

Many thanks to Gary Wilson who visited Beechen Cliff School in July 2022 and spoke to KS3 parents about supporting literacy for boys.

A selection of Gary's slides can be found here.

Help Your Boys Succeed

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Available from Gary Wilson at wilson.gary@talk21.com

Gary Wilson

continuum

“Right boys – time to write.”
Sir, do we *have to*....again?
Can't we just talk about it instead?
Sir, can I borrow a pen?
Can I have some paper sir?
I left my book at home last night
How do you start?
How much do you have to write?
What if you don't finish?
Do you write on both sides of the sheet?
Does the spelling matter?
Does it *have to* be neat?
Do you *have to* copy out the question?
Can't we just have a rest?
My arm hurts sir, I've got cramp
Do I *have to* copy it out in best?
Can I go and work in the library?
Can I do it on the computer instead?
Sir, do I have to read it through?
I know what it is I said.
You're not going to read it out are you?
I don't want it displayed
What's it for? Does it count?
Is it part of our final grade?

Gary Wilson

“ Having taught for twenty seven years
one day I decided I'd make a list of the
kinds of things boys might say on a bad
day when I've asked them to write!!”
Gary Wilson

Adapted from 'Help Your Boys
Succeed "by Gary Wilson

A lot of boys tend to learn in more active ways, so in preparation for exams the following can be very useful

- **Take frequent study breaks.**
- **Move around to learn new things (e.g. read while on an exercise bike, or walking around the room).**
- **Work at a standing position.**
- **Put the main points on cards then sort in different ways.**
- **Do demonstrations, role plays and acting.**
- **Use drawings, write things down, draw diagrams.**
- **Use bright colours to highlight reading material.**
- **Dress up your work space with posters.**
- **If you wish, listen to music while you study.**
- **Use the process of look, cover, remember, write.**
- **Skim through reading material to get a rough idea what it is about before settling down to read it in detail.**

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- Compare the number of times you tell your son off with the number of times you praise him..... 3 positives to 1 negative works well
- Do you tend to be just a little too quick to correct him when he says something that is not in line with your thinking?
- Do you tend to talk in chapters when you're making a point?
- Do you hear yourself using clichés and preaching?
- Do you ever hear yourself projecting him way too far into the future – saying, well if you don't do this now – in thirty years you'll.....

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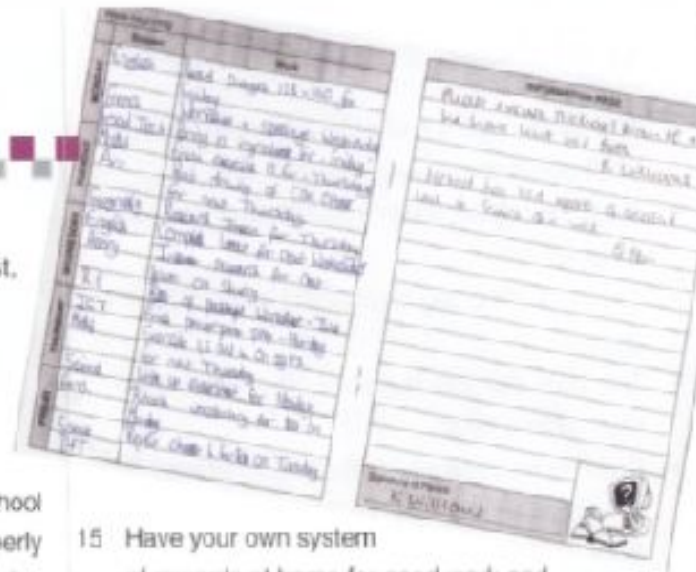
- **Tell tale signs of peer pressure:**
 - A sudden decision not to take a bag to school
 - A sudden dip in performance: Your high achieving boy suddenly starts to behave like a low achiever (he's actively seeking to be 'one of the lads')
 - A pocketful of school merits or credits (he hasn't wanted to hand them in for fear of humiliation)
 - A sudden lack of interest in wanting to celebrate success
 - A loss of engagement with the arts (subjects perceived by some of the peer police as "girly")
 - A sudden reticence to participate in revision classes, study support sessions

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How to help...



- 1 Give lots of encouragement to boost confidence.
- 2 If your son has a reading habit, encourage it. If not, do your best to help him develop one. You could ask his teacher's advice. Seeing other males in the house reading can also help.
- 3 Guide him towards out of school activities that he will not only enjoy but also at which he can succeed.
- 4 Give him more responsibilities around the house and **don't** do everything for him!
- 5 Try to create some opportunities for learning at home by discussing the news or TV programmes.
- 6 Persuade him that talking over problems is best, as it can help release tension and anger.
- 7 Check his student planner regularly (if he has one).
- 8 Make sure he has a list of things he needs for school each day... and make sure he gets himself properly organised in time. "Planning and preparation help prevent poor performance."
- 9 Contact school immediately if you feel your son might be under pressure from others not to work.
- 10 Good male role models can play a significant part in boys' education e.g. by reading to them, giving help with work at home, or even by helping out at school.
- 11 Other learners in the house can be used as good examples.
- 12 Make sure he has enough sleep.
- 13 Reassure him that it's okay to express his feelings - in fact positively encourage it!



- 15 Have your own system of rewards at home for good work and behaviour.
- 16 Limit leisure time spent in front of screens.
- 17 When he starts to be given homework, get into the habit of making sure that he does it on the night it is set... preferably as soon as he gets home... and definitely without the TV on.
- 18 Show interest in his day at school.



101 ways to Praise Kids

THAT'S INCREDIBLE! • **HOW EXTRAORDINARY!** • FAR OUT! • OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE • **I CAN'T GET OVER IT!** • **GREAT!** • **AMAZING EFFORT!** • UNBELIEVABLE WORK • WONDERFUL! • **MARVELOUS** • **PHENOMENAL!** • YOU'VE GOT IT • **SUPERB!** • COOL! • **EXCELLENT!** • YOU'RE SPECIAL • **YOUR WORK IS OUT OF SIGHT** • **YOUR PROJECT IS FIRST-RATE!** • YOU'VE OUTDONE YOURSELF! • **WAY TO GO!** • **THUMBS UP** • YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND • YOU CAME THROUGH! • TERRIFIC • YOU TRIED HARD • YOUR HELP COUNTS! • YOU MADE IT HAPPEN! • IT COULDN'T BE BETTER! • **FANTASTIC WORK!** • **YOU'RE A REAL TROOPER** • FABULOUS! • **BRAVO!** • *exceptional!* • **YOU'RE UNIQUE** • AWSOME! • BREATHTAKING! • **THE TIME YOU PUT IN REALLY SHOWS!** YOU'RE A GREAT EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS! • **KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK** • **I KNEW YOU HAD IT IN YOU!** • **DYNAMITE** • IT'S EVERYTHING I HOPED FOR! • YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF YOURSELF! • WHAT AN IMAGINATION! • YOU MADE THE DIFFERENCE! • WELL DONE • YOU'RE SENSATIONAL • **VERY GOOD!** • **A+ WORK** • **SUPER JOB** • **GOOD FOR YOU!** • **TAKE A BOW** • YOU FIGURED IT OUT • GREAT ANSWER • YOU'RE DOING A LOT BETTER • THANKS FOR BEING HONEST • HOW ARTISTIC • HOORAY FOR YOU • YOU'RE A JOY • **HOW THOUGHTFUL OF YOU** • YOU'RE AMAZING! • YOU'RE GETTING THERE • **WHAT A GREAT IDEA** • YOU DESERVE A HUG • THANKS FOR TRYING • YOU'RE GETTING BETTER • YOU'RE A BIG HELP • **YOU'RE TOPS** • YOU'VE MADE PROGRESS • **YOU'RE NEAT** • YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES • **YOU'RE # 1** • YOU'RE A SHINING STAR • YOU CAN BE TRUSTED • **WOW!** • REMARKABLE! • BEAUTIFUL • **I'M PROUD OF YOU** • **VERY IMPRESSIVE** • YOU'RE SHARP • **YOU'RE A WINNER!** • HOT DOG • SPECTACULAR WORK • YOU'RE SO KIND • YOU'RE REALLY GROWN UP • **WHAT A GREAT LISTENER** • THANKS FOR HELPING • GREAT DISCOVERY • YOU'VE EARNED MY RESPECT • THANKS FOR CARING • YOU'RE A-OKAY • **YOU'RE A GREAT KID** • **HOW ORIGINAL** • YOU'RE A **CHAMP** • YOU'RE A **PLEASURE TO KNOW** • VERY BRAVE • **WHAT A GENIUS** • YOU'RE VERY TALENTED • YOU'RE

Helping Girls and Boys Succeed
By Gary Wilson

- **HOW PARENTS CAN HELP AROUND EXAM TIME:**
- **Encourage him to use a wide variety of revision techniques** – staring endlessly at the same set of notes will not help him The best kind of revision techniques for boys in particular, are more active, as seen in ‘preferred learning styles’. Some time spent on computer, reducing notes to index cards – sorting them, creating mindmaps / posters/ diagrams/ flow charts/ then sometimes reading notes.
- **Have a quiz** if he’s up for it! The word “Quiz” has a slightly more positive tone to it. (Which would you rather have? A Test or a Quiz?)
- **Keep an eye on progress** – display exam and revision timetables prominently.
- **Regularly chat to him about his progress** to ensure that he’s not leaving everything to the last minute but - don’t be overanxious yourself- its contagious!
- **Encourage him to take breaks** He needs to take breaks, but ensure the breaks don’t take over! If it’s on the computer the break might be ten minutes on a game every hour (real test of will!).Recent revision programmes that your school may have, such as Inquizator, already have games built in as a reward for high scores.
- **Make sure he has some exercise** – even if it’s only a stroll outside! Getting more oxygen to the brain will improve his ability to study
- **Encourage him to talk** – As parents of most boys know, getting him to share any anxieties can be difficult. However, sharing anxieties he might have in the run up to tests or exams with you, with friends or with a teacher can give a fresh boost to flagging confidence. They will often find their mate is worried too and just talking it out will help get it “sorted”. Similarly, after the event, anxieties need to be talked through to ensure that every exam is a fresh start.
- **Splash out on things to make revision fun and active** – cards, highlighter pens, post-it notes
- **Make sure he has a decent study environment** – but not too warm – they say boys work more effectively in lower temperatures than girls!
- **It doesn’t help telling stories about your own school nightmares!**
- **Build in lots of treats in between exams** – And a huge celebration at the end (you can invite him too!)

**Adapted from 'Help Your Boys
Succeed "by Gary Wilson**

As they get older:

- Seeing older males in the house reading and talking about their reading can really help
- Give books as presents or rewards
- Encourage him to explore author websites
- Take an interest in what he's reading – maybe even read the same book from time to time and discuss them together
- Find fiction that will relate to their particular interests (see below)
- Books that are TV or Film 'tie-ins' can often entice reluctant readers on board
- If he appears to be only interested in one particular series of books on say a particular boy wizard – point out to him there are other books in a series/ books about wizards/ books about schoolboy heroes/ books about imaginary lands – any good bookseller will be able to guide him

When he's older:

Play board games together

Find opportunities for discussion related to films or programmes watched together on television

Limit leisure time spent passively in front of screens

Eat together as regularly as you can, creating a regular habit of sharing thoughts and feelings about the day as you do it

Wash up together !

Talk as you do jobs around the house together (sometimes the best time for him to talk about his concerns and problems!)

His "payment" for a ride in mum or dad's taxi can be a proper heart to heart

- **Getting the facts!** Make sure that you understand the school's policy on homework, including recommended amounts according to the year group he's in and the number of evenings allocated to produce it.
- **Establishing a routine** – say immediately after tea and before leisure time. Some flexibility might be required on the nights he has after school activities.....so why not create a wall timetable that allows for these?
- **Preparing the scene** - Ensuring an appropriate workspace is available that is comfortable and appropriately lit (don't worry if he doesn't sit at that lovely new desk you bought him-his learning style may mean he needs to wander from place to place – and besides, he may have been sat down most of the day at school!)
- **Removing distractions** – (And if he's providing his own distractions, such as background music, make sure he is the kind of learner who can cope with back ground music – not everyone can!)
- **Establishing a system of rewards** - for completed targets can help. (but not “If you do well this year you can have an I pod at Christmas”! – short term rewards work best for most boys – short term aims, short term targets and short term gratification)