



# TLA Stage 3 Presentation Tabitha

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## Gender Equality planning document

<p><b>Name</b> Tabitha</p>	<p><b>Completing the collaborative coaching activity</b></p> <p>In a group of three decide who is going to take on each of the following roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Respondent:</b> talk and respond to questions about how you might answer your enquiry question using the TLA 6 core dimensions</li> <li>• <b>Questioner:</b> guide the learning conversation using the core dimensions, try to draw out from the respondent specifics on how he/she might develop his/her project</li> <li>• <b>Scribe:</b> record the learning conversation</li> </ul> <p>Once complete, change roles and begin the process again</p>
<p>Your enquiry question:</p> <p>Raising boys' attainment in literacy.</p> <p>To what extent does young children's play reflect preferred learning styles?</p> <p>What is the impact upon learning outcomes for boys and girls?</p>	

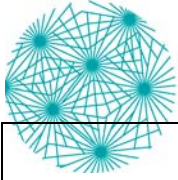
Core Dimensions	Your responses and ideas	Core Dimensions	Your responses and ideas
<p><b>Planning your learning</b></p> <p>Consider your enquiry question and what you will undertake to answer it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What outcomes are you hoping for?</li> <li>• What are the success criteria?</li> <li>• What are the timescales for completing this work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To investigate the differences in learning outcomes for boys and girls in literacy</li> <li>➤ Improve learning outcomes for boys in literacy</li> <li>➤ Understand the differences in learning outcomes for boys and girls</li> <li>➤ Find strategies to address gender differences in learning outcomes in literacy for boys and girls.</li> </ul> <p>Success criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear understanding about different learning styles</li> <li>• A better understanding about possible reasons why boys are underachieving in literacy</li> <li>• Strategies to address underachievement of boys in literacy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Carrying out your plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you actually have to do?</li> <li>• When and how will you review progress?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out about gender related achievement data</li> <li>• Find out about what research already exists to address gender related achievement differences</li> <li>• What is the impact of nature vs nurture on gender</li> <li>• What do we know about different learning styles?</li> <li>• Observe children's play and talk in foundation stage and relate this to what we know about the link between learning and play</li> <li>• Observe different types of play and talk</li> <li>• Record over time and look for patterns-what is it telling me</li> </ul>



## My Learning Journey- 1

### Raising Boys attainment in Literacy - Gender equality in literacy at Key Stage 1

March 2008	Observation undertaken in Foundation stage Reception class- in speaking and listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ noticed boys and girls made different choices about play activities and in patterns of speaking and listening</li><li>➤ noticed that mainly boys and hardly any girls played in construction area</li><li>➤ Noticed that boys play involved lots of imaginative play and talk related to this in construction area</li><li>➤ Noticed that most girls chose to play at table activities e.g. colouring, drawing writing and spoke very little</li><li>➤ Noticed that both boys and girls used the computer from choice but that girls play was largely non verbal whilst boys were more vociferous and louder.</li><li>➤ Wondered why? Wondered if this related to prefer learning styles</li><li>➤ Wondered whether this meant boys and girls should be encouraged to undertake different play from these choices</li><li>➤ Wondered whether these choices advantaged or disadvantage their respective learning outcomes. Decided to undertake further observations</li></ul>
April 2008	Attended seminar at DCSF found out that national picture reflected boys under-attainment in literacy. This raised the following questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What are the gender gaps between boys and girls attainment in literacy?</li><li>2. Evaluation of strategies already used</li><li>3. Recommendations by researchers</li></ol> Found out that Nationally in 2007:	Wondered: This is an analysis of several other pieces of research. How far does this synthesis of several pieces of research reflect outcomes in my own school?



Science:  
Whilst there are small gaps et end of KS2 in science

And maths in Literacy girls attain 10% higher than boys nationally in literacy at end of KS2

- Gender gap in English. 68% girls and 53% boys achieve A-C grade in GCSE.
- **Girls achieve more in Literacy**
- **Link between boys achievement in Literacy and boys achievements in other subjects.**
- **Gender gap greatest in writing**

**increases as children get older**

- **Maths L4 2007** Boys slightly over girls but generally close
- Very little gender difference.

Although at GCSE A-C small differences in gender in Maths and Science, however more boys study Maths at higher degree level.

End of KS1 and end of KS2

Nationally DCSF:

Looked at variables:

**1. FSM: as indicator of social class**

There is greater gap between FSM boys and non FSM boys and Between non FSM girls and FSM girls than between boys and girls.

There are some girls under-performing in literacy. Poverty is biggest indicator in performance

**2. Ethnicity:**

Poverty gap is not true for all minority groups

**Differences in achievement -Gender gap is small in relation to social class and ethnicity**

Strategies tried?

**Accentuating perceived differences**

- Seeing different genders as homogenised-plays to differences eg single sex classes-mixed results trends-impact on girls positive
- teacher using gender exacerbates differences

Wondered to what extent this was reflected in outcomes in the school  
What does data for foundation stage say?



### **Using girls as a resources**

e.g. boy girl seating-disadvantages girls-self fulfilling prophecy

#### **Increased numbers of mentors / male teachers**

- Social role theories to impact on identity. Identity very complex involves ethnicity, age and social class-social class biggest indicator)
- Diversity of teaching styles within gender, practice varies-resentment of female teachers

#### **Boy friendly materials**

e.g. curriculum materials- boys football clubs exacerbates differences and feeds into stereotypes, marginalises

- some boys and girls who don't fit stereotype and send wrong message.
- exacerbates laddish construction of masculinity-contributes to notion that learning is not for boys
- Schools and studying seen as feminised

#### **Teaching to gendered learning styles**

- No clear evidence of preferred learning styles between boys and girls
- Exacerbates stereotypes rather than learning

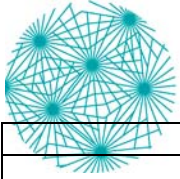
#### **Excellent Practice :**

**Met cognitive- learning to learn-does not narrow gender gap** as it raises achievement of girls and boys but **is not poor teaching.**

#### **What works well...?**

##### **The need to deconstruct gender constructions in schools:**

- high expectations of girls and boys achievement
- whole staff approach HT and Govs
- Need for social justice approach
- **Work that reduces constructions of gender differences are most**



	<b>effective</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Consistent high expectations of boys and girls irrespective of gender</b></li><li>• <b>The need to deconstruct gender- pupils construction of reality is root of gender gap</b></li></ul>	



## My Learning Journey Part 2: Analysis of observations of children in Y1-Peter a reluctant writer boy and Fiona a reluctant writer girl.

### Analysis of observations of children in Y1 - reluctant writers, Peter and Fiona.

Peter	<p>I chose Peter as he was an example of a boy that was a reluctant writer in Foundation stage and I was interested in how his literacy generally and writing specifically would develop in Y1.</p> <p>Also I was aware that as a White British boy he was in a high risk group for under achieving in writing.</p> <p>Whilst in the Foundation stage he often took himself outside of the classroom into the toilets to play in water and flood the toilets, and so was often in trouble and getting told off.</p> <p>At just 5 in September, he is the youngest in the class. His birthday was 29<sup>th</sup> August.</p>
Fiona	<p>Fiona interested me because as a child in Foundation Stage she was a reluctant writer, she also was a girl who's play bucked the gender specific choices of other more passive girls. Her play also includes the largely interactive play that boys engage in-involving a lot of talk and "boisterous behaviour" Interestingly though she often used the construction materials in non gender specific ways e.g. used bricks as a microphone to sing into and dance playing x factor rather than building as the boys did.</p> <p>Fiona was a strong personality, confident with peers and a natural leader. Other girls followed and wanted to be led by her.</p> <p>Her mum is a teacher who was concerned about her reluctance and often refusal to write in Foundation stage.</p> <p>Fiona left the school in January 2009 as she had moved house.</p> <p>Wendy is an EAL child who started in Foundation stage mid year with no English. She has grown in confidence and now speaks constantly in English and Polish by beginning of school year in September. Even offering to translate for new Polish children who started without English. She has a very strong personality and quite bossy often telling off other children who she sees breaking school rules or not doing as they are told. She will always inform the teacher if she sees this. Plays with Fiona. Often chooses to play in</p>



	<p>construction area and is vociferous. Made huge progress in speaking of English in Foundation stage.</p> <p>Wendy's best friend is Fiona who leaves the school half way through Spring term in January 09. The weeks after Fiona's last day Wendy is absent.</p>
<p>Observations took place from Autumn Term November 08 -February 09- Spring a term and a half.</p> <p>I teach the class on day a week and sometimes less if I am asked to teach another class.</p>	<p>I was interested in analysing not only what these children wrote but their attitude to the writing tasks set by their teacher and what writing they undertook when self generated. The quality and quantity of both forms of writing.</p>
<p>11.11.08 Fiona</p> <p>11.30 am Fiona. has white board and is playing teacher she holds the white board standing in front of friends (mixed boys and girls) - Pierre; Courtney; Susan and tells them "write the word she" They do so on their white board.</p> <p>The children had earlier been taught about he and she in a phonics lesson, and had made a small book "He we or she book".</p> <p>She also chooses to do a "Yes or No Book"</p>	<p>Analysis:</p> <p>Fiona is practicing her sounds and phonic knowledge. Her play is directly related to her learning and is an opportunity for her be in control of the learning. She comfortably takes the teacher role and is showing her confident knowledge of the phonics. This reinforces the importance of providing opportunities for children to play at this age and the role of the teacher in modelling writing behaviour.</p> <p>Later same day at 2pm Fiona is playing teachers and writing with her friends girls Wendy ( Polish/Nigerian); Sally (African Carribean) and Rebecca (Jamaican)</p>
<p>11.11.08 Peter:</p> <p>Peter is playing with the magnetic alphabets on the white board arranging them in order.</p>	<p>Self generated play- again reinforcing and practicing writing knowledge that has been taught formally by class teacher.</p> <p>Also makes up his own words (children have been taught this recently in phonics lesson)</p>
	<p>I observed that Peter and Fiona both write during opportunities to choose. That their general reluctance to write is not manifested when they are able to write on their own terms. I.e. they chose what to write. But that they draw upon learning that has taken place with their teacher and largely through imaginative play.</p> <p>The importance of providing play opportunities for this age group and those who are reluctant to write in non threatening context and to allow them to have some control</p>



	over what they are writing is obvious.
Professional discussion with Y1 class teacher about observations.	Following a discussion with the year 1 teacher, we both felt that the role play area afforded EAL children and those less confident in literacy skills a safe opportunity to practice their speaking skills. This is supported by the evidence of Wendy's behaviour and progress.

<p>28.11.08 Peter Literacy lesson –has handwriting sheet practicing “ai” and “ee” sounds.</p> <p>Very reluctant to complete the sheet but asks ‘Can I leave some’ says that he wants to write numbers on the class white board then asks for large sheet of paper. When given large sugar paper starts to write number 1-100. Requests if he can have a friend to help him. Choose Ali Asian heritage child for whom English is an additional language (EAL)</p> <p>Later goes back to number sheet allowing other children (boys) to join in writing numbers on his sheet. Ashley (African Caribbean) and Sharrafadin (Asian)</p>	<p>Noticed that Peter will choose to write if allowed to choose the subject. If task is too challenging to manage alone, will chose to work with a child whose knowledge is greater than his own - In this case Ali.</p> <p>He enjoys rehearsing and recording numbers 1-100 although he is not confident once past the teens.</p>
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<p>28.11.08 Fiona completes writing sheet as requested and then continues to write by choosing to play in the writing area.</p>	
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<p>2.12.08 Fiona</p>	<p>Fiona absent</p>
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<p>2.12.08. Peter Phonic sound work on the carpet. “oo” sounds. Makes an oo book with confidence. comes to me for spellings kangaroo writes lion independently ‘liyon’</p> <p>Undertakes writing test-phonics. Good phonic knowledge.</p> <p>Focus group for reading. Small</p>	<p>Recognises g in Mego's name. Eager to stop “can I go now” however after asks me if he can read to me. Brings a phonic book “oo” reads with enthusiasm -using good prediction skills. Confidently uses phonics with unfamiliar words.</p> <p>Later when I am working with a focus group comes and stand beside me writing. Gets a chair and sits beside me to write. Peter is aware that I am interested in him as a writer! This appears to have a positive effect.</p>
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<p>group of 4. Peter reads with enthusiasm.-uses phonic cues to decode words. Listens to other children reading, shares.</p>	
<p>8.12.08 Fiona: During choosing time wrote a letter to mum and dad. Wrote on envelope complete with a self designed stamp.</p>	<p>I have observed that Fiona often chooses to write about subjects that are important to her-usually her family, parents or her mum and her grandmother. When she chooses writing as an activity.</p> <p>8.1.09 Chooses to work on writing table and writes with a partner-her friend Wendy To mum "I love You" Draws flowers and picture of a smiling mum.</p>
<p>8.12.08 Peter: At choosing time chooses to work at table games on an addition puzzle, alone. Move pieces around the board whilst counting.</p>	<p>I noticed that Peter often chooses a literacy activity related to numbers and rehearses numeric skills.</p>
<p>9.12.08 Peter: Carpet activity on phonics is confident, put up hand to answer and completes follow-up task quickly.</p>	<p>Will often show that he is eager to complete set literacy task and yet choose to undertake a writing activity given a choice.</p> <p>Later during choosing time he uses a white board ( this appears to be his favourite chosen medium rather than paper. and asks if he can "borrow Mrs Hudsons big pen" he sits for a while and then says "car" Peter writes c r q then a cA r i2 crAsid ( a car is crashing)</p>
<p>SPRING TERM 2009</p>	<p>I notice that there has been a change in Peter's behaviour and attitude to learning since he has returned from the Christmas holidays. He is less responsive in lessons. Finds it difficult to settle at any task and will more often disrupt the learning of other children. Preferring to tidy up than engage at activities. As I am also often working in different classes through January to February, I am unsure if this is out of character or usual. I attempt to engage in conversation with him about this change, he is not forthcoming.</p>
<p>16.1.09</p> <p>23.1.09</p>	<p>Peter is reluctant to take part in the literacy task and chooses to play in the construction area next door. Later at home time after the children have gone I see that Peter has written me a note and left it on both teachers' desks. He has written two copies on white boards, one left on each of his teacher's desks. This was a message he definitely did not want me to miss:</p> <p>"I feel bad bcosto everee Boddy I am" ( (I feel bad because to everybody I am)</p> <p>" I feel bAd cos Um bad from Peter</p> <p>"To Miss Nice Peter is bAd From Pete" he also records his numbers on paper.</p> <p>I am aware of two things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peters writing is heartfelt. he wants to communicate</li> </ul>



	<p>to me something important to him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peter is feeling bad about himself</li><li>• Peter wants me to do something about it.</li></ul> <p>I show his class teacher who shares my concern about his poor self esteem and behaviour. We decide to booster his self esteem and find ways to praise him. The next week Peter is chosen as star of the week. I am convinced that he is not a reluctant writer, however, rather that he is reluctant to undertake the writing as it has been defined for him. When encouraged to choose what and when he writes he has no difficulty turning to writing to express himself.</p>
Fiona 8.1.09	<p>At choosing time, chooses writing area. Sits with her friend Wendy. Draws picture and writes "To mum I love you. from F....."</p> <p>Draws flowers and a picture of her mum The flower is for her mum. Correct use of capitals at start of sentence. Correct use of capital letter for I.</p> <p>Moves away from writing area and then back before going into the role play area.</p> <p>When she is given the option to choose. She chooses to write about things that are significant to her.</p>
	<p>Children should be given the freedom to write what is important to them. Boys should be given opportunities to write what they choose to.</p> <p>The importance of teachers modelling writing behaviours. That writing can provide children a vehicle to express emotions that they feel unable to express in spoken words.</p> <p>The importance of boys having positive self esteem if they are to succeed.</p>
January 2009	<p>Fiona has transferred to a church school, which I have heard she enjoys but has only one complaint- they do not do any choosing. Given her expression of her writing skills at this time I would be interested in knowing if this has affected her motivation for writing at her new school.</p>



## Learning breakthrough

My aim when I started this study was to find out practical ways of raising boy's attainment in literacy in order to help close the gap between boy's and girl's attainment in literacy.

Researching the topic of boys attainment and some of the reasons for their underachievement in literacy has led me to discover the importance of early socialisation in gender roles before children even get to school, attitudes that influence children's view of themselves with regard to gender roles and how this impacts upon their willingness to engage in certain subjects or think of themselves in non-stereotyped roles. I further discovered that these choices, later influence subject choices and can dictate career choices along gender lines. (Social role theories to impact on identity)

..."much of our gender identity is socially constructed and schools have an important part to play in encouraging young people to widen rather than restrict their horizons." Kate Myers 2007. *Gender Watch. Still Watching.*

I also found out that for many years girls attainment was lagging behind boys and that a lot of the educational policy strategies introduced to raise the attainment of girls has been successful, evidenced by the steady rise in girls attainment.

On reflection, it would seem to follow logically, that to raise the attainment of boys; a similar strategic intervention through educational policy could be equally effective. Strategies such as for example, the introduction of a boy friendly curriculum, stories and reading materials which appeal to boys such as adventure stories ; more male role models in the form of more male teachers, might impact positively on boys attainment.

My learning breakthrough came when I discovered that despite the changes in girls attainment over the past 20 years, and the improvement in end of key stage attainment figures at all of the key stages also in GCSE grades for girls, despite the fact that girls are doing so much better academically and have higher standards of educational outcomes, outside of the school environment in wider society women are still lagging behind male peers with regard to employment opportunities and access to promotion.

This has caused me to completely rethink. I now believe that it is important that any strategy to improve the educational outcomes of boys in the short-term must not be at the expense of girls and ultimately women in the real world.

I also discovered that nationally there is a greater gap between boys who receive free school meals (as an indicator of social class) and those who do not receive free school meals and between girls who have free school meals and girls who do not have free school meals. Equally I found out that ethnicity is a factor influencing outcomes.

This has led me to consider what would be the strategies and interventions that will impact positively upon boys and girls to maintain high outcomes for both? That high quality teaching and learning for both groups is the key - but what aspects?



The research shows that accentuating gender differences for example through single sex classes and single sex schools sees genders as homogenised and as such does not encourage the challenging of roles. Some girls and boys who do not fit the stereotype can be made to feel excluded and alienated, and can have a de-motivating affect upon attainment. A boy friendly curriculum which does not challenge the stereotyped construction of masculinity can have the adverse effect of reinforcing macho or “laddish” behaviour and reinforce boys seeing schools and studying as feminine, and therefore encourage boys not to want to achieve in school.

I recognise the importance of positive images of boys and girls which directly challenge male and female stereotypical roles in school.

Some research has also shown that there is no clear evidence that there are preferred learning styles between boys and girls, rather that to assume so will exacerbate gender stereotyped behaviour.

I recognised the greater complexity of the issue. Teachers who believe that ability is fixed, and influenced by gender differences may unintentionally communicate this and have lower expectations of boys or girls. It is therefore important to have high expectations of boys as well as girls.

I participated in a successful school based enquiry project into strategies which improve writing of reluctant boys through writing journals, which allowed them to choose their own topics for writing. The overwhelming evidence from this project was that it was a successful strategy for boys and girls. It did not in any way disadvantage girls. This has further impressed upon me the importance of strategies which are good for both sexes.

My experience in promoting race equality and leading equality of opportunity and inclusion projects in school including children with special needs has taught me the importance of good equality practice e.g. having high expectations of **all** children and the provision of high quality teaching and learning.

Rather than finding something *special* that needed to be done to support only boys attainment, equality of opportunity means having high expectations and classroom good practice for both boys and girls.

Whilst reading: *Genderwatch: Still Watching* by Kate Myers 2007, I was struck by her statement in the introduction:

“Good equal opportunities practice is good practice *per se*. It is good for *all* of us”

This statement resonated with me because it reinforces everything that I know about good race equality practice, why did I think it would be different for promoting gender equality?

I realised that I needed to reconsider title of enquiry to reflect gender equality. Not just under performance of boys to take in the bigger picture and the social construction of gender and the impact on attainment for boys and girls.

But what are they? I needed to move from a wider macro-level to the practitioner level. This has led me to investigate what do we mean by high attainment in literacy? or rather, what do we mean by high achievement in literacy taking a more holistic view- rather than the narrow confines of tests?



What has the research on achievement in literacy to teach us about gender equality? in terms of classroom practice? More questions than answers. How do we recognise success in literacy? and what are the implications for our classroom practice.

Were there certain professional behaviours; attitudes and classroom actions that resulted successful literacy teaching for both genders? What were the favourable conditions within schools which supported successful literacy teaching? These questions led me to the GTC research of the Month anthology "Effective literacy in the first Years of School" March 2004.

The GTC overview of current research around successful literacy indicated that these indicators were present in the classrooms of successful literacy teachers:

Immersing child in "whole language"

High quality reading materials

Challenging writing activities

Interactive teaching style

High quality questioning about texts read

Cross curricular inks

Variety of texts

Promotion of comprehension through predictive questioning

Drafting and redrafting

Teacher conferencing

Can do attitude in classroom

Praise pupils and celebrate others achievements

Good behaviour management

Linking phonics and whole language approaches

Another study (Taylor) looked at school level factors which supported effective literacy teaching. These were:

- strong school/ parent links
- positive friendly environment
- strong collaboration and communication amongst colleagues
- systematic monitoring of pupils' progress
- children were reading using progressively more difficult books available to them in classrooms

The research indicates that quality teaching of literacy **high expectations** and good practice in literacy was important.

Having completed my study, I was asked to share the findings with the schools Senior Leadership team. Since then I have been asked to share with the GTC professional networks team which I also did. On the strength of the feedback I received, I have been asked to share my learning with the rest of the schools staff and with the wider GTC Policy Team. There will also be an opportunity to publish a vignette case study on the GTC website, for the Professional Networks.



I also decided to continue the study and then submit later for stage 3 verification. I continued my reading and began close observations of two children who were both reluctant writers, a white British boy-Peter and an African heritage girl, Fiona, both of whom had been in Foundation Stage class last year and whom I now still teach in Y1 this year.

Peter:

I chose Peter as he was an example of a boy that was a reluctant writer in Foundation stage and I was interested in how his literacy generally and writing specifically would develop in Y1. Also I was aware that as a White British boy he was in a high risk group for under achieving in writing.

Whilst in the Foundation stage he often took himself outside of the classroom into the toilets to play in water and flood the toilets, and so was often in trouble and getting told off. At just 5 in September, he is the youngest in the class. His birthday was 29<sup>th</sup> August.

Fiona:

Fiona interested me because as a child in Foundation Stage she was a reluctant writer, she also was a girl who's play bucked the gender specific choices of other more passive girls. Her play also includes the largely interactive play that boys engage in-involving a lot of talk and "boisterous behaviour" Interestingly though she often used the construction materials in non gender specific ways e.g. used bricks as a microphone to sing into and dance playing x factor rather than building as the boys did.

Fiona was a strong personality, confident with peers and a natural leader. Other girls followed and wanted to be with her.

Willow:

Willow is an EAL child who started in Foundation stage mid year with no English. She has grown in confidence and now speaks constantly in English and Polish by beginning of school year in September. She is even offering to translate for new Polish children who started without English. She has a very strong personality and quite bossy often telling off other children who she sees breaking school rules or not doing as they are told. She will always inform the teacher if she sees this and plays with Fiona.

I was interested in analysing the quality and quantity of both forms of writing, not only what these children wrote, but their attitude to the writing tasks set by their teacher and what writing they undertook when self generated.

I observed that both Peter and Fiona, although reluctant to write during literacy sessions, both chose to write during opportunities at "choosing time". That their general reluctance to write is not manifested when they are able to write on their own terms. i.e. they chose what to write. Also they draw upon learning that has taken place with their teacher and practice through imaginative play e.g. pretending to be the teacher, writing a card to mum.

I have observed that Fiona often chooses to write about subjects that are important to her-usually her family, parents or her mum and her grandmother.

I noticed that Peter often chooses a literacy activity related to numbers and rehearses numeric skills.

The importance of providing play opportunities for this age group and those who are reluctant to write in non threatening context and to allow them to have some control over what they are writing is obvious and is reinforced by my reading. The DCSF guidance document "Confident, capable and creative: supporting boys' achievements" 2007. The study looks at research based practice to explore what works best for boys" and tells us as teachers that we should be



“Planning experiences for boys that **build on their interest and value their strengths as active learners and problem solvers**”

I would argue that this also true for girls too and would support those children that engage in non-gender specific play and learning styles.

More importantly, unless we do, as teachers we will result in de-motivating their even wanting to learn:

“If they perceive that their strengths, interests and learning preferences are not respected, they will lose interest in the learning process.” p3.

This very much reinforced my own understanding about **the importance of teachers’ attitudes and relationship with the child.**

“When young children are encouraged to think creatively by following their own lines of enquiry exploring possibilities, making new connections and solving problems, they are developing the skills for life long learning .”

My observations of both Peter and Fiona very much bear this out. When they are allowed to choose their own activity, and the subject, ironically these reluctant writers do choose to write. Given more opportunities to do this, we will be supporting them in their learning generally not just writing.

I also noticed that Peter was aware that I was interested in his writing and that this was impacted on his relationship with me and his motivation to write during the autumn term. He would come and stand beside me with his writing. I had not realised that my enquiry was actually modelling learning behaviour for him until I read in the same report:

“When practitioners see themselves as co-researchers, working alongside the children to gain deeper insights into the learning process, they are modelling many key skills, including enquiry, creativity, information processing, problem solving and communication”

The report reinforces the importance of teachers **as significant others** in the lives of young children. This also reinforces my observations about the importance of building in boys **a positive self image of themselves as successful learners**, of valuing their play choices

“If these interests and choices are valued and supported, boys are more likely to develop positive attitudes about themselves as learners”

I noticed that Peter will choose to write if allowed to choose the subject himself. If the writing task is too challenging to manage alone, I also observed that he will chose to work with a child who s knowledge is more than his own. In this case Ali. E.g. He enjoys rehearsing and recording numbers 1-100 although he is not confident once past the tens, and asks Ali to help him.

All this took place during the autumn term before Christmas. A very significant learning breakthrough on my part involved writing that Peter has produced since the new term in January.

I notice that there has been a change in Peter’s behaviour and attitude to learning since he has returned from the Christmas holidays. He is less responsive in lessons. Finds it difficult to settle at any task and will more often disrupt the learning of other children, preferring to tidy up than engage at planned learning activities. Because I am also often working in different classes through January to February, I am unsure if this is out of character or usual. I attempt to engage in conversation with him about this change, he is not forthcoming. I mention my concerns to his class-teacher.



On one particular occasion in January Peter is reluctant to take part in the literacy task and chooses to play in the construction area next door. Later at home time after the children have gone I see that Peter has written me a note and left it on both teachers' desks. He has written two copies on white boards, one left on each of his teacher's desks. This was a message he definitely did not want me to miss:

"I FeeL bAd bcosto everee Boddy I am" (I feel bad because to everybody I am)

" I feel bAd cos Um bad from Peter

"To Miss Nobll Peter is bAd From Pete" he also records his numbers on paper.

I am aware of two things

- Peters writing is heartfelt. He desperately wants to communicate to me something important to him.
- Peter is feeling bad about himself
- Peter wants me to do something about it.

I show his class-teacher who shares my concern about his poor self esteem and behaviour. We decide to booster his self esteem and find opportunities to praise him. The next week Peter is chosen as star of the week. I am sure that one of the reasons for his lack of motivation is his negative image of himself as a learner. His tidying up is a safe way of getting positive reinforcement, as it is not intellectually challenging to him and he is lacking in confidence.

"If they perceive that their strengths, interests and learning preferences are not respected, they will lose interest in the learning process." DCSFp3.

I am convinced that he is not a reluctant writer, however, that he is reluctant to undertake writing as it has been defined for him, because he fears failing. When encouraged to choose what and when he writes he has no difficulty turning to writing to express himself competently.

In conclusion, what have I learnt about boys (children's) writing?

- Children should be given the freedom to write what is important to them.
- Boys should be given opportunities to write what they choose to (e.g. writing journals) and when during choice time
- boys should be provided with a wide variety of materials with which to engage in writing activities as well as paper
- The importance of teachers modelling writing, not just to teach writing skills but also to model writing attitudes and behaviour
- Writing can provide children with a powerful vehicle to express thoughts and emotions that they may feel unable to express in words
- The importance of boys (children) having positive self esteem if they are to succeed
- the power teachers have to influence a child's self image as successful learners

Finally, what of Fiona? Fiona has transferred to a church school in a neighbouring authority. I have heard she enjoys the new school but has complained they do not do any "choosing". Given that this is the time in which she chooses to engage in writing, writing I would be interested in knowing her current motivation for writing in her new school?



### Future Plans- Disseminating my Learning

- I have presented my learning to the school SLT as a power-point presentation. I have included this PP (see 10).
- The schools SLT want to implement some of the findings from my study to inform the schools literacy policy and practice.
- I will present my findings to the rest of teaching staff at an INSET day.
- I will present to Governors.
- I will write up a case study vignette for GTC achieve web-site to support others practice nationally
- I will present PP to rest of the GTC policy team.

## An analysis of the Impact of Professional Learning Conversations with my Mentors:

<p>1. Head of Foundation stage- T. M.</p>	<p>The trigger for the focus of my study came following a learning conversation with the Head of the Foundation stage unit, whose class I was teaching - for PPA cover. She had asked me to observe and record children's "talk" in Foundation Stage during the course of one day. I noticed that children's talk was very differentiated, according to gender as were children's play choices. In a feedback conversation we were both surprised by this. She supported me in my decision to undertake further investigation as to if this was a one off occurrence or a regular pattern of children's interaction, and whether or how this would impact upon children's learning. She also gave professional support to the venture, sharing my plans with the Headteacher and SLT, all recognising the impact this could have to inform practice at school. I would meet with her at the end of each term to discuss my findings, which at that stage was largely more questions, she too was interested in my findings and how it might inform practice at Foundation Stage.</p>
<p>2. Policy Adviser: L.S</p>	<p>Once I had decided on my focus area I had a professional discussion about possible lines of enquiry with a Policy Adviser colleague at the GTC who recommended some reading of gender research which might support my enquiry. She suggested Kate Myers book "Genderwatch". I read "Still Genderwatching" by the same author which included more recent and up to date research. This opened up my thinking beyond the narrow perspective of raising boys attainment to the wider context of gender equality in the real world and shifted my thinking from a focus of raising boys attainment to take account of wider equality issues e.g. the fact that women are still lagging behind men professionally in the world outside of school. This had a huge impact on my learning breakthrough.</p>
<p>3. Year 1 Class teacher Literacy Coordinator.</p>	<p>When the children I had been teaching in the Foundation unit moved up to Y1, I was able to continue teaching them and continue my observations. Their class teacher in Y1 was the literacy coordinator at the school and a member of the schools SLT. I was able to discuss some of my observations about their</p>



	<p>behaviour and gender issues with their new class teacher in professional learning conversation, which helped to inform my thinking e.g. when discussing with her my observations regarding gender related play choices in foundation stage in the large construction area by EAL girls, and possible reasons for these, she suggested that the role play area afforded EAL children and those less confident in speakers, a safe opportunity to practice their linguistic skills. This supported my observations of Wendy's behaviour and progress, and helped me make sense of some of my observations. Namely, that although mainly boys played in the large construction area, Wendy a Polish speaking girl who was EAL would play there in a loud vociferous manner like the boys. Could the confidence and rapidity with which she learned English be partly because she was able to practice it safely in her play during this first year in the school?</p>
	<p>When meeting my mentors I would use the opportunity to externalise my thinking. In each case the support I received would help me clarify my thinking, challenge me, and suggest new areas of enquiry.</p>



## Analysis of attainment data for foundation stage 2006

### Summary of children's achievements toward early learning goals at end of Foundation Stage.

Issue	stats	Analysis
Numbers:	12 boys 24 girls 36 total	Twice as many girls than boys in cohort Small numbers in total beware percentages.
Ethnicity other than white British	25	High percentage
FSM	11	Nearly 1/3
EAL	15	Nearly half
Pupils living in area of deprivation(bottom 30%) 2004 National Index of Multiple Deprivation)	10	Nearly 1/4
Overall findings in profile.	"The area in need of particular focus is in writing	
National expectation is 6.0	56% pupils scored 6+ in all of Communication, Language and Literacy compared with 55% in Merton as a whole.	Very close to the borough average.
Language for communication and thinking	2006 5.9 2007 6.4	Within NA 2007
Linking sounds and letters	2006 5.3 2007 6.4	Within NA 2007
Reading	2006 5.5 2007 6.1	Within NA 2007
Writing	2006 5.2 2007 5.6	Below NA 2007



Gender breakdowns 2007	LCT girls 6.8 Boys 5.8	Boys behind girls
	LSL girls 6.7 Boys 5.8	Boys behind girls
	W girls 5.9 Boys 5.0	Below NA Below girls and below NA
LCT	22 girls achieved a score of 6+ (92%) 8 boys achieved a score of 6+(67%)	Substantially fewer boys
LSL	21 girls achieved a score of 6+ (88%) 8 boys achieved a score of 8+ (67%)	
Reading	20 girls achieved a score of 6+ (83%) 5 boys achieved a score of 6+ (42%)	Boys substantially behind girls
Writing	16 girls achieved a score of 6+ (67%) 4 boys achieved a score of 6+ (33%)	Boys substantially behind girls.



## Ethical Issues

I am female	I may be inadvertently be giving signals to boys and girls about gender related expectations	➤ I could get another member of staff to monitor my behaviour and language to analyse gender related bias.
How certain can I be that the language and activities are not influenced by my presence-how aware are children of being observed?	Want to ensure children's talk is natural and not contrived.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The classroom layout and organisation facilitates this as it is open plan and children are used to open plan working with several adults present, choosing their own activities.</li> <li>➤ Children are used to my presence in the classroom.</li> <li>➤ I will not engage in conversation merely observe and record-<i>fly on the wall</i>.</li> </ul>
Attainment of boys in literacy must not be at the expense girls.	There is wider ethical issue of girls' underachievement in the wider work-force.	Any strategy to raise boys' attainment must benefit girls too and must benefit both genders.
I work part-time.	My observations are not comprehensive, will only give a limited indication of patterns and trends of behaviour and may not be as robust as a more intensive observation schedule	Learning conversations with other members of staff and with the rest of the early years team is added evidence.
Protecting children identity.	The children are very young. Parental permission would need to be sought to name children.	No child will be identified in this study - names altered. Parental permission gained before observing focus children at stage 3.



Staff protocol.	The observations are taking place in the Foundation Unit of the school and I have the permission and support of the Head of the Early Years Unit who is my mentor.	The support of the schools senior leadership team has been sought and obtained. Members of the SLT are kept regularly updated of my findings.  Have acquired permission from the Headteacher to use performance school data.
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## Reading List.

- Gender and Achievement.  
Professor Christine Skelton and Professor Becky Francis.  
April 2008
- Changing School Subjects Power Gender and Curriculum.  
Carrie Paechter. Changing Education Series.  
Editors Andy Hargreaves and Ivor Goodson.  
Open University Press. 2000.
- GTC Research of the Month “Effective literacy teaching in the first years of school: What makes schools effective at improving children’s literacy skills?” research overview from three studies:

Literacy Instruction in Nine First Grade classrooms: Teacher Characteristics and Student Achievement.

Ruth Wharton-Mc Donald, Michael Pressley, Jennifer Mistretta Hampston,  
Elementary school journal, V99, 2, 1998.

A Study of Effective First Grade Literacy Instruction

Michael Pressley; Ruth Wharton-Mc Donald,  
Scientific Studies of Reading V5, 1, 2001.

Effective Schools and Accomplished Teachers: Lessons about Primary-Grade Reading Instruction in Low-Income Schools.

Barbara M. Taylor, P. David Pearson, et al,  
Elementary School Journal, V101, 2, 2000

Primary National Strategy publication: “Confident, capable and creative: supporting boys’ achievements Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

DCSF Ref 00682-2007BKT-EN  
2007.

Merton LA statistical Reports Foundation stage Profile 2006-7 Report: Tabitha School.