

CCKM Review of Evidence - Single-Sex Schooling

Terri Thompson & Charles Ungerleider (University of British Columbia) report on how single-sex schooling is being defined in the popular press, and then systematically review academic research that addresses claims of increased achievement and improved educational experience for boys and girls. Finally, they present policy directions suggested by the research.

Single-Sex Schooling in the News

Newspaper articles published between 2003 and 2004 tend to define single-sex schooling in terms of:

- educational benefits
- learning styles
- parental choice
- gender gaps
- social distraction



What Does the Research Say?

The research studies mirror the issues defined in the newspapers but few if any of the claims:

- few achievement differences between single-sex and mixed-sex schooling
- some psychological and social benefits for girls in single-sex classes
- reduced sex-role stereotyping based on subject areas

The research does not confirm the media's suggestion that boys have greater academic success in single-sex classrooms.

What Does the Research Say About Policy?

Conditions that give rise to differences in academic achievement or learning climate can be best addressed by policies and practices that:

- ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys
- eliminate sex discrimination in instruction
- manage student behaviour, encouraging respect and harmony
- give boys and girls the chance to study and learn together

How Well Is Single-Sex Schooling Studied?

Search of studies published in English between 1990 and 2004 identified 160 articles, but only 48 actually *tested or compared* the effects of single-sex classrooms. The research was methodologically weak. Most studies compared private to public schools, or single-sex schools to coeducational schools, making it difficult or impossible to separate the influence of single-sex classroom environments from differences in:

- home and parent influences
- socio-economic, achievement, and motivational levels
- philosophic, ideological, and pedagogical factors