

## Demystifying the Science of Single-Sex Education

It is a commonly held notion that single-sex education promotes gender stereotypes and prevents children from developing proper social skills. Critics of the system's effectiveness liken single-sex education to the "separate but equal" doctrine, fearing that the two sexes will not receive equal educational opportunities in the classroom if they are separated. One will surely be favored over the other. However, within the standard co-ed public school system, boys are already at a serious academic disadvantage, and educators and parents should start looking for alternative solutions.

### Why Boys Are Failing

The structure of schools has been changing, even at its most basic levels. Many parents played games and learned the alphabet in kindergarten. Today their children learn how to count to 100 and read simple sentences. Human mental faculties haven't evolved over those few decades, but children are nevertheless expected to sit still for longer periods of time and follow along patiently with the teacher as he or she covers more complex material. Boys, especially, are hard-pressed to follow this curriculum because of their neural development.

### Early Brain Development

The male brain does not even reach its halfway point for development before age 15. On the other hand, girls have already reached theirs before 11. A woman's brain will reach full maturity at 21 or 22 years of age, but a man's will not mature fully until age 30 (a decade later!). In adults, there are no significant differences between male and female brains. However, boys and girls have vastly different stages of neural development, and these differences have great implications for classroom behavior.

It seems silly to think of comparing how long a man can sit still to how long a woman can sit still. But most kindergarten teachers will assert that boys cannot sit still for nearly as long as girls can. Boys will start squirming in their seat, looking around, or playing footsie with their friends under the table. Instead of understanding these actions as a symptom of natural childhood development, this is increasingly being approached as a behavioral problem. After all, the girls sit still, don't they?

### The Single-Sex Classroom

Although children *can* be taught successfully in a co-ed classroom, a single-sex classroom can better play to the particular strengths of boys and girls. Although boys do not have the language development that girls do at a young age, they start out with greater spatial and mathematic abilities. For example, whereas girls may be more comfortable writing a paragraph to explain something, boys may be more comfortable drawing a picture or a chart, instead. [Academic programs for boys](#) can take advantage of these patterns of development by presenting information, designing projects, and conducting class in certain ways. While learning in a structured environment that understands their needs, children can learn more effectively and more successfully overcome learning disabilities and gender stereotypes.