Best Practices in Single Gender Education

September, 2011

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Contents

Introduction 1

Reasons for Single-gender Education 1

Single-gender Education and Grade Level 2

Single-gender Education Best PracticesoT5TJ0 Tc 0 T3.....Tj(..)Tn BDC /CS0 cs 0 scn/TTT0 1 Tf6(t)5 630.84 T4.....

Introduction

Single-gender education in the United States has existed for a long time; however, it was found mostly in private and parochial schools. Public school single-gender education did not fully emerge until 2001, under The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. This change in federal legislation allowed for the opening of various single-gender public schools and single-gender programs in recent years. According to the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE), in 2002, only about a dozen public schools offered single-gender education; in the 2011–2012 school year at least 506 public schools were registered as offering single-gender educational opportunities.

Single-gender public education has adopted several different operational models. One is the classic model, which serves either boys or girls only; another is the dual academy model, in which boys and girls are in a coeducational school but attend classes separately (Riordan, 2008). In 2011, NASSPE reported that out of the 506 public schools registered to offer single-gender education, 116 operated under the classic model, and 306 operated

Gains can be made in secondary literacy when:

Teachers and students have an understanding of different learning styles.

Teachers receive support so they can plan lessons that

posters and charts in an organized way, and use flexible seating positions according to the types of learning activities.

3.3 Engage boys' competitive spirit. Healthy competition not only engages students to learn but also promotes their spirit and motivation in the classroom. However, this can create unnecessary conflict for the youngest students, who might still not understand the concept of competition (3rd grade and below).

4. Best practices for teaching core curricula to boys (Gurian et al., 2009)

4.1 Give instructions and directions. Because boys learn best using their strongest sense, which is vision, they benefit most from seeing information (Gurian et al., 2009; Sax, 2006). Teachers should visually share in advance examples of what good work looks like (i.e., in terms of quantity and presentation). Some teachers suggest limiting verbal instruction to 10 minutes or less and instead focus on presenting visual cues and allow boys to learn through investigation and exploration.

4.2 Help boys transition between learning tasks. Most boys struggle more than girls when they have to stop what they are doing, clean up, and get ready for the next task. Teachers should develop strategies that ease these transitions.

4.3 Enhance math curricula. Boys tend to be better than girls with spatial tasks (Gurian et al., 2009); thus, they might enjoy working with symbols, diagrams, maps, and abstractions. Teachers and educators suggest using the blackboard rather than textbooks. Some specific strategies for math learning are to use competition, sports, and physical games to explain math.

4.4 Enhance science curricula. Boys build their science knowledge not as much from reading as from experiencing. Therefore, teachers suggest providing boys with the opportunity to do hands-on and interactive work.

4.5 Enhance learning of literacy skills. It is important to develop an awareness of what boys enjoy reading and allow them to find and read those books. Some resources that list books boys like are *Books for* Boys, by Michael Sullivan; *Great Books for Boys,* by Kathleen Odean; *What Stories Does My Son Need?* by Michale Gurian and Terry Trueman; and *Guys Read,* by Jon Scieska. Helping boys become better writers is another important aspect of literacy. Experts suggest using technology and allowing boys to write about high-interest topics.

Recommended Resources for Professional Development Opportunities

1. NASSPE (http://www.singlesexschools.org)

2. Gurian Institute (http://www.gurianinstitute.com)

3.

Spielhagen, R. (2008). Having it our way: Students speak out on single-sex classes. In R. Spielhagen, (Ed.), *Debating single-sex education: Separate and equal?* (pp. 32-46). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

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Younger, M., Warrington, M., Gray, J., Rudduck, J., McLellan, R., Bearne, E., Kershner, R., & Bricheno, P. (2005). *Raising boys' achievement* (Research Report RR636). Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge, Department for Education and Skills.