



## Research Brief

### High Schools for Girls

**Question:** What do we know about high schools for girls?

**Summary of Findings:**

The leading authority on high schools for girls is the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (<http://singlesexschools.org>). They advocate for the promise of single sex education:

In the past five years, there has been an extraordinary surge of interest in single-sex public education. The most important factor driving this resurgence is the growing recognition that girls and boys learn differently. Educators who understand these differences can inspire every child to learn to the best of her or his ability. Conversely, educators and parents are recognizing that all too often, coeducational settings actually reinforce gender stereotypes. Boys at coed schools will tell you "music is for girls." Girls at coed schools will tell you that computer science is for boys.

NASSPE list schools with single sex programs (<http://singlesexschools.org/schools-schools.htm>):

Eight years ago, only four public schools in the United States offered single-sex educational opportunities. As of April 2006, at least 209 public schools in the United States are offering gender-separate educational opportunities. Most of those are COED schools which offer single-sex CLASSROOMS, retaining at least some coed activities (in some cases, only lunch and certain electives are coed). However, 44 of those 209 schools are COMPLETELY single-sex in format.

Some reports claim the long-term effects show no differences between students who attend single-sex versus coed schooling. But results from studies are mixed, but largely because most focus on grades or test scores, instead of breadth of educational opportunity, attitude toward school, motivation and engagement, or self concept and self esteem. The ERIC Digest on single sex education (<http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-2/sex.html>) summarizes the research findings this way:

Studies of attitudinal variables yielded some consistent findings, including differences in specific domains of self-concept between girls in single- and mixed-sex schools (but no overall differences), and findings that support the view that single-sex contexts foster less stereotypical views of subjects. Studies also concur that students perceive single-sex school environments to be more orderly.

Studies finding positive achievement effects attributable to school type tend to view their findings as specific to certain contexts and group characteristics (including socioeconomic status). Some studies recognize that some single-sex schools are "doing something different" that may be reproducible in the coeducational context. These studies view policy and training interventions as particularly valuable.

Other studies have not claimed positive achievement effects for single-sex programs. Although research finds that girls view the single-sex classroom as more conducive to learning, research fails to confirm significant gain in girls' math and science achievement in the single-sex classroom.

Finally, the research, while inconsistent in its assessments of whether single-sex education is "better" than coeducation for girls, does reveal areas of consensus on specific indicators, which may serve as starting points for further research into how single-sex schools affect educational outcomes.

NASSPE suggests that the advantages of single-sex education for girls fall into three categories: (i) expanded educational opportunity, (ii) custom-tailored learning and instruction and (iii) greater autonomy, especially in heterosexual relationships. Their Web site (<http://singlesexschools.org/adgirls.html>) expands on each of these ideas.



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### Online Resources:

(Note: ERIC documents can be found by going to <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> and entering the ERIC ID#)

#### **National Association for Single Sex Public Education**

In the past five years, there has been an extraordinary surge of interest in single-sex public education. The most important factor driving this resurgence is the growing recognition that girls and boys learn differently. Educators who understand these differences can inspire every child to learn to the best of her or his ability. Conversely, educators and parents are recognizing that all too often, coeducational settings actually reinforce gender stereotypes. Boys at coed schools will tell you "music is for girls." Girls at coed schools will tell you that computer science is for boys.

<http://singlesexschools.org/>

#### **Schools That Are Completely Single Sex**

<http://singlesexschools.org/schools-schools.htm>

#### **K-12 Single-Sex Education: What Does the Research Say? ERIC Digest.**

Haag, Pamela

Although research on the effects of K-12 single-sex education is inconclusive in general, some common themes emerge in the research literature. This Digest reviews that research with particular attention to effects on girls' attitudes and achievement. The Digest first discusses attitudinal variables (i.e., self-esteem and attitudes toward academic subjects) and then explores research on achievement variables. The Digest concludes with a summary of research findings, including the following: (1) studies of attitudinal variables yielded some consistent findings, including differences in specific domains of self-concept between girls in single- and mixed-sex schools, and findings that support the view that single-sex contexts foster less stereotypical views of subjects; (2) studies finding positive achievement effects attributable to school type tend to view their findings as specific to certain contexts and group characteristics (including socioeconomic status); (3) some studies recognize that some single-sex schools are "doing something different" that may be reproducible in the coeducational context--these studies view policy and training interventions as particularly valuable; and (4) other studies have not claimed positive achievement effects for single-sex programs. The research, while inconsistent in its assessments of whether single-sex education is "better" than coeducation for girls, does reveal areas of consensus on specific indicators, which may serve as starting points for further research into how single-sex schools affect educational outcomes.

ERIC #: ED444758

<http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-2/sex.html>

#### **Single-Sex Schools**

NASBE Policy Update, Vol. 10, No. 11

National Association of State Boards of Education

[http://www.nasbe.org/Educational\\_Issues/Policy\\_Updates/10\\_11.html](http://www.nasbe.org/Educational_Issues/Policy_Updates/10_11.html)

#### **Gendered Schooling**

The public debate over single-sex schooling versus coed schooling is a hot topic not only in the United States, but also around the globe. Several countries have experimented with public, single-sex schools, and research has been conducted to study the academic and psychological effects this type of schooling has on both boys and girls alike. Currently in the United States, there are only eleven public single-sex schools. The vast majority of all-girl and all-boy schools are private. As this becomes more of an issue in the United States, more researchers are investigating the effects of separate and coed schooling. Current research has concluded that single-sex education seems to be most beneficial to females and males from disadvantaged backgrounds, whereas males benefit most from coeducational settings. There are many short-term benefits to single-sex schooling, however the long-term effects show no differences between students who attend single-sex versus coed schooling. (Includes terrific summary of the research)

[http://www.cofc.edu/~winfield/socy354/Group2004/Group%204/Gendered\\_Schooling.html](http://www.cofc.edu/~winfield/socy354/Group2004/Group%204/Gendered_Schooling.html)



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### **Single Sex Academies**

Annotated list of online resources

<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/schoolreform/ssex.htm>

### **Single-Sex Education: The pros and cons**

List of online references presenting both the Pros and Cons of Single Sex education.

<http://www.etni.org/singlesexedu.htm>

### **Effects of Attending Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools on Achievement, Attitudes, Behaviors, and Sex Differences.**

Marsh, Herbert W.

Journal of Educational Psychology; v81 n1 p70-85 Mar 1989

The effects of single-sex versus coeducational arrangements were compared for 2,332 Catholic high school students representing 21 single-sex boys', 26 single-sex girls', and 33 coeducational schools. Various outcomes during the sophomore-to-senior period were nearly unaffected by school type. These findings contradict those of earlier national studies.

ERIC #: EJ396046

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<http://www.principalspartnership.com>

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