunes the characters encounter, including a brawl. The major theme that should interest boys is the lifestyles of children during the Middle Ages (Table 4.11). Boys might become frustrated with the difficult words found within the text; selected vocabulary words from the Middle Ages defined in the beginning of the book scaffolds and supports student comprehension. Girl culture would embrace the family relationships and friendships developing within the monologues (Table 4.11). Both boys and girls will find certain monologues appealing.

*The Graveyard Book* will most likely appeal to boys because both the lead and supporting characters are male (Table 4.12). Bod, the lead character, is a brave risk taker, which are personality traits that many boys want to emulate. The genre of fantasy is very popular with boys because of their exposure to television, movies and the Internet. Several of the popular boy culture themes include growing up and living within a graveyard and a murder investigation (Table 4.12). In my experience, one particular event that will engage boys is a pencil stabbing. The fifth grade teacher panel member explained that this book contains a complex plot and vocabulary (Table 4.12). Therefore, a fourth or fifth grade boy must be a proficient reader in order to fully appreciate and engage in the nuances of the book. This book will interest fourth and fifth grade boys.

These data from the findings of the panel of proficient fourth and fifth grade teachers and an elementary school administrator are in full agreement with my conclusions for gender appeal (Tables 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 & 4.12). One Newbery medal-winning book will engage the boy culture (Table 4.12), two books will satisfy the girl culture (Tables 4.8 & 4.9), and two

books will interest both gender cultures (Tables 4.10 & 4.11). Boys would be interested in reading three Newbery medal-winning books (Table 4.10, 4.11 & 4.12). Based on the contextual analysis highlighting gender appeal components, three Newbery medal winners may narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys (Tables 4.10, 4.11 & 4.12). These books might engage those two particular racial groups and contribute to their love of reading. This deduction is based on the specific boyhood appealing elements discovered within the Newbery medal-winning books. The following is a gender-differentiated recommended reading list of the Newbery medal winners.

### **Gender-Differentiated Recommended Reading List of Newbery Medal-Winning Books**

#### **Boyhood Culture:**

2009: *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman

#### **Girlhood Culture:**

2005: *Kira-Kira* by Cynthia Kadohata

2006: *Criss Cross* by Lynne Rae Perkins

#### **Both Gender Cultures:**

2007: *The Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron

2008: *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* written by Laura Amy Schlitz and illustrated by Robert Byrd

### ***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #2: 2005- 2009 Caldecott Medal-Winning Books***

I evaluated the five Caldecott medal-winners for gender appeal and asked the panelists to complete the same evaluation. These books included *Kitten's First Full Moon* (2005), a forty page realistic picture book with one lead female character written and illustrated by Kevin Henkes; *The Hello, Goodbye Window* (2006), a thirty-two page realistic picture book with one lead female character written and illustrated by Chris Raschka; *Flotsam* (2007), a forty page fantasy and wordless picture book with one lead male character written and illustrated by David Wiesner; *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2008), a five hundred thirty-three page fantasy, mystery and realistic graphic novel with one lead male character written and illustrated by Brian

Selznick and *The House in the Night* (2009), a forty page poetry picture book with one lead female character written by Susan Marie Swanson and illustrated by Beth Krommes. Following my evaluation of the Caldecott medal-winning books, I envisaged that *Flotsam* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* will appeal to the boy culture. *The House in the Night* will interest the girl culture. *Kitten's First Full Moon* and *The Hello, Goodbye Window* will fascinate both gender cultures.

### ***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The summarized panelists' contextual evaluation charts are found within the appendix (Tables 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16 & 4.17). Two panel members evaluated *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* because one of the assistant principals was currently reading and discussing the book with his son and I thought his input would be beneficial to this study. This gender-differentiated contextual analysis provided insight for teachers and students into the rationale of the Caldecott medal-winning books appealing to the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures. *The House in the Night* will appeal to the girl culture because poetry is popular with girls (Zambo & Brozo, 2009). The poem in *The House in the Night* is about life at home and conveys peaceful images. Boys would not be interested in reading this book because there is little action and only girls are depicted in the illustrations (Table 4.17). Boys frequently desire to see other males like themselves displayed in illustrations (Booth, 2002; Tyre, 2008). The fourth grade English Language Arts teacher panel member explained that the author and illustrator present *The House in the Night* in a soothing manner (Table 4.17). This factor would appeal to the girlhood culture because it involves calmness and tranquility (Newkirk, 2002).

*Kitten's First Full Moon* is a humorous story that would appeal to both gender cultures, but because the lead character is female and the genre is realistic fiction, the book may not

engage boys. However, the kitten often climbs, chases, jumps, and leaps with intense determination to find her bowl of milk (Table 4.13). These action-packed moments and illustrations would interest boys. Since the illustrations are done solely in black, white and gray with no other colors in a cartoon style format, it will captivate boys (Brozo, 2010). Several of the themes from the book that would engage the boyhood culture include risk taking, persistence and not quitting (Table 4.13). Boys should not have any objection to reading this book because it contains a fascinating plot. Girl culture would appreciate the ability to make your own decisions that is portrayed because it is an important component of girlhood (Table 4.13). In my experience, the kitten as a risk taker will appeal to both the boy and girl culture since children take risks on a daily basis at home, with friends and within school (Newkirk, 2002). The fourth grade English Language Arts teacher panel member thought that because the kitten is clumsy, both boys and girls would relate (Table 4.13).

*The Hello, Goodbye Window* will also fascinate both gender cultures. The lead character is a typical and sociable girl to whom girls can relate (Table 4.14). The hello goodbye window within the kitchen should engage the girl culture because girls thrive on dialogue-based relationships. They would enjoy that neighbors walk past it to wave hello (Brizendine, 2006). Since the lead female character is in many of the illustrations, boys might be discouraged from reading it (Table 4.14). The concept that would interest boys is spending time with grandpa or “Poppy” as he is called in the book. In my experience, boys will also like the purpose of the hello/goodbye window by being able to see the world around them and the opportunity to be silly or goofy. Boys will also enjoy seeing Poppy depicted in multiple illustrations (Table 4.14).

*Flotsam* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* will appeal to the boy culture. Since *Flotsam* has very minimal text and many illustrations, it should engage boys (Table 4.15). In *The*

*Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Hugo partakes in many adventures and is the type of preadolescent male boys would want to emulate. He is an orphan, clock keeper and thief (Table 4.16). More than half of the book includes illustrations, which promotes visual literacy and motivates boys to want to read it (Table 4.16). Boys enjoy graphic novels because of the multitude of illustrations and comic book features (Tyre, 2008). Consequently, even though the book is over five hundred pages, the wealth of illustrations makes it less threatening for boys to read, although I have witnessed boys who did not want to read this novel after seeing its length. In fact, this novel can be classified as a relatively quick read for boys because it is intertwined with suspense, excitement and elaborate illustrations and photographs.

The boyhood culture elements found in *Flotsam* include a setting of sand and the ocean, finding a mysterious camera on the beach, fish and a sea creature (Table 4.15). The components found in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* that would engage the boy culture include Hugo as a strong willed lead male character, a powerful friendship with a girl, fixing the automaton mechanical man and the train station as the setting for the majority of the novel (Table 4.16). Furthermore, boys will be astonished and impressed that Hugo demonstrates perseverance while living independently and surviving within a train station in Paris (Table 4.16). Hugo acts as a superhero to his friend Isabelle when he saves her from death (Table 4.16). These two books contain elements that appeal to boyhood culture.

All of the books have a profusion of illustrations, which is extremely beneficial for boys. *Flotsam* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* displayed mostly males in illustrations (Tables 4.15 & 4.16). *Kitten's First Full Moon*, *The Hello Goodbye Window* and *The House in the Night* depicted mostly females in illustrations (Tables 4.13 4.14 & 4.17). Based solely on gender representation within illustrations, *Flotsam* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (Tables 4.15 and

4.16) will appeal to the boyhood culture while the other three books will appeal to the girlhood culture (Tables 4.13, 4.14 & 4.17).

The boy code is present in *Kitten's First Full Moon*, *Flotsam* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (Tables 4.13, 4.15 & 4.16). In *Kitten's Full Moon*, the boy code includes risk-taking behaviors to get the bowl of milk (Table 4.13). The fifth grade English Language Arts teacher panel member explained that the boy code in *Flotsam* was visually shown when the lead male character does not cry when a powerful wave nearly caused him to drown (Table 4.15). An example of the boy code in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is when Hugo shows bravery despite being in serious pain with a swollen hand (Table 4.16). When a boy sees the boy code within text and illustrations, it can be a hook to inspire him to read (Pollack, 1998, Tyre, 2008).

These data showed that the determination of the gender appeal of the Caldecott medal-winning books conducted by the panel of proficient fourth and fifth grade teachers and an assistant principal were in total agreement with my conclusions (Tables 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16 & 4.17). Two of the Caldecott medal-winning books will satisfy the boy culture (Tables 4.15 & 4.16), one book will fascinate the girl culture (Table 4.17) and two will engage both gender cultures (Tables 4.13 & 4.14). Boys would be engaged in reading four Caldecott medal winning books and likely avoid reading the other book. Based on this evaluation, four books might narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys and simultaneously promote meaningful engagement (Tables 4.13, 4.14, 4.15 & 4.16). The gender-differentiated recommended reading list of the Caldecott medal winners is found below.

**Gender-Differentiated Recommended Reading List of Caldecott Medal-Winning Books**  
**Boyhood Culture:**

2007: *Flotsam* illustrated by David Wiesner

2008: *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* written and illustrated by Brian Selznick

**Girlhood Culture:**

2009: *The House In The Night* written by Susan Marie Swanson and illustrated by Beth Krommes

**Both Gender Cultures:**

2005: *Kitten's First Full Moon* written and illustrated by Kevin Henkes

2006: *The Hello, Goodbye Window* written by Norton Juster and illustrated by Chris Raschka

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #3: Grade Four Treasures Text Selections***

The next educational artifacts evaluated for gender appeal are six grade four text selections from *Treasures: A Reading/Language Arts Program*. After I evaluated all of these text selections, they were assigned at random for the panelists to also assess. The text selections included *The Mystery of the Missing Lunch*, a mystery with a lead male character written by Johanna Hurwitz and illustrated by Joe Cepeda; *Mighty Jackie: The Strike Out Queen*, historical fiction with a lead female character written by Marissa Moss and illustrated by C.F. Payne; *My Diary from Here to There*, realistic fiction with a lead female character written by Amanda Irma Pérez and illustrated by Maya Christian Gonzalez; *How Benjamin Franklin Stole The Lightning*, a biography with a lead male character written and illustrated by Rosalyn Schanzer; *Dear Mr. Winston*, humorous fiction with a lead female character written by Ken Roberts and illustrated by Nicole E. Wong, and *Dear Mrs. La Rue: Letters from Obedience School*, a fantasy with a lead male character written and illustrated by Mark Teague.

After my text selection evaluation I established that *The Mystery of the Missing Lunch*, *How Benjamin Franklin Stole The Lightning* and *Dear Mrs. La Rue: Letters from Obedience School* will appeal to the boy culture. *My Diary from Here to There* will interest the girl culture. *Mighty Jackie: The Strike Out Queen* and *Dear Mr. Winston* will appeal to both gender cultures.

***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The panel members' summarized contextual evaluation charts for each of the text selections are found within the appendix (Tables 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, 4.22 & 4.23). A fourth grade teacher panel member and I evaluated *How Benjamin Franklin Stole The Lightning*. This

gender-differentiated contextual analysis provided insight for teachers and students into the rationale of the *Treasures* text selections appealing to the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures. According to the panel members, the following three text selections, *The Mystery of the Missing Lunch*, *How Benjamin Franklin Stole The Lightning* and *Dear Mrs. La Rue: Letters from Obedience School* will appeal to the boy culture (Tables 4.18, 4.21 & 4.23). Boys will engage in reading these text selections because the genres include mystery, biography and fantasy (Tyre, 2008; Reichert & Hawley, 2010). Girls are more likely to pursue reading historical and realistic fiction. The genre of biography will engage either boys or girls depending on whether it is about a famous male or female individual. Boys prefer to read biographies of males while girls usually have no aversion to reading about the lives of males or females (Brozo, 2010). The text selection appealing to the girl culture is *My Diary from Here to There* (Table 4.20). It has no elements that would appeal to the boy culture. The text selections, *Mighty Jackie: The Strike Out Queen* and *Dear Mr. Winston* will appeal to both gender cultures (Tables 4.19 & 4.22). *Mighty Jackie: The Strike Out Queen* will interest both boys and girls even though it has a lead female character named Jackie because it is about baseball and two prominent baseball players, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig (Table 4.19). Boys will only enjoy reading *Dear Mr. Winston* because the lead female character's snake escapes from a box in the library and scares the librarian (Table 4.22).

The gender of the lead character is a critical component in determining whether boys will read a particular text selection. Within these six text selections there are three lead male characters and three lead female characters (Tables 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, 4.22 & 4.23). Therefore, an equal number of males and females is represented. Boys will usually choose to read a text selection because it contains a lead male character, not a female one. It is evident that

girls usually have no hesitation to read text selections that have lead male or female characters (Brozo, 2010).

The length of each of the six text selections is roughly twenty pages each. Boys usually prefer selections that are not too lengthy (Tyre, 2008). Based on my experiences as a literacy coach and third and fourth grade teacher, I did not receive any student complaints about the length of any of the *Treasures* text selections. The length of a text selection does not appear as a priority for girls (Cleveland, 2011).

The text selections have an abundance of colorful illustrations, which facilitate comprehension, especially for boys (Tyre, 2008; Cleveland, 2011). It is essential for the majority of boys to see an illustration of a boy, not a girl, on the cover of a text selection in order to want to read it (Taylor, 2003). The illustrations within *How Benjamin Franklin Stole The Lightning* and *Dear Mrs. La Rue: Letters from Obedience School* depict mostly males (Tables 4.21 & 4.23). The illustrations from the other four text selections display both boys and girls (Tables 4.18, 4.19, 4.20 & 4.22).

Boys must make a relevant personal connection to the characters and events transpiring in the text selection in order to establish a relationship with the text. All of the text selections have relevant connections which include a missing lunch, playing baseball, gender discrimination, a snake loose in a library, the invention of electricity and a dog in obedience school (4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, 4.22 & 4.23). When a boy makes connections, he is incorporating himself into the text. It can be easier for girls to be able to interact with a text selection because of their abilities as auditory and/or verbal learners (Tyre, 2008). Both fourth grade English Language Arts specialist panel members explained that *The Mystery of the Missing Lunch* and *Dear Mr. Winston* might appeal to fourth grade black and Latino males (Tables 4.18 & 4.22). A

missing lunch could be a common boyhood problem and a snake wandering around a library can provoke plenty of humor. Both of these selections can impact the reading habits of boys. Those types of relevant elements motivate boys to read.

Both boys and girls are bombarded by popular culture in their daily lives, so when a boy notices it within a text selection, he will be more engaged. Only *Mighty Jackie: The Strike-Out Queen* incorporated popular culture, baseball (Table 4.19). The presence of popular culture can motivate boys to become enthusiastic about reading.

The overarching themes of each text selection make an impact on whether it will appeal to the boyhood, girlhood or both gender cultures (Tables 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, 4.22 & 4.23). The themes that would appeal to the boy culture include solving a mystery, baseball, fearlessness towards snakes and being a troublemaker. Several themes that would interest the girl culture include discrimination against girls within baseball, demonstrating bravery and diary writing.

The boy code is presented in *The Mystery of the Missing Lunch*, *Mighty Jackie: The Strike-Out Queen*, *My Diary From Here To There*, and *Dear Mrs. La Rue* (Tables 4.19, 4.20 & 4.23). Several examples of the boy code include staying calm in a stressful situation, stating insults, causing trouble and acting as a rabble-rouser. Boys are exposed to the boy code within and outside of school (Pollack, 1998; Cannon, 2011). In my experience, they will enjoy components of the boy code displayed in text selections

The gender appeal conclusions by the panel of fourth grade teachers and an elementary school administrator were in complete agreement with my findings (Tables 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, 4.22 & 4.23). Three text selections will appeal to the boy culture (Tables 4.18, 4.21 & 4.23); one text selection will engage the girl culture (Table 4.20) and two text selections will

interest both gender cultures (Tables 4.19 & 4.22). Boys would be satisfied reading five out of the six text selections. Five text selections have the potential to narrow the reading achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys while engaging readers. A recommended gender-differentiated reading list of fourth grade *Treasures* text selections are shown here.

**Gender-Differentiated Recommended Reading List of Fourth Grade *Treasures* Text Selections**

**Boyhood Culture:**

*The Mystery of the Missing Lunch* written by Johanna Hurwitz and illustrated by Joe Cepeda

*How Ben Franklin Stole The Lightning* by Rosalyn Schanzer

*Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School* written and illustrated by Mark Teague

**Girlhood Culture:**

*My Diary from Here to There* written by Amanda Irma Pérez and illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez

**Both Gender Cultures:**

*Mighty Jackie: The Strike-Out Queen* written by Marissa Moss and illustrated by C.F. Payne

*Dear Mr. Winston* written by Ken Roberts and illustrated by Nicole E. Wong

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #4: Grade Five Treasures Text Selections***

I evaluated six text selections for gender appeal and then distributed them at random to the panelists to complete the same evaluation. They include *Davy Crockett Saves the World*, a tall tale with a lead male character written and illustrated by Rosalyn Schanzer; *Rattlers!:* a non-fictional article with no lead male or female characters written by Ellen Lambeth; *The Night of San Juan*, a fictional text with a lead male character written by Lulu Delacre and illustrated by Edel Rodriguez; *Zathura*, science fiction with two lead male characters written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg; *Goin' Someplace Special*, historical fiction with a lead female character written by Patricia McKissack and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney and *Weslandia*, a fantasy with a lead male character written by Paul Fleischman and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes. Following my text selection evaluation I determined that *Rattlers!*, *Zathura* and *Weslandia* will appeal to the boy culture. *The Night of San Juan* and *Goin' Someplace Special* will engage the girl culture. *Davy Crockett Saves the World* will appeal to both boys and girls.

### ***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The completed contextual evaluation charts for each of the text selections are found within the appendix (Tables 4.24, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28 & 4.29). A fifth grade teacher panel member and I evaluated *Zathura* because I had utilized this text for instructional purposes. This gender-differentiated contextual analysis provided insight for teachers and students into the rationale of the *Treasures* text selections appealing to the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures. The following three text selections, *Rattlers!*, *Zathura*, and *Weslandia* will appeal to the boy culture (Tables 4.25, 4.27 & 4.29). The text selections, *The Night of San Juan and Goin' Somewhere Special* will interest the girl culture (Tables 4.26 & 4.28). The text selection, *Davy Crockett Saves the World* will appeal to both gender cultures (Table 4.24). The genres of tall tale, non-fiction, science fiction and fantasy would interest boys while girls would savor historical fiction. Fiction appeals to both gender cultures if the interests of boys are clearly represented. The genre of the text selection will have an impact in determining whether a boy will desire to read a text selection or not (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Within the six text selections, four of them have a lead male character, one has a lead female character and one has no lead character (Tables 4.24, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28 & 4.29). The one text selection without a lead male or female character is a nonfictional article about rattlesnakes (Table 4.25). Even though there is a lead male character in *The Night of San Juan* (Table 4.26), this selection still appeals to girls because of the emphasis on the girlhood culture. The gender of the lead character will influence the motivation of a boy whether to choose to read the text selection or not (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008).

The length of the *Treasures* text selections ranges from twelve to twenty pages (Tables 4.24, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28 & 4.29) and appears to be a suitable length of reading material to engage boys. Unless they are fascinating, boys prefer reading texts selections that are not too long (Tyre, 2008). Otherwise, in my experience, they might become to lose interest in the text.

All the text selections contain detailed illustrations. The three text selections, *Davy Crockett Saves the World*, *Zathura* and *Weslandia* mostly depict males (Tables 4.24, 4.27 & 4.29) while *The Night of San Juan and Goin' Someplace Special* display mostly females (Tables 4.26 & 4.28). One of the text selections, *Rattlers!* contains solely photographs of rattlesnakes (Table 4.25). The fifth grade teacher panel member and I established that the in-depth action-packed illustrations in *Zathura* and *Weslandia* might support black and Latino fifth grade boys with fluency, comprehension and vocabulary development (Tables 4.27 & 4.29).

Pertinent connections to the lives of students can foster interest in both genders, especially boys (Newkirk, 2002; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Teachers can help boys discover a relevant hook within a text selection that can foster profound enthusiasm towards reading (Tyre, 2008). Each of the six text selections has their own relevant connection, which boys will relate to. Several significant connections include rattlesnakes, living in San Juan, Puerto Rico, racial discrimination and utilizing school knowledge within the real world (Tables 4.24, 4.26, 4.28 & 4.29). The themes appealing to the boy culture include becoming a hero, conceptual information about rattlesnakes to ease fears and a middle school male outcast gaining popularity after he independently creates a natural functioning civilization (Tables 4.24, 4.25 & 4.29). The themes that support the appeal of the girl culture include the essentials of being pretty, getting married and receiving practical advice to handle racial discrimination (Tables 4.24 & 4.28). It is

imperative that teachers are familiar with themes in text selections that would appeal to boys, girls or both genders.

In *Davy Crockett Saves The World*, *Zathura* and *Weslandia* the boy code is clearly displayed (Tables 4.24, 4.27 & 4.29) through strength, toughness, physical fighting and a boy being designated the target of schoolmate tormentors. Fifth grade boys will enjoy reading selections containing the boy code.

Only one of the text selections contained elements of popular culture. A board game, Jumanji, and outer space were mentioned in *Zathura* (Table 4.27). Boys become enthusiastic when seeing popular culture represented in literature because it is a captivating and prevalent part of their worlds.

The findings by the fifth grade teachers, one elementary school administrator and I were in total consensus regarding the gender appeal of these text selections. The results of the contextual evaluation showed that three text selections will appeal to the boy culture (Tables 4.25, 4.27 & 4.29), two text selections will interest the girl culture (Tables 4.26 & 4.28) and one text selection will engage both boys and girls (Table 4.24). Boys would like reading four out of the six text selections. The four text selections might engage struggling black and Latino boys and impact the achievement gap of these two particular racial groups. A recommended gender-specific reading list of fifth grade *Treasures* text selections is shown below.

**Gender-Differentiated Recommended Reading List of 5<sup>th</sup> Grade *Treasures* Text Selection**  
**Boyhood Culture:**

*Rattlers!* by Ellen Lambeth

*Zathura* written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg

*Weslandia* written by Paul Fleischman and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes

**Girlhood Culture:**

*The Night of San Juan* written by Lulu Delacre and illustrated by Edel Rodriguez

*Goin' Somewhere Special* written by Patricia C. McKissack and illustrated By Jerry Pinkney

**Both Gender Cultures:**

*Davy Crockett Saves The World* written and illustrated by Rosalyn Schanzer

***Conclusion***

Potential solutions for pinpointing and understanding the gender appeal of these English Language Arts artifacts will be discussed in the concluding chapter. In the next chapter, the findings from the evaluation of the reading and listening passages and the common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening will be presented.

**Chapter Five**  
**Findings:**  
**Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation of Grades Four and Five English Language Arts Educational Artifacts # 5-7**

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #5 Part One: 2007, 2008 and 2009 Grade Four New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test Reading Passages***

I evaluated the six grade four standardized reading passages for gender differentiation and then asked the panelists to complete the same evaluation. These reading passages included *Song of the Cicada* (2007), a realistic story with a lead female character by Tristin Toohill; *A Koala Isn't A Bear* (2007), a non-fictional article with no lead character by Shirley Ramaley; *My Hand Was in the Cookie Jar* (2008), a poem with an unknown gender of the lead character by Dave Crawley; *First In Line* (2008), a realistic story with a lead female character by Gertrude Fass and illustrated by Stephanie Roth; *Comets* (2009), a non-fictional text with no lead character by Franklyn M. Branley and illustrated by Guilio Maestro and *The Tortoise, the Hare, and the Penguin* (2009), a fable with two lead female characters and one lead male character by Tom Keating and illustrated by Linda Weller.

I established that the following passages, *A Koala isn't a Bear* and *Comets* will appeal to the boy culture. *First In Line* will interest the girl culture. The *Song of the Cicada*, *My Hand was in the Cookie Jar* and *The Tortoise, the Hare and the Penguin* will engage both boys and girls.

***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The panelists' summarized evaluation charts of the six reading passages are found within the appendix (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, & 5.6). This gender differentiated contextual analysis provided insight for teachers and students into the rationale of the reading passages that interested the boyhood culture, girlhood culture or both gender cultures. The non-fictional

reading passages will appeal to boys (Tables 5.2 & 5.5). The realistic fictional passages typically will engage the girlhood culture (Tables 5.1, 5.4 & 5.6). The reading passage, *My Hand Was in the Cookie Jar* which incorporates poetry, will interest the girl culture, but because boyhood elements such as humor are integrated, boys will become engrossed (Zambo & Brozo, 2009) and this passage will engage both boys and girls (Table 5.3).

Within the six reading passages, only one has a lead male character, two have lead female characters, two have no lead characters and in one of the fictional passages there was some confusion as to whether the lead character(s) are male or female (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 & 5.5). A fourth grade teacher panel member confirmed that the gender of the three lead characters in *The Tortoise, the Hare, and the Penguin* were male (tortoise), girl (hare) and girl (penguin) (Table 5.6). The same panel member concluded that *My Hand Was in the Cookie Jar* will interest boys since there is at least one lead male character (Table 5.3). Since most boys do not enjoy reading passages with girls as lead characters, they will not be interested in reading *Song of the Cicada and First In Line* (Tables 5.1 and 5.4)

The average length of these reading passages is one and a half pages (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5 & 5.6). The longest passage, *First In Line* is two pages (Table 5.4). One and a half pages is developmentally appropriate and appealing to boys because it is not an overwhelming amount of text to read, focus on and comprehend and can be meaningful and complex.

Four of the six reading passages (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.5 & 5.6) have one illustration. One of the reading passages has two illustrations (Table 5.4), while there are no illustrations in *My Hand was In The Cookie Jar* (Table 5.3). Since many boys are visual learners, they prefer to see illustrations, which help them better understand the passage. An illustration within a passage makes it more desirable for boys to read (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

The boy culture components found within the reading passages include cicadas, a koala bear, personification of cookies, elements of suspense, outer space and the winning of a race through teamwork (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5 & 5.6). The components that would interest the girl culture are the strong relationship between Addy and her father, friendships between girls and providing emotional support (Tables 5.1, and 5.4). The fourth grade teacher panel member suggested that boys would have no interest in reading *First in Line* because the majority of characters are girls and the relational process of allowing others to cut the line to see a movie.

The results of the contextual evaluation by the panelists are in total agreement with my conclusions for gender appeal. *A Koala Isn't A Bear* and *Comets* would appeal to the boy culture, *First In Line* would engage the girl culture, and the *Song of the Cicada*, *My Hand Was in the Cookie Jar* and *The Tortoise, the Hare, and the Penguin* would interest both gender cultures (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 & 5.6). Those five boy friendly reading passages might reduce the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys while also engaging them. The following is a gender-differentiated recommended list of the fourth grade reading passages.

#### **Gender-Differentiated Recommended List of 4th Grade Standardized Reading Passages**

##### **Boyhood Culture:**

*A Koala Isn't A Bear* (2007) by Shirley Ramaley

*Comets* (2009) by Franklyn M. Branley

##### **Girlhood Culture:**

*First In Line* (2008) by Gertrude Fass

##### **Both Gender Cultures:**

*Song of the Cicada* (2007) by Tristin Toohill

*My Hand was in the Cookie Jar* (2008) by Dave Crawley

*The Tortoise, the Hare, and The Penguin* (2009) by Tom Keating

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #5 Part Two: 2007, 2008 and 2009 Grade Five New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test Reading Passages***

I evaluated six grade five reading passages for gender appeal and then distributed them at random to the panelists to complete the same evaluation. These passages included *Mystery Flats* (2007), a mystery with a lead male character by Rosalyn Hart Finch; *Busy Beavers* (2007), a non-fictional text with no lead character by George Laycock; *Will My Toy Car Survive a Croc Attack?* (2008), a non-fictional article with a lead male character by Brady Barr as told to Maggie Zackowitz; *A Spaghetti Tale* (2008), a memoir with a lead male character written and illustrated by Tedd Arnold; *Lion At School* (2009), a realistic story with a lead male character by Alexander McCall Smith and *Frozen Bubbles* (2009), a non-fictional scientific article with no lead character by Verlie Hutchens.

I concluded that the following passages, *Mystery Flats*, *Busy Builders*, *Will My Toy Car Survive a Croc Attack?* and *Frozen Bubbles* will appeal to the boy culture. None of the reading passages will solely interest the girl culture. *A Spaghetti Tale* and *Lion At School* will engage both boys and girls.

***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The panelists' summarized evaluation charts of the six reading passages are found within the appendix (Tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11 & 5.12). The mystery and non-fictional passages will appeal to the boy culture (Tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9 & 5.12). The biographical memoir and realistic fiction passages typically will engage solely the girl culture (Tables 5.10 & 5.11). Since this biographical memoir passage focuses on a male author as a lead character, boys will also find it engaging (Table 5.10) (Tyre, 2008).

Four of the six reading passages, *Mystery Flats*, *Will My Toy Car Survive A Croc Attack?*, *Lion at School* and *Spaghetti Tale* (Tables 5.7, 5.9, 5.10, & 5.11) have lead male

characters. The other two reading passages, *Busy Builders* and *Frozen Bubbles* (Tables 5.8 & 5.12) do not have any lead male or female characters. One of those non-fictional articles was about beavers and the other one was about how to make frozen bubbles (Tables 5.8 & 5.12).

The lengths of five of the reading passages are approximately one page (Tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10 & 5.12). The longest passage, *Lion at School* is one and three-quarter pages (Table 5.11). The one page and a half reading passages are more appealing to boys than the lengthier ones (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

All of the reading passages have at least one illustration (Tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11 & 5.12). The reading passage, *Will My Toy Car Survive a Croc Attack?* (Table 5.9) contains two small photographs. Since many boys are visual learners, illustrations can support them significantly in comprehending the passage (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Several components from the reading passages that will interest the boy culture include a character named Ken acting as a detective to solve a mystery, beavers building dams and crocodile suspense (Tables 5.7, 5.8 & 5.9). Other factors that would engage the boy culture consist of a male promoting reading and writing, Simba the lion causing trouble at school and a scientific investigation of creating frozen bubbles (Tables 5.10, 5.11 & 5.12). The component within *Lion at School* that appeals to the girl culture includes a school setting (Table 5.11). The fifth grade teacher panelist for *A Spaghetti Tale* explained that the two boyhood captivating elements were a big mess of spaghetti and meatballs and plenty of silliness (Table 5.10). The elements of realistic fiction found within *A Spaghetti Tale* will engage the girlhood culture (Table 5.10).

These data provided by the findings of the panel members are in full agreement with my conclusions from the initial evaluation of gender appeal. The following reading passages,

*Mystery Flats*, *Busy Builders*, *Will My Toy Car Survive a Croc Attack?* and *Frozen Bubbles* will engage the boy culture (Tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9 & 5.12). There are no reading passages that solely appeal to the girl culture. The other two reading passages, *A Spaghetti Tale* and *Lion At School* will engage both boys and girls (Tables 5.10 & 5.11). These six reading passages might help diminish the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys and engage them simultaneously. This list displays gender-differentiated recommendations of the fifth grade reading passages.

### **Gender-Differentiated Recommended List of 5th Grade Standardized Reading Passages**

#### **Boyhood Culture:**

*Mystery Flats* (2007) by Rosalyn Hart Finch

*Busy Builders* (2007) by George Laycock

*Will My Toy Car Survive a Croc Attack?* (2008) by Brady Barr as told to Maggie Zackowitz

*Frozen Bubbles* (2009) by Verlie Hutchens

#### **Girlhood Culture:**

None

#### **Both Gender Cultures:**

*A Spaghetti Tale* (2008) by Tedd Arnold

*Lion At School* (2009) by Alexander McCall Smith

### ***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #6 Part One: 2007, 2008 and 2009 Grade Four New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test Listening Passages***

I evaluated the three grade four listening passages for gender appeal and then assigned them at random to the panelists to complete the same evaluation. These passages included *Hand-Me-Down Crayons* (2007), a realistic text with a lead female character by Dori Hillestad Butler; *The Voice of Rigo* (2008), a realistic text with a lead male character by Leslie Hall and *The Bell That Knew The Truth, A Story From China* (2009), a mystery text with a lead male character by an unknown author. I determined that *The Voice of Rigo* and *The Bell That Knew The Truth: A Story From China* will engage the boy culture. *Hand-Me-Down Crayons* will appeal to the girl culture.

### ***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The completed summarized listening passage contextual evaluation charts by the panelists are found within the appendix (Table 5.13, 5.14 & 5.15). The genre of *Hand-Me-Down Crayons* and *The Voice of Rigo* are both realistic fiction (Tables 5.13 & 5.14) and will appeal to the girl culture, unless boy culture themes are presented, as in *The Voice of Rigo* (Zambo & Brozo, 2009). The genre of mystery, *The Bell That Knew the Truth, A Story from China*, will fascinate the boy culture (Table 5.15). If the genre does not capture the attention of a boy, he will not carefully listen to the passage (Tyre, 2008).

*The Voice of Rigo* and *The Bell That Knew the Truth, A Story from China* contain lead male characters, which appeal to the interests of boys (Tables 5.14 & 5.15). The length of each of the three listening passages is approximately one and a half pages. A one page listening passage that satisfies the cognitive needs of boys appears to be a suitable length without decreasing text complexity. Auditory learning is not an instructional style frequently preferred by boys (Tyre, 2008). Boys need to learn how to be great listeners. There are no illustrations within any of the listening passages. Students are only supposed to listen to the read aloud, visualize and take written notes simultaneously.

Several appealing boyhood components from *The Voice of Rigo* and *The Bell That Knew the Truth, A Story from China* include Rigo getting in trouble for talking loudly at school (Table 5.14) and a robbery followed by the suspense of determining whether the suspect is guilty or not using a magical bell (Table 5.15). According to the fourth grade teacher evaluator, boys would be fascinated by *The Bell That Knew The Truth: A Story from China* because of the action-packed description of a trial in a courtroom (Table 5.15). Several appealing girlhood components from *Hand-Me-Down Crayons* include the constant dialogue between the

characters, a strong friendship and Molly’s empowering idea of how to use her old and broken crayons to make something better (Table 5.13). The transformation from the broken crayons to multicolored crayons in interesting shapes will likely alienate the boy culture.

These data from the findings of the panel are in agreement with my conclusions for gender appeal. *The Voice of Rigo* and *The Bell That Knew The Truth: A Story From China* will appeal to the boyhood culture (Tables 5.14 & 5.15). *Hand-Me- Down Crayons* will satisfy the girlhood culture (Table 5.13). The findings indicate that two listening passages could engage struggling black and Latino boys and contribute towards narrowing the achievement gap of both these groups. The following list provides a fourth grade gender-differentiated recommendation of listening passages.

#### **Gender-Differentiated Recommended List of 4th Grade Standardized Listening Passages**

##### **Boyhood Culture:**

*The Voice of Rigo* (2008) by Leslie Hall

*The Bell That Knew The Truth* (2009) Author, Not Mentioned

##### **Girlhood Culture:**

*Hand-Me-Down Crayons* (2007) by Dori Hillestad Butler

##### **Both Gender Cultures:**

None

#### ***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #6 Part Two: 2007, 2008 and 2009 Grade Five New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test Listening Passages***

The three grade five listening passages were evaluated by myself for gender appeal and then dispersed at random to the panelists to complete the same evaluation. The passages include *Lion Around: Close encounter with an upside-down Cat* (2007), a memoir with a lead male character written by Mattias Klum, as told to Catherine D. Hughes; *The Courage of “Molly Pitcher”* (2008), a memoir with a lead female character written by Karen S. Hopkins and *Snorkeling for Bass* (2009), a memoir with two lead male characters written by Shaun Morey. I

concluded that *Snorkeling for Bass* would appeal to the boy culture, *The Courage of Molly Pitcher* would appeal to the girl culture and *Lion Around: Close encounter with an upside-down cat* would appeal to both gender cultures.

### ***Gender-Differentiated Contextual Evaluation by the Panelists***

The completed summarized listening passage evaluation charts by the panelists are found within the appendix (Tables 5.16, 5.17 & 5.18). All three of the listening passages are memoirs, which will engage girls unless boy culture topics are infused (Tables 5.16, 5.17 & 5.18). War and fishing are two topics that appeal to boys and can be found in the *Courage of Molly Pitcher* and *Snorkeling for Bass* (Tables 5.17 & 5.18). Two of the three passages, *Lion Around: Close encounter with a an upside-down cat* and *Snorkeling for Bass* have lead male characters, which is beneficial for boys since they do not like listening to passages with lead female characters (Tables 5.16 & 5.18). The other passage, *The Courage of “Molly Pitcher”* has a lead female character (Table 5.17). The lengths of the three listening passages are approximately one page. The longest one, *Snorkeling for Bass* is one and a half pages (Table 5.18). A one page listening passage is not a tremendous amount of text to listen to while simultaneously comprehending the main idea and taking notes. There are no illustrations found on the listening passages.

All three listening passages have components that will interest the boy culture. These include suspense, adventure, risk-taking and a Revolutionary War battle (Tables 5.16, 5.17 & 5.18). In *Snorkeling for Bass*, boys would be fascinated to be face to face with a huge bass (Table 5.18). The components from *The Courage of “Molly Pitcher”* that would engage the girl culture include the strong relationship between a husband and wife, a woman fighting in the Revolutionary War and her determination during the battle (Table 5.17).

The findings by the panel members for gender appeal are in full agreement with my determinations. Those passages appealing to the boyhood culture include *Lion Around: Close encounter with an upside-down cat* and *Snorkeling for Bass* (Tables 5.16 & 5.18). The passage that would interest the girlhood culture is *The Courage of “Molly Pitcher”* (Table 5.17). It will mildly interest the boyhood culture because there is a battle taking place. Girls would have no trouble engaging in the two listening passages appealing to the boys because they are not resistant to boy culture topics (Tyre, 2008). Two listening passages might interest struggling black and Latino boys and decrease the achievement gap of both racial groups. A fifth grade gender-differentiated recommended list of listening passages is shown below.

**Gender-Differentiated Recommended List of 5th Grade Standardized Listening Passages**

**Boyhood Culture:**

*Snorkeling for Bass* (2009) by Shaun Morey

**Girlhood Culture:**

*The Courage of “Molly Pitcher”* (2008) by Karen S. Hopkins

**Both Gender Cultures:**

*Lion Around: Close encounter with an upside-down cat* (2007) by Mattias Klum, as told to Catherine D. Hughes

***English Languages Arts Educational Artifact # 7: Grades Four and Five Common Core State Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening***

The grades four and five reading, writing, speaking and listening common core state standards are detailed and explicit in terms of what academic skills students are expected to master. The academic requirements of the common core state standards are significantly more comprehensive compared to the previously used New York State English Language Arts learning standards. The instructional methodology of how the students’ master each standard is dependent on the teacher’s knowledge. Within these standards, no guidelines explaining how to deliver gender-differentiated instruction is provided. This critical element might be preventing

boys from obtaining considerable achievement and engagement within English Language Arts. The standards do not present an explanation of practical instructional means for students to accomplish each objective benchmark. Gender discrimination within instruction will occur, given that these standards do not account for the diverse learning styles and passions of boys.

These standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening appear to be deemed gender neutral, not gender-balanced, There is no accompanying instructional methodologies such as visual, verbal, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile. Hands-on learning, which is beneficial for boys, was not mentioned because these are solely a list of common core state standards. When these standards were developed, engagement and gender-differentiated instructional techniques appeared to be never discussed. These missing essential instructional components will negatively impact the scholastic achievement of fourth and fifth grade boys. The learning requirements for educating successful boys are not incorporated throughout the English Language Arts common core state standards.

A random selection of grade four and five common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening were evaluated by the panel of fourth and fifth grade teachers, assistant principals, principals and me. The evaluation was conducted orally within several meetings with the panelists utilizing the gender-differentiated contextual evaluation chart (Table 3.16) found in the appendix. This evaluation is connected to the bricolage of academic development, which is a progression of skills students are expected to master each year building on what was taught during the previous grade. The transition from fourth to fifth grade includes increased scholastic expectations from the previous year.

The evaluated fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading are listed below.

***Grade Four Reading Standards for Literature***

**Reading Standard for Literature #2:** Students will determine a theme of a story, drama, poem, or non-fiction text from details in the text; summarize the text.

**Reading Standard for Literature #3:** Students will describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

**Reading Standard for Literature #4:** Students will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used, in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g. Herculean).

**Reading Standard for Literature # 6:** Students will compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first-and third-person narrations.

**Reading Standard for Literature #10:** By the end of the year, students will read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, poetry and non-fiction text, in grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

***Grade Five Reading Standards for Literature***

**Reading Standard for Literature #2:** Students will determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

**Reading Standard for Literature #3:** Students will compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific events in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**Reading Standard for Literature #4:** Students will determine the meanings of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

**Reading Standard for Literature #6:** Students will describe how a narrator or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

**Reading Standard for Literature #10:** By the end of the year, students will read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, and non-fiction texts at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

***Evaluation of Grades Four and Five Reading Standards by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #2, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #3 & Principal #3***

According to the panelists and me, these grade four and five reading standards are discriminatory toward boys because they do not acknowledge the ways they learn nor do they mention any topics that might interest boys. Girls will adjust easier than boys to the framework of reading standards because they are auditory and verbal learners (Tyre, 2008). In elementary school classrooms, verbal and auditory styles of instruction are prevalent, which academically support girls but neglect boys (Whitmire, 2010).

There is no reference of students making relevant connections to what they are reading. When boys are able to relate to topics and make connections they are better able to learn (Tyre, 2008). The use of a graphic organizer, a visual learning tool for story structure and non-fictional elements, is not integrated into these standards. Since many boys are visual learners rather than auditory or verbal learners, a graphic organizer can help them understand the structure of a story or a non-fictional text. Role-playing as a kinesthetic and auditory learning

practice is not incorporated. Bruce Joyce's models of teaching are also not included within the reading standards. If gender-differentiated instructional techniques were coherently integrated, boys might be attaining higher proficiencies in reading.

The critical picture-word inductive model, a tool for students to determine the meanings of words and phrases as they are used, is not mentioned. A list of grade four and grade five titles of popular yet complex fictional and non-fictional books specifically appealing to the boy culture is not presented. Boys can be successful within the reading standards with gender-differentiated and well-orchestrated instruction. In conclusion, the reading standards do not highlight the learning styles and passions of fourth and fifth grade boys that are requisites for them to develop into motivated and proficient readers.

The evaluated fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in writing are delineated below.

#### *Grade Four Writing Standards*

**Writing Standard #1:** Students will introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.

**Writing Standard #3:** In narrative writing, students will use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters or situations.

**Writing Standard #4:** Students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Writing Standard #6:** Students will with some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and

collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

**Writing Standard #7:** Students will conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

### *Grade Five Writing Standards*

**Writing Standard #1:** Students will introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

**Writing Standard #3:** In narrative writing, students will use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

**Writing Standard: #4** Students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Writing Standard #6:** With some guidance and support from adults, students will use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.

**Writing Standard #7:** Students will conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

### *Evaluation of Grades Four and Five Writing Standards by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #1, Fifth Grade Teacher #7 and Principal #1*

The panelists and I were in agreement that the writing standards are explicit and detailed. We argue that the writing standards are discriminatory against boys for two reasons. First, the interests of boys are not incorporated into instruction. Second, there are no

instructional techniques provided. Bruce Joyce's models of teaching utilized to accommodate the learning needs of boys are not integrated. Based on the rigorous demands of the standards and the ways boys learn, an abundance of scaffolding and gender-differentiated instruction would be required.

The writing standards lack any mention of using a graphic organizer or a PowerPoint presentation to produce coherent and detailed writing. They do not state drawing first before writing an essay. The teacher promoting student choice for writing topics is not integrated. The standards also do not recognize the value of boys selecting their own topics for writing assignments. In addition, the type of report presentation format is not discussed. Providing a selection of report presentation formats can enrich the learning experiences of boys.

It is beneficial that the technology educational component is coherently stated in one of the standards, however gender differentiation is lacking. Since technology promotes learning for boys it needs to be incorporated into more of the writing standards. The world is becoming more technologically advanced and students have to be prepared for the technological revolutions that will be intertwined into their careers within the twenty-first century. Boys must be taught how to navigate the Web and how to tell which Internet-based information is inaccurate or useless.

The interests, learning styles, and pedagogical techniques fulfilling the boyhood culture must be incorporated to make writing instruction meaningful. The standards have to be enhanced to change their classification from gender neutral to gender-differentiated to acknowledge the academic, psychological and physical needs of fourth and fifth grade boys.

### ***Brief Overview of Speaking and Listening Standards***

Within the common core state standards, the standards for speaking and listening are combined, while in the previous New York State learning standards, they were separate. I believe this combination benefits students and teachers because speaking and listening are academic and relevant life skills that work together. When fourth and fifth grade boys engage in meaningful and authentic discussions, they must have the skills to be effective speakers and listeners.

The reviewed fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in speaking and listening are listed below.

#### ***Grade Four Speaking and Listening Standards***

**Speaking and Listening Standard #1:** Students will engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**Speaking and Listening Standard: #1a:** Students will come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

**Speaking and Listening Standard #1b:** Students will pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

**Speaking and Listening Standard #3:** Students will identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

**Speaking and Listening Standard: #4:** Students will report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

*Grade Five Speaking and Listening Standards*

**Speaking and Listening Standard #1:** Students will engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**Speaking and Listening Standard #1a:** Students will come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

**Speaking and Listening Standard #1c:** Students will pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

**Speaking and Listening Standard #3:** Students will summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

**Speaking and Listening Standard #4:** Students will report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

*Evaluation of Grades Four and Five Speaking and Listening Standards By 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teachers #5 & #8, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teachers #4 & #6 & Assistant Principals #2 & #4*

The panelists and I suggest that before these coherent standards can be mastered, boys should be taught how to speak effectively. Public speaking is an important and career preparatory skill that boys need support in. Fourth and fifth grade boys need to be encouraged to speak in a playground (loud) voice when sharing in class, giving an oral presentation or reading a writing selection in order to be heard. The speaking and listening standards do not address

speaking loudly and clearly, though it is an important skill that boys should master and must be integrated.

The speaking and listening standards do not provide gender differentiation in terms of student passions, learning styles and instructional methodologies. The lack of role-playing within collaborative discussions contributes to classroom disengagement. Role-playing, as a kinesthetic, visual, auditory and verbal instructional tool that can enhance the speaking and listening abilities of boys is not mentioned.

The use of a graphic organizer is never mentioned within the speaking and listening standard about a speaker providing reasons and evidence to support particular points. A graphic organizer is a necessary visual tool for boys to use while listening to and tracking what the speaker is saying and should engage them in active listening.

The panelists and I thought that the absence of boyhood instructional techniques within the common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening could be intensifying the achievement gap of black and Latino boys. They also believed students were not engaged.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided the findings for the fifth, sixth and seventh English Language Arts educational artifacts. The findings revealed that a conscious awareness by teachers and administrators to comprehend gender appeal for the reading and listening passages and common core state standards is paramount. In the concluding chapter, the research questions are reexamined and analyzed based on these findings. Recommendations to foster instructional boyhood culture appeal and awareness within the seven educational artifacts among teachers and school administrators are presented. It is hoped that these potential solutions will inform

teacher education and school-based professional development activities.

## **Chapter Six** **Conclusion**

It is evident that the academic, psychological and physical needs of fourth and fifth grade boys in coeducational classrooms have not been acknowledged within English Language Arts instruction. The national and international gender achievement gap in reading and writing of boys is the true indicator of this major dilemma and must be addressed (Newkirk, 2002; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). All teachers and school administrators must understand what constitutes a typical fourth or fifth grade boy in terms of learning styles, interests and behaviors. I concluded that gender awareness among teachers and school administrators must increase and classroom texts that will appeal to the boyhood culture must be selected. If gender awareness were lacking in the selection and lesson planning of literacy texts and curriculum, then gender discrimination of boys would occur. After the reexamination of the research questions, practical solutions for each of the seven educational artifacts are presented. At the end of this chapter, the implications for future research on boyhood achievement and engagement within reading and writing are delineated and discussed.

### **Reexamination of the Four Research Questions**

In this section I restated and responded to each of the four research questions presented in the introductory chapter and summarized their existing outcomes.

**Research Question #1:** How is the concept of a “gender neutral” English Language Arts curriculum inherently discriminatory in not meeting the academic, psychological and physical needs of fourth and fifth grade boys?

I have determined that the concept of a “gender neutral” English Language Arts curriculum is inherently discriminatory because it does not acknowledge the academic, psychological and physical needs of fourth and fifth grade boys. The gender neutral curriculum has been in existence for numerous years. Unfortunately, male academic achievement and meaningful engagement have been minimal, especially for struggling black and Latino boys (Noguera, 2008; Noguera, Hurtado & Fergus, 2011). This gender discriminatory factor has been preventing fourth and fifth grade boys from cultivating a passion for learning within English Language Arts. The curriculum must be transformed from gender neutral to gender-differentiated in order to reach more boys and ensure academic achievement, effective engagement and a step towards college and career readiness. While a gender-balanced curriculum in English Language Arts will require careful and extensive awareness and preparation, it should also help narrow the reading and writing achievement gap that is seen among fourth and fifth grade boys. School administrators and teachers must be taught how to revolutionize the English Language Arts curriculum in the direction of a gender-differentiated framework.

**Research Question #2:** How can boy culture gender-differentiated fourth and fifth grade instructional techniques within English Language Arts foster an optimal coeducational elementary school learning environment and promote a social justice framework for boys that also supports girls?

After analyzing data pertaining to the second question, I concluded that if boy culture gender-differentiated fourth and fifth grade English Language Arts instructional techniques were executed properly, an optimal coeducational learning environment would be fostered. These effective strategies will also uphold a social justice framework for boys because they will

be receiving academic, psychological and physical support. It will make school a fulfilling place to be. The social justice framework should cultivate a learning environment in which boys thrive, take academic risks and become proficient in reading and writing. The boyhood fourth and fifth grade instructional strategies must be utilized daily to have an enduring impact on academic achievement and engagement. Well-constructed techniques might enhance the level of engagement of black and Latino boys and decrease the achievement gap in reading and writing.

**Research Question #3:** To what extent do the fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books, Treasures text selections and New York State Standardized English Language Arts test reading and listening passages promote gender discrimination towards boys within coeducational classrooms?

In examining the third question, I deduced that the fourth and fifth grade common state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening are not acknowledging the interests and instructional needs of boys. It appears that gender differentiation was never considered nor discussed when the standards were written. Gender appeal appears not to be a criterion within the writing and publication of the Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books, text selections from Treasures and New York State Standardized English Language Arts tests reading and listening passages. As a result, gender discrimination might become evident in those English Language Arts literacy resources. It is imperative that all fourth and fifth grade English Language Arts common core state standards and resources be clearly examined for gender differentiation. If gender awareness and differentiation are not infused into English Language Arts instruction then boys will continue to struggle with scholastic aptitude and passionate

learning. Teachers must demonstrate effective boyhood instructional techniques when teaching novels, picture books and text selections to fourth and fifth grade boys.

**Research Question #4:** How can the instruction within the fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening be enhanced to target the academic, psychological and physical needs of boys and as a preparation towards their success in middle school?

In response to the fourth research question, I have developed instructional enhancements linked to the common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The literacy framework of Thomas Newkirk, Ralph Fletcher and Bruce Joyce's model of teaching were the foundation for developing these pedagogical enhancements. There is no gender differentiation found within the common core state standards. If the proposed boyhood enhancements presented in the middle of this chapter are successful with fourth and fifth grade boys, especially black and Latino males, then they can be replicated within elementary schools. Stereotypical classifications of boys might be eliminated when boys are provided with gender-balanced instruction that satisfies their learning needs. Boys would no longer be classified as struggling students, troublemakers, and/or class clowns. Instead, boys would be positively characterized as smart, diligent, respectful and responsible. Teachers and school administrators value self-control, concentration and verbal achievement that appear effortless for many girls. As boy culture instructional enhancements to the common core state standards are integrated into lessons, these positive attributes should appear within the actions and behaviors of boys (Rosin, 2010).

### ***Practical Solutions***

These solutions have the potential to transform the academic, psychological and physical experiences of boys within English Language Arts instruction.

#### ***English Language Arts Educational Artifacts #1 and #2: Genre and Gender Appeal Classification of Newbery and Caldecott Medal-Winning Books***

Even though three out of five Newbery medal-winning books and four out of five Caldecott medal-winning books will interest the boyhood culture, I still argue that teachers must be aware of gender appeal when selecting books to use with their students. I believe gender appeal must be a criterion when a book is nominated to become a Newbery or Caldecott medal-winner and suggest that the judging committee designate one year for the book to appeal to boys, the next year to girls and the following year to both boys and girls. As this change is executed, gender appeal within these books will be promoted.

A small notation displaying the genre of the book and the gender of the lead character should be on the cover of each book. The notations on the book would be used to help teachers select books for independent reading and read alouds that appeal to boys and girls. As students understand the gender appeal elements of different Newbery and Caldecott medal-winners, they can promote books to their peers. Boys' enthusiasm and love for reading will only intensify when a variety of Newbery and Caldecott medal-winning books appealing to the boy culture are readily available in the classroom.

#### ***English Language Arts Educational Artifacts #3 and #4: Genre and Gender Appeal Classification of Grades Four and Five Treasures Text Selections***

Even though nine out of the twelve *Treasures* text selections within grades four and five will interest the boyhood culture, teachers must consciously consider gender appeal when

choosing text selections. The authors, illustrators and publisher of *Treasures* text selections should be cognizant of the gender-differentiated components in each text selection in order to engage both boys and girls. The gender appeal review must happen in order to promote scholastic aptitude and motivation of boys towards reading. If boys are not provided with exciting text selections, they will avoid reading and limit their academic achievement. Boy interest in reading will intensify when text selections appealing to the boy culture are actively utilized and available in the classroom.

Publishers should label the cover page of each text selection with the gender of the lead character as well as the genre. The teacher should use this information to select texts for lessons, read alouds and independent reading. Teachers and students must be taught how to choose text selections based on gender appeal. As teachers and students gain awareness of the gender appeal of text selections, they can recommend them to other students.

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #5:  
Genre and Gender Appeal Classification of Grades Four and Five New York State  
Standardized Test Reading Passages***

Even though ten out of the twelve reading passages will appeal to the boy culture, gender differentiation needs to be considered when test makers select reading passages for standardized tests. Consideration of gender appeal must be a priority for test designers and gender-differentiated reading passages should be developed in order to foster academic success and promote meaningful engagement. If gender differentiation were a primary criterion, there would be a smaller achievement gap among fourth and fifth grade boys. Each reading passage should have a notation in the top right hand margin stating the genre and the gender of the lead character for students to note before reading the passage.

In order for a standardized test to be gender-equitable, there needs to be an equal number of reading passages appealing to the boyhood and girlhood culture. Generally, girls have no aversion to and take pleasure in reading passages appealing to the boyhood culture (Tyre, 2008). Standardized test developers must have a professional and profound focus on gender awareness and differentiation to make the standardized reading test passages equitable.

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #6:  
Genre and Gender Appeal Classification of Grades Four and Five New York State  
Standardized Test Listening Passages***

Even though four out of the six listening passages will appeal to boys, the gender appeal of listening passages must always be considered before publication. The test designers should know which listening passage themes support the learning needs and engage the boyhood and girlhood culture. Gender differentiation will not happen if a careful analysis of each listening passage is not implemented. If listening passages are critically reviewed for gender appeal before test publication, a narrower reading and writing achievement gap should exist between boys and girls.

There should be a notation stating the genre and the gender of the lead character on the listening passage. Before the teacher begins reading, he or she should state the genre and the gender of the lead character if applicable. Knowing the gender of the protagonist in advance should prepare boys to delve into the listening passages. In a three-year cycle, the listening passages should appeal to the boyhood culture, girlhood culture and both gender cultures. Gender-differentiation is vital in order for standardized test designers to develop engaging and pertinent listening passages that will interest boys.

Since many boys are visual learners, there should be an illustration on the back of the listening passage. In the book *Models of Teaching* (2004) by Bruce Joyce, the picture-word

inductive model suggests that an illustration be provided on a listening passage to aid comprehension. The picture will enable boys to better focus while listening and enhance their understanding. The picture will also support boys to include details when answering questions. Listening passages with an image will remain academically justified. A picture on the back of the listening passage will help in increasing the achievement of boys on the New York State Standardized English Language Arts test.

***English Language Arts Educational Artifact #7:***  
**Optimal Boyhood Culture Instructional Enhancements to the Fourth and Fifth Grade Common Core State Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**

Based on the evaluation, I developed evidence-based instructional enhancements for the fourth and fifth grade common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

These instructional enhancements should strengthen boyhood academic achievement and increase engagement. The purpose of these enhancements is to provide instruction that connects to the ways boys learn, acknowledges their interests and destroy the message that school isn't a place for boys (Noguera, 2008). Gender-balanced instruction must be instituted in kindergarten in order to prepare boys for the rigors of fourth grade (Brizendine, 2010; Whitmire, 2010).

These enhancements are specifically designed to promote the achievement and engagement of boys. I believe that girls will also academically benefit as a result of the high-quality instructional techniques.

***Boyhood Culture Instructional Enhancements to the Reading Common Core State Standards***

The relevance and practicality of the instructional enhancements in reading would need to be evident for boys. Teachers must focus on matching texts to boys based on their interests and reading levels. When students, especially boys, are asked to choose a novel or a text

selection, they should be able to select appealing and teacher-recommended chapter books, picture books and text selections.

Teachers should administer a reading inventory to boys and girls in September, January and May (Calkins, 2001; Goldberg & Roswell, 2002) in order to discover the reading habits and genre preferences of students. Teachers should use this information to plan meaningful lessons and develop high-quality relationships with their male and female students.

It would be beneficial if teachers utilize a graphic organizer to help boys find the theme, provide the description and development of a character, setting or an event utilizing specific details from the story (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008 & Sprung, Froschl & Gropper, 2010). The graphic organizer helps students, particularly boys display their knowledge and ideas in a methodical manner. Since many boys are classified as visual learners they might want to draw some information within the graphic organizer. A Venn diagram, a type of graphic organizer, can help compare characters through written text and illustrations. Boys will be able to refer to it to enable them to comprehend a book or text selection. Using a graphic organizer while simultaneously rereading a chapter from a novel or a text selection can help boys identify themes. While using a graphic organizer, boys become detectives searching for clues, which should be exciting. It is extremely important that boys be exposed to different types of graphic organizers during fourth and fifth grade and be free to select the type of graphic organizer that works best for them based on the designated task.

As male students build their vocabulary, visuals within the classrooms such as illustrations, images or photographs are instructionally stimulating and practical (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). Effectively utilizing the Internet websites [www.onelook.com](http://www.onelook.com) and [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) will help boys define words. Boys must be taught how to use the context

clue technique when reading to determine the meaning of an unknown word. This technique involves rereading the sentence with the unknown word, a few sentences before and after, to attempt to figure out the definition. The teacher could relate the context clue technique to a scavenger hunt. This type of rigorous learning activity is a challenge boys enjoy.

Boys should feel empowered to use a visual thesaurus to find the synonym for a particular word because it aligns to their preferred learning style. Teachers should have boys maintain an individual student-created thesaurus and dictionary for newly-learned vocabulary words. Boys should always include text and a corresponding illustration for each word. Each day, boys should use two newly-learned words in conversation to foster their own vocabulary development and the repertoire of other students. This particular technique is especially practical for male English language learners, yet all boys will benefit.

The following methods can help boys compare and contrast different genres of literature. Since boys do better when they have a tangible object to look at, a Venn diagram can be useful. Drawing and writing in a comic book format can help students compare and contrast. The role-playing component is a kinesthetic activity that can make comparing and contrasting coherent.

Boys should read boyhood appealing books at the high end of the grades four to five text complexity band independently and proficiently ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) in order to take risks in their reading and attaining a higher level. If a book topic is of interest, boys should want to read it regardless of the level. This notion is connected to the positive impact that the Harry Potter books had on boys. Complex reading can be facilitated with high-interest books and teacher scaffolding for students who require remediation. It is vitally important that the genres of fiction and non-fiction books contained within the classroom library engage the boyhood

culture. Fourth and fifth grade boys should be expected to read books independently at grade and above grade level with proper instructional support.

Boys should be encouraged and permitted to read in a quiet and comfortable area of the classroom where they can focus and partake in close reading. The teacher should create a relaxed and purposeful area of the classroom for independent reading. Boys might prefer to stand, which can help them focus and provide an opportunity for physical movement (Tyre, 2008). Teachers should permit boys to stand as long as they do not disturb others.

Teachers should offer opportunities for boys to discuss books with their classmates. In these partner or small group discussions, the teacher should provide time and structure for dialoguing about books based on complex, open-ended questions. These discussion opportunities should motivate boys to read and help boys internalize the relevance of reading. At the beginning, middle and the end of the school year, it would be beneficial if the teacher and boys brainstorm the purposes of reading so boys understand how reading supports them in the real world.

Boys should be required to keep a daily reading log of what they read within and outside of school and record the date, title, author, genre and the purpose of each text read. Viewing the reading log can boost self-confidence and remind boys to focus on daily reading. The reading log is an excellent tracking system that should impact the academic and psychological development of boys. These reading enhancements should academically support boys and engage them.

### ***Boyhood Culture Instructional Enhancements to the Writing Common Core State Standards***

Boys would need to understand the significance and effectiveness of the instructional enhancements in order to make writing productive and worthwhile. Fourth and fifth grade boys

need to be able to organize their thoughts in a methodical manner to write effectively. Graphic organizers, a valuable resource for supporting boys with writing paragraphs, essays and poems, can help students introduce a topic, state an opinion and develop a coherent structure to connect ideas to support their purpose. A major goal of the common core state standards in writing is to have boys produce clear and organized writing, so plenty of modeling of the writing process must occur because many boys are visual learners (Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Optimal instructional practices within writing should include exposure to various graphic organizers. Teachers should encourage students to choose a graphic organizer that satisfies the purpose. Teachers must demonstrate how to transfer the information from a graphic organizer to writing.

Schools should develop an evolving writing checklist that boys use as a visual tool to self-assess their writing. Boys would check that they completed all the components of the task, fulfilled the purpose and wrote with the intention to argue, inform or entertain. They should be encouraged to audio record their preliminary draft of writing, then listen to it several times, checking for development of ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, voice and conventions. This boyhood culture instructional technique would appeal to boys because they are using technology. Listening to recorded writing would be a valuable preparation for teacher conferences and help boys improve their revising and editing skills.

Boys should be provided with an opportunity to draw their ideas before writing in order to produce detailed and coherent paragraphs, essays and stories. This technique should be incorporated textually into the writing standard on incorporating dialogue, description and pacing in narrative writing. Since many boys learn visually, drawing and multimedia presentations can help them process their ideas. Teachers could ask boys to use a graphic organizer to plan out their characters, dialogue, and events for a narrative. There should also be

different features for boys to complete for an opinion or informative piece. In the graphic organizer, boys could combine illustrations and written text and design a short comic strip before producing a rough draft. They should utilize their graphic organizer and/or comic strip as a road map as they write their preliminary draft.

It is imperative that teachers provide boys with choices for short research projects in order to increase motivation (Tyre, 2008). Boys need to be taught with explicit modeling how to use the Internet for research. Teachers need to recommend reliable websites where boys can find high-quality information. Boys must be provided with choices about what the finished research project will look like. The act of writing a strong and coherent research paper is a skill that boys cannot do without.

The third grade biography-writing unit I developed contained evidence-based, appealing boyhood instructional elements that could effectively be implemented within grade four and five classrooms (Sprung, Froschl & Gropper, 2010). Each of my students selected an important figure in history or a famous person within popular culture. One of my male students chose to research the author Jeff Kinney, who writes the book series, *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. I was pleased that the student completed a biography on an author whose books significantly impacted his love of reading. In addition to having the students write a biography, I organized a biography day when each student orally shared information about his or her famous person with the invited audience. Several of my students dressed up as his or her selected biographical person. Many of the boys enjoyed biography day because it involved choice, visual and kinesthetic learning and role-playing.

The application of kinesthetic learning connected to conducting research is meaningful for boys. I was inspired by the production of cardboard arcade games by Caine who created

Caine's Arcade, located in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights within Los Angeles. As a hobby, this nine-year-old boy made elaborate and sophisticated games out of cardboard boxes in his dad's used auto parts store. Students can research a topic, develop a game connected to their research, and produce the game itself. The writing components would include note taking, textual information on the game and a detailed explanation of how to play. This visual and kinesthetic learning task for boys will foster a concrete understanding of the research topic and detailed writing. It is an interdisciplinary learning assignment that can promote strong content knowledge.

The standard for producing and publishing writing includes using word processing, multimedia tools and the Internet, both of which require gender-differentiated instructional techniques. Many students, especially boys, come to school with a passion for and a strong foundation in effectively utilizing technology. Boys might have limited experience with typing essays on the computer, which might not be a frequent requirement. Since many boys are kinesthetic and visual learners, using a keyboard will be a positive instructional experience.

Boys should be taught touch-typing. They will relish this challenging, yet meaningful opportunity. Students must be provided with modeled instruction and numerous opportunities for guided practice for typing. The typing requirement of one page for a fourth grader or two pages for a fifth grader in a single setting is a significant and doable undertaking. In order for a boy to effectively complete the typing requirement, he should be able to stand up to stretch and reenergize his brain as needed.

Computers must be available within the classroom and throughout the school for boys to use so they can experiment with different fonts and sizes, learn how to save a document and use the application Power Point. Boys can add images, select various font styles, background colors,

movable graphics and sound for their document. Boys should be provided with opportunities to engage in dialogues about computer applications and websites with their peers.

Digital simulations and gaming are active learning technologies that appeal to boys. *Minecraft*, *Scribblenauts* and *BrainPOP* are examples of educational digital simulations and games that will interest boys and foster writing development. Teachers should provide an opportunity for boys to write about their experiences following a digital simulation or game.

Collaboration is a fundamental learning technique boys can use to help each other edit and revise preliminary drafts. When boys engage in peer editing and revising, they can write at least two content and one mechanics suggestion on post it notes to attach to his partner's rough draft as a visual reminder. Then, he can explain his notes and answer any questions his partner might have. In turn, the partner must refer to the content and mechanics suggestions when rewriting the final draft of his essay.

When boys generate ideas for writing topics during the year, the teacher should collect their ideas on chart paper and post it in a prominent location for boys to view and utilize for brainstorming. The chart should be constantly added to as the students and teachers come up with additional ideas, and all ideas from the boys should be written down, unless they are detrimental to the students and teacher. Boys should feel empowered towards writing if they are able to write about topics that excite them. In conclusion, fourth and fifth grade boys should be engaged and successful with writing if all of these enhancements are implemented because they acknowledge boys' academic, psychological and physical needs.

***Boyhood Culture Fourth and Fifth Grade Instructional Enhancements to the Speaking and Listening Common Core State Standards***

Boys need to witness the immediate application of the instructional enhancements to activate a high-interest in acquiring speaking and listening skills. They require structured

techniques to support their needs in speaking and listening because boys thrive on structure, which keeps them focused and organized. Since many boys are not verbal or auditory learners, there should be opportunities for role-playing in order to effectively engage boys in collaborative discussions.

As a protocol for engaging in discussion, it would be beneficial if the teacher first generated speaking and listening norms with his or her boys. Several of the developed norms could include listening carefully to others, equity of voice, showing patience while waiting to speak and respectfully expressing individual views. The norms should be written down on large paper and hung in a visually appealing and noticeable place within the classroom so that the boys will be able to refer to the norms. By displaying the norms, the boys will be accountable for partaking in effective and meaningful discussions.

Diversified student partnerships for class work with dialoging can be valuable if they are two weeks to one month long. The academic and psychological benefits for boys of these partnerships should include hearing different perspectives, building on the strengths of their peers and cultivating new friendships. The teachers and students should cultivate a list of topics for possible discussions related to content knowledge and hang it in the classroom. Also, a chart of phrases for accountable talk that help boys begin a discussion and express agreement and disagreement should be visible (Fisher, Frey & Rothenberg, 2008). It is important that boys have an opportunity to role-play those discussion strategy phrases to understand their application. The partnerships, topics of helpful phrases and role-playing can help students develop useful skills in speaking and listening.

Before boys orally report in an organized manner on a topic, text read, tell a story or recount an experience, they should use a graphic organizer to plan out their thoughts and record

them in a logical and coherent manner. Boys can use their graphic organizer to record relevant facts and details for their oral presentations. Note cards can support boys when they deliver an oral presentation or a speech. Boys should write out the entirety of their speech on note cards for practice and to build their confidence. Boys can practice their speech in front of a partner and request constructive feedback. They can also audio-record and listen to their speech to determine clarity, volume, voice and pacing. This technique can enable boys to revise and edit their speeches more effectively.

A graphic organizer is beneficial for boys to use while preparing for a class discussion to state the main ideas of the topic. It can be used for cultivating thoughts, using text-based details and ensuring that a boy gets to say what he desires to during a discussion. When a boy is prepared to share, he should encounter minimal difficulty expressing his ideas. Teachers should encourage boys to make a relevant connection to their topic. This instructional suggestion can be beneficial because it is a link to their world outside of school.

It can be useful if a boy uses a tangible object such as a graphic organizer or highlighted copy of readings from a text to provide text-based documentation during a discussion. When a boy is prepared for discussions, it is a progressive step towards his academic success and potential career success. For example, he might have to create a detailed agenda and conduct a meeting in a future grade or for a future career.

It is critically important that boys prepare for daily text-based discussions by underlining or highlighting within the text. A weekly homework sheet within a planner that clearly delineates the dates of specific discussions can help a boy keep track of his responsibilities. It is imperative that teachers reiterate homework assignments daily and students copy it down in the homework planner. Most boys require this type of verbal and visual reminder (Homayoun,

2010). The daily and weekly homework or assignment should be posted near the interior entrance of the classroom for students to view and utilize as a reminder.

Since many boys are visual, not auditory learners, they should take notes during a lesson or an oral presentation to focus and foster recall. A teacher could introduce and model a note-taking chart that uses three columns (Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008; Goldberg & Roswell, 2002). The first column could be used to record interesting information, the second to write relevant connections to the outside world of school and the third to record content-based and clarifying questions. Boys would utilize this chart as a reference tool when asking and responding to questions. It will support boys in being prepared for their dialogue (Fisher, Frey & Rothenberg, 2008). The auditory and verbal skills of boys will be bolstered because they are focused on listening as they are writing down pertinent and relevant information. The note-taking chart should support boys in linking what they hear and say to the oral remarks of other students and the teacher.

As a methodology for boys to identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points, a graphic organizer is an effective tool. Boys will use it to fill in detailed information when another student is presenting and it will help a boy concentrate when the speaker (teacher or another student) is talking. If a boy completes a graphic organizer while another classmate is presenting, this process of note taking can provide him with valuable techniques to utilize when he has to deliver a speech.

A graphic organizer can also be used as a template for judging the strengths and weaknesses of a speech. After the speech, a boy can transfer his information from the graphic organizer onto chart paper to illustrate the reasons and evidence the speaker provided to support

the stated points. This document can become a tool of reference when other classmates are preparing their future speeches.

In order for boys to become stronger at public speaking, they must be provided with numerous opportunities to deliver short oral presentations. It is beneficial for the teacher to give a boy a visual cue to inform him that his speech is not loud enough and/or if he is speaking too fast. Several years ago, I worked with a fifth grader to prepare his valedictorian speech. He had written a meaningful speech, however he struggled with speaking in a loud voice. Since I knew he liked to play soccer, I told him to speak in a voice loud enough to notify a teammate that he was going to pass him the ball. This analogy was a relevant connection to his interests. He delivered his valedictorian speech in a significantly louder voice on his graduation day. The methodology leading to his speech achievement was formulating an instructional technique that acknowledged his passion for playing soccer.

These gender-based instructional enhancements to the common core state standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening should contribute to an optimal and meaningful learning environment that supports boys. As a result, fourth and fifth grade boys, especially black and Latino ones, might be deeply engaged and successful because they are taught in ways that support their learning styles, nourish their interests and stimulate them intellectually (Brizendine, 2010; Whitmire, 2010). Fourth and fifth grade girls also should benefit from these high-quality instructional enhancements.

### **Heading Towards the Future**

Where is the passion, excitement and motivation for fourth and fifth grade boys within learning? The boredom of boys, happening for years, is not an option in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The practical solutions discussed in this chapter should be considered and implemented. New York

City is a prime location for this academic and psychological revolutionary endeavor to provide gender differentiation within fourth and fifth grade coeducational classrooms. If the implementation of gender-differentiated reading and writing instruction and resources in New York City are successful, then other school systems can initiate the changes as well. An optimal learning environment must be infused with a spotlight on gender awareness. Teachers should utilize boyhood instructional techniques. Engaging and complex texts appealing to boys must be present in every classroom. If these changes are made, fourth and fifth grade boys will be more enthusiastic about school. As a result of boyhood instructional techniques and appealing texts, unmotivated boys dreading to venture to school each morning could be an element of the past. I suggest that one of the responsibilities of the principal, assistant principal or literacy coach is to focus on the complex process of school-wide gender-differentiated planning and instruction. There is no doubt that fourth and fifth grade boys can be successful and motivated within English Language Arts.

If boys continue to face an educational system that does not address their needs, the consequences discussed in chapters one and two will become even more dire. It is imperative that fourth and fifth grade boys enjoy being in school. No more boys can fall through the cracks of their elementary school classrooms. The purpose of schooling always must remain to develop engaged and inquisitive children and prepare them for college and their future professions.

### **Implications for Further Research**

The research outcomes determined that a significant number of books, text selections, reading passages and listening passages appeal to the boyhood culture. The outcome did not solve the problem of the gender achievement gap in reading and writing of boys versus girls. Therefore, additional research in the areas of teacher knowledge, teacher dispositions and

effective English Language Arts instructional methodologies to support and engage fourth and fifth grade boys must be conducted. The impact of appealing boyhood Newbery and Caldecott medal winning books, *Treasures* text selections, standardized reading and listening passages and enhancements to the common core state standards on the achievement of fourth and fifth grade black and Latino boys must be further researched. A limitation of this study is the need for a closer examination of race and ethnicity of boys in reference to the impact of the seven English Language Arts educational artifacts. There must be further study of fourth and fifth grade reading and writing achievement and engagement controlling for gender, race and ethnicity. Teachers and school administrators should undergo effective training in gender awareness in order for them to comprehend the needs and interests of boys and the selection of appealing texts. There are many opportunities for research within boyhood gender-differentiated English Language Arts instruction.

## APPENDIX

**TABLE 1.1**

**2006-2009 New York State Standardized English Language Arts Test Results by Gender  
of Third, Fourth, Fifth and Eighth Grade Students within New York City Public  
Elementary and Middle Schools**

**Key:**

A score of 4 = the student is exceeding standards.

A score of 3 = the student is meeting standards.

A score of 2 = the student is approaching standards.

A score of 1 = the student is below standards.

**Percentage of Third Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Levels 3 and 4**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	74.6%	64.4%	<b>10.2%</b>
2008	63.7%	56.2%	<b>7.5%</b>
2007	60.8%	52.3%	<b>8.5%</b>
2006	66.7%	56.4%	<b>10.3%</b>

**Percentage of Fourth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Levels 3 and 4**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	73.0%	65.0%	<b>8.0%</b>
2008	66.3%	56.5%	<b>9.8%</b>
2007	60.3%	52.0%	<b>8.3%</b>
2006	62.5%	55.2%	<b>7.3%</b>

**Percentage of Fifth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Levels 3 and 4**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	77.0%	72.4%	<b>4.6%</b>
2008	72.0%	66.6%	<b>5.4%</b>
2007	58.4%	54.1%	<b>4.3%</b>
2006	60.0%	53.5%	<b>6.5%</b>

**Percentage of Eighth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Levels 3 and 4**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	63.0%	51.2%	<b>11.8%</b>
2008	49.7%	36.6%	<b>13.1%</b>
2007	47.8%	36.1%	<b>11.7%</b>
2006	41.9%	30.9%	<b>11.0%</b>

**Percentage of Third Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 2**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	21.0%	27.1%	<b>6.1%</b>
2008	29.8%	32.6%	<b>2.8%</b>
2007	29.2%	31.9%	<b>2.7%</b>
2006	24.6%	28.5%	<b>3.9%</b>

**Percentage of Fourth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 2**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	22.9%	27.3%	<b>4.4%</b>
2008	26.1%	30.1%	<b>4.0%</b>
2007	31.0%	33.8%	<b>2.8%</b>
2006	28.5%	29.9%	<b>1.4%</b>

**Percentage of Fifth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 2**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	22.3%	26.4%	<b>4.1%</b>
2008	26.1%	29.9%	<b>3.8%</b>
2007	35.8%	37%	<b>1.2%</b>
2006	33.1%	35.7%	<b>2.6%</b>

**Percentage of Eighth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 2**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	35.3%	45.2 %	<b>9.9%</b>
2008	45.0%	53.7 %	<b>8.7%</b>
2007	45.1%	51.8%	<b>6.7%</b>
2006	47.4 %	51.1 %	<b>3.7%</b>

**Percentage of Third Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	4.4 %	8.5 %	<b>4.1%</b>
2008	6.5%	11.2 %	<b>4.7%</b>
2007	10.0 %	15.9%	<b>5.9%</b>
2006	8.7%	15.1%	<b>6.4%</b>

**Percentage of Fourth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	4.0 %	7.7 %	<b>3.7%</b>
2008	7.6 %	13.3 %	<b>6.3%</b>
2007	8.7 %	14.2 %	<b>5.5%</b>
2006	9.0 %	14.9 %	<b>5.9%</b>

**Percentage of Fifth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	0.7 %	1.2 %	<b>0.5%</b>
2008	1.9 %	3.5 %	<b>1.6%</b>
2007	5.8 %	9.0 %	<b>3.2%</b>
2006	6.9 %	10.9 %	<b>4.0%</b>

**Percentage of Eighth Grade Students by Gender Scoring at Level 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2009	1.6 %	3.6 %	<b>2.0%</b>
2008	5.2 %	9.7 %	<b>4.5%</b>
2007	7.2 %	12.1 %	<b>4.9%</b>
2006	10.7 %	18.0 %	<b>7.3%</b>

**TABLE 3.4**

*How does this Newbery Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**Year of Newbery Medal Winner:**

**Title:**

**Author:**

**Illustrator:**

**Evaluated by**

**Description of Title:**

**Description of Cover Illustration:**

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b></p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p>
<p><b>What is the length of the book?</b></p>	<p><i>Definition of Boy Code: The belief that no matter how a boy is feeling he must always act like a man and never a girl. He has to hide his uncomfortable emotions or deal with them in a manly way.</i></p>	<p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b></p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b></p>	<p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b></p>	<p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p>
<p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p>		<p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b></p>		
<p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b></p>		

**TABLE 3.5**

***Boyhood Engagement Evaluation Tool for Newbery Medal-Winning Books***

Please circle **1: Not Useful, 2: Mildly Useful 3: Neutral, 4: Useful, or 5: Very Useful** for each component to determine how useful the criteria is for judging whether these Newbery Medal-Winning books will engage fourth and fifth grade boys. Your comments are much appreciated.

**1. Genre**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**2. Gender of Lead Character(s)**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**3. Sense of Relevance**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**4. Number of Illustrations**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**5. Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**6. Length of Book**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**7. Promoting the Boy Culture or Girl Culture**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**8. Displaying of Boy Code**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**9. Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino boys**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**10. Potential for Engaging Struggling Black and Latino Boys**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**TABLE 3.6**

***How does this Caldecott Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

*Year of Caldecott Medal Winner*

**Title:**

**Author:**

**Illustrator:**

**Evaluated by**

**Description of Title:**

**Description of Cover Illustration:**

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<b>What is the genre of the book?</b>	<b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b>	<b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b>
<b>What is the length of the book?</b>	<i>Definition of Boy Code: The belief that no matter how a boy is feeling he must always act like a man and never a girl. He has to hide his uncomfortable emotions or deal with them in a manly way.</i>	<b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b>
<b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b>		<b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
<b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b>	<b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b>	<b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
<b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b>		
<b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b>		

**TABLE 3.7**

***Boyhood Engagement Evaluation Tool for Caldecott Medal-Winning Books***

Please circle **1: Not Useful, 2: Mildly Useful 3: Neutral, 4: Useful, or 5: Very Useful** for each criteria to determine how useful it is for judging whether these Caldecott Medal-Winning books will engage fourth and fifth grade boys. Your comments are much appreciated.

**1. Genre**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**2. Gender of Lead Character(s)**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**3. Sense of Relevance**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**4. Number of Illustrations**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**5. Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**6. Length of Books**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**7. Promoting the Boy Culture or Girl Culture**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**8. Displaying of Boy Code**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**9. Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino boys**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**10. Potential for Engaging Struggling Black and Latino Boys**

1: Not Useful      2: Mildly Useful      3: Neutral      4: Useful      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**TABLE 3.8**

*How does this Fourth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**Title:**

**Author:**

**Illustrator:**

**Evaluated by**

**Description of Title:**

**Description of Cover Illustration:**

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b></p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b></p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b></p>	<p><i>Definition of Boy Code: The belief that no matter how a boy is feeling he must always act like a man and never a girl. He has to hide his uncomfortable emotions or deal with them in a manly way.</i></p>	<p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p>
<p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p>	<p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b></p>	<p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b></p>
<p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b></p>		<p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b></p>		
<p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b></p>		<p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p>

**TABLE 3.9**

***Boyhood Engagement Evaluation Tool for Fourth Grade Treasures Text Selections***

Please circle **1: Not Useful, 2: Mildly Useful 3: Neutral, 4: Useful or 5: Very Useful** for each criteria to determine how useful it is for judging whether these Treasure Text Selections will engage fourth grade boys. Your comments are much appreciated.

1. **Genre**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
2. **Gender of Lead Character(s)**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
3. **Sense of Relevance**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
4. **Number of Illustrations**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
5. **Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
6. **Length of Text Selections**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
7. **Promoting the Boy Culture or Girl Culture**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
8. **Displaying of Boy Code**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
9. **Incorporation of Popular Culture**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
10. **Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino boys**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
11. **Potential for Engaging Struggling Black and Latino Boys**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**

**TABLE 3.10**

*How does this Fifth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**Title:**  
**Author:   Illustrator:**  
**Evaluated by**  
**Description of Title:**  
**Description of Cover Illustration:**

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b></p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b></p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b></p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b></p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b></p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p> <p><i>Definition of Boy Code:  The belief that no matter how a boy is feeling he must always act like a man and never a girl. He has to hide his uncomfortable emotions or deal with them in a manly way.</i></p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b></p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b></p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b></p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p>

**TABLE 3.11**

***Boyhood Engagement Evaluation Tool for Fifth Grade Treasures Text Selections***

Please circle **1: Not Useful, 2: Mildly Useful 3: Neutral, 4: Useful or 5: Very Useful** for each criteria to determine how useful it is for judging whether these Treasure Text Selections will engage fifth grade boys. Your comments are much appreciated.

- 1. **Genre**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 2. **Gender of Lead Character(s)**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 3. **Sense of Relevance**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 4. **Amount of Illustrations**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 5. **Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 6. **Length of Text Selections**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 7. **Promoting the Boy Culture or Girl Culture**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 8. **Displaying of Boy Code**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 9. **Incorporation of Popular Culture**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 10. **Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino boys**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 11. **Potential for Engaging Struggling Black and Latino Boys**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**

**TABLE 3.12**

*How does this (Year) Fourth or Fifth Grade New York Grade State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

<b>Title:</b>
<b>Author:</b>
<b>Evaluated by</b>
<b>Genre:</b>
<b>Gender of Lead Character:</b>
<b>Number of Illustrations:</b>
<b>Length of Passage:</b>
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b>
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b>
<b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b>
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>

**TABLE 3.13**

***Boyhood Engagement Evaluation Tool for New York State Standardized Test Fourth and Fifth Grade Reading Passages***

Please circle **1: Not Useful, 2: Mildly Useful 3: Neutral, 4: Useful, or 5: Very Useful** for each criteria to determine how useful it is for judging whether these reading passages will engage fourth and fifth grade boys. Your comments are much appreciated.

- 1. Genre**  
 1: Not Useful   2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 2. Gender of Lead Character**  
 1: Not Useful   2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 3. Number of Illustrations**  
 1: Not Useful   2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 4. Length of Passage**  
 1: Not Useful   2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 5. Ideas Appealing to the Boy Culture**  
 1: Not Useful   2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 6. Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys**  
 1: Not Useful   2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 7. Potential for Engaging Struggling Black and Latino Boys**  
 1: Not Useful   2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**

**TABLE 3.14**

*How does this (Year) Fourth or Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Listening Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

<b>Title:</b>
<b>Author:</b>
<b>Evaluated by</b>
<b>Genre:</b>
<b>Gender of Lead Character:</b>
<b>Number of Illustrations:</b>
<b>Length of Passage:</b>
<b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the boy culture?</b>
<b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the girl culture?</b>
<b>Which gender(s) will this listening passage likely engage?</b>
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>

**TABLE 3.15**

***Boyhood Engagement Tool for New York State Standardized Test Fourth and Fifth Grade Listening Passages***

Please circle **1: Not Useful, 2: Mildly Useful 3: Neutral, 4: Useful, or 5: Very Useful** for each criteria to determine how useful it is for judging whether these listening passages will engage fourth and fifth grade boys. Your comments are much appreciated.

**1. Genre**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**2. Gender of Lead Character**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**3. Number of Illustrations**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**4. Length of Passage**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**5. Ideas Appealing to the Boy Culture**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**6. Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino boys**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**7. Potential for Engaging Struggling Black and Latino boys**

1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful                      3: Neutral                      4: Useful                      5: Very Useful

**Comments:**

**TABLE 3.16**

*Examining Grades Four and Five Clusters of the Common Core State Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening according to the designated criteria: How do the common core state standards support or discriminate against the boy culture?*

**English Language Arts Common Core State Standard:**

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p>What are the varieties of instructional techniques used in the classroom to promote high-quality learning?</p> <p>How can writing topics assigned or allowing freedom to choose writing topics promote or neglect the quality of the boy and girl learning cultures?</p> <p>How can books that appeal to the boy or girl culture impact learning?</p>	<p>How will a gender neutral curriculum work?</p> <p>How can various learning styles: visual, spatial, and kinesthetic (boys) -- verbal and auditory (girls) be acknowledged in the classroom?</p> <p>How does physical movement have an impact in the classroom?</p>	<p>How do relevant connections impact lessons?</p> <p>How is infusing popular culture into the lessons valuable for students?</p> <p>How does sitting down while learning not work for certain students, especially boys? How does this create or limit an optimal learning environment?</p> <p>How might the common core state standards narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</p> <p>How might the common core standards engage struggling black and Latino boys?</p>

**TABLE 3.17**

**Boyhood Engagement Evaluation Tool for Grades Four and Five Common Core State Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**

Please circle **1: Not Useful, 2: Mildly Useful 3: Neutral, 4: Useful or 5: Very Useful** for each criteria to determine how useful it is for judging whether these common core state standards will engage fourth and fifth grade boys. Your comments are much appreciated.

- 1. Instructional Techniques**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 2. Choice of Writing Topics**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 3. Appeal of Books within Classroom Library**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 4. Gender Neutrality**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 5. Acknowledgement of Learning Styles**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 6. Opportunities for Physical Movement**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 7. Incorporation of a Relevant Connection**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 8. Infusion of Popular Culture**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 9. Potential of Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**
- 10. Potential of Engaging Struggling Black and Latino Boys**  
 1: Not Useful    2: Mildly Useful    3: Neutral    4: Useful    5: Very Useful  
**Comments:**

**TABLE 4.1****Evaluation of Criteria to Judge Newbery Medal-Winning Books as Appealing to the Boyhood Culture**

<b>Criteria for Judging</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Mildly Useful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>
Genre				7	5
Gender of Lead Character(s)			1	5	6
Sense of Relevance			1	5	6
Number of Illustrations				6	6
Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations				8	4
Length of Books			1	10	1
Promoting the Boy or Girl Culture				7	5
Displaying of Boy Code			3	7	2
Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	6	5
Engages Struggling Black and Latino Boys				4	8

**TABLE 4.2****Evaluation of Criteria to Judge Caldecott Medal-Winning Books as Appealing to the Boyhood Culture**

<b>Criteria for Judging</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Mildly Useful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>
Genre				6	6
Gender of Lead Character(s)			1	7	4
Sense of Relevance			1	3	8
Number of Illustrations				5	7
Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations				5	7
Length of Books			<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Promoting the Boy or Girl Culture				7	5
Displaying of Boy Code			2	6	4
Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	5	6
Engages Struggling Black and Latino Boys				5	7

**TABLE 4.3****Evaluation of Criteria to Judge Fourth Grade *Treasures* Text Selections as Appealing to the Boyhood Culture**

<b>Criteria for Judging</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Mildly Useful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>
Genre			1	5	2
Gender of Lead Character(s)			1	4	3
Sense of Relevance				6	2
Number of Illustrations				6	2
Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations				6	2
Length of Text Selections			2	3	3
Promoting the Boy or Girl Culture			1	4	3
Displaying of Boy Code			1	5	2
Incorporation of Popular Culture				3	5
Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	4	3
Engages Struggling Black and Latino Boys				3	5

**TABLE 4.4****Evaluation of Criteria to Judge Fifth Grade *Treasures* Text Selections as Appealing to the Boyhood Culture**

<b>Criteria for Judging</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Mildly Useful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>
Genre				6	2
Gender of Lead Character(s)			1	4	3
Sense of Relevance			1	6	1
Number of Illustrations				5	3
Depiction of Gender(s) in Illustrations			1	5	2
Length of Text Selections			1	6	1
Promoting the Boy or Girl Culture			1	6	1
Displaying of Boy Code			1	6	1
Incorporation of Popular Culture			1	4	3
Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	7	
Engages Struggling Black and Latino Boys				5	3

**TABLE 4.5****Evaluation of Criteria to Judge Fourth and Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Reading Passages as Appealing to the Boyhood Culture**

<b>Criteria for Judging</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Mildly Useful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>
Genre				9	3
Gender of Lead Character			2	9	1
Number of Illustrations				8	4
Length of Passage			1	7	4
Ideas Appealing to the Boy Culture			1	8	3
Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	8	3
Engages Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	6	5

**TABLE 4.6****Evaluation of Criteria to Judge Fourth and Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Listening Passages as Appealing to Boyhood Culture**

<b>Criteria for Judging</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Mildly Useful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>
Genre			1	9	2
Gender of Lead Character			1	9	2
Number of Illustrations			2	7	3
Length of Passage			1	8	3
Ideas Appealing to the Boy Culture			1	10	1
Potential for Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	8	3
Engages Struggling Black and Latino Boys				8	4

**TABLE 4.7****Evaluation of Criteria to Judge Fourth and Fifth Grade Common Core State Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening as Appealing to the Boyhood Culture**

<b>Criteria for Judging</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Mildly Useful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>
Instructional Techniques				9	3
Choice of Writing Topics				9	3
Appeal of Books Within Classroom Library			1	8	3
Gender Neutrality			3	6	3
Acknowledgement of Learning Styles			1	9	2
Opportunities for Physical Movement			1	7	4
Incorporation of a Relevant Connection				8	4
Infusion of Popular Culture				9	3
Potential of Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	7	4
Engages Struggling Black and Latino Boys			1	7	4

*How does this Newbery Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.8**

**SUMMARY**

**2005 Newbery Medal Winner**

**Title:** *Kira-Kira*

**Author:** Cynthia Kadohata

**Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #3**

**Description of Title:** The title, *Kira-Kira* can make the reader wonder what the novel is going to be about. *Kira-Kira* means glittering in Japanese.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The front cover shows a photograph of a Japanese girl, probably the main character. The back cover shows another photograph of a different girl.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Realistic fiction</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 244 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> 2 Lead Female Characters: Lynn and Katie</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racism</li> <li>• Hospitalization</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> None: Not Applicable</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> None</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of anger, Father smashes the window of his boss' car.</li> <li>• The two sisters want to help their uncle, but he stated they would be getting in a man's way.</li> <li>• Sammy, the younger brother of Lynn and Katie did not appear as a tough boy.</li> </ul> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> No Impact</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> Girl culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 relatable lead female characters</li> <li>• Relationships and feelings of the characters</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Girl culture</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p>

*How does this Newbery Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.9**

**SUMMARY**

**2006 Newbery Medal Winner**

**Title:** *Criss Cross*

**Author:** Lynne Rae Perkins

**Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #4**

**Description of Title:** *Criss Cross* appears to be a puzzling title.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover shows a picture of a girl with the caption, “She wished something would happen.” The cover picture and caption would most likely appeal to the girl culture.

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Realistic fiction</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 337 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> A male lead character named Lenny and a female lead character named Debbie</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Crossroads of adolescence</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Not Applicable, only a face of one female and one male</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> Several images</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not Displayed</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> No Impact</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> Girl culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girl centered activities</li> <li>• Lots of dialogue</li> <li>• Finding his and her path in life</li> <li>• Sophisticated writing</li> <li>• Male lead character not portraying masculinity</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Girl culture</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p>

*How does this Newbery Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.10**

**SUMMARY**

**2007 Newbery Medal Winner**

**Title:** *The Higher Power of Lucky*

**Author:** Matt Phelan

**Evaluated by** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher # 2

**Description of Title:** The title appears to be textually appealing.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover shows a picture of a girl in a red dress.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Realistic fiction</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 133 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Female</p> <p><b>What is the relevant connection to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption</li> <li>• Having a dog</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Both boys and girls</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> Several small illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> A few pictures of male characters will interest boys.</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running Away from home</li> <li>• Surviving a dust storm</li> <li>• Lucky acting tomboyish</li> </ul> <p><b>Girl culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running away from home</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Both gender cultures</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood appeal</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood appeal</p>

***How does this Newbery Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.11**

**SUMMARY**

**2008 Newbery Medal Winner**

**Title:** *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*

**Author:** Laura Amy Schlitz **Illustrator:** Robert Byrd

**Evaluated by Principal #1**

**Description of Title:** The title appears to promote curiosity and intrigue.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is detailed and displays people living and working in a medieval village.

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Historical fiction; miniature play with nineteen monologues</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 82 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Both genders</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History: Middle Ages</li> <li>• Adventures of medieval children</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Combination of males and females</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> Several illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Monologue: <i>Hugo, The Lord's Nephew</i>: "The way to become a man is being brave by hunting and killing a boar."</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> It gets them excited to read as a result of seeing males in illustrations.</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various short monologues</li> <li>• Promotes masculinity</li> <li>• Detailed illustrations</li> </ul> <p><b>Girl culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships: family and friends</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Both gender cultures</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Engaging components</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood interests</p>

***How does this Newbery Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.12**

**SUMMARY**

**2009 Newbery Medal Winner**

**Title:** *The Graveyard Book*

**Author:** Neil Gaiman **Illustrator:** Dave McKean

**Evaluated by 5th Grade Teacher #6**

**Description of Title:** The title appears to be enticing and likely to appeal to the boy culture.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration displays a gravestone and the letters of the title have a stone-like design.

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Fantasy</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 310 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> A lead male character growing up in a graveyard named Bod</p> <p><b>What is the relevant connection to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in a graveyard</li> <li>• Adventures of growing up in a graveyard</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Mostly males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> Only a few illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not displaying fear</li> <li>• The word, “wimp” is used.</li> </ul> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> The few pictures of males promote reading.</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danger</li> <li>• Risk-taking</li> <li>• Bravery</li> </ul> <p><b>Girl culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Complex vocabulary</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Mostly the boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood literary components</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood literary components</p>

***How does this Caldecott Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.13**

**SUMMARY**

**2005 Caldecott Medal Winner**

**Title:** *Kitten's First Full Moon*

**Author:** Kevin Henkes

**Illustrator:** Kevin Henkes

**Evaluated by a 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #2**

**Description of Title:** The title appears to be interesting and promotes curiosity.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is creative and displays a kitten licking her paw. Flowers and an oversized moon are in the background surrounding the kitten.

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Realistic fiction</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 29 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead female character: a cat with no name</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full moon and a kitten</li> <li>• Desire for milk</li> <li>• Uniformity in daily life</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Female</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> An abundance of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Risk-taking behaviors</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The illustrations show that the female kitten is involved in physical movements such as stretching, tumbling and climbing.</li> <li>• Many boys like partaking in these physical activities because they are moving their bodies.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical actions</li> <li>• Clumsiness</li> <li>• Persistence</li> </ul> <p><b>Girl culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• Clumsiness</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Both gender cultures</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood components</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> The text content and illustrations</p>

***How does this Caldecott Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.14**

**SUMMARY**

**2006 Caldecott Medal Winner**

**Title:** *The Hello, Goodbye Window*

**Author:** Norton Juster      **Illustrator:** Chris Raschka

**Evaluated by 5th Grade Teacher #7**

**Description of Title:** The title appears to be exciting and magical.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is captivating and displays a girl waving hello outside to a man and a woman through two windows of their house.

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Realistic fiction</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 29 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead female character: a girl with no name</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People watching</li> <li>• Grandparent Relationships</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Female: granddaughter Male: Poppy, grandfather</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> An abundance of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not displayed</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> The pictures of Poppy will impact boys in reading the book.</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poppy (grandpa)</li> <li>• The hello/goodbye window</li> </ul> <p><b>Girl culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Sociable lead female character</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Both gender cultures</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood components</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood elements</p>

*How does this Caldecott Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.15**

**SUMMARY**

*2007 Caldecott Medal Winner*

**Title:** *Flotsam*

**Author:** David Wiesner

**Illustrator:** David Wiesner

**Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #6**

**Description of Title:** The title appears to be fascinating and puzzling.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is captivating and colorful. It displays an oversized fish eye with two small fish and a strange object in the center.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Fantasy; wordless book</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 36 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead male character: a boy with no name</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending time on the beach</li> <li>• Underwater discoveries</li> <li>• Finding a camera</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> An abundance of illustrations on every page</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> The boy does not cry when he almost drowned as a result of a powerful wave.</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> There are many pictures of the lead male character engaged in different situations.</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A setting of a beach</li> <li>• Lots of action</li> <li>• Finding a camera that was washed ashore</li> <li>• All the fish and sea creatures</li> <li>• All the colorful illustrations</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood elements</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood components</p>

*How does this Caldecott Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.16**

**SUMMARY**

*2008 Caldecott Medal Winner*

**Title:** *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

**Author:** Brian Selznick      **Illustrator:** Brian Selznick

**Evaluated by a 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #5 and Assistant Principal #2**

**Description of Title:** The title is fascinating and can make readers curious.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is detailed. It displays the inside of a clock’s mechanisms where there is a keyhole. In the background, a village in Paris, France with the Eiffel Tower during the night is shown.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Fantasy, mystery and realistic fiction</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 525 Pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead male character: Hugo Cabret</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major setting: train station</li> <li>• Friendships</li> </ul> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Mostly males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> An abundance of illustrations; there are a combination of drawings and photographs.</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hugo showed bravery by continually going on without seeking medical support even as his fingers are being crushed.</li> <li>• An old man was going to burn Hugo’s notebook. Hugo wanted to tackle him and knock him to the ground.</li> </ul> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> The abundant illustrations of males made it popular for boys to read.</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train station</li> <li>• Orphan, clock keeper and thief</li> <li>• Surviving on his own</li> <li>• Action-oriented</li> <li>• Independence and perseverance</li> <li>• Heroism by Hugo</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood elements</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood cultural appeal</p>

*How does this Caldecott Medal-Winning book support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.17**

**SUMMARY**

***2009 Caldecott Medal Winner***

**Title:** *The House in the Night*

**Author:** Susan Marie Swanson **Illustrator:** Beth Krommes

**Evaluated by** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #1

**Description of Title:** The title appears to be simple, yet fascinating.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is black and yellow. The cover displays a house surrounded by trees, stars, and the moon. The background is a light black color to convey night.

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the book?</b> Poetry</p> <p><b>What is the length of the book?</b> 36 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Female: no name</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b> Life at home</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Females</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the book?</b> An abundance of detailed and graphic illustrations in black, white and yellow</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not displayed</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> No impact</p>	<p><b>What makes this book favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Girl culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only females are depicted in the illustrations</li> <li>• Realistic setting</li> <li>• Explains a house during the night in a soothing method</li> <li>• Peaceful poem</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this book promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Girl culture</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p> <p><b>How does this book attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p>

***How does this Fourth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.18**

**SUMMARY**

**Fourth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title** *The Mystery of the Missing Lunch*

**Author:** Johanna Hurwitz **Illustrator:** Joe Cepeda

**Evaluated by** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #8

**Description of Title:** It is an exciting title that conveys suspense.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is captivating! Three students and the teacher are displayed. One of the male students is in the midst of a big sneeze.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Mystery</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead male character named Ramón</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School setting</li> <li>• Solving a mystery</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 14 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Boys</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> A lot of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> It is displayed because Ramón did not cry, scream, or display physical aggression. He calmly handles the situation.</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> There are several illustrations of boys.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Boy culture:</b> Ramón shows tenacity and is determined to solve the mystery.</p> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy Culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Engaging Components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood appeal</p>

*How does this Fourth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.19**

**SUMMARY**

**Fourth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Mighty Jackie: The Strike-Out Queen*

**Author:** Marissa Moss **Illustrator:** C.F. Payne

**Evaluated by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #1**

**Description of Title:** It is a powerful title that can promote wonderment.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is not that exciting. It shows three baseball teammates watching some opposing team members on the baseball diamond.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Historical fiction</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead female character named Jackie Mitchell</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseball</li> <li>• Gender discrimination</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 16 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Both men and women</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> An abundance of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boy insult: “You throw like a girl.” (Notion: girls could not throw.)</li> <li>• After Jackie struck Babe Ruth out he was disgusted.</li> </ul> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Seeing males in illustrations gets boys excited to read.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Baseball game</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b> The game of Baseball</p> <p><b>Girl culture:</b> Successful female pitcher</p> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Both gender cultures</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood elements</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Engaging components</p>

***How does this Fourth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.20**

**SUMMARY**

**Fourth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *My Diary From Here To There*

**Author:** Amanda Irma Pérez **Illustrator:** Maya Christina Gonzalez

**Evaluated by Assistant Principal #4**

**Description of Title:** It is a simple title that seems to imply traveling to a new place.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is very detailed. It shows a Mexican girl ready to write in her diary. She is looking at the city from her bedroom.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Realistic Fiction</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead female character named Amanda</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping a diary</li> <li>• Immigration</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 18 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Both boys and girls</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> Abundance of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys causing trouble</li> <li>• The boys cover up their angry feelings by building cardboard box cities and acting like nothing is bothering them.</li> </ul> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> The pictures of boys might encourage them to read.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not present</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Girl culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diary writing</li> <li>• Family relationships</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Girl culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p>

***How does this Fourth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.21**

**SUMMARY**

**Fourth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *How Benjamin Franklin Stole The Lightning*

**Author:** Rosalyn Schanzer      **Illustrator:** Rosalyn Schanzer

**Evaluated by Self and Fourth Grade Teacher #1**

**Description of Title:** The title is creative and can cause the reader to think.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** Benjamin Franklin is standing on a platform close to the sky holding lightning. There is a kite in the background.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Biography</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead male character named Benjamin Franklin</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invention of Electricity</li> <li>• Lightning</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 16 Pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Mostly males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> A lot of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not displayed</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Seeing boys and men in illustrations encourages them to read.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Boy culture:</b> Stealing lightning</p> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Engaging components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Appealing boyhood components</p>

***How does this Fourth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.22**

**SUMMARY**

**Fourth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Dear Mr. Winston*

**Author:** Nicole E. Wong    **Illustrator:** Ken Roberts

**Evaluated by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #5**

**Description of Title:** The title is simple and the topic of letter writing may come to mind.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is visually appealing and detailed. It shows a girl lying on her bed looking at her cat while typing on the computer in her bedroom. There is also a dog sleeping on the rug.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Humorous fiction</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead female character named Cora</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loose snake</li> <li>• Visiting the library</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 12 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Both genders</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> An abundance of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not displayed</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Boys like seeing themselves in pictures.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not Applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Boy culture:</b> Letting a snake free in a library <b>Girl culture:</b> Letter writing</p> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Both gender cultures</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Engaging boyhood components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood appeal</p>

***How does this Fourth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.23**

**SUMMARY**

**Fourth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Dear Mrs. La Rue*

**Author:** Mark Teague     **Illustrator:** Mark Teague

**Evaluated by Principal #3**

**Description of Title:** The title is enticing and a dog comes to mind.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is action-packed and shows an elderly woman with a dog nearly getting run over by a bus.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Fantasy</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead male character named Ike (the dog)</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys and girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ike misbehaving</li> <li>• Involved in adventures</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 14 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Mostly males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> An abundance of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Ike being a troublemaker</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Seeing males in illustrations can motivate boys to want to read.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not Applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Boy Culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short pieces of text; very humorous</li> <li>• Ike is a troublemaker and becomes a hero.</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Appealing boyhood components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood literary elements</p>

*How does this Fifth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.24**

**SUMMARY**

**Fifth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Davy Crockett Saves The World*

**Author:** Rosalyn Schanzer      **Illustrator:** Rosalyn Schanzer

**Evaluated by 5th Grade Teacher #4**

**Description of Title:** It is a powerful title that triggers curiosity.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration can be considered motivating. It shows Davy Crockett riding a bear above the world in outer space. Stars and planets are present in the background.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Tall tale</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead male character: Davy Crockett</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilderness adventure</li> <li>• Strong relationship</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 16 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Mostly males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> A lot of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Boys are described as strong and tough.</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Seeing several illustrations of males makes them excited to read.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> No incorporation</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Boy culture:</b> Strength and adventures</p> <p><b>Girl culture:</b> Sally marries Davy Crockett.</p> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Both gender cultures</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood appeal</p>

*How does this Fifth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.25**

**SUMMARY**

**Fifth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Rattlers!*

**Author:** Ellen Lambeth      **Illustrator:** Photographer not specified

**Evaluated by Self and Fifth Grade Teacher #3**

**Description of Title:** It is an exciting title, especially with the exclamation point at the end of the title.

**Description of Cover Photograph:** The cover photograph is very detailed and intriguing! It shows a rattlesnake with its mouth wide-open. The caption next to the photograph is captivating and fascinating.

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Nonfiction article</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> None</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b> Facts about snakes</p> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 11 Pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> An abundance of photographs</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Not applicable</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Boy Culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in snakes</li> <li>• The lives of rattlesnakes</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Appealing boyhood components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood elements</p>

***How does this Fifth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.26**

**SUMMARY**

**Fifth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *The Night of San Juan*

**Author:** Lulu Delacre **Illustrator:** Edel Rodriguez

**Evaluated by** 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #7

**Description of Title:** The title makes me wonder what the text selection is going to be about. I think the setting will be the city of San Juan,

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is detailed and colorful. It shows three girls looking up at a boy sitting outside on the floor of a balcony apartment. There are some palm trees in the background

Literacy	Psychological	Cultural
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Fiction</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> José Manuel- Lead male character</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life in San Juan</li> <li>• Friendship</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 12 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Combinations of males and females</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> Lots of illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not displayed</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> The few pictures of males increase the enthusiasm of a boy to read a particular text selection.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Girl culture:</b> Three clever sisters want to play with José</p> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Girl culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p>

***How does this Fifth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.27**

**SUMMARY**

**Fifth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Zathura*

**Author:** Chris Van Allsburg      **Illustrator:** Chris Van Allsburg

**Evaluated by Self and Fifth Grade Teacher #6**

**Description of Title:** The title is exciting and produces some wonderings.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is captivating and in black and white. It shows a boy holding onto a curtain near a window in his house. He is looking out the window and outer space is clearly transparent. It appears like he might get pulled into space.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Science Fiction</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Two lead male characters: Walter: older brother Danny: younger brother</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b> Adventure; Board Game</p> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 20 Pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> An abundance of black and white illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Physical fighting</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> The pictures of males get boys excited to read.</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Board Game, Jumanji</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Boy Culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boyish fighting</li> <li>• Space game</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood literacy elements</p>

***How does this Fifth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 4.28**

**SUMMARY**

**Fifth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Goin' Somewhere Special*

**Author:** Patricia C. McKissack      **Illustrator:** Jerry Pinkney

**Evaluated by Assistant Principal #4**

**Description of Title:** The title sounds peaceful and happy. The word, “goin’” is spelled differently than the traditional English spelling.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** It is colorful and shows a nicely dressed, happy, and confident African-American girl ready to venture out.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Historical fiction</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead Female Character: Tricia Ann</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Relationships</li> <li>• Racial Discrimination</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 14 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Combination of males and females</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> Many illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Not applicable</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b></p> <p><b>Girl Culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready to be independent</li> <li>• Mama Frances gives female advice to Tricia Ann.</li> <li>• Mama Frances wants Tricia Ann to carry herself proud.</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Girl culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Not probable</p>

*How does this Fifth Grade Treasures text selection support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 4.29**

**SUMMARY**

**Fifth Grade Treasures Text Selection**

**Title:** *Weslandia*

**Author:** Paul Fleischman      **Illustrator:** Kevin Hawkes

**Evaluated by** 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher # 7

**Description of Title:** The title can make you think and wonder.

**Description of Cover Illustration:** The cover illustration is colorful and detailed. It shows a boy wearing a straw hat, a dress with a rope belt, and carrying a satchel. He is overseeing the area. The boy is standing on the stalk of a large flower. Two boys are playing a lacrosse-type game, while attached to tree branches. Also, a man is staring out of his house in disbelief.

<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<p><b>What is the genre of the text selection?</b> Fantasy</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are the lead character(s)?</b> Lead male character: Wesley</p> <p><b>What are the relevant connections to the lives of boys or girls?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School; Being an outcast</li> <li>• Wesley built a civilization.</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the length of the text selection including illustrations?</b> 12 pages</p> <p><b>Which gender(s) are mostly depicted within the illustrations?</b> Mostly males</p> <p><b>How many illustrations are found in the text selections?</b> Many illustrations</p>	<p><b>How is the boy code clearly displayed?</b> Wesley is considered the outcast of his schoolmate tormentors.</p> <p><b>How does the gender of illustrations displayed impact the motivation of what boys want to read?</b> Boys like to see pictures of other males in text selections to connect it to themselves</p>	<p><b>How is popular culture incorporated?</b> Not applicable</p> <p><b>What makes this text selection favorable to the boy or girl culture?</b> <b>Boy culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wesley: outcast and then proud</li> <li>• Creating an authentic civilization</li> </ul> <p><b>Does this text selection promote the boy culture, girl culture, or both gender cultures?</b> Boy culture</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood culture literacy components</p> <p><b>How does this text selection attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b> Boyhood elements</p>

*How does this 2007 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.1**

**SUMMARY**

<b>Title:</b> Song of the Cicada
<b>Author:</b> Tristin Toohill
<b>Evaluated by</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #1
<b>Genre:</b> Realistic Fiction
<b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Addy, a girl
<b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One small picture of a cicada
<b>Length of Passage:</b> One and one-third pages
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is about cicadas.</li> <li>• There is a picture of a cicada</li> </ul>
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female lead character, Addy</li> <li>• Relationship between Addy and her father develops while looking for cicadas.</li> <li>• Realistic fiction</li> </ul>
<b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b>
This reading passage would most likely engage both gender cultures.
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appeal of boyhood literacy components
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appeal of boyhood literacy components

*How does this 2007 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.2**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> A Koala Isn't A Bear  <b>Author:</b> Shirley Ramaley  <b>Evaluated by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #2</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Nonfiction Article</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Not specified, a koala bear</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One photograph</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One page and a half</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The genre of nonfiction</li> <li>• Photograph of a koala bear</li> <li>• Exciting title</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage would most likely engage the boy culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appeal of boyhood culture literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appeal of boyhood culture literacy components</p>

*How does this 2008 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.3**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> My Hand Was in the Cookie Jar  <b>Author:</b> Dave Crawley  <b>Evaluated by Assistant Principal #2</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Poetry</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Not Specific; possibly the grandma, female</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One Page</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspense</li> <li>• Kids like cookies. It is a subject that boys relate to.</li> <li>• Cookies having human qualities</li> <li>• Elements of fantasy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue</li> <li>• Elements of realism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage will most likely engage both gender cultures.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appeal of boyhood cultural literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appeal of boyhood literacy components</p>

***How does this 2008 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 5.4**

**SUMMARY**

<b>Title:</b> First In Line
<b>Author:</b> Gertrude Fass
<b>Evaluated by Fourth Grade Teacher #8</b>
<b>Genre:</b> Realistic Fiction
<b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Caroline, female
<b>Number of Illustrations:</b> Two small illustrations
<b>Length of Passage:</b> Two Pages
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b>
None
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A female lead character named Caroline</li> <li>• It deals with relationships between girls.</li> <li>• It is important for Caroline to sit near the teacher.</li> <li>• Realistic fiction</li> </ul>
<b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b>
This reading passage would most likely engage the girl culture.
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Not probable
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Not probable

*How does this 2009 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.5**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> Comets  <b>Author:</b> Franklyn M. Branley  <b>Evaluated by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #5</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Non Fiction</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> No Lead Character</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> Small Illustration</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One Page</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject: comets and outer space</li> <li>• Nonfiction</li> <li>• Illustration</li> <li>• A topic boys can relate to</li> <li>• Comets can be connected to popular culture.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This passage will most likely engage the boy culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

*How does this 2009 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.6**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> The Tortoise, the Hare, and the Penguin  <b>Author:</b> Tom Keating  <b>Evaluated by</b> 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #2</p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Fable</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Tortoise (Boy), Hare (girl) and Penguin (girl)</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One and a half pages</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead male character</li> <li>• Competition of a race</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Illustration</li> <li>• Element of suspense</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatable female characters</li> <li>• Supporting each other through teamwork</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage will most likely engage both gender cultures.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

*How does this 2007 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.7**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> Mystery Flats  <b>Author:</b> Rosalyn Hart Finch  <b>Evaluated by</b> 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #3</p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Mystery</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Ken, male</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One Page</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male lead character</li> <li>• Illustration</li> <li>• Mystery</li> <li>• Element of suspense</li> <li>• Ken acts like a detective and solves the mystery.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage will most likely engage the boy culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

*How does this 2007 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.8**

**SUMMARY**

<b>Title:</b> Busy Builders
<b>Author:</b> George Laycock
<b>Evaluated by Principal #1</b>
<b>Genre:</b> Nonfiction Article
<b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Beavers (gender not specified)
<b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One small photograph of a beaver
<b>Length of Passage:</b> One page and a quarter
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonfiction article involves action: beavers building a dam</li> <li>• Photograph of a beaver</li> <li>• The title has the word, “builders” as a part of it.</li> </ul>
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b>
None
<b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b>
This reading passage will most likely engage the boy culture.
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appealing boyhood literacy components
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appealing boyhood literacy components

***How does this 2008 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 5.9**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> Will My Toy Car Survive a Croc Attack?  <b>Author:</b> Brady Barr as told to Maggie Zackowitz  <b>Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #6</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Nonfiction Article</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Brady Barr, a scientist who studies crocodiles (male)</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> Two small photographs</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One and a half pages</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The subject is crocodiles.</li> <li>• The nonfiction article involves action and suspense.</li> <li>• The male lead character, a scientist named Brady Barr, uses the suggestions from children on how to catch crocodiles to study them.</li> <li>• The passage has two photographs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage will most likely engage the boy culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

*How does this 2008 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.10**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> A Spaghetti Tale  <b>Author:</b> Tedd Arnold  <b>Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #7</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Biographical Memoir</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> The author (Male)</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One illustration</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One page</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead male character</li> <li>• Elements of suspense, humor and silliness</li> <li>• Promotes male reading and writing</li> <li>• A detailed illustration</li> <li>• A big mess of spaghetti and meatballs transpires in the plot</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <p>There are realistic fiction components.</p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage will most likely engage both gender cultures.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

*How does this 2009 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.11**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title of Passage:</b> Lion at School  <b>Author:</b> Alexander McCall Smith  <b>Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #7</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Realistic Fiction</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Akimbo (male)</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One and three-quarters pages</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead male character</li> <li>• Suspense and excitement</li> <li>• Simba the lion cub causes trouble at the school.</li> <li>• Excitement in the classroom</li> <li>• Humorous story</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realistic fiction</li> <li>• The setting is school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage would most likely engage both gender cultures.</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

*How does this 2009 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Reading Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.12**

**SUMMARY**

<b>Title:</b> Frozen Bubbles
<b>Author:</b> Verlie Hutchens
<b>Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #6</b>
<b>Genre:</b> Nonfiction Article
<b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> None
<b>Number of Illustrations:</b> One
<b>Length of Passage:</b> One page
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the boy culture?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science Investigation: Description of a hands-on experiment that boys can do</li> <li>• Nonfiction article</li> <li>• Has a photograph</li> <li>• Real-life component</li> </ul>
<b>Which components help make this reading passage appealing to the girl culture?</b>
None
<b>Which gender(s) will this reading passage most likely engage?</b>
The reading passage will most likely engage the boy culture.
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appealing boyhood literacy components
<b>How does this reading passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appealing boyhood literacy components

***How does this 2007 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Listening Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 5.13**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title of Passage:</b> Hand-Me- Down Crayons  <b>Author:</b> Dori Hillestad Butler  <b>Evaluated by Principal #3</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Realistic Fiction</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Molly, female</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One and two-third pages</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a relatable girl lead character named Molly.</li> <li>• It is realistic fiction.</li> <li>• There is a significant amount of dialogue between characters.</li> <li>• Molly came up with an empowering solution for her old and broken crayons.</li> <li>• Molly was very proud of her new crayon creations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this listening passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This listening passage will most likely engage the girl culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Not probable</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Not probable</p>

***How does this 2008 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Listening Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 5.14**

**SUMMARY**

<b>Title:</b> The Voice of Rigo
<b>Author:</b> Leslie Hall
<b>Evaluated by</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher # 8
<b>Genre:</b> Realistic Fiction
<b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Rigo, boy
<b>Number of Illustrations:</b> None
<b>Length of Passage:</b> One and a quarter pages
<b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the boy culture?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lead character is a boy named Rigo.</li> <li>• Boys can relate to the situation of talking loudly at home and school.</li> <li>• Rigo gets reprimanded at school for talking loudly.</li> <li>• The principal encourages Rigo who has a loud voice to become an actor.</li> <li>• The genuine compliment by the principal enhances Rigo's self-esteem.</li> </ul>
<b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the girl culture?</b>
None
<b>Which gender(s) will this listening passage most likely engage?</b>
The listening passage will most likely engage the boy culture
<b>How does this listening passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appealing boyhood literacy components
<b>How does this listening passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b>
Appealing boyhood literacy components

*How does this 2009 Fourth Grade New York State Standardized Test Listening Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.15**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title of Passage:</b> The Bell That Knew the Truth, A Story from China  <b>Author:</b> Not mentioned  <b>Evaluated by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #1</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Mystery</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Judge Chen, Male</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One and a half page</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead male character</li> <li>• Mystery</li> <li>• Suspense of determining whether the suspect is guilty or not guilty of the robbery</li> <li>• The courtroom as the setting</li> <li>• A detailed description of a trial occurring in a courtroom</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <p>Elements of realistic fiction</p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this listening passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This reading passage will most likely engage the boy culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

***How does this 2007 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Listening Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?***

**TABLE 5.16**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> Lion Around: Close encounter with an upside-down cat  <b>Author:</b> Mattias Klum, as told to Catherine D. Hughes  <b>Evaluated by a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #3</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Memoir</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Photographer (male) and lioness (female)</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One Page</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involves suspense and adventure</li> <li>• Lead male character</li> <li>• Nonfiction elements</li> <li>• Lots of action</li> <li>• Risk taking</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <p>Poignant experience</p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this listening passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This listening passage will likely engage both gender cultures.</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

*How does this 2008 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Listening Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.17**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title:</b> The Courage of “Molly Pitcher”  <b>Author:</b> Karen S. Hopkins  <b>Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #4</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Biography Memoir</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Mary (Molly Pitcher) Female</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> Approximately one page</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <p>There is a battle-taking place during the Revolutionary War.</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatable lead female character, Mary</li> <li>• Emotional and Relational</li> <li>• A woman fighting in the Revolutionary War.</li> <li>• Mary became a heroine for her efforts being brave firing the cannon (She took her dead husband’s place in combat).</li> <li>• Mary demonstrated leadership skills in dire circumstances</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this listening passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This listening passage will most likely engage the girl culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Not probable except for a battle scene taking place</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Not probable except for a battle scene taking place</p>

*How does this 2009 Fifth Grade New York State Standardized Test Listening Passage support or oppose the boyhood culture?*

**TABLE 5.18**

**SUMMARY**

<p><b>Title of Passage:</b> Snorkeling for Bass  <b>Author:</b> Shaun Morey  <b>Evaluated by 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher #7</b></p>
<p><b>Genre:</b> Memoir</p>
<p><b>Gender of Lead Character:</b> Two brothers</p>
<p><b>Number of Illustrations:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Length of Passage:</b> One page and a half</p>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the boy culture?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two male lead characters</li> <li>• Subject: fishing</li> <li>• Adventure</li> <li>• Suspense</li> <li>• Action-packed story</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which components help make this listening passage appealing to the girl culture?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Which gender(s) will this listening passage most likely engage?</b></p> <p>This listening passage will most likely engage the boy culture.</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to narrow the achievement gap of struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>
<p><b>How does this listening passage attempt to engage struggling black and Latino boys?</b></p> <p>Appealing boyhood literacy components</p>

**IRB Approval**

I applied for IRB approval on August 21, 2009 and was granted it on September 2, 2009.

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