



Teachers Laura Paradiso, Darlene White, Matthew Dean and Principal Linda Marie Pilgrim, all from St. Anne English Catholic School, discuss literacy strategies with David Booth (centre).

BOYS' LITERACY EXPERT ADDRESSES TEACHERS

Literacy was at the forefront of the agenda today as the Northeastern Catholic District School Board welcomed world renowned expert David Booth.

With comical anecdotes and relevant analogies, he shared with educators his wealth of knowledge, particularly as it relates to the gender gap in literacy. He explained that choosing interesting and appropriate reading materials is as critical to student literacy as a pair of skates would be to a hockey player. Without these fundamental tools, either will fail.

Booth suggested a need to smash traditional barriers, and eliminate any belief that there is a hierarchy of text or music.

"The works of Shakespeare are not more important than the letters written home by a child at summer camp," explained Booth. "We need to celebrate the differences in appreciation of different forms of text. We also need to teach kids to be mindful and critical readers, regardless of the form of text. You as educators have to help them become more literate in the text that they need to understand, whether that be sports magazines, newspapers or electronic print on a PC. Boys may not read the same materials as girls. They simply need to be as skilled and as literate readers as girls in whatever form of text they read. Literacy is more important than the choice of literature. As educators, you need to notice what boys are reading and not devalue it. Literacy is about setting a school culture that is responsive to the reading interests of both sexes."

David Booth is Professor Emeritus in education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto where he is Scholar in Residence in the Curriculum, Teaching and Language Department. For over forty years, he has been involved in teaching children and teachers, as a classroom teacher, language arts consultant, professor, speaker and author. His students have included teachers and administrators enrolled in the preservice, master's and doctoral programs in education. David has authored many teacher reference books and textbooks in all areas of language development: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and has worked on several guidelines for the Ontario Ministry of Education.

A popular speaker internationally, David has addressed educators in every province of Canada, throughout most American states, and in England, Germany, the Near East, New Zealand and Australia. He has participated in many international conferences, speaking and presenting workshops in all areas of language learning. He has won several awards in Canada and the United States for his teaching, for his contributions to language and literacy, and for his books for young people.

Director of Education Paul Toffanello believes that Mr. Booth's visit will further help foster a culture of appreciation for different forms of text and their value in the classroom. "Literacy is a key focus of programming and professional development at the Northeastern Catholic District School Board," noted Toffanello. "We have already introduced a variety of strategies to ensure that students have access to reading materials that are of interest. For example, last year, the students taking part in the Steps to Success Program at O'Gorman High School visited a local bookstore to select the materials that would be purchased to stock the classroom library. This is just one way that we are creating more meaningful and more enjoyable learning experiences for our students."

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