

Single-sex education and its effects

Business



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Have you ever wondered why boys and girls behave so differently? As a child, it seems as if the opposite gender is an entirely different species – especially when the boys are shooting spitballs and rough-housing around, while the girls are hanging out in their pre-designed little huddles, thinking and acting as one entity. Scientists around the world used to believe that these actions were what they called “learned behavior”; they thought that girls and boys acted the way that they did merely because society told them to (Sax 3). This theory claimed that girls played with dolls because they were told to, and boys played with trucks for the same reason, and these scientists claimed that in order to defeat gender stereotypes, parents must teach their sons to play with dolls and their daughters to play with trucks. And it is the same concept that brought about the ideas of gender-neutral child rearing and a gender-neutral learning system, since the very idea of having two different genders is a socially constructed concept (so claimed these aforementioned scientists).

However, in recent years there have been many scientific studies and findings that have supported the following: males and females are born with biologically innate differences in the way they hear, act, and learn. So why do we still teach children through a gender-neutral system that was created based upon a faulty hypothesis that has since been proven inaccurate? Why do people still cling to a learning system that has allowed tons of children to suffer and fall through the cracks? Many children struggle in school simply because they are not being taught in a manner that entices them, but instead one that berates them and tries to put them in a box. Through providing single-sex education, both boys and girls can learn in a way that is

more suited to their needs and abilities, and will come to appreciate subjects or activities that they may not have appreciated before because it was “ too girly” or “ too masculine”. There are many benefits for both males and females within a single-sex education system. For starters, boys and girls hear differently; it is scientifically proven that girls have better hearing than boys. In 1991, Janel Caine, a graduate student at the University of Florida, wanted to determine if playing music to premature babies would stimulate their appetite and cause them to grow faster – and it did.

Babies exposed to music were discharged an average of five days sooner than those who were not exposed. However, Caine did not break down her research by gender when doing so, and if gender is taken into account, then her report shows that baby girls exposed to music left the hospital an average of nine and a half days sooner than babies that were not exposed to music. Baby boys exposed to music, on the other hand, left the hospital no sooner (Wondra). Caine’s research proves that girls have better hearing than boys even as babies, and this difference only becomes greater as the children grow. And even though a child’s acuteness of hearing may seem like a small thing, it can have major impacts within a classroom.

For example, a female teacher may be talking at the front of the room in what she thinks is a suitable tone – and it is, for the girls – but it may be harder for the boy in the back row to hear her, and as a result he is often distracted by other objects or found to be staring out the window. Of course, this causes the teacher to repeatedly scold the boy and reprimand him for not paying attention, and eventually she sends him home with a note to his parents — telling them that she believes the child has ADD. The parents

<https://assignbuster.com/single-sex-education-and-its-effects/>

become rightfully concerned and take the boy to see a doctor, and if the doctor doesn't prescribe medicine, the school suggest that the parents take the boy to see another doctor — one who will prescribe medication to a child that may not actually need it. In the past decade, there has been an influx of young boys being medicated for ADD; and in 2005 a survey of all doctors in the Washington area, done by Dr. Leonard Sax, stated that “ In the majority of [ADD] cases, the diagnosis for ADD is made by the teacher.

Not by the parents, nor the neighbors, nor the doctor,” and that “ after talking to dozens of teachers in our country, I didn't find one who was aware of the studies showing that girls hear better than boys,” (Sax 5). This difference in hearing can also explain why a young girl may feel that her male teacher is yelling, but he thinks that he is talking in a normal voice while trying to keep the attention of the rest of the males in the classroom. And a young boy who is tapping his pencil on his desk may not be bothering the other boys around him, but he is distracting all of the girls in the classroom. The acuteness of hearing is just one factor that contributes to the differences between boys and girls and how they act within a classroom setting. Males and females are also genetically inclined to act and react in manners that are completely different from one another and require different teaching styles, some of which cannot be applied in the same classroom. For example, boys and girls react differently to stress; boys tend to thrive under stress, while girls are likely to perform worse.

This is because when they're put under pressure, boys get a surge of adrenaline that creates the “ fight or flight” response, but when girls are put under pressure they get a surge of acetylcholine which causes nausea and

<https://assignbuster.com/single-sex-education-and-its-effects/>

dizziness (Sax 68-69). Girls are also more likely to turn to each other for help when they are put under stress in what Dr. Shelly Taylor calls the “tend-and-befriend response” or “the tendency of females to turn towards one another for support and defend each other against perceived threats,” (James). These responses to stress may be able to explain why boys are likely to perform better than expected on high-pressure standardized tests, and girls are more likely to perform lower than expectations predict. In order to achieve the best results on tests for each gender, it is suggested to put boys into a high-pressure event, such as a team race over the material with a reward for the first place team. However, for girls, it’s suggested that teachers should create a low-stress environment and provide each girl with as much time as she needs to finish her test.

However, if a teacher tried to use both of these methods within a co-ed classroom, neither one would provide great results. The high-pressured event would cause most of the girls to either freak out or disregard the race as silly, and a low-stress test would cause most boys to see the test as something jovial and they would, in turn, waste a large majority of their time goofing off. Similarly, boys and girls learn using different methods and require different styles of teaching in order for both genders to fully understand the material. One of the best examples of this is in math class, since females use the cerebral cortex for spatial tasks and males use the hippocampus. In other words, girls are better at using visual landmarks over compass directions, while boys perform better with compass directions.

In terms of learning math, boys are typically fascinated by “math alone” and why things work the way that they do; girls, on the other hand, typically

<https://assignbuster.com/single-sex-education-and-its-effects/>

don't care about how things work, but are more interested in how they can relate what they're learning to the real world. Also, girls typically think they aren't as smart as they truly are and need positive reassurance, whereas boys often think they are brilliant when they may be getting B's or C's in school and often need a reality check. Furthermore, boys usually view the teacher as a last resort, and asking the teacher for help is seen as nerdy, but girls view teachers as an ally and typically go to the teacher for help as soon as a problem arises. Boys and girls vary in many different ways, and single-sex education can be very beneficial for everyone, especially those at an elementary school age or younger. However, there are many people who oppose the idea of single-sex education and believe that "there is strong evidence of negative consequences accompanying segregating by sex and that doing so promotes the development of negative gender stereotypes," (Blake). Those in opposition to single-sex education also believe that separating the two genders doesn't prepare them for the real world and hinders their ability to interact with the opposite gender.

Although, in contrast, proponents of single-sex education say that it is preparing children for the real world, since in the real world it doesn't matter if you're considered attractive, but whether or not you have gotten your work done properly. These aforementioned proponents claim that in single-sex schools one's popularity comes from a variety of things, such as grades, athleticism, and personality, whereas in co-ed schools popularity mainly derives from one's physical appearance – making single-sex schools more attune to the real world. Similarly, there have been many positive reviews from kids who went to a single-sex school, or from their parents, about the

vast difference that it has made in their self-confidence and their grades. One particular mother, whose daughter attended an all-girls school for three years said, “ I feel that the single gender environment has given her a level of confidence and informed interest in math and science that she may not have had otherwise,” (Stanberry). Single-sex education has proven to be very influential for boys as well.

Benjamin Wright, a principal for a low-income Seattle public school that recently changed to single-sex education stated that “ In the [coed] environment that we had before, we spent most of our time taking care of crises. Now we’re actually teaching kids. In terms of bullying: we’ve almost completely stopped that. Once we split the classes, the boys went from the 10th percentile to the 73rd percentile [on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning]” (National Association for Single Sex Education). Single-sex education has also been praised by many college professors, and Professor Robin Robertson has said she can identify students from girls-only schools on the first day of class, saying, “ They were the young women whose hands shot up in the air, who were not afraid to defend their positions, and who assumed I would be interested in their perspective,” (CRC Health).

In the end, there are many benefits and lots of scientific research that support the usage of a single-sex education system, but having single-sex schools alone will not solve the problem. Along with separating boys and girls into different classrooms, teachers also must understand the differences between boys and girls and be able to adequately teach both genders in a way that appeals and interests them. Through having single-sex schools, or just single-sex classrooms, boys and girls can thrive, learn, and grow in ways

<https://assignbuster.com/single-sex-education-and-its-effects/>

that they never thought possible. Works Cited Blake, Chris. “ The Disadvantages of Single Gender Education Schools.” n.

d. Synonym. website. 7 January 2015. CRC Health.

The Many Advantages of Single-Sex Schools. 2011. website. 7 January 2015. James, Abigail.

“ Gender Differences in Response to Stress.” 17 May 2010. education. com. website. 7 January 2015.

National Association for Single Sex Education. Advantages for Boys. 2013. website. 7 January 2015.

Sax, Leonard. Why Gender Matters. Doubleday, 2005. book. Stanberry, Kristin. “ Single-sex education: the pros and the cons.

” n. d. Great! Schools. website. 7 January 2015. Wondra, Chris.

“ Listen. Boys and girls hear differently. And it matters.” 22 August 2012. We teach we learn. website.

7 January 2015.