

## 2005 NASSPE Conference

Our conference theme was **best practices for single-sex education**. We're leaving the rest of the conference web page up for now. We will be archiving it in the next week or two. Meanwhile, we're interested in hearing from you about when and where our next conference should be!

Why do some schools enjoy great success after they adopt the single-sex format, while other schools fail? It isn't enough just to put the girls in one room and the boys in another. Teachers also need to understand **gender-specific best practices** for teaching in the single-sex classroom.

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Who should attend?

Educators and administrators who work at schools which currently offer single-sex educational options -- or who are considering offering such options.

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Where and when will it take place?

The conference will take place at the Marriott Cincinnati at RiverCenter, located on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River, facing downtown Cincinnati. The conference will take place over the Columbus Day weekend, October 8 - 10, 2005.

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### Speakers and topics

Here's a listing of some of the more than 30 speakers you'll have the opportunity to hear at our conference:

- *"We have crossed the bay; the ocean lies ahead". The future of single-sex public education.*  
Benjamin Wright, Victory Schools  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- *Best practices for single-sex education: Are we there yet?*  
Leonard Sax, NASSPE  
Poolesville, Maryland
- *Legal considerations for public school districts offering single-sex classrooms*  
Amy Borman, J.D., Eastman & Smith  
Toledo, Ohio
- *Making the transition from coed to single-sex classrooms: Lessons learned through experience*  
Daren Starnes, The Webb Schools  
Claremont, California
- *Boys At Risk: Why have boys stopped caring about school?*  
Dr. Judith Kleinfeld, Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska
- *Gender-specific strategies for middle school algebra*  
Dr. Gary Ross, Principal, Stratford Middle School  
Macon, Georgia

- *Remedial education: taking advantage of the single-sex format*  
Dr. Abigail Norfleet James, Rockhouse Associates  
Orange, Virginia
- *Students at Risk: Benefits of single-sex education for at-risk middle school students*  
Carol Thom, Principal, Stonewall Jackson Middle School  
Charleston, West Virginia
- *Single-sex education for Latina girls*  
Jennifer Madigan, Ph.D.  
San José State University
- *Single-sex education for African-American girls*  
Suzanne Muggy, Toledo Public Schools  
Meg Molinsky and Deborah Durbin, The Odyssey Group (Dayton, Ohio)
- *Building moral character at an all-boys school*  
Kevin Davern, The Avalon School  
Rockville, Maryland
- *Where Girls Come First: the inspiring history of single-sex public schools for girls*  
Ila na Debare, Co-Founder, the Julia Morgan School  
Oakland, California
- *Single-sex public education: the Australian experience.*  
Fiona Mueller, University of Wollongong  
New South Wales, Australia
- *Escaping Stereotypes: using the single-sex format to broaden educational horizons*  
Dr. Abigail Norfleet James, Rockhouse Associates  
Orange, Virginia
- *Single-sex education in a public elementary school, part I: best practices*  
Dr. Elizabeth Heins, Dr. Kathy Piechura, and Dr. Mercedes Tichenor  
Stetson University
- *Single-sex education in a public elementary school, Part II: teacher observations*  
JoAnne Rodkey, Deborah Roberts, and Shari Mesibov  
Woodward Avenue Elementary, Volusia County Public Schools, Florida
- *The benefits of single-sex kindergarten for **both** girls and boys*  
Margrét Pála Ólafsdóttir, Founder, Hjalli Kindergarten  
Hjalli, Iceland
- *Starting an all-girls' public school*  
Vivian Taylor, Principal, Irma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School  
Dallas, Texas
- *"Tomboys" and "sissies": What do we really know about gender-atypical children?*  
Dr. Leonard Sax, Executive Director, NASSPE

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## Session Descriptions

- *"We have crossed the bay; the ocean lies ahead"*  
*The future of single-sex public education*

Benjamin Wright, Victory Schools  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

America's school reform movement has resembled a slot machine: Pull the handle and see what's popular today. Single-sex education is not a panacea. But there can no longer be any doubt that single-sex education has an important role to play in American public education.

The next ten years are critical for the future of single-sex public education. If this format is to take hold as a mainstay of American public education, parents and teachers must be educated regarding best practices for single-sex education. If we fail, if single-sex education does not catch on in public schools, then boys in particular -- especially African-American and Latino boys from low-income neighborhoods -- will be the losers.

- *Best practices for single-sex education: Are we there yet?*

Leonard Sax, NASSPE  
Poolesville, Maryland

In recent years, considerable research has demonstrated fundamental and hardwired gender differences in how girls and boys learn. In some cases, these differences require educators to think about parameters which previously have not been recognized as pedagogically significant. For example: room temperature. We will review evidence that young boys learn best in a room where the temperature is about 69 degrees, while young girls learn best in a room where the temperature is about 75 degrees. If you put children in a room where the temperature is 75 degrees, the girls will be alert and the boys' eyes will glaze over. The boys will be half-asleep.

Merely putting girls in one room (or building) and putting the boys in another room is no guarantee of success. You have to know how to set the thermostat. Educators interested in single-sex education need to understand innate differences between girls and boys in order to be able to take full advantage of this innovative format.

- *Legal considerations for public school districts offering single-sex classrooms*

Amy Borman, J.D., Eastman & Smith  
Toledo, Ohio

Administrators and educators offering single-sex educational opportunities within public schools in the United States should be cognizant of constitutional, statutory, and regulatory constraints on such programs. In this session, we will review each category of constraint. Constitutional constraints on single-sex education in public schools derive principally from the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, e.g. the VMI case (1996) and *Hogan v Mississippi* (1982). Statutory constraints, from a federal perspective, derive principally from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, although individual states may also have applicable statutes. The role of federal and state regulations will also be considered. Guidelines for writing district policies which can pass constitutional, statutory, and regulatory muster will be offered.

- *Making the transition from coed to single-sex classrooms: Lessons learned through experience*

Daren Starnes, The Webb Schools  
Claremont, California

Once the decision is made to implement single-sex classes in a coeducational school, whether on a limited scale or throughout the academic program, the transition process begins -- for students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Making this transition as smooth as possible is essential to the initial success of single-sex instruction in classrooms. Not surprisingly, the key to achieving desired outcomes lies in appropriate, timely education about the differences in how boys and girls learn, and the implications of those differences for all members of the school community.

Our school has recently shifted sophomore Chemistry, Algebra II/Trig, Spanish I, and an introductory visual arts course from coed to single-sex classes. In this session, I'll describe the nuts-and-bolts details of this shift, including the things we did well and the things we could have done better.

- *Boys At Risk: Why have boys stopped caring about school?*

Dr. Judith Kleinfeld, Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska

What is behind the widening gender gap in college attendance, favoring girls at the expense of boys? Our research suggests that young women -- of virtually every social group and cultural background -- have direction and focus. They have a "Plan" and often a "Backup Plan." The situation among boys is more complicated. Dislike of schooling (at least the schooling they have experienced) is one crucial element. If you hate school, you don't want more of it.

- *Gender-specific strategies for middle school algebra*

Dr. Gary Ross, Principal, Stratford Middle School  
Macon, Georgia

We will examine gender differences in how middle-school girls and boys learn math. Session attendees will participate in activities which address these differences, for pre-algebra and algebra students. We will also consider optimal teaching strategies for girls and for boys.

Our school has offered single-sex algebra classes for the past four years. I will share anecdotal evidence gathered over that period, as well as follow-up data gathered on these students regarding their subsequent achievement in high school math.

- *Remedial education: taking advantage of the single-sex format*

Dr. Abigail Norfleet James, Rockhouse Associates  
Orange, Virginia

Traditionally, educational remediation programs have focused on managing attentional problems and developing skills in reading, writing, and math. However, learning disabled students in general and boys in particular are less likely to have good study strategies and usually need specific instruction to acquire learning skills. This session examines an intensive program for boys at risk for learning disabilities. In this course, where boys are the focus of educational efforts, they explore gender specific learning approaches and develop study skills in a single sex environment.

Additionally, while research shows that girls are more likely to develop a variety of study approaches, they also benefit from skill development. Components for a similar course for girls will be outlined.

- *Single-sex education for African-American girls*  
Presenters: Suzanne Muggy, Administrator (Toledo Public Schools, Ohio) - The Ella P. Stewart Academy for Girls is the first female single-gender public urban elementary school in the State of Ohio. She will share her experiences and researched based strategies on how to improve student achievement.  
Meg Molinsky and Debbie Durbin, The Odyssey Group, Dayton, Ohio - Consultants in single gender program design will present a blueprint for success, including how and why gender difference awareness is important in facility planning, program design and other key elements.  
We will discuss how to develop, implement, market and assess a successful urban single-sex educational program. To ensure a smooth initial year transition and success for the future, we will discuss key elements necessary in the development of rules, regulations and procedures.
- *Students at Risk: Benefits of single-sex education for at-risk middle school students*  
Carol Thom, Principal, Stonewall Jackson Middle School  
Charleston, West Virginia  
We will discuss performance and behavior data comparing mixed sex classes to single sex classes, and describe effective instructional strategies to be used with both boys and girls. Special attention will be paid to students from minority backgrounds, students from lower-income families, and students in special education.
- *Building moral character at an all-boys school*  
Kevin Davern, The Avalon School  
Rockville, Maryland  
Being a "real man" involves more than merely being a physically-mature male. It means achieving authentic masculinity. So: What is "authentic masculinity"? In this session, I will relate the insights which I have gained from years of working with boys and young men in the classroom and in the gym. In the 21st century, how can young men lead what we might call a "noble" life?
- *Where Girls Come First: the inspiring history of single-sex public schools for girls*  
Ilana DeBare, Co-Founder, the Julia Morgan School  
Oakland, California

All-girl public schools may seem like a new idea, but they actually have a distinguished and inspiring history going back 150 years. Award-winning journalist Ilana DeBare will talk and show slides about the first generation of all-girl public schools in the 1800s; the decline and "near-death experience" of single-sex public education in the 1960s and 70s; and today's revival of interest in all-girl classes and schools. She will address what today's classroom teachers can learn from girls' schools of the past, as well as the advantages and challenges of all-girl education.

Ilana DeBare is author of *Where Girls Come First: The Rise, Fall, and Surprising Revival of Girls' Schools* (Tarcher/Penguin), the first comprehensive history of all-girl schools. A graduate of Harvard College and the U.C. Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, she is a reporter at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. You can find information about her work on girls' schools at [www.whereregirlscomefirst.com](http://www.whereregirlscomefirst.com).

- Escaping Stereotypes: using the single-sex format to broaden educational horizons*  
 Dr. Abigail Norfleet James, Rockhouse Associates  
 Orange, Virginia  
 One frequent concern about single sex schools is that students might be limited to educational opportunities consistent with gender stereotypes. Research has shown that this is not true, that students in single sex schools are more likely than students in coed schools to explore areas traditionally associated with the opposite sex. Boys in all-boys schools are more likely to pursue interests in subjects such as art, music, history, and foreign languages. Girls at all-girls schools are more likely to study computer science and physics. This session will describe the findings of recent research demonstrating that both boys and girls attending single sex schools report cross-gendered interests in subjects as well as a greater willingness to engage in activities which are generally connected with the opposite sex.
- Single-sex education in a public elementary school, part I: best practices*  
 Dr. Elizabeth Heins, Dr. Kathy Piechura, and Dr. Mercedes Tichenor  
 Stetson University  
 Presenters will discuss information about professional development workshops held for teachers in single-gender classrooms and how university faculty and teacher candidates work with these classes. Results of interviews with teachers and students, as well as results from standardized test data collected after the first year of implementation will be shared. Suggestions for implementing similar programs will also be presented.
- Single-sex education in a public elementary school, Part II: teacher observations*  
 JoAnne Rodkey, Deborah Roberts, and Shari Mesibov  
 Woodward Avenue Elementary, Volusia County Public Schools, Florida  
 Single-sex education in a public elementary school, part II: teacher observations This presentation will provide an overview of and rationale for implementing single-gender classrooms at the elementary school level. Teachers who have implemented single-gender classes will provide insight on what they have learned and how this information can be utilized for working with boys and girls, particularly in the context of the single-gender classroom.
- The benefits of single-sex kindergarten for **both** girls and boys*  
 Margrét Pála Ólafsdóttir, Founder, Hjalli Kindergarten  
 Hjalli, Iceland  
 Single-sex kindergarten can break down gender stereotypes. Girls in single-sex kindergarten can become more outgoing, more confident, and they find their "voice." An all-girls kindergarten offers the opportunity to engage in "dare training," encouraging each girl to take risks and maybe even shout! Boys in all-boys kindergarten may surprise you: they often become more caring, more nurturing, and quieter than they were in the coed kindergarten. And, boys in all-boys kindergarten love to draw. In a coed kindergarten, boys will tell you that "drawing is for girls."
- "Tomboys" and "sissies": What do we really know about gender-atypical children?*  
 Dr. Leonard Sax, Executive Director, NASSPE  
 Some girls despise playing with dolls. They'd rather roll in the mud and climb trees. Some boys can't stand football. They'd rather stay home and read a book. What do we know about such children?

We know, or think we know, that girls hear better than boys, and that girls see differently than boys do. Do those differences apply with equal force to gender-atypical girls and boys? We know, or think we know, that the right kind of stress enhances learning in boys and impairs learning in girls. Does that finding hold with equal force in these children? Studies addressing these issues will be reviewed.

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