

# Memorandum

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**To:** High School Staff  
**From:** Joe Zmikly  
**Date:** 4/7/2017  
**Re:** Gender gap in reading scores

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## **Problem:**

Our school's MEAP scores show that boys are achieving substantially lower than girls in Reading. Since reading affects all other content areas, this gap must be closed.

## **Possible Solution:**

This is not an uncommon problem among other schools; in fact, recent studies show that females today consistently achieve higher than males in reading and read more for enjoyment in schools not only within America but across the world (Klecker, 2005). The solution I'd like to explore is the implementation of single-sex classrooms. Districts across the country, in every demographic position, have implemented single-sex classrooms with very positive results. Their reasons for doing so range from disciplinary problems to a gender gap in performance, but the results have been consistent: higher achievement for both boys and girls (Gibb, Ferguson, & Horwood, 2008; Sax, 2007). The most recent brain research indicates that the most profound differences between boys and girls neurologically are not brain structure but rather the sequence of brain development; in fact, there is zero overlap between boys and girls in their respective trajectories of brain development. (Lenroot, et al., 2007)

## **Disadvantages:**

There are a few disadvantages to this solution that must be addressed. First, it may prove difficult to garner support within the community to implement such a radical departure from the status quo. However, we've already shown that this can be overcome with our implementation of trimester scheduling and our current instructional and curricular adjustments. Second, students may be uneasy about such a shift, but clearly, we must do what we feel is best for their educational interests. Finally, many staff may feel ill-equipped or uncomfortable teaching in single-sex classrooms. This can be alleviated through professional development training and proactive class scheduling.

The most important disadvantage is the loss of benefits that come with a coeducational environment. These benefits include dynamic socialization, diversity in thought and discourse, and interpersonal skill development. However, these benefits can still be maintained since the school will remain coeducational, with selected single-sex classes. Further, the benefits of single-sex education far outweigh these detractions.

## **Advantages:**

One advantage of single-sex schooling is the ability to address inherent gender differences at the classroom level rather than at the individual level. It reduces the need to differentiate at the gender level and allows for boys and girls to learn according to their natural styles. (Gibb, et al., 2008)

Anecdotal evidence suggests that disciplinary problems are also greatly reduced (Gibb, et al., 2008).

A third advantage to implementing this change, aside from the positive benefits it will have on our students, is the fact that it is extremely cost-effective. It will require the purchase of no “program” materials; we will simply rearrange student schedules. The minimal cost of training staff through professional development, which we will have done anyway, is the only potential financial burden.

The most important advantage, simply, is that single-sex classrooms increase academic performance of both boys and girls (Gibb, et al., 2008; Sax, 2007). Parochial schools have been doing it for years, and recently, public schools in various districts across the country, and several in Michigan, have begun to reap the benefits of this educational model.

**Recommendation:**

I recommend we discuss this option at the upcoming faculty meeting and form a committee to determine whether this is an avenue we should pursue at our school. When the committee reaches a decision, we can present our findings to the Board and if we decide to act on this, begin a pilot program.

**References:**

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