

SECTION FIVE – RECOMMENDATIONS

Our strongest recommendation is for a paradigm shift in considering gender based differences in learning, development and performance in our district. Everything else evolves from that assumption. The CRC Gender Differences Committee believes that through understanding the data and other research there are opportunities to improve the academic performance of students of both genders in District 39.

This committee has worked with District 39 to collect a baseline of information that will allow the district to track and compare differences in performance by gender. The following recommendations describe developing a database to further understand differences.

We have also developed classroom and administrative recommendations based on the significant differences found in D39, particularly in the upper grades (5-8).

Finally, we have read an extensive literature review of gender differences in learning – both in the popular press and in books by educators and developmental psychologists. These books and articles are listed in the Bibliography/resources appendix. Based on that research, we have integrated trends in the literature into our recommendations, though we did not directly assess all of these issues in D39.

PART I - Mission Statement

Adopt a statement within the District 39 educational philosophy that suggests how boys and girls learn differently, and that our educational practice reflects this belief.

PART II - Database

Starting the summer of 2006, build a database for D39 to track over time educational performance and test score results by gender and other criteria as determined by the District. The goal is to be able to track student performance and other key data trends and to ultimately establish a link at the K-8 level and high school in order to follow our students through the 12th grade. Consider capturing the following information:

Structure of District Database

- 1. Build a single central repository for data on all tests or grades.** Much of the information is located in individual schools that vary widely in the types of databases on which information resides, the length of time that the information is kept, and the quality of the information.
- 2. Build a longitudinal database.** Proactively build a common database in which information can be tracked over time and results compared over time. There are a myriad of applications for such a database; gender difference issues would simply be one of those applications.
- 3. Structured management of third party managed data.** In some cases, the district turns over the management of data to a third party vendor, but that vendor may not store the information by gender, for instance. Structuring data to fit the needs of D39 would allow more effective access.

Information Compiled:

1. Academic classroom performance (including classroom grades) by gender, for each major subject by grade level – Obtain meaningful data on academic performance beyond the categories in this report for grades K-4.
2. Academic test performance by gender, by subject by grade including state tests and standardized tests. Local assessments would include Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) at lower grades.
3. Identification data by gender for gifted and talented and other similar data in the district, including advanced math and differentiated language arts services in the higher grades.
4. Data on IEPs by gender and grade (e.g., the data may cause future work to focus on certain disabilities like Learning Disability or Speech Language Impaired over Physical Impairment or Traumatic Brain Injury).
5. Analyze IEPs and other data that may highlight some of the emotional/behavioral issues between gender, and process issues in learning related to this (i.e. emotional disinvestment in school may equal irregular homework) .One recent study finds that males account for 70% of all alienated students (US News, 2/22/99) – investigate this in D39.
6. Analyze IEPs (emotional/behavioral) and discipline referral patterns.
7. Adjusted academic and test performance to address the impact of IEPs on these results.
8. Data on social behavior issues by gender, including but not limited to, office visits, suspensions, expulsions, reported incidents, detentions, etc.
9. Data comparing our performance to other benchmark districts.
10. Data on Reading Intervention students by gender and grade.
11. Seek data on placement and testing of 8th grade District 39 students as they exit the district and enter New Trier and, ideally, performance data for District 39 students at the high school level.
12. Breakdown and analyze writing differences, as reflected in test scores and classroom, to target specific skill sets or process issues, (i.e. what does the ISAT writing score reflect vs. Iowa's).
13. Utilize process and local assessments, with online and progress report rubrics. Develop online rubric for process of writing that teachers already do. Address gap in writing and math by looking at the process as well as the content, tie classroom work in process with progress report rubric for process.
14. Track mix of male and female teachers and educators over time by grade in District 39.

PART III - Administrative/Policy Actions

1. **Teacher Hiring** – Identify and implement hiring policies that promote the hiring of excellent teachers of all genders, rather than policies and practices that tend to disqualify or fail to select teachers of either gender at any grade.
 - Understand differences in styles of teachers by gender, especially styles of outstanding teachers.
 - Encourage hiring of teachers of all genders, to encourage strong role models for all District 39 students, across all grades and subject areas.
 - Collect data on the hiring process – gender and credentials of candidates by grade level for applicants, those interviewed, those offered positions and those hired, over time. Collect this data both for classroom teachers and other educators/professionals working in district 39 schools.
2. **School Improvement Process** – Take steps to integrate gender based learning and performance actions into the regular planning processes of District 39.
 - Each school’s School Improvement Plan (SIP) should incorporate gender based performance and learning objectives, which seek to raise opportunities for each gender.
 - Compile hard data by school each year to measure progress.
 - Identify and appoint an educator responsible at District level for communication and coordination of gender issue goals as expressed in school improvement plans and linked goals across the District (elementary school goals linked together, linked to the Middle School goals and linked to the Junior High School goals).
3. **Provide professional development opportunities for educators, parents and administrators in District 39 to encourage awareness of and support for the similarities and differences between genders.**
 - Provide training of innovative teaching techniques and methodologies that reflect current research on gender differences in social behaviors, learning, emotional development, physical development, and intellectual interests.
 - Encourage creativity among teachers (see classroom interventions).
 - Allocate training time for staff to explore classroom practices’ impact on gender differences in performance.
 - Understand socialization behaviors in classrooms and the impact on academic performance.
4. **Seek further anecdotal data from veteran teachers – e.g., girls’ process dominance in honors math but under representation, ways to encourage girls with certain mathematics techniques at the early elementary school level.**
5. **Seek to collaborate with New Trier on a K-12 integrated study.**
6. **Conduct a survey or focus group of special education staff, e.g., Learning Behavior Specialists, Social Workers, to gather information on their gender-based experiences. Develop a list of successful differentiation practices.**
7. **Share research, District 39 programs, etc. with parents through newsletters, presentations and other forums of discussion to educate about gender differences.**

8. Continue to stay abreast of further research regarding gender differences in learning.
9. Seek more specific input from other benchmark school districts that have sought to understand and address differences in gender performance and compare data.
10. Continue this CRC team into the 2006-2007 school year to refine findings and recommendations, including greater high school outcome data.
11. Seek parent and student input regarding:
 - Medications
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - Video games, television, computer
 - Reading at home
 - Contact with school
 - Presence at home (e.g., single parent or travel father or mother)
 - Discipline
12. Study proportion of gender in a classroom as they relate to gender differences in learning and effect of class size.

PART IV - Classroom Interventions

1. Explore innovative classroom arrangements designed to support gender differences to learning and to increase classroom participation such as:
 - Use of manipulatives – Identify and provide materials for students that reflect gender-specific interests. Study the physical environment of early education classrooms to see how they support needs of both genders. This may include, but is not limited to wooden unit blocks, art materials, science equipment etc.
 - Personalize classrooms and desks
 - Put high energy to work and toward academic focus
 - Movement related learning
 - Space
 - Multi-sensory strategies
 - New approaches to real or perceived discipline problems
 - Call on boys and girls equally
 - Constant feedback and encouragement
 - Consider expanding single-sex circles and explore, on trial basis, separate-sex homerooms (and/or other forms of mentoring programs) and classes.
 - Identify materials that would provide more reading materials to boys that they are more likely to want to read, i.e. action-oriented, non-fiction, heroes similar to demographic of boy-readers.
 - Use a combination of team building and competitive activities to encourage student involvement. Consider additional competitive activity in language arts skills as a way to engage boys to improve their capabilities in these areas:

punctuation, capitalization, usage & expression, writing, reading comprehension, vocabulary).

2. Focus on specifically working with boys in the classroom to address early gender gap in writing skills, focus on working with girls in the classroom to address early gender gap in math skills (i.e. as seen on CoGAT).
3. Create an environment to focus on underperforming groups at the elementary level (boys and girls) – as identified by differences in test performance and GPA; create a rubric to specifically target this at-risk group.

PART V – Recommendation Timeline

CRC 2005/06: “Gender Differences” Sub-committee Tactics & Timeline

Tactic	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	Comments	Primary Resource
I. MISSION STATEMENT						
a. Adopt a statement within the District 39 educational philosophy that suggests how boys and girls learn differently, and that our educational practice reflects this belief.	X					CRC, Board of Education; SIP Teams
II. DATABASE						
a. Build a single central repository for data on all tests or grades.	Summer 06					Superintendent;
b. Build a longitudinal database. Proactively build a common database in which information can be tracked and results compared over time.	Summer 06					Director of Technology & Media Services
c. In some cases, the District may turn over management of the data to a third party.	Fall 07					

Tactic	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	Comments	Primary Resource
III. ADMINISTRATIVE/POLICY ACTIONS						
a. Identify and implement hiring policies that promote the hiring of excellent teachers of all genders.	X					Superintendent; Administrator for HR
b. SIP teams take steps to integrate gender based learning and performance actions into the regular planning processes of District 39.	X	X	X	X		SIP Teams
c. Provide professional development opportunities for educators, parents and administrators in District 39 to encourage awareness of and support for the similarities and differences between genders.	X	X				Administrator for Curriculum and Instruction; PTOs
d. Seek further anecdotal data from veteran teachers.	X					CRC
e. Seek to collaborate with New Trier on a K-12 integrated study.	X					Superintendent; CRC
f. Conduct a survey or focus group of special education staff, e.g., Learning Behavior Specialists, Social Workers, to gather information on their gender-based experiences. Develop a list of successful differentiation practices.	X					CRC
g. Share research, District 39 programs, etc. with parents through newsletters, presentations and other forums of discussion to educate about gender differences.	X					Superintendent; Principals; PTOs
h. Continue to stay abreast of further research regarding gender differences in learning.	X	X	X	X		Superintendent; Administrator for Curriculum and Instruction
i. Seek more specific input from other benchmark school districts that have sought to understand and address differences in gender performance and compare data.	X					CRC

Tactic	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	Comments	Primary Resource
j. Continue this CRC team into the 2006-2007 school year to refine findings and recommendations, including greater high school outcome data.	X					CRC
k. Seek parent and student input regarding medications, extra-curricular activities, video games, television, computer, reading at home, contact with school, present at home (e.g., single parent or travel father or mother) and discipline.	X					CRC
l. Study proportion of gender in a classroom as they relate to gender differences in learning and effect of class size.	X					CRC
IV. CLASSROOM INTERVENTIONS						
a. Explore innovative classroom arrangements designed to support gender differences to learning and to increase classroom participation.	X					CRC; Administrator for Curriculum and Instruction
b. Focus on working with boys in the classroom to address early gender gap in writing skills and focus on working with girls in the classroom to address early gender gap in math skills.		X				Administrator for Curriculum and Instruction
c. Create an environment to focus on underperforming groups at the elementary level (boys and girls) and create a rubric to specifically target this at-risk group.		X				Administrator for Curriculum and Instruction