



Talking Points for Responding to Arguments Against Single-Sex Schools

Claim: There is a Lack of Research Demonstrating the Value of Girls' Schools

Response: The claim of a lack of well-designed research showing that single-sex schooling improves academic performance is refuted by the 2005 U.S. Department of Education's *Single-Sex Versus Coeducation Schooling: A Systematic Review*. After looking at all of the research comparing single-sex and coed schools, the final summary reports that single-sex schools were more effective than coed schools both academically and socio-emotionally. *Additional research supporting girls' schools' value is found at the end of this document.*

Claim: The Empirical Evidence Supporting All-Girls Education is Minimal

Response: Though one could conclude that the benefits of single-sex education are small, as measured by empirical research standards, the key is in how one interprets "small" benefits. While some researchers may view "small" as statistically "insignificant," other researchers, and many educators, interpret ANY benefits to the healthy development and education of girls as critical evidence of the positive impact of all-girls schools.

Claim: Single-Sex Education does not Educate Students any Better than Coed Schools

Response: The faculty and administrators at girls' schools are experts in and dedicated to how girls' learn best. Various research studies have concluded that girls' school students develop greater self-confidence¹, leadership skills², and heightened career aspirations³ compared to their coed counterparts. Dr. Rosemary C. Salomone, in the April 2006 edition of Columbia University's *Teacher College Record*, examined the research surrounding single-sex education, ranging from developmental psychology perspectives to studies on the classroom environment and teacher-student interaction. She stated, "[d]rawing from that research, one of the key arguments supporting single-sex programs is that they create an institutional and classroom climate in which female students can express themselves freely and frequently, and develop higher order thinking skills."

¹ Dr. Rosemary C. Salomone, "Same, Difference, Equal: Rethinking Single-Sex Schooling"; Dr. Linda Sax, "Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College"

² Dr. Alison Booth, Australian National University and Dr. Patrick J. Nolen, "Gender Difference in Risk Behavior: Does Nurture Matter?" and "Choosing to Compete: How Different are Girls and Boys?"; Goodman Research Group, "The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools"

³ Dr. Cary M. Watson, "Sex Roles: A Journal of Research"; Dr. Linda Sax, "Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College"; Goodman Research Group, "The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools"

Claim: Girls' Schools Reinforce Gender Stereotypes

Response: The central value of single-sex schools is freedom from, not reinforcement of, gender stereotypes. When you combine strong female mentors and positive role models, reduced sex stereotyping in curriculum and classroom, and abundant learning opportunities, the results are clear. Educational researcher Cornelius Riordan, Professor of Sociology at Providence College and author of *Girls and Boys in School: Together or Separate?* sums it up, “Females especially do better academically in single-sex schools and colleges across a variety of cultures. Having conducted research on single-sex and coeducational schools for the past two decades, I have concluded that single-sex schools help to improve student achievement.”

Dr. Rosemary C. Salomone, a professor at St. John's University School of Law, states in her book *Same, Difference, Equal: Rethinking Single-Sex Schooling*, “All-girls settings do provide girls a certain comfort level that helps them develop greater self-confidence and broader interests, especially as they approach adolescence. Research has found that single-sex schools and classes promote less-gender-polarized attitudes toward certain subjects—math and science in the case of girls...”

Claim: Single-Sex Schools do not Prepare Girls for the “Real World”

Response: The statement that the opportunities for cooperative, positive interactions between boys and girls are reduced in single-sex schools does not take into account the healthy, constructive co-curricular opportunities: joint service programs, choirs, theatre productions, debates, field trips, etc. as well as male role models in the schools who are faculty, administrators, coaches, etc.

Claim: Girls are not Ready to Assume Leadership Positions in a Coed World

Response: One of the most important advantages of an all-girls school is every leadership position—in the classroom, on the stage, in student government, on the playing field—is held by a girl. This results in every student seeing female leadership role models in action daily. Girls' schools graduates have the expectation that women are—and will be—leaders. They are undoubtedly aware of the reality and predominance of male leadership, especially in the financial and political sectors, but they graduate with the confidence to “lean in” to new opportunities because of the extensive leadership experiences presented to them at all-girls schools.

Claim: Single-Sex Public Schools are Illegal

Response: Single-sex schools are not illegal. Title IX specifically allows single-sex public schools in grades K-12. This was a deliberate provision included by the sponsors, Congresswoman Edith Green of Oregon and Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, to reassure their fellow lawmakers that Title IX would not prohibit single-sex public education. For this reason, the opening clause of Title IX (1681.a.1) states “in regard to admissions to educational institutions, this section shall apply only to institutions of vocational education, professional education, and graduate higher education, and to public institutions of undergraduate higher education.” Single-sex vocational schools such as trade schools to learn plumbing, carpentry etc. are prohibited, but non-vocational single-sex public schools in grades K-12 are explicitly allowed in Title IX.

Additional Research in Support of Girls' Schools:

- In a 2009 study, Alison Booth, Professor of Economics at the Australian National University and at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom, writes, “We found that girls from single sex schools were as likely to take risks as boys...and were more likely to take a risk than coed girls. Moreover, [girls proved] more likely to choose to take a risk when assigned to an all-girl group.”

- A 2009, peer-reviewed study by UCLA compared a large and representative sample of girls' school graduates to their coed peers. Uniquely, this study, drawing from the UCLA Higher Education Research Freshman Survey, separated single-sex schooling from other influences including socioeconomic background, parental education, and characteristics of high schools attended.
 - In mathematics and computer skills, girls' school alumnae rate their confidence at the start of college 10 percent higher than do their coed counterparts.
- Seventy-one percent of girls' school alumnae consider college as a prelude to graduate school, compared to 66 percent from coed schools. Likewise, 45 percent of women from single-sex schools (compared to 41 percent of their coed peers) choose a college in part for its graduate school admissions record.
- In single-sex schools political dialogue thrives: nearly 60 percent of girls' school alumnae compared to 47.7 percent of coed counterparts report discussing politics in class and with friends. These same women view staying current with world affairs essential.
- More than 80 percent of girls' school alumnae consider their academic performance highly successful compared to 75 percent of women graduates from coed schools.
- Nearly half of all women graduates of single-sex schools (44.6 percent) rate their public speaking ability high as compared to 38.5 percent of women graduates of coed schools.
- In writing, 64.2 percent of girls' school alumnae report confidence in their writing skills, compared to 58.8 percent of women graduates of coed schools.
- Alumnae of single-sex schools spend more time studying, talking with teachers outside class, tutoring peers, and studying with others: 60 percent of girls' school alumnae spent 11-plus hours a week on studies, compared to 42 percent from coed schools.
- A 2005 study conducted for NCGS by the Goodman Research Group of Cambridge, Massachusetts, which surveyed over 1,000 college freshmen about their preparedness for post-secondary work, found that 93 - 99% of girls' school alumnae expressed appreciation for their schools' strong academic curricula, abundant individualized classroom attention, and sound preparation for college. These girls reported self-confidence in public speaking and comfort interacting with faculty as early as their first-year in college.
- In Great Britain, the National Foundation for Educational Research examined 2002 student performance from 979 primary and 2,954 secondary schools. Among its objectives was to test assertions that single-sex education can be beneficial for boys and girls alike. The study concluded girls' schools help counter gender-stereotyping in subject choices and girls in single-sex schools perform better than girls in coed schools, regardless of socio-economic and ability levels.