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We Suggest

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WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Austin, D., Clark, V., and Fitchett, G.

Reading Rights For Boys

New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971. Pp. x +117

Education that is active, exploratory, problem-solving, adventurous, and aggressive has been talked about for a long time, but little has been done. A current interest in providing equality of educational opportunity for boys and girls has revived the talk and hopefully will result in action.

The mounting evidence of the disproportionate number of boys who are disabled readers, maladjusted, low achievers, delinquent, inattentive and rebellious reinforces and undergirds the urgent need for educational reform in the direction of equal opportunity for boys and girls.

These quotations from the foreword of *Reading Rights For Boys* set the frame of reference for this timely volume. In the book three concerned teachers show results of their study, experience, and exploration on the subject of boy-school conflict and failure in reading and language development.

In the first chapter, Austin, Clark, and Fitchett examine the discriminating character of the American school as a learning environment for boys. They cite contributing factors, such as differences in societal expectations, early verbal foundations, reading and language interests, and flexibility in masculine and feminine environments. They do not propose authoritative, final answers; but, they do follow this discussion of these factors with relevant questions concerning implications for instruction. These may well serve as foundation for further study and formulation for programs to alleviate the discriminating character of classroom reading and language instruction.

In subsequent chapters, the authors proceed in a similar format, discussing the following areas:

- Chapter 2: The learning process and the perceptual differences between boys and girls
- Chapter 3: Specific differences in language development between boys and girls
- Chapter 4: Imposed language standards and the male image
- Chapter 5: Masculine curriculum and the place of the male model
- Chapter 6: Programs of instruction considerate of sex differences
- Chapter 7: Continuous assessment techniques considerate of sex differences.

Delineation of appropriate concerns in each area, explanation of educational theories, and description of current classroom practices, in each case, precede implications for an instructional program. Generally, these implications are stated somewhat tentatively, guaranteeing no immediate, easy answers, or comfortable, quick cures.

The final chapter, "Review of critical factors in a program of language development," is a clear summary of understandings basic to the major premises of the text. It serves to clarify concepts related to implementation of instructional programs which recognize the need for a male learning environment.

Students, teachers, and administrators who read and study this book will be aware that it is based upon sound, educational, linguistic theories, and upon scientific knowledge from related fields such as psychology, human development, and the social sciences. Wisely, the three teacher-authors have refrained from viewing the problem simplistically, or authoritatively. Quite probably, their positive inferences and suggestions will evoke further exploration, experimentation, and action research encouraging improved learning for children and educators alike.

Much is being spoken and heard, written and read, about "rights" these days. For many, the struggle to secure and maintain rights for themselves, and others, has become a way of life. Each concerned educator has a private battle of his own to wage for rights for teachers and learners as human beings. It seems worthwhile, indeed, encouraging, to note that many leaders and writers are actively involved in prodding a professional/public conscience to an awareness that disregarding or diminishing rights of *any* segment of society, in some measure diminishes and disables society itself.