



## For further reading

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## Girls' schools are specialists in girls' education

- An all-girls school can create an atmosphere that counteracts the negative influence of mass media and its often troubling depictions of women and girls.
- Girls at girls' schools enjoy not only equal opportunity, they enjoy every opportunity.
- Girls are freer to participate in class discussions, without being dominated by boys.
- Girls don't have to live up to expectations that they must be nice, quiet, non-athletic, and passive.
- Girls prefer written texts and tend to be more interested in the emotional workings of literary characters.
- Most girls prefer fiction and enjoy learning through narrative, with context to their learning.
- In relationships, girls solve issues through dialogue, text messages and social networking sites; boys are more physical with their solutions.
- Girls hear better and are more sensitive to angry, loud voices.
- They want to know why Beethoven composed a certain piece and where he was when he wrote it. Boys just want to play the song.
- Teaching girls using an approach which recognises these gender differences enables girls to live up to their full potential and be comfortable being themselves.

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In research by Linda Sax, 2009, it was concluded that female graduates of single-sex high schools in the US have higher levels of academic engagement, higher scores on the standardised test for college admissions, greater confidence in mathematical ability and computer skills than their female peers from co-ed schools. This study also found that all-girls graduates showed higher levels of political engagement, greater interest in engineering careers and more confidence in public speaking.

'Girls' schools are places where education is valued, teachers are encouraged to press the boundaries and girls are excited about their learning. Girls' education is a specialised field, underpinned by continual research that enhances learning outcomes in a range of areas.' (Judith Poole, Headmistress, Abbotsleigh, NSW)



'Schools give you many things. An academic education is important but of itself, it will not develop a social conscience or produce leaders. You have to be nurtured, challenged, encouraged and empowered to act. This too can come from co-educational schools but what an all girls' school gave me, that no co-educational school could, was all of those things plus the knowledge, born of day to day lived experience, that women are independent, equal citizens of the world, capable of running it, with no need to wait for or defer to any male in getting started.' (Christine Milne, 2007, *Empowering Girls for Leadership*, in *Alliance*, Vol. 38, p.10)

## Girls' schools are 'can do' environments

- Girls' in girls' schools achieve significantly stronger academic results than any other group in Australia.
- Girl-centred learning leaves no doubt as to who receives the teacher's full attention, or who will be taking maths, science, and technology classes.
- There is a greater sense of connectedness – listening, helping and accepting others' points of view.
- All the leadership roles are filled by girls: from the captain of the touch football team to the head of the student body; from the first trombone in the school orchestra to the main part in the school play; and from all the committee chairs in every organisation to the leaders of every school club.
- In girls' schools, girls see strong female role models, and are encouraged to achieve successful outcomes from their own efforts.
- All activities are open to girls: they participate, influence and lead .
- In an all-girl classroom, girls take on all the roles in the group, providing an atmosphere where students take the risks necessary for genuine achievement.
- Girls thrive and excel in collaborative teams.
- Teachers can match their teaching to the way girls learn and develop their courses to suit girls' needs.
- Girls can work through the challenges of adolescence without fear of embarrassment or harassment.
- Girls can develop their relationships in a supportive environment.
- Girls are able and encouraged to explore a career in any area.
- Girls' achievements are celebrated.



'For all the rhetoric and political correctness of assenting to equality of opportunity for women, can you tell me that we live in a world where women have equal opportunity? Statistics clearly show that they don't. Women do not yet enjoy equality of opportunity in Australia.

'Why have girls' schools? Because we need to have social structures that exercise positive discrimination in favour of girls. We need to have schools for girls. We need girls' schools to educate girls for a world where they must be able to assert themselves and to insist that their voices are heard and their talents recognised.'

(Dr Susan Stevens, Principal, Loreto Mandeville Hall, Toorak)

'Students at single-sex schools were more highly engaged than those at co-educational Schools.' (Fullarton, 2002)

This report found that schools which focus on 'developing a strong self-concept of ability and positive views of school climate' produce a high level of engagement which in turn leads to a student's closer connectedness to the school community. It is argued in the report that there are 'flow-on' effects to more academic parts of the curriculum. Girls' schools provide the nurturing environment where this engagement is encouraged.

'A single-sex school is able to nurture leadership qualities in its students, with no roles being seen as off limits to the girls. They don't feel they have to conform to any gender expectations because they occupy all the roles in their school environment and that leads them to taking an approach, when they get beyond school, of thinking it natural they should aspire to leadership positions.'

(Judy Crowe, Principal, Melbourne Girls' College, Victoria)