

Single-Sex Schooling: What the research says

Charles Ungerleider & Terri Thompson
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Boy 'Tribes' On Frontier In Reading

Md. School Segregates To Boost Achievement

By Fredrick Kunkle
Washington Post Staff Writer
Saturday, January 8, 2005; Page B01

CNN.com/EDUCATION

Teachers: Kids focus in single-gender classes

Monday, May 26, 2003 Posted: 9:08 AM EDT (1308 GMT)

KIMBERLY, Idaho (AP) -- Mr. O'Donnell's sixth-grade class asks a lot of questions about their social studies assignments. So many, in fact, that he has to stop them just so he can explain their next task.

It's one of the benefits, he says, of the single-gender classes the public school switched to this year.

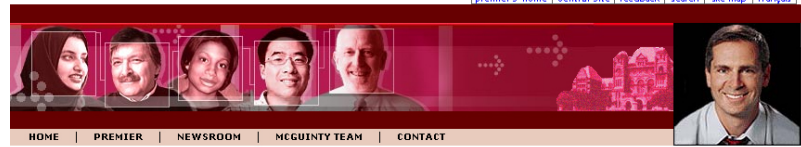
Now, in math, science, social studies



Sixth-grade boys work together in their English class at Kimberly Middle School in Kimberly, Idaho.

What Makes Math Fun? Ask Those in Single-Sex Classes

By MERRI ROSENBERG. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Feb 19, 1995. pg. WC27, 1 pgs



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
January 19, 2005

CLOSING THE READING GAP

Premier and Michael "Pinball" Clemons Encourage Boys To Read To Succeed



Education

Where the Boys Are

Do children learn better in sex-segregated classrooms? Increasing evidence says yes

By Liza Finlay



As recently framed by news media — Single-sex schooling . . .

- ... is an educational benefit.
- ... is a solution to the gender gap in achievement.
- ... is respectful of differences in learning styles.
- ... provides a psychologically safe (less intimidating) environment for girls.
- ... is a solution to sexual distraction.
- ... improves or diminishes educational equity.
- ... is a solution to the feminization of curriculum.
- ... is a choice that should be available to students and parents.

The questions one might ask about single-sex schooling —

- Does single-sex schooling improve student achievement? For whom? Under what conditions? With what consequences?
- How does single-sex schooling affect...
 - ... course selection?
 - ... dropout rates?
 - ... graduation rates?
 - ... interest in postsecondary education?

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The questions one might ask about single-sex schooling (continued)

- Does single-sex schooling enhance or diminish the educational experience of boys and/or girls in terms of...
 - ... enjoyment?
 - ... self-confidence?
 - ... self-concept about academic ability?
 - ... motivation?
 - ... comfort?
 - ... willingness to ask questions?
 - ... deportment?
- What is the impact of single-sex schooling on social cohesion?
- What is the impact of single-sex schooling on the ways in which males and females interact with one another?

What counts as good research?

- The design and methods of the research are appropriate to the research question posed.
- The research employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment.
- The research includes analyses that adequately supports the general findings.
- The research includes measurements or observational methods that provide reliable data.

What counts as good research? (continued)

- Claims of causal relationships are made only in random-assignment experiments or designs that substantially eliminate plausible competing explanations for the results that are obtained.
- Studies and methods are described in sufficient detail to permit replication.
- The research is accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of qualified independent experts through a rigorous review.

The state of the research

- Studies typically use samples of convenience.
- Studies often use non-equivalent group comparisons (e.g., single-sex private schools or denominational ones are compared with coeducational public schools).
- Studies do not adequately control for background (SES, motivation, parenting), prior achievement, or environmental influences (teacher influence, programmatic changes).
- Even when control has been imposed by statistically equating non-equivalent groups, results are often over-stated.

Research themes (not results)

- Single-sex education benefits students' academic achievement.
- There are no measurable differences between single-sex and coed education on a variety of variables.
- There are psycho-social benefits for girls in single-sex classes.
- Girls prefer single-sex classes, and/or boys prefer coed classes.
- Coeducation reinforces sex-role stereotypes and gendered subject areas.
- Single-sex schools/classrooms break down sex-role stereotypes and gendered subject areas.

What the research says about single-sex schooling

- The research is inconclusive; single-sex schooling is not an unambiguous benefit to students.
- There is general agreement that single-sex schooling decreases girls' feelings of intimidation and harassment by boys.
- Single-sex schooling does not eliminate sex discrimination in the school system.

CCKM moving this knowledge forward

Single-Sex Schooling

Summary

CCKM CANADIAN CENTRE FOR KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION

Single Sex Schooling

Teri Thompson & Charles Longpré
The University of British Columbia

Summary Report
November, 2008

Often associated with increasing student achievement and improving the educational experiences for both girls and boys, single sex schooling has garnered renewed interest among education professionals, researchers, politicians and parents. The purpose of this study was to (a) review recent newspaper articles to determine how the issue of single sex schooling was being defined, and (b) to undertake a systematic review of academic research focusing on single-sex schooling.

Single Sex Schooling in the News

The way that issues are defined by news media often influences how the public, policy-makers, and practitioners view and understand those issues. In order to understand how the issue of single sex schooling was being defined, an inventory of newspaper articles published between 2003 and 2008 was created using the LexisNexis and Canadian Newsstand databases. Single sex schooling was defined in five dominant ways: (1) as an educational benefit issue, (2) as a learning styles issue, (3) as a gender gap issue, (4) as a choice issue, and (5) as a distraction issue.

A dominant sub-theme in these newspaper articles was the potential for single sex schooling to address and mitigate the disadvantage of boys. Single sex schooling was presented as a means to helping boys improve their concentration, engagement and thus academic achievement in school. Typically, the newspaper articles focused on the middle school age group, defining the period as the 'normal' years. Boys were identified slightly more frequently than girls as being disadvantaged by the current system, and (5) as a distraction issue.

The distraction issue, however, included two related sub-themes which were tied directly to a single gender. The framing of the distraction issue was tightly bound to the sexuality of girls and to negative behaviours of boys, girls distract boys on a neuromaternal level, while boys distract girls with their disruptive behaviour.¹ The newspaper accounts promoted the

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Full Report

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