

Why a Girls' School?

Sometimes separate isn't equal - it's better

Girls and boys learn differently; research continues to refine our understanding of these differences. As schools respond and move away from the "one size fits all" practices of old, girls' schools have continued to create outstanding learning environments.

Girls' schools are dynamic and challenging places, working for the growth of the whole person. They fit young women for a future where problem-solving and decision-making, healthy relationships, confidence and on-going learning are all vital to a fulfilling life.

Girls' schools are 'can do' environments

- Girls in girls' schools achieve significantly stronger academic results than any other group in Australia.
- Girls are taken seriously.
- Girls set the agenda, and their voices are heard.
- Teachers can finely match their teaching to the ways girls learn, and develop their courses to girls' needs.
- Girls dare to take intellectual risks because the classroom is an area for co-operative discovery.
- In girls' school girls see strong female role models, and learn to expect successful outcomes for their own efforts.
- All activities are open to girls; they participate, influence and lead.
- Girls thrive and excel in collaborative teams.
- Girls can work through the challenges of adolescence in safety.
- Girls have first place on the sports field, at the computer, in front of the microphone and in class. There is no obstacle preventing girls from exploring a career in any area.
- Girls' achievements are celebrated.

Girls like being girls, but girls' sense of self has a particular cost to it. Girls often get the impression that they are second-class citizens in some schools. They are not used to acknowledging and celebrating their own achievements, successes, competencies and talents. Girls rarely think of themselves as beautiful, or even passable in appearance. These perceptions can sometimes undermine a girl's health, self-confidence and feeling of self-worth, all of which are pre-conditions for learning.

"Listening to Girls" Australian Education Council on the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools, January 1992

I consider that I owe a great deal of my academic and professional success to my time spent during those formative years in an all-girls school. I found the nurturing

and personal care very important in helping me decide on my future. I was encouraged to believe that girls could do anything that boys could do and that I only had to try something and I would succeed. That positive atmosphere developed my confidence and ensured that I went on with my studies.

Professor Fay Gale, AO,ASSA, PhD Hon D Litt,
Vice Chancellor, University of WA

Girls' schools provide an environment that is not only good in and of itself, but that in its re-definition of competitiveness and collaboration of autonomy and connectedness, presents a model that other schools do well to emulate.

Dr D. Riesman, Harvard University

For Further Reading

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*Dr Spender is a Patron of The Alliance of Girls' Schools (Australasia) Ltd.