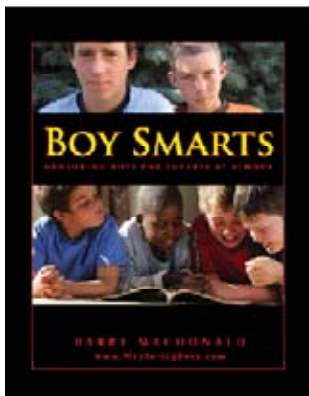




READING OPENS DOORS!



MORE IDEAS TO SUPPORT YOUNG BOY READERS...

Witnessing a child learning the pleasures of reading is a wonder to behold. Eyes brighten as words on a page create images, thoughts, and new narratives of possibility. Yet, while many children gravitate easily to reading, others—especially rambunctious and slower to develop boys—struggle with learning to read.

According to the 2010 **Kids and Family Reading Report**, parents of boys and girls value reading equally, but “Only 39 percent of boys say reading books for fun is extremely or very important versus 62 percent of girls.” This situation only gets worse as children move through school: “Reading enjoyment, importance, and frequency all decline with age, especially among boys.” How does a child who struggles with reading learn to sift, interpret, and evaluate all the data and images he will be exposed to in a lifetime? What does he miss out on if he cannot use imaginative literature to help him develop a sense of self—what the report refers to as a “reading and writing identity”? How does he build knowledge, vocabulary, and literacy confidence that extends well beyond school?

In this digital age, where floodtides of information keep pouring in at faster and faster rates, every child deserves an opportunity to develop strong reading skills in order to be successful. Reluctant and struggling readers will benefit immensely from early support and coaching to launch them along their reading paths.

This month's newsletter addresses questions from readers and offers additional suggestions to foster a love of literacy among boys.



PASSION-BASED LITERACY

"Learning to read in Kindergarten has been difficult for my son and my heart breaks when he says that reading is stupid. My husband says it was the same for him when he was a boy but that he became an avid reader once he caught on. Should I get some reading flashcards or sign my son up with a tutoring school this summer to help him learn to read? How can I help him shake his negative attitude?"

Monica, St. John's, NJ

Dear Monica — I don't suggest you begin any sort of formal reading instruction or tutoring this summer, as you don't want to communicate anxiety about reading. You don't have to worry about teaching him letters in an organized way. Just look for opportunities to make activities associated with language fun. Remember that motivation runs high when boys are passionate about what they are learning.

Provide plenty of engaging activities and be positive with any sign that he is drawn to explore books or reading. Ensure there are plenty of different kinds of reading material around the house—comics, picture books, how-to books (but don't hover over him if he picks something

up). Leave something on the computer screen that you think may captivate his attention. Remember that many boys are more likely to read comic books, baseball cards, and cereal boxes than storybooks. Make a special effort to borrow factual books from the library about space, dinosaurs, cars, trains, reptiles, sea creatures, insects, or how things work. Like girls, boys will flick pages and look at pictures for ages when they are motivated. If he is open, you can invite him to listen to you read aloud. Sit with your son and selectively draw attention to words that seem to impress him. Observe how he engages with text and visual images. Be careful to avoid jumping in too early to direct or to help him. Let yourself be curious to see what attracts his curiosity.

Instead of imposing drills or flashcards this summer that could make him link reading with drudgery, support his natural inquisitiveness through play. Perhaps you could introduce him to learning a new physical skill or a sport. Maybe you could both collaborate on a project such as baking cookies, building a birdhouse or a model car, creating a family photo calendar, or conducting a simple science experiment like building a tornado tower—the internet is a great help here with ideas. Boys his age are often curious about backyard bugs. A great website that will support an investigation of bugs—and might even have you both starting a small ant colony—is at www.childrens-books-and-reading.com/bugs-for-kids.html.

As you follow his interests and explorations, look for ways to remind him that he is a wonderful learner, keeping in mind that showing interest and enthusiasm is usually better reinforcement than praise.

Also observe how he approaches struggles that emerge along the way. Is he excessively hard on himself or overly perfectionistic when the going gets tough? Consider that it may also be difficult for your son to see the progress he has made as a new reader over the past year. Show empathy for his struggle and look for gentle ways to remind him that learning any new skill takes practice. While learning to read is currently a challenge for him, acknowledge that everyone has challenges in life, and that he will get there in good time. Learning how to reframe disappointments into something positive is a process and a practice.

LEARNING TO READ WEBSITES YOUR SON WILL ENJOY

“Despite my best efforts to introduce my four year old son to a variety of books, he gravitates to the computer screen like it’s an extension of his own body. Can you suggest some literacy websites that will engage him AND also help him develop his reading skills?”

Sarah, Calgary



Dear Sarah — Digital media are here to stay. Given that 80% of video game players are male, it is likely that your son’s attraction to these new media will only increase. In addition to playing video games, he may, like many other kids, be spending hours and hours with digital media each week, listening to music and watching TV shows and movies through video streaming websites. He will be text messaging, updating his social media profile, contributing to online discussion boards. A 2011 **Commonsense Media** report entitled **Zero to Eight: Children’s Media Use in America** states that the average five-to-eight year old American child spends close to three hours a day with screen media, including television—with 24 minutes each day spent on a computer.

While at first glance these new media may appear to threaten literacy traditions that many adults cherish, it is also possible to argue that these literacies have enabled greater connections not only in our personal and friendship circles, but also in larger school, work, and civic spaces.

While nothing can replace the face-to-face loving interaction between you and your son to cultivate reading readiness, many interactive websites can supplement and enhance your son’s early learning. Here are five websites that will keep young boys smiling as they learn to read:

- + **Starfall** at www.starfall.com engages early learners in basic phonics lessons that are highly visual and fun. Starfall has developed a second website, **more.starfall.com**, that features K—Grade 2 math, a talking library, and songs, rhymes and phonics for all ages.
- + **Learning Games for Kids** at www.learninggamesforkids.com offers dozens of fun online games that help children learn important skills.
- + **Peep and the Big Wide World** at www.peepandthebigwideworld.com introduces science activities through online adventures that are highly engaging for young learners.
- + **Sesame Street** at www.sesamestreet.org hosts many learning games, videos, and familiar characters that young learners will love to connect with as they learn basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- + **PBS Kids** at www.pbskids.org has lots of games for your preschooler to explore based on literary characters like Curious George and the Berenstain Bears.



BOY SMARTS ACTION TALK

Because it's
better to
build boys
than to
mend men!

St. John's, Sept 15
Calgary, Oct 13

Edmonton, Sept 29
Maple Ridge, Oct 27

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HOW TO READ ENTHUSIASTICALLY

“Each night my 5 year old son picks his outgoing father to read to him over me. I love listening to their story time antics and I want to learn how to read aloud as enthusiastically as my husband does. Can you suggest ways that a less than outgoing mom might join in their bedtime hilarity?”

Jessica, Toronto

Dear Jessica — Don't be afraid to ham it up! See the following link featuring tips by award-winning children's author Mem Fox for 24 suggestions to read aloud that employs your eyes, your body, and your voice, including rhythm and pauses, to full effect: www.memfox.com/reading-magic-and-do-it-like-this#



12 GREAT STRATEGIES
TO GET BOYS WRITING

**BOYS CAN
WRITE!**

SURREY, BC

PD DAY OCTOBER 19, 2012

DETAILS ON WEBSITE

HUB WEBSITE RESOURCES

“Your June newsletter about getting young boys to read really got my husband and I talking (thank you!) about how we can work together to support our children's literacy needs. Can you suggest some websites here in BC that will connect us to local literacy resources?”

Devendra, Prince George

Dear Devendra — There are several BC websites that offer high caliber support for parents who want to support literacy in their home. Here are four outstanding ones that will keep you busy learning about how to help your son develop a lifelong love of literacy:

♦ **ReadNowBC** at www.readnowbc.ca promotes literacy among early learners, school-aged learners, and adults too. The “Early Learners” section of the website includes an on-line DVD titled “Reading for Families: Helping Your Child with Reading at Home” and offers easy and fun ideas on how to fit reading and literacy activities into busy days.

♦ **StrongStartBC** at bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strong-start_bc offers school-based early learning services for adults and their young children, aged birth to five, at no cost to families. During weekday mornings caregivers drop in with their early learner to play and learn together through storytelling, conversations, and games.

♦ **Ready, Set, Learn** at bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/rsl/ offers literacy events to families and their 3 year olds to engage in play-based early learning activities while caregivers find out about the early learning programs and services offered by the local school district and/or school. The parent booklet entitled **Ready, Set, Learn** is available online as a free PDF document.

♦ **Decoda Literacy Solutions** at decoda.ca is a new BC provincial literacy organization that operates as a literacy hub supporting programs across the province such as **PALS** (Parents as Literacy Supporters), **LEAP BC**, Family Literacy Certificate Program, and Family Literacy Day. Their website also offers over 170 free online resources.

REAL MEN READ!



“When I read that study after study reveals how boys read less than girls (even that boys read a grade and a half lower than girls), and that 90% of young people in our prison system are young men who are mostly illiterate, I worry for the future of many boys. I’d like to start up a project in my school that gets men to read to boys so they will learn that reading is a masculine activity. Any suggestions?”

Therese, Montreal

Dear Therese — Many community leaders are concerned about the emerging trend for boys to increasingly underachieve at school. Manitoba Justice Murray Sinclair, the appointed Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and a judge for almost 25 years, estimates that 75% of the offenders who appear in Canada’s courts are functionally illiterate. Crime prevention advocates point to literacy as the single most effective way to prevent crime, and like you, they also acknowledge that boys need male role models to help them understand that literacy is for everyone.

While your question inspires reflection about the varied ways that literacy can be encouraged among boys, I have to admit that it really is a great topic to address more comprehensively. Perhaps I will explore this idea in a future newsletter—thank you! Meanwhile a recent literacy project that I was involved with in Ontario might be of interest to you and serve to kindle how your school might draw boys to reading.

Bryan Cinti, the school principal at St. Teresa School in Kitchener believes that we need to challenge men to be more open about their reading, to read in public, and to share their reading with boys. He notes that while women openly share their love of reading, often gathering at book clubs to exchange favourite books with each other, men are much less likely to celebrate the place of reading in their lives. Bryan wants to change this cultural attitude by inviting everyday men into the school to read to students and discuss how books can introduce readers to different worlds and dimensions.

Passionate about helping all students learn, Bryan assembles like-minded men from varied backgrounds to read to students during **Real Men Read Week**. He manages to get a range of men of different ages and backgrounds—grandfathers, uncles, fathers, neighbours, firefighters, nurses, police officers, clerks, tradesmen, authors, illustrators, pastors, school trustees, administrators, and coaches. This year he was particularly proud to have the Mayor of Kitchener, 12 Year CFL Veteran Jeff Johnson, and author and Chef Ted Reader address students.



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Understanding that boys, in subtle and not so subtle ways, are encouraged to think that their job is to learn how to get things done in a world filled with rules and tools, Bryan invites men to read from how-to manuals and practical guidebooks. While all children loved to hear Chef Ted Reader elaborate on how to make the best burger, boys especially were captivated by the chef's instructions about how to stack a very tall burger.

Bryan says, "Hook boys into reading about something they like, such as food or a sport, and they will broaden their choices in time. I am so pleased that men from our community are helping our boys open countless doors by reading to them."

Thank you, Bryan. I couldn't agree more!

READING BY FLASHLIGHT



"Barry, I don't have a question so much as a very short story about something you inspired me to do at your Boy Smarts workshop. After trying everything I could think of to get my boy reading more, I paid special attention to his comment when he noticed a light shining beneath his younger sister's bedroom door one evening. "Why does she get to stay up past her bedtime?" he asked. I explained that his sister was reading her books in bed and that the bedtime curfew is extended for those who are reading. He immediately asked if he could do the same and now he is reading in bed for hours."

Susan, Maple Ridge

Dear Susan — Thank you for your story. If we want to transform boys into lifelong readers, we need to discover what motivates them to read.



Available on Amazon.ca

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OUTSTANDING PRESCHOOL INDICATORS

“Being a parent of two very active young boys keeps me so busy that I hardly have time for much else, let alone researching how I might support more literacy in my home. It is for this reason that I look forward to your monthly newsletters about boys. Today, I am emailing you because I am unhappy with the pre-school my oldest boy goes to and would like your suggestions as to what I might look for when I select a new preschool for him.”

Tami, Winnipeg

Dear Tami — As it turns out, The National Association of School Psychologists has already answered your question and published their results. Here are 10 qualities of a great preschool that I fully endorse:

- 1—Children are mainly active in the classroom; that is, playing and/or working with other children or materials.
- 2—Children have access to various hands-on materials and activities.
- 3—Children receive individual and small-group time with the teachers, and not solely large-group time.
- 4—Children’s work is displayed in the classroom.
- 5—Children learn numbers and the alphabet throughout the entire day; that is, their learning of these constructs is embedded into everyday activities.
- 6—Children are given at least an hour to play and explore with little worksheet use.
- 7—Children are provided a daily opportunity to play outside.
- 8—Children are read to by teachers, individually, and in small-groups.
- 9—Children receive curriculum to match their individual needs.
- 10—Children and parents are excited about the preschool; that is, children are happy and do not regularly cry or complain.



BOOK FAIRY & ARMY OF BOOK ELVES GET BOOKS TO KIDS

“Everyone should have access to books,” says Dawn Edwards, a mother and former Kindergarten teacher who started a reading revolution in her BC community in 2008 when she couldn’t find a place to donate the books her children had outgrown. Instead of letting them sit on the shelf collecting dust, she decided to start the **Little Readers Book Club**. In the first year she distributed about 100 books, most of them from her home. With passion and determination to back it, Dawn’s brilliant idea quickly grew. She inspired a team of volunteers—mothers, grandmothers, and retired teachers—to collect donations of used children’s books and redistribute them to children on a monthly basis. By 2011 about 28,000 books were redistributed to just over 1600 children. Dawn Edwards—children call her the **Book Fairy**—and her small army of 64 volunteers—the **Book Elves**—even went so far as to ensure that each child who joined the reading club received an additional specially gift-wrapped book in their birthday month.

The **Little Readers Book Club** also distributed a monthly newsletter to caregivers of club members that highlight literacy tips, books, websites, ideas to get kids cooking, and the words to popular **fingerplays**. Dawn believes



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that fingerplays are a powerful bonding device that increase a child’s attention span while also developing small muscle coordination, listening skills, self-expression, and articulation. She encourages parents of a young child to visit YouthLiterature.com (click on Songs and Fingerplays) to access over 200 fingerplays. If you have limited experience with fingerplays, also visit the Reading is Fundamental website at rif.org/kids/leadingtoreading/en/preschoolers/play.htm for short video clips that will teach you the lyrics and movements. Here is

a popular fingerplay from **Little Readers Book Club** for you to enjoy immediately with young children:



Five Little Fishies

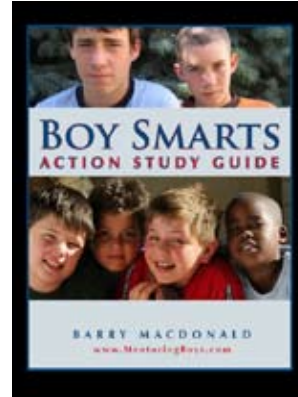
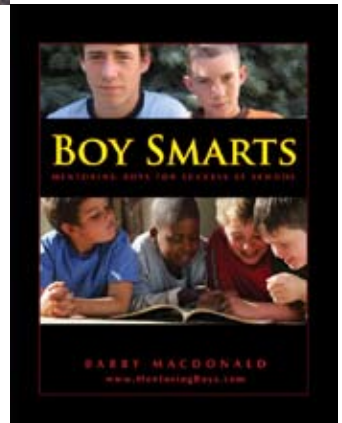
Five little fishies, swimming in a pool
 (Wiggle five fingers)
 The first one said, “The pool is cool.”
 (Show one finger, then wrap arms around body)
 The second one said, “The pool is deep.”
 (Show two fingers, then hands measure ‘deep’)
 The third one said, “I want to sleep.”
 (Show three fingers, then rest head on hands)
 The fourth one said, “Let’s take a dip.”
 (Show four fingers, then hands ‘dive’ into water)
 The fifth one said, “I spy a ship.”
 (Show five fingers, then form scope with hands to peer through)
 Fisher boat comes,
 (Form ‘V’ with fingers, then move hands away from body)
 Line goes kersplash
 (Pretend to throw fishing line)
 Away the five little fishies dash
 (Wiggle five fingers away)



*SUMMER
 B O O K
 S P E C I A L*

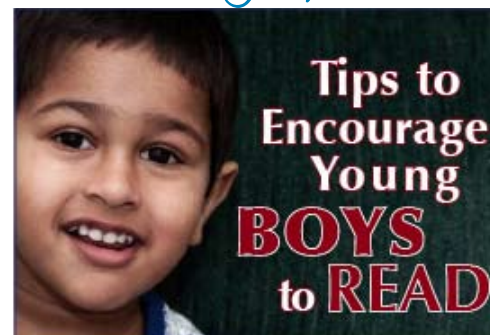
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BORN TO LEARN



All children are born learning.

In their short first year of life, young brains more than double in size as 100 billion neurons connect within networks to become 90 percent of their eventual adult weight in just three years.

While some neurons are programmed for specific tasks like breathing and heartbeat, most are not yet designated and are waiting for experiences in the environment to determine their purpose. This growth of neural connections is supported through the sensory experiences of seeing, smelling, touching, and especially tasting.

During these early years there are so many interrelated influences that contribute to what and how children will learn. While a boy's early ease with tossing a ball might be prompted by his developmental readiness, his skill and interest grow with encouragement from a loving mentor. The same holds true for learning how to read, reading to learn, and eventually reading for lifelong pleasure.

If you are fortunate enough to find a more relaxed pace this summer, it should be an especially great time to let literacy sparkle in your home. Keep in mind the famous words of Dr. Seuss: "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

It is questions that drive the quest. If we want learning adventures for ourselves and our children, we must create conditions that enable curiosity to bloom. ■ ■ ■

Barry MacDonald

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MACDONALD
TO YOUR
COMMUNITY!**

**HOST A
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TALK
SATURDAY
WORKSHOP!**



WE ARE CURRENTLY SETTING UP WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS FOR 2013 AND WELCOME YOUR INVITATION.

FOR DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT
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The intention of encouraging a more positive focus on boys' strengths and their varied needs in our homes, schools and communities.

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