



Does Gender Matter? Teaching to both Mars and Venus

Findings from single-gender education
at Bragg Elementary School
West Memphis School District

Who is Bragg Elementary School?



*Approximately 75% Free/Reduced

*55% Caucasian, 44% African American, 1% Hispanic

Why it mattered to us...



- Boys were scoring below our expectations across grade levels and subject areas
- Girls were outscoring boys on almost every assessment for the five years prior to implementation
- The biggest discrepancies were in literacy
- Boys and girls mature at different rates and in different ways

Where we started and **where we are now...**



Benchmark Literacy Scores Proficient/Advanced

	2005	2010	2012	2013	2014
3 rd grade	55%	86%	87%	87%	87%
4 th grade	47%	85%	86%	94%	90%
5 th grade	52%	82%	87%	80%	91%
6 th grade	77%	83%	77%	76%	70%

Where we started and **where we are now...**



Benchmark Math Scores Proficient/Advanced

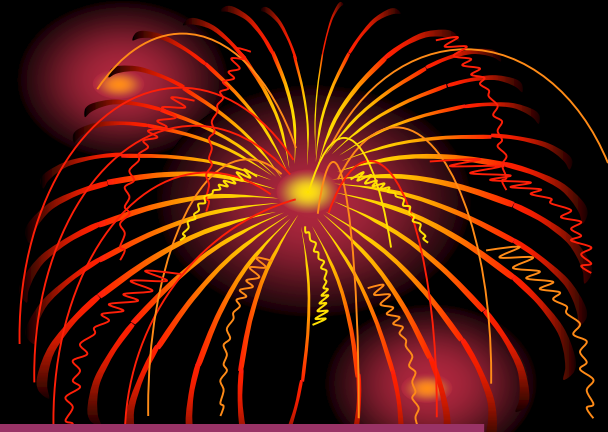
	2005	2010	2012	2013	2014
3 rd grade	78%	88%	89%	93%	96%
4 th grade	69%	96%	86%	93%	89%
5 th grade	60%	92%	81%	68%	84%
6 th grade	61%	89%	82%	81%	84%

How we started...



- Recognition of discrepancy through Normes data
- Leadership Team met to discuss Normes data and possible solutions
- Teacher and parent surveys
- Board presentation and approval for single-sex classrooms in 3rd grade
- Two-day weekend retreat with gender-specific specialists
- **Book study on “Why Gender Matters”**
- 3rd grade departmentalized single-sex classrooms with three teachers

Teacher & Parent Surveys



Bragg Gender Survey May 29, 2009

Directions: Please place the number in the blank that best represents your opinion on each question.

1=Strongly disagree

2=Disagree

3=Neither agree nor disagree

4=Agree

5=Strongly agree

- _____ 1. I feel I know a lot about the different learning styles of boys and girls.
- _____ 2. I feel my current level of teaching is serving both genders well.
- _____ 3. I have read about/or am aware of the brain research on gender development.
- _____ 4. I feel discipline will be affected using gender specific strategies.
- _____ 5. I want to know more about gender specific instruction.
- _____ 6. I would like the opportunity to teach in a single-sex classroom.
- _____ 7. I need some professional development on gender specific instruction.
- _____ 8. I am willing to make changes to my teaching based on the professional development I will receive.
- _____ 9. I think gender specific teaching strategies are a good idea.
- _____ 10. I am excited about trying the new strategies for working with boys and girls.

From the desk of... Terri McCann

May 22, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians of Second Grade Students,

I am writing this letter with great excitement! As most of you know, I try to think "outside the box" to keep our students motivated and learning to the best of their abilities. In my research of our test scores during the past several years, I made a discovery that needs to be addressed in the teaching of our students.

Our female students have been consistently scoring higher than their male counterparts on the state mandated tests, both in literacy and math. Being the mother of two boys as well as the principal of a school with a higher percentage of boys than girls, my concern was immediately raised. I began doing research into the learning styles and brain development of boys vs. girls. What I found is that we, as a school, are not teaching our boys as strategically as we could be and that we must address this concern as our percentages of boys increase each year.

I met with our West Memphis School Board on Tuesday night and received approval to try to improve our instruction of our male students, as well as females. We will be implementing strategies, school-wide, to address these concerns and to make sure that both genders receive the best instruction available but I am taking it a little further in the upcoming third grade classes.

We will be having one class with only boys, one with only girls, and one that is a mixed-gender classroom. They will still be taught by all three teachers in the third grade in their current subject areas but will have gender-based homerooms. I would like to give you the opportunity to provide input about where you would like your child to be placed if space permits. I will let you know ahead of time that I may not be able to accommodate all requests but will do my best to place your child in the best possible learning situation.

Please send this note back to the school office on Tuesday, May 26th, with your preference noted. You are also welcome to make notes if you have advice or any concerns to offer regarding our pilot program.

Thanks so much for all you do for your child's education. Together we can make more things possible for our students.

_____ I want my child in an all boys or all girls classroom if possible.

_____ I want my child in the mixed gender classroom if possible.

_____ I do not have a classroom preference for my child.

Child's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____

Comments: _____

What the research **says...**



- Girls have better hearing than boys, especially related to speech discrimination.
- Girls prefer visuals involving faces while boys prefer moving objects.
- Girls draw nouns while boys draw verbs.
- Women navigate directions using landmarks while men use absolute directions.
- Negative emotions do not naturally occur in the brains of boys but they do in girls. Boys learn these emotions.
- Boys enjoy risks and seek out risky situations whereas girls do not.
- Boys thrive on competition and girls strive to please.
- Stress improves learning in boys while it impairs learning in girls.

-Leonard Sax

Research continued...



- Boys prefer to read non-fiction and girls prefer fiction.
- Girls are excessively critical of their own work while boys often overestimate their abilities.
- There are no differences in what girls and boys can learn. But there are big differences in the best way to teach them.

-Leonard Sax

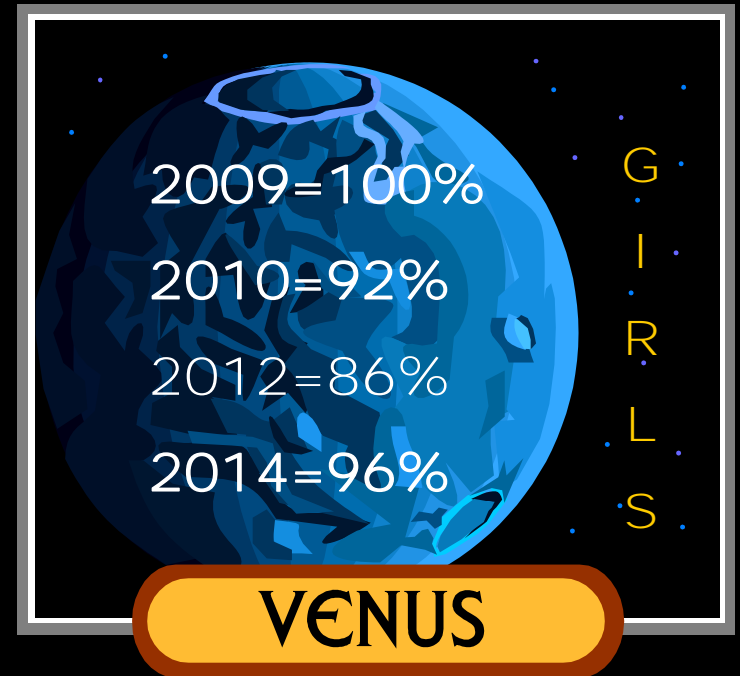
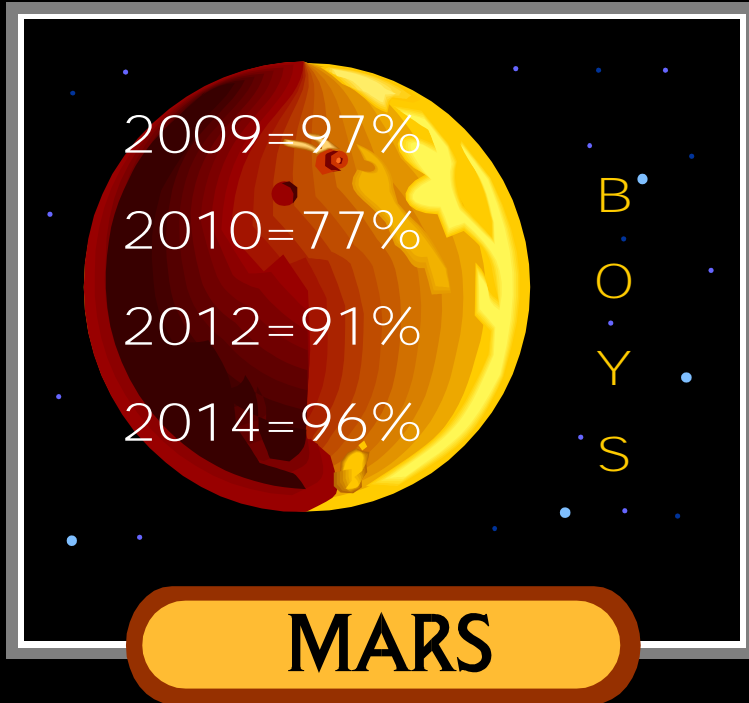
It mattered to us, so

we...

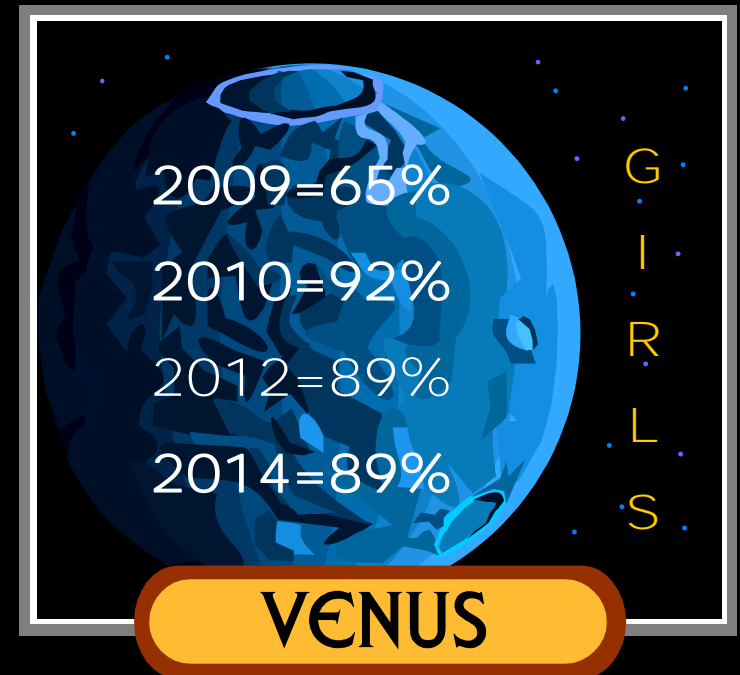
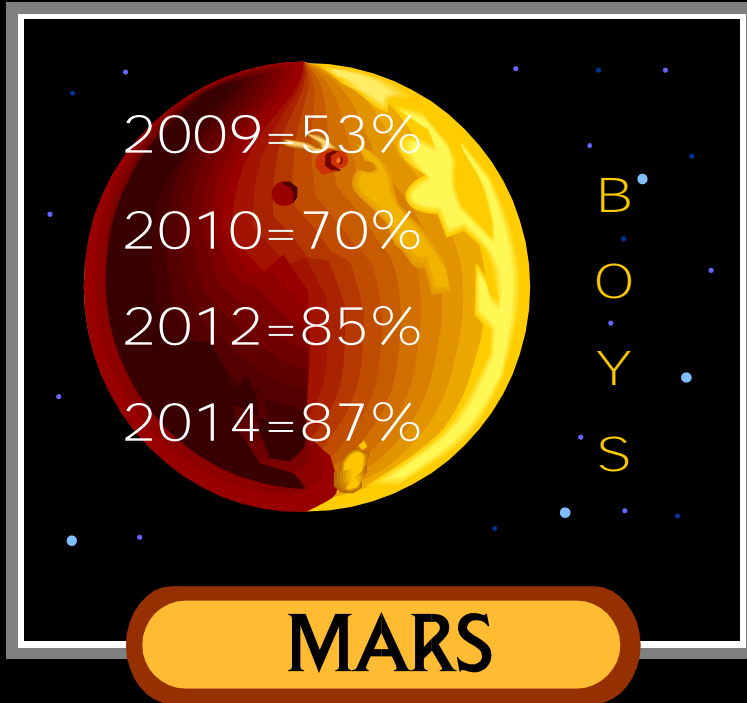
- Increased active, movement-related teaching
- Reconfigured seating arrangements for best auditory and visual results
- Purchased audio equipment for surround sound in the 3rd grade
- Provided teachers a toolbox of objects to divert excessive energy.
- Adjusted teaching rates as needed.
- Varied incentives to accommodate the desires of the students.
- Offered a wider variety of reading materials, writing prompts and math experiences



Boys vs. Girls: Math Benchmark, Before & After



Boys vs. Girls: Literacy Benchmark, Before & After



What about discipline?

3rd Grade

2009=13 Referrals

2010=9 Referrals

2011=5 Referrals

2012=6 Referrals

