This week’s issue:

SHOULD SINGLE-GENDER EDUCATION BE AN OPTION FOR EVERYONE?

Jenny lives with her mother, grandmother, and little sister. She is a junior at an all-girls high school where she is an excellent student. Jenny has applied to the University of New Mexico. She is concerned about living in a co-ed dorm. She has not spent much time interacting with boys her own age. Has Jenny’s high school experience prepared her for the real world?

For years, many private schools have separated boys and girls. Today, single-gender education can also be offered in public schools, making it available to students who cannot afford to go to private schools.

Supporters of the single-gender paradigm in education say that boys and girls learn better in separate settings. Some research has shown that single-gender education improves learning. Supporters say that in coeducational settings, the pressure to impress the opposite sex distracts both genders from their studies. Students focus on looking attractive or acting cool instead of concentrating on schoolwork. Some students hesitate to participate in class because they worry about what students of the opposite sex will think.

Teachers of single-gender classes report that both genders pay attention and participate more when separated. Teachers can plan activities specifically to address boys’ and girls’ needs, such as adding movement and competition to lessons for boys and creating collaborative lessons for girls. The learning environment can also be tailored; classrooms for girls are often kept warmer and quieter than those for boys. Having only one gender present can weaken stereotypes about boys being better at math and girls being better at literacy.

However, opponents say that single-gender schools actually reinforce gender stereotypes. In reality, some girls prefer competition, and some boys are collaborative learners. Some studies show that teachers interact with students differently in single-gender classrooms. Teachers might assign less reading to boys and easier math to girls. Opponents think it is better to work on improving student achievement without separating boys from girls.

Many people also point out that schools are supposed to prepare students for the future. Men and women comprise the workforce. If boys and girls grow up without working together, they may have trouble adapting to mixed-gender situations. For students to succeed as adults, they must learn how to conduct themselves around the opposite sex.

What do you think? Do the academic advantages of single-gender education outweigh the social learning opportunities provided in regular schools?

Questions for Classroom Discussion:

• In this passage, why is Jenny worried about living in a co-ed dorm in college?
• What are some advantages of single-gender education for boys? For girls?
• What are some disadvantages of single-gender education for boys? For girls?
• How could going to a single-gender school make it difficult for boys or girls to adapt to situations with both genders?
• Would you like to attend certain classes with all girls or all boys? Which classes? Why?

More information for teachers: Before 1972, many schools offered separate classes for boys and girls. Girls attended home economics classes where they learned to cook, sew, and clean. Boys went to workshop classes where they learned how to fix and build things. Many people argued that students were getting an unequal education if they did not have equal choices. In 1972, Title IX made it illegal for any federally funded school to offer classes to only one gender and not the other. However, in 2006, the Bush Administration gave public schools the choice to try single-gender education.
USE THE FOCUS WORDS *and alternate parts of speech

**gender (noun)** social category related to sexual identity

- **Sample Sentence:** A new law has made single-gender education available to students who cannot afford to go to private schools.

**Turn and Talk:** Discuss a time when you were not allowed to participate in an activity because of your gender.

**comprise (verb)** to make up; to form

- **Sample Sentence:** Men and women comprise the workforce.

**Turn and Talk:** Do you think it's important that a school be comprised of an equal number of boys and girls?

**adapt (verb)** to change to fit a new situation

- **Sample Sentence:** If boys and girls grow up without the experience of working together, they may have trouble adapting to mixed-gender situations.

**Turn and Talk:** Why might students have a hard time adapting to middle school?

**conduct (verb)** to behave in a particular manner; to plan and carry out

- **Sample Sentence:** To prepare students to succeed as adults, they must learn how to conduct themselves around the opposite sex.

**Turn and Talk:** Do you think it is dishonest to conduct yourself one way in front of some friends and differently in front of other friends?

**conduct (noun)** behavior

- **Sample Sentence:** The guide discussed appropriate conduct before allowing the class to enter the museum.

**Turn and Talk:** How does your conduct change when you are in a classroom versus when you are at the shopping mall?

**paradigm (noun)** a model or example; a framework

- **Sample Sentence:** Supporters of the single-gender paradigm in education say that boys and girls learn better in separate settings.

**Turn and Talk:** What are some rules that you would include in your personal paradigm for success?
DO THE MATH

Option 1: American schools must *adapt* to a competitive world. Schools are looking for ways to boost achievement and improve student *conduct*. Schools or classes *comprised* of just one *gender* might help reach these goals. More public schools are considering the single-*gender* *paradigm*. In 1995, there were just 2 single-*gender* public schools. By 2011, there were 116.

Which of the following best describes what happened to the number of single-*gender* public schools?

A. the number doubled
B. the number decreased by one-third
C. the number increased dramatically
D. the number increased by 300%

Option 2: Dr. Leonard Sax has championed the single-*gender* *paradigm*. He claims that classes *comprised* of only girls or only boys allows teachers to *adapt* each class to boys’ or girls’ different needs. Researchers have *conducted* studies that have found that males prefer lower temperatures than females when wearing bathing suits. In regular clothing, Dr. Sax thinks males will prefer a temperature of 69°, and females will prefer a temperature of 76°.

Assume Dr. Sax is right. Let $f =$ the preferred temperature for females. Let $m =$ the preferred temperature for males. Write an algebraic expression that shows the relationship between the two variables.

\[ f = m + 7 \quad \text{OR} \quad m = f - 7 \quad \text{OR} \quad f - m = 7 \]


Discussion Question: Will *conducting* studies on *gender* differences help us do a better job of educating students? Should schools *adapt* to students, or should students *adapt* to school? Which *paradigm* seems right to you? Why?
Ms. Kahn gave her students many assignments to complete as groups. She wondered whether group work was an effective teaching paradigm. Every year, she asked her students to work in groups to design a bridge with toothpicks. This year, her class decided to conduct an experiment to see if groups built better bridges than individuals. They divided the class into two conditions, so that some students worked in groups and some worked individually. Then they rated each bridge on how long it took to build and how much weight it held. Ms. Kahn agreed that if students worked better in groups than alone, they would adapt their class plans to include more group activities.

Ms. Kahn’s student Tanya worked with Ms. Kahn to investigate whether working in groups helped with problem solving.

**Question:** Is group work an effective way to solve challenging problems?

**Hypothesis:** The students who work in groups will build stronger bridges.

**Materials:**
- Toothpicks
- Glue
- Timers

**Procedure:**
1. Begin with a class of 15 students. Divide the students into two groups of 5 students each and 5 students working alone. Students in groups decide on their roles.
2. Monitor the amount of time the students spend building the bridges.
3. When the bridges are complete, measure how much weight the bridge can hold before it breaks.

Do the data give you information about the effectiveness of group work?

In general, the groups built stronger bridges. However, they spent more time constructing the bridges than the individuals.

Could you change this experiment to compare gender groups instead of groups and individuals? How?

The experiment could be changed to compare gender groups. For example, Group A could be five female students, Group B could be five male students, and the last set of five students could be a co-ed Group C.
DEBATE THE ISSUE
Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

☐ Public schools should all be co-ed.

OR

☐ Public schools should offer co-ed and single-gender options.

OR

☐ Public schools should provide single-gender education only.

OR

CREATE YOUR OWN

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

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Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

• Can you show me evidence in the text that...

• You make a good point, but have you considered...

• I believe that...

• I agree with you, but...

Word Generation | Series 3A | Unit 3.12 | wordgeneration.org
TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

gender | comprise | adapt | conduct | paradigm

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National Association for Single Sex Public Education: http://www.singlesexschools.org
