



## NATIONAL COALITION OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS

The following is an excerpt from *The Girls' School Advantage*, a 2010 publication produced by NCGS.

# The Benefits of Attending a Girls' School:

## what the research shows

**Outgoing,  
daring, and  
willing to  
take a risk**

The notion of girls deferring to boys in class discussion, academic competitions, and the pursuit of leadership roles has been around for years. There has been concern, especially among parents and educators, that in the mixed gender classroom, girls in early adolescence, if not before, learn to shy away from competitive behavior and risk taking. Is there truth to that argument? A 2009 study conducted in the UK, researchers report findings that address this very question, and prove what educators and psychologists have long suspected:

Of this multilayered study, Alison Booth, Professor Economics at University of Essex and CEPR Research Fellow at Australian National University, writes: "We found that girls from single-sex schools were as likely to take a risk 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."

**What might  
explain these  
findings?**

"In a coeducational environment," continues Booth, "adolescent girls are more explicitly confronted with adolescent subculture (such as personal attractiveness to members of the opposite sex) than they are in a single-sex environment. This may lead them to conform to boys' expectations of how girls should behave to avoid social rejection. If risk avoidance is viewed as being a part of female gender identity while risk seeking is a part of male gender identity, then being in a coeducational school environment might lead girls to make safer choices than boys."

**Girls put  
academic  
work first**

Girls' schools create a culture of achievement in which academic progress is of great importance, and the discovery and development of a girl's individual potential is paramount. Time in the classroom is spent learning, not flirting.

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: “[F]emales especially do better academically in single-sex schools and colleges, across a variety of cultures. Having conducted research on single-sex and co-educational schools for the past two decades, I have concluded that single-sex schools help to improve student achievement. My conclusions are based on high quality national data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics, as well as on studies conducted around the globe.”

Riordan credits a range of factors, including strong role models; reduced sex stereotypes in curriculum and classroom interaction; as well as an abundance of leadership opportunities.

**Not just equal  
opportunity,  
but every  
opportunity**

In the 1990s, a national study of secondary schools and colleges made “The Case for Single-Sex Schools” by showing that single-sex schools for females provide greater opportunity for educational attainment as measured by standardized cognitive tests, curriculum and course placement, leadership behavior, number of years of formal education, and occupational achievement.

what the research shows

**Twenty-first-century studies show girls' school graduates have an edge**

More recent studies ask girls' and coed school graduates to assess their high school experiences in terms of academic preparedness and world citizenship:

In a 2005 study conducted by the Goodman Research Group of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for NCGS, 1,000 college freshmen reflected on their readiness to cross the threshold into college, and beyond. Consistently, 93 to 99 percent of girls' school alumnae expressed appreciation of their schools' strong academic curricula, abundant individualized attention, and sound preparation for college. No more playing dumb or hiding in the shadows. These girls reported self-confidence in public speaking, and comfort interacting with faculty.

The 2005 US Department of Education report "Single-Sex versus Coeducational Schooling: a Systematic Review" found in compiling the results of 44 studies, that single sex education for girls yields superior academic accomplishment, superior socioemotional development, improved test scores and better long term indicators for success, as compared with coed schooling. In the aggregate, 100 percent of the studies found the single sex environment for girls to be associated with a superior climate for learning and higher career aspirations; 67 percent of the studies found girls' schools to be associated with higher scores on academic achievement tests.

**UCLA's Higher Education Research**

In some of the most recent research on single sex schooling, a 2009, peer-reviewed study by UCLA, compared a large and representative blind 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 socio-economic background, parental education, and characteristics of high schools attended. The findings were striking:

what the research shows

**Consider  
these  
recent  
findings  
from UCLA**

- In mathematics and computer skills, girls' school alumnae rate their confidence at the start of college 10 percent higher than do their coed counterparts.
- Three times as many girls from girls' schools (compared to coed peers) are interested in careers in engineering.
- Seventy-one percent of girls' school graduates consider college 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 graduates compared to 47.7 percent of their 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 graduates 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 girls' school graduates report confidence in their skills, compared to 58.8 percent of women graduates of coed schools.
- Women graduates of single sex schools spend more time studying, talking with teachers outside class, tutoring peers, and studying with others: 60 percent of girls' school graduates spent 11-plus hours a week on studies, compared to 42 percent from coed schools.

**Learn more about the advantages of girls' schools at: [www.ncga.org](http://www.ncga.org)**

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