

Top 10 Reasons to Choose a Girls' School

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Whether she wants to be an astronaut, ambassador, or accountant, a girl needs to know—not just think, but really know, deep down in her gut—that nothing can stand in her way. Girls' schools send that very message to girls every day.

To help remind families how a girls' school will engage, challenge, inspire, and prepare their daughters, the International Coalition of Girls' Schools is pleased to provide this Top 10 list of reasons to attend a girls' school, all supported by research.

10. INSPIRATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Girls' schools champion the educational needs of girls.

Single-sex programs ... create an institutional and classroom climate in which female students can express themselves freely and frequently, and develop higher order thinking skills. — Dr. Rosemary C. Salomone, St. John's University, *Public Single-Sex Schools: What Oprah Knew*

A notable majority of girls' school students indicated that they have strong learning goals; they are intent to learn as much as possible, to completely master the material, and to understand the content of their classes as thoroughly as possible.

— *The Positive Effects of the Girls' School Environment: An Analysis of PISA Data*, Macquarie Marketing Group study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The robust learning environment encountered by students at all-girls schools is highlighted by a recent survey of high school students. The girls' responses provide unequivocal support for the value of an all-girls educational environment. — Dr.

Richard A. Holmgren, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

9. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Girls' schools create a culture of achievement.

More than 80 percent of girls' school graduates consider their academic performance to be highly successful. — Dr. Linda Sax, UCLA, *Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College*

Nearly 80 percent of girls' school students report that most of their classes challenge them to achieve their full academic potential, compared to 72 percent of girls at coed independent and 44 percent at coed public schools. — Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

8. BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE

At girls' schools, girls occupy every role.

Seventy-seven percent of girls' school students reported having self-confidence. They noted feeling a sense of accomplishment, identifying that when they are in a difficult situation, they can usually find a way out of it, and that they can handle many things at a time. — *The Positive Effects of the Girls' School Environment: An Analysis of PISA Data*, Macquarie Marketing Group study of the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

A majority of girls' school graduates report higher self-confidence than their coed peers. — Dr. Linda Sax, UCLA, *Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College*

All-girls settings seem to provide girls a certain comfort level that helps them develop greater self-confidence and broader interests, especially as they approach adolescence. — Dr. Rosemary C. Salomone, St. John's University, *Same, Difference, Equal: Rethinking Single-Sex Schooling*

7. DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Girls' schools empower students to become bold leaders.

Programs at girls' schools focus on the development of teamwork over other qualities of leadership, while the qualities of confidence, compassion, and resilience also ranked prominently. — Dr. Nicole Archard, Kincoppal-Rose Bay School of the Sacred Heart, *Student Leadership Development in Australian and New Zealand Secondary Girls' Schools: A Staff Perspective*

93 percent of girls' school graduates say they were offered greater leadership opportunities than their peers at coed schools, and 80 percent have held leadership positions since graduating from high school. — Goodman Research Group, *The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools*

6. FOCUS ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATH (STEM)

Girls' schools champion the educational needs of girls as a group that is underrepresented in STEM majors and careers.

Girls' school grads are six times more likely to consider majoring in math, science, and technology, compared to girls who attend coed schools. — Goodman Research Group, *The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools*

Compared to their coed peers, girls' school graduates are three times more likely to consider engineering careers. — Dr. Linda Sax, UCLA, *Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College*

During the middle school years, girls show a decline in both their performance in mathematics, and in their attitudes toward mathematics. Research suggests that girls' schools may mitigate that decline, in comparison with coed schools. — Dr. Carlo Cerruti, Harvard University, *Exploring Girls' Attitudes About Math*

5. DEDICATION TO HOW GIRLS LEARN

Girls' schools know how girls learn best.

To be successful, students need more than just a *feeling* of support. That support must translate into actions that are geared toward student success. Nearly 96 percent of girls' school students report receiving more frequent feedback on their assignments and other course work, compared to 93 percent of girls at coed independent schools, and 80 percent at coed public schools. — Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

A study prepared for the U.S. Department of Education demonstrated more positive academic and behavioral interactions between teachers and students in the single-sex schools than in the comparison to coed schools. — U.S. Department of Education, *Early Implementation of Public Single-Sex Schools: Perceptions and Characteristics*

Teachers at girls' schools employ alternative teaching strategies and lesson plans to maximize the learning of their students. — *The Positive Effects of the Girls' School Environment: An Analysis of PISA Data*, Macquarie Marketing Group study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

4. NURTURING HIGHER ASPIRATIONS

Girls' school students strive for greatness.

Girls at all levels of achievement in the single-sex schools receive a ... benefit from the single-sex school environment in terms of heightened career aspirations—an effect unprecedented in any other portion of our study. — Dr. Cary M. Watson, Stanford University, *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*

Students at girls' schools have higher aspirations and greater motivation than their female peers at coed independent and public schools, and more than 2/3 expect to earn a graduate or professional degree. — Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

3. PROVIDING EXCELLENT MENTORING

Girls' school students are mentored by a community of peers, teachers, and school administrators.

Overall, female students at girls' schools noted more frequently than their coed peers that their teachers were enthusiastic, displaying higher levels of teacher encouragement and motivation. — *The Positive Effects of the Girls' School Environment: An Analysis of PISA Data*, Macquarie Marketing Group study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The overwhelming majority of girls' school students agree to strongly agree that they feel supported at their schools: 95 percent said they feel supported by their teachers, compared to 84 percent of girls at coed schools; 90 percent report feeling supported by other students compared to 73 percent of girls at coed schools, and 83 percent feel supported by their school administrators, compared to 63 percent of girls at coed schools. — Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

Research indicates that girls place more emphasis on interpersonal relationships than boys do, which may provide girls with beneficial social support ... Compared to boys, girls are more likely to socialize in smaller groups, share more personal information with each other, and emphasize helping behavior over competitive behavior in their friendships. — Dr. Lisa Damour, Center for Research on Girls at Laurel School, *Girls and Their Peers*

2. PREPARING GIRLS FOR THE REAL WORLD

Girls' schools engage students in activities that prepare them for life beyond the classroom.

Nearly half of all women graduating from single-sex schools rate their public speaking ability as “high,” compared to 39 percent of women graduates from coed schools. A similar differential exists for writing abilities: 64 percent of girls' school graduates assess their writing skills as “high,” compared to 59 percent of women graduates of coed schools. — Dr. Linda Sax, UCLA, *Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College*

In the world outside of school, the answers are not always found in the text. Girls' schools prepare students for the world beyond school by requiring outside research, encouraging them to connect ideas across problem domains, and challenging them to grapple with problems with no clear solution. —Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

1. ALLOWING GIRLS TO BE THEMSELVES

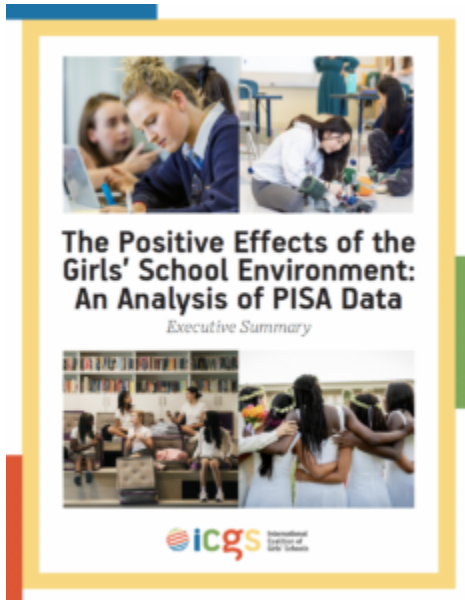
Girls' schools provide an environment where students feel safe to express themselves and engage in an open and safe exchange of ideas.

More than 88 percent of girls' school students report that they are comfortable being themselves at school, which means that they are free to focus their energies on their learning. — Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

Students at girls' schools indicated more frequently than girls at coed schools that they made friends easily, felt like they belonged, and that other students seemed to like them. — *The Positive Effects of the Girls' School Environment: An Analysis of PISA Data*, Macquarie Marketing Group study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

93 percent of girls' school graduates are “Very” or “Extremely Satisfied” with their school's ability to provide individualized attention, and 80 percent strongly feel

encouragement to develop their own interests. — Goodman Research Group, *The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools*



For the most current data on the advantages of girls' schools, visit the 2023 Executive Summary of Coalition-commissioned research, "**The Positive Effects of the Girls' School Environment: An Analysis of PISA Data**" (login required).

This new research report compares data from girls enrolled in coeducational schools and girls' schools in 12 participating countries. Findings trended overwhelmingly positive across several measures for those students attending girls' schools, including:

- Classrooms at girls' schools are less disruptive, and students see a clearer correlation between effort and future opportunities.
- Students at girls' schools found greater satisfaction and enjoyment in working hard toward a goal, preferring to persist until mastered.
- Wellbeing was noted as a strength at girls' schools, with fewer incidences of bullying.