

A high percentage of women who have become leaders in their field were educated at girls' schools. Girls perform better at school and in life if they are educated at single-sex schools.



“Students at single-sex schools were more highly engaged than those at co-educational schools.”

From a study based on students who were in Year 10 in 1999 using data from the 1998 cohort of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) project

to investigate school-level differences in levels of engagement.

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.

For further reading

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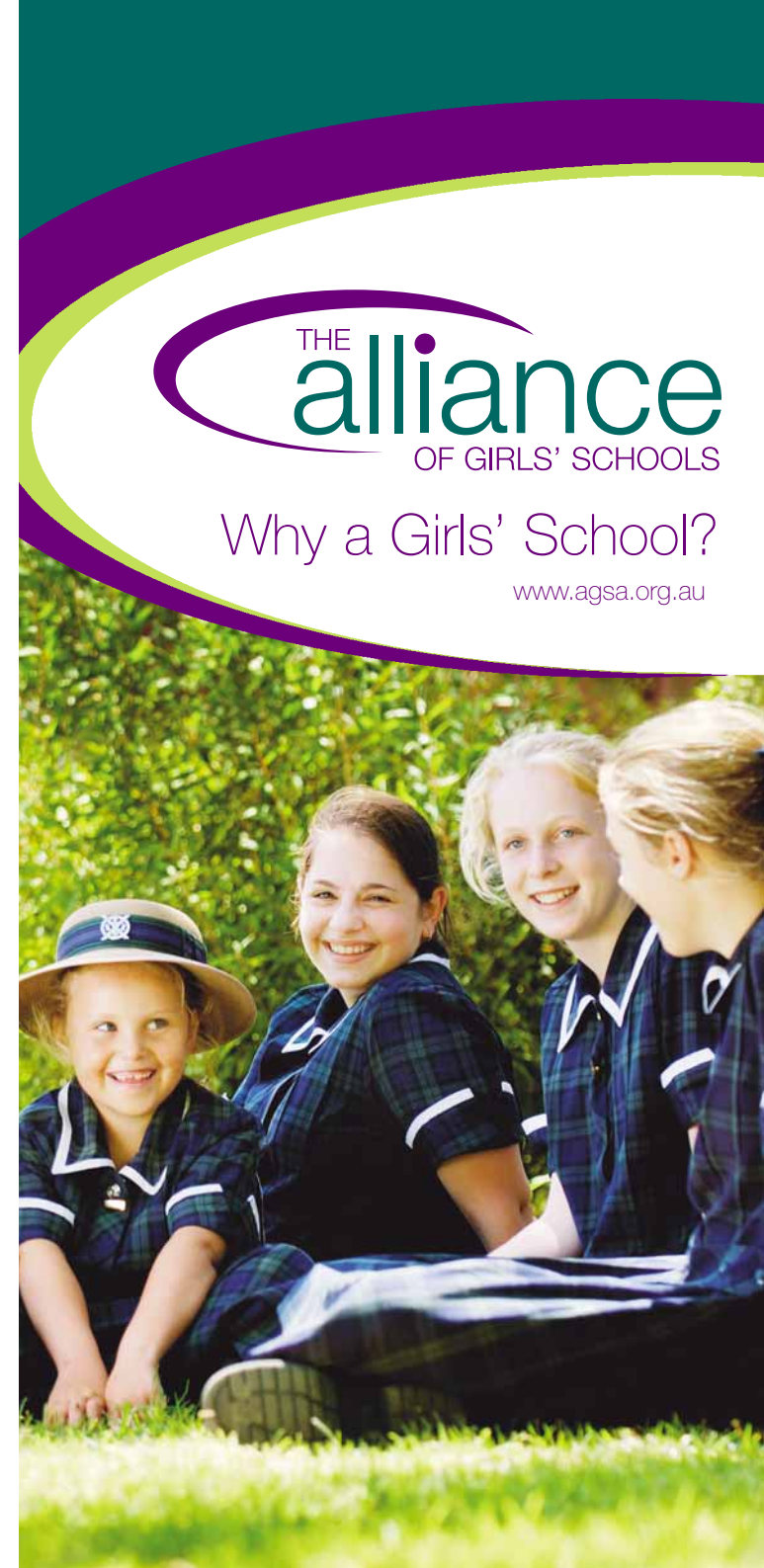
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Why a Girls' School?

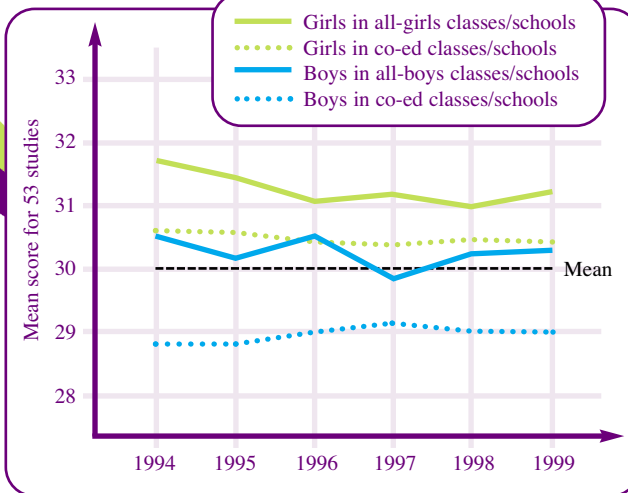
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“An all girls’ school, where safe risk-taking is applauded, helped my daughter move from a painfully shy 11-year-old to a confident leader. Unbounded by notions of ‘girls vs boys’, she learned to step boldly forward and take her place as a valued individual, regardless of gender.”
 (Parent of a Year 12 girl)

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 violin 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 understand that they too can 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
- There is no obstacle preventing girls from exploring a career in any area
- Girls’ achievements are celebrated



Plot of mean ‘ability-adjusted’ VCE scores for 4 gender/school/class groups of students on 53 studies with the largest enrolments (1994-1998) [N = 2.2 million students drawn from 600 VCE providers] (Rowe, 2000)

Rowe argues that “it is important not to over-interpret the importance of these gender and gender/class/school-grouping effects, since they pale into insignificance compared with class/teacher effects – regardless of either student or teacher gender.” However, his study supports the evidence that girls and boys learn differently, and teachers are more easily able to accommodate and nurture these differences in abilities and interests in an all-girls environment.

When girls are in a girls’ class, research, such as that by Rowe, has shown that they have more confidence in their ability, particularly in areas such as maths and science, and in turn are significantly more likely to participate in maths and science at a senior level.

“Sex differences are real, biologically programmed, and important to how children are raised, disciplined, and educated.” (Sax, 2006)



“...after adjusting for measures of students’ ‘abilities’ and school sector (government, Catholic and independent), the achievements of boys and girls in single-sex environments were, on average, 15 - 22 percentile TER ranks higher than the achievements of their counterparts in co-educational settings.”

Furthermore, differences between gender groupings of students are not restricted to academic achievement. Similar patterns are evident for: students’ behaviours in the classroom; their perceptions of Teacher Responsiveness, Curriculum Usefulness, and Enjoyment of School. These findings are based on data obtained in recent large-scale, longitudinal studies involving more than 16 000 students, drawn from 200 government, Catholic and independent, primary and secondary schools.

“...understandings are emerging from the research evidence suggesting that co-educational settings are limited in their capacity to accommodate the large differences in cognitive, social and developmental growth rates of girls and boys between the ages of 12 and 16. In contrast, this evidence suggests that during these key adolescent years, single-sex settings better accommodate the specific developmental needs of students.” (Rowe, 2000)

