

Struggling male readers respond better to female teachers

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Boys with difficulty reading actually respond better to female teachers, according to a new Canadian study. Research shows that boys develop higher positive self-perceptions as readers when they worked with female research assistants compared to working with male research assistants.

The study focused on 175 third- and fourth-grade boys who were identified as struggling readers by their teachers. The boys participated in a 10-week reading intervention to determine the effect of the reading teacher's gender on boys' reading performance, self-perception as readers, and view of reading as a masculine, feminine or gender-neutral activity.

“As competent reading is the strongest predictor of school success, it's crucial to find ways to engage boys to become stronger readers,” says University of Alberta professor Herb Katz. “Although boys and girls enter kindergarten with similar performance in reading, by the spring of third grade, boys have lower reading scores, which makes this an opportune time for reading intervention.”

Over the 10-week period, the research assistants visited children at school to conduct 30-minute reading sessions, reading books that hold high interest for boys. The process included duet reading during which student and tutor read simultaneously and solo reading in which the student read independently.

“From this we can conclude that the drop in the number of male teachers, especially in elementary schools, is not the reason why boys are underachieving in reading,” says Katz. “Therefore, the strategic hiring of male teachers as a way to address boys’ poor reading scores may be naïve.”

Source: University of Alberta

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