

Single-sex schools vs. coed schools essay sample

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Background Information

■ Single-sex education has been growing in popularity since the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act was passed, allowing local educational agencies to use “ Innovative Programs” funds to support same-gender schools and classrooms “ consistent with existing law.” The U. S. Department of Education loosened its Title IX regulation in 2006 to diminish prohibitions on single-sex education.

■ <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/02/coed.aspx>

■ Boys and girls differ in the way they act, how they learn, and in their interests and abilities. They need an educational environment custom-made to meet their unique needs.

■ Without boys in their classes, girls are more likely to be leaders and reach higher levels of achievement, which leads to greater selfconfidence and higher professional ambitions.

■ Many students may find it easier to participate actively in classes where everyone is the same sex. Others enjoy the camaraderie that often connects classmates at single-sex schools.

■ The stereotypical thinking that girls don’t perform as well as boys in math and science may cause girls to hold back in those classes or not take those classes for fear of underachieving. Likewise, single sex language arts classes may help to dislodge stereotypical thinking that indicates males don’t perform as well as females in language arts.

Reasons Continued...

■ Though many boys’ and girls’ schools are at the top of their game

academically, they often have a more relaxed environment. This relaxed environment is created, in part, because boys and girls don't need to worry about impressing the other gender. The students can be themselves in class, and they can speak openly and honestly. At the same time, students in single-sex schools are often more willing to take risks because they do not fear falling on their face in front of the other sex. As a result, the classrooms in these schools are often dynamic, free, and bursting with ideas and conversation expressing a great education.

Evidence

Purpose: Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania traveled to Seoul South Korea. In Seoul Korea, students are RANDOMLY assigned either to single-gender or to coed high schools. Students cannot “opt out” of either the single-gender format or the coed format. This policy of random assignment was instituted in 1974 specifically to prevent clustering of students from particular backgrounds at particular schools.

Idea: The scholars from Penn realized that the random nature of the assignment creates the opportunity to compare single-gender schools with coed schools, without the usual problems which would accompany any attempt at a similar comparison among North American schools. The researchers found no differences between the single-gender and the coed schools in terms of teacher quality or in teacher training. Class sizes in the boys' schools were no different than in the typical coed school, and class sizes were actually slightly larger in girls' schools than in the typical coed school. There were no differences in socioeconomic background or prior

academic achievement between students attending single-gender schools and those attending coed schools.

Results: Girls attending girls' schools were significantly more likely to attend a 4-year college compared with girls attending coed schools. Likewise, boys who graduated from boys' schools were significantly more likely to attend a 4-year college compared with boys who graduated from coed schools. Boys at boys' schools also earned significantly higher test scores compared with boys at coed schools; likewise, girls at girls' schools also earned significantly higher test scores compared with girls at coed schools. The authors conclude:

-” Our analyses show that single-sex schools are causally linked with both college entrance exam scores and college attendance rates for both boys and girls. Attending all-boys schools or all-girls schools, rather than attending coeducational schools, is significantly associated with higher average scores on Korean and English test scores. Compared with coeducational schools, single-sex schools have a higher percentage of “Continued... (Connecticut Gender Gap)

■ Recent research about gender differences in education has raised alarms about the academic and social/ emotional development and health of boys (“boy crisis”). This crisis is characterized by lower scores by males on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), higher dropout and suspension rates for boys, a higher incidence of classification of learning disabilities, and lower test-taking rates and scores on standardized assessments. ■ According to the U. S. Department of Education’s Early

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Childhood Longitudinal Study, when children enter kindergarten, boys and girls perform similarly on reading and math assessments; however, around third grade, boys on average outperform girls in math and science, while girls outperform boys in reading. State test scores across the country show girls performing roughly as well as boys do in math while boys lag behind girls in reading and writing. ■ Connecticut reflects this national trend as well. Graph 1 displays student achievement rates for boys and girls on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) in the third, fifth, and eighth grades as reported by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Writing

(Percentage of Students at or Above Goal) Retrieved from <http://sdeportal.ct.gov> ■

Girls hold their own with boys in math and science on the CMTs and clearly outperform boys in reading and writing.

Conclusion

Our main point is that the single sex education system works better for students to achieve academic excellency. Boys and girls in single sex schools find it easier to focus on academics without the other gender around and find it easier to participate in classes actively. Also the stereotypes that girls and guys are only good in certain classes goes away and it shows that more boys will go into arts as a career and girls will go into sciences and math as a career. Boys and girls are freer to be who they are and they don't have to try to impress the other gender and aren't focused on that. All in all, the entire classroom is more free and open in single sex schools.

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