

A Foundation for Success

Devon Preparatory School is a boys' school not because single sex education is our mission, but rather, because single sex education helps us accomplish our mission. Our students benefit from the focus on academic achievement and leadership made possible by fewer peer and social distractions, yet enjoy many social and co-curricular activities with young women from other schools. For most, it's the best of both worlds.

A few years ago, this approach to teaching was controversial. No longer. Today, expert after expert is acknowledging the fact that America's school culture puts boys at a disadvantage. Today, a growing chorus praises the unique opportunities boys' schools provide. Following are some articles on the value of single sex education for boys.

Why A Boys' School?

(from International Boys' School Coalition website, www.boyschoolcoalition.org)

Schools that educate only boys enjoy some powerful advantages over schools that serve both boys and girls. Boys' schools are able to develop their resources, choose their teachers, and design their programs with only one goal in mind -- to meet the educational and developmental needs of young men.

During recent decades, ground-breaking brain research using FMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), investigations into the developmental differences between boys and girls, and studies of the sociology of schools have all helped us understand how to best educate boys and girls. At the same time, ironically, it has become clear that an alarming number of boys -- most of whom are attending coeducational institutions - are not succeeding in school. This well-documented and broadly publicized phenomenon, coupled with new knowledge about learning, has led to a re-examination of many assumptions underlying current educational practices. One of the results has been a growing understanding of the benefits of single-gender educational settings and an increased awareness of the advantages of boys' schools.

In the middle of the 20th Century, boys' schools were common in secondary and higher education, with even some public single-sex institutions of higher education. But during the 1970's, most all-male institutions generally became coed due to federal law, Title 9 of the Civil Rights Act, and due to the fear among private institutions that they would lose students unless they too became coed. Some independent schools remained single-sex, however, and in recent years, there have been several movements to renew such institutions.

Not just better students; more well-rounded people

The benefits of single-sex schools are not only academic. Just as importantly, single-sex education has been shown to broaden students' horizons, to allow them to feel free to explore the own strengths and interests, not constrained by gender stereotypes. A British researcher compared the attitudes of 13 and 14 year-old pupils toward different subjects. Students at coed schools tended to have gender-typical subject preferences: boys at coed schools liked math and science and did NOT like drama or languages, whereas boys at single-sex schools were more interested in drama, biology and languages. Likewise, girls at girls-only schools were more interested in math and science than were girls at coed schools.

Source: A. Stables. Differences between pupils from mixed and single-sex schools in their enjoyment of school subjects and in their attitudes to science and to school. Educational Review, 42(3):221-230, 1990.

A University of Virginia study published in 2003 found that boys who attended single-sex schools were more than twice as likely to pursue interests in subjects such as art, music, drama, and foreign languages, compared to boys of comparable ability who attended coed schools. Single-sex schools break down gender stereotypes.

Source: Abigail Norfleet James and Herbert Richards, "Escaping Stereotypes: educational attitudes of male alumni of single-sex and coed schools," Psychology of Men and Masculinity, 4:136-148, 2003.

Why Attend a Boys' School?

From: Robert Kennedy
Your Guide to Private Schools

Why should your son attend a boys' school instead of a 'traditional' coed school? I can think of three reasons.

Freedom To Be Themselves

Boys thrive in a single sex academic setting for many reasons. With no girls to 'impress', boys can get on with being themselves. Conformity gives way to individuality. They feel free to explore subjects like languages and the arts without fear of ridicule. Sexual stereotypes fade into the background. Macho posturing yields to sensitive dialogue.

Boys and Girls Are NOT the Same

When I attended Westmount High School back in the 1950's, single sex classes were the order of the day. Well, for most of the day. Our home rooms were segregated. Certain classes were not.

We were joined by the girls for certain subjects with low enrollments like trigonometry. Orchestra and band were integrated classes; phys ed was not. I had many friends who attended boys' or girls' schools. Looking back I wonder what all the fuss is about. Why? Because it seems pretty obvious to me that boys and girls are quite different people. Educating boys and girls in single sex settings is not an assault on equal rights. It is an opportunity which ultimately will enhance equality by allowing boys and girls to develop their own unique characters.

Different Learning Styles

A single sex school allows boys to explore art, drama and music without fear of being a freak in front of his feminine peers. A boys' school develops a boy's uniqueness and his individuality. Teachers in a boys' school can teach effectively in ways which reach boys and appeal to their learning style.

The Issue

Which works better? Single sex education or co-education?

We have spent years promoting equality of the sexes. Eliminating gender bias has been a huge societal theme for several decades now.

With that in mind coeducation, which is based on that laudable theme of equality seems like the right way to go. But the plain truth is that boys and girls learn in different ways. Research shows that a girl's brain is different from a boy's brain. One size does not fit all. Coeducation does not work for every child. Hence, the move to revisit the traditional notion of educating the sexes separately.

I view single sex education as an opportunity to capitalize on the learning differences inherent in boys and girls. There are other considerations too. Many children thrive in a private single sex school. The social pressures are gentler. Your child can 'grow' at his own pace. Gender stereotypes are not a major factor. The faculty at single sex schools understand how their students learn. They adapt their teaching styles to those specific needs. You and I will discover other advantages as well. A single sex school for your child is definitely an educational solution worth looking into!

Background

The conventional thinking thirty years ago was that coeducation would break down gender stereotypes. That thinking turned out to be flawed. Boys in coeducational settings are less likely to take courses in the arts or tackle advanced academic subjects simply to avoid being typecast as a 'nerd'. Private single sex schools are flourishing once again because parents have realized that learning is probably more important than being properly socialized.

Three Reasons for Choosing a Single Sex School

Your child's happiness is one of the most important factors in selecting a school. Here are three reasons why a single sex school might prove to be the best choice for your son or daughter.

Competition

Boys tend to soften their competitive edge and become more collaborative in a single sex setting. They can just be 'boys' and not worry about what the 'girls' might think.

Academics

Boys participate in choirs and orchestras and learn Latin in single sex settings. These are just a few examples of how children will break out of their stereotypical roles and behavior when they are left to their own devices. Single sex education has a delightful way of encouraging children to be fearless, to be curious, to be enthusiastic - in short, to just be themselves.

Socialization

Boys have always felt a need to impress girls in the classroom. Girls usually feel as though the boys are always teasing them. Surely there is enough time in college and in later life to deal with social and other kinds of intercourse? I feel very strongly that children are subjected to an avalanche of pressures from every quarter to become adults before they are ready to do so. They grow up too quickly. Let them be children for a few more years. Single sex education with its gentler, more controlled social outlets is just the ticket for many children. Maybe it's right for your child.

Resources

[The Yin and Yang of Learning: Educators Seek Solutions in Single-Sex Education](#)

[Research Summary: Single-sex versus Coeducation](#) From Long Beach Unified School District

[Single Sex Schools](#) From the National Association of State Boards of Education

[How Effective is Single Sex Teaching](#) From Britain's National Literacy Trust.

[Single-Sex Public Schools](#) Podcast from Boston Public Radio

[Secretary Spellings Announces More Choices in Single Sex Education](#) The Federal Education Department moves with the times.

[Single-Sex vs Coed: The Evidence](#) From the National Association for Single Sex Public Education