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Do Gender Specific Classrooms Increase the Success of Students?

Dave DePape

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Introduction

Although teaching students encompasses the majority of a teacher's time, it is not enough for educators to simply teach for the duration of their careers. It is just as important for educators to search for ways to improve the success of students. This search can occur through participating in an action research project. Research into gender specific classes is one direction that may be explored to increase the success of students, both academically and socially.

Furthermore, it is possible that these classes may be explored most successfully at the middle school level. Middle school is a challenging time for students as schoolwork becomes more demanding and social pressures and distractions abound. It is up to educators to develop innovative ways of increasing the success of all students. Gender specific classrooms may be a possible solution.

As indicated elsewhere in this paper, there are several reasons why gender specific classrooms make sense, including differences in male and female brain make up and gender differences in learning styles. Although not widely used, gender specific classes are becoming quite popular in some schools. But, are gender specific classrooms always beneficial, especially in different school settings? Every school has its own culture and, therefore, must decide what the best practices for that school are.

One way of studying what can be done is to conduct qualitative research in which the culture of the school and students can be taken into account. Qualitative research allows you to work directly with the students and assess what they need, in their situation, to be successful. Qualitative research uses a small sample size and more importantly, offers the researcher the opportunity to work directly with the people involved in the project. If I want to make changes in my classroom or school, I should perhaps, try using a qualitative research approach to see what works for my situation.

At St. Michael School, deciding whether or not gender specific classrooms benefit students, was a plausible project for my situation. The two main objectives for this action research project were to explore if gender specific classes in the middle years improve the academic performance of students, and enhance the social development of students.

Literature Review

DO BOYS AND GIRLS LEARN DIFFERENTLY?

The basic question, “Do boys and girls learn differently?” led me to researching the possibilities of the many, varied answers. I realized that if the answer to that question was no, then there was no need to carry on with my investigation.

According to Sandra Witleson, a professor of psychiatry and behavioural neuroscience at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, there are many physiological and anatomical differences between the male and female brain (Finlay, 2004). The conclusion that she draws from these differences is that learning differences probably exist between the sexes and deserve further investigation by educators. Moreover, it is suggested that among the fundamental physiological differences that exist between boys and girls are differences in inner-ear mechanics, brain structure and basic neurological wiring (Finlay, 2004). It is, therefore, very important that educators look at what can be done to increase the achievement of both males and females.

RATIONALE FOR GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSES

Dr. Leonard Sax of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education suggests there are a large number of reasons why males and females should be separated during class time at school. He points out two of these reasons as he reveals that there are gender differences in the brain and gender differences in learning styles.

1. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE BRAIN

Male and female brains differentiate early in pregnancy and the changes that the brain undergoes are permanent. The levels of chemicals present in the brain are different for males and females, resulting in very different ways that the brains learn (Achiron, Lipitz & Achiron, 2001).

So how are male and female brains different? Dr. Sax points out that the two hemispheres of a male’s brain are quite different, with the left hemisphere being much more developed than the right hemisphere, while the female’s hemispheres are very similar in size (Sax, 2004). In addition, Sax notes there is proportionately more grey matter and less white matter in a female brain; vice versa for men (Sax, 2004).

Furthermore, studies have been completed that suggest there are other sex differences between male and female brains. These studies have shown that the brains of females and males process information, listen, read, and experience emotion in very different ways (Sax, 2004). Michael Gurian supports these theories as he points out in his book that there are structural, chemical, hormonal, and functional differences in female and male brains (Gurian, 2001). These differences make it very clear that it would be almost impossible that males would learn in the same manner as females. They also suggest that by putting students into gender specific classrooms, they may

have an opportunity to learn much more easily as teachers adapt to the students' needs.

2. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING STYLES

The learning styles of males and females are also quite different. Sometimes students are unsuccessful in school because teachers have not met the needs of certain learning styles. The differences in male and female learning styles may be noticed in both physiological differences, such as the ability to hear, and in differences in higher-level cortical functions (Sax, 2004). Dr. John Corso found in 1959 that girls hear, on average, two to four times as well as boys (Corso, 1959). This finding means that if a teacher is somewhat soft spoken, boys throughout the classroom may not be able to hear the teacher, leading to off task behaviour. Providing students with gender specific classrooms might be part of the solution to this problem. In a male only classroom, teachers may be able to teach using a much louder voice and approach. Because females hear much better than males, females may learn best with a quieter approach by the teacher. Perhaps if the teacher is too loud, the female students will not be able to concentrate on the material being presented as the voice of the teacher is too distracting.

Also associated with learning styles is the tendency towards deductive or inductive reasoning. Males tend to be deductive in their conceptualizations, while females prefer inductive exercises (Gurian, 2001). This difference could explain why males do better on multiple-choice exams, while girls favor written exams. In addition, boys tend to do better with abstract reasoning than girls (Gurian, 2001). Girls often prefer to learn using manipulatives and objects, whereas boys can learn much more easily from chalkboard instructions. Finally, although both females and males enjoy working in learning teams, their approach to teamwork is quite different. Gurian suggests that males tend to create structured teams, while females operate using looser organizations (Gurian, 2001). Teachers can easily adapt their teaching styles, in gender specific classrooms, to accommodate these differences in the learning styles of males and females.

Another factor associated with learning styles is the way in which students approach failures. Sax describes very well how each sex handles failures:

Girls generalize the meaning of their failures because they interpret them as indicating that they have disappointed adults, and thus they are of little worth. Boys, in contrast, appear to see their failures as relevant only to the specific subject area in which they have failed; this may be due to their relative lack of concern with pleasing adults. In addition, because girls view evaluative feedback as diagnostic of their abilities, failure may lead them to incorporate this information into their more general view of themselves. Boys, in contrast, may be relatively protected from such generalization because they see such feedback as limited in its diagnosticity. (Sax, 2004)

Teachers, therefore, may be able to help students work through their failures much more efficiently in a gender specific classroom where most students approach failure in a similar fashion.

Gender specific classrooms afford the opportunity for educators to tailor the learning environment to suit the majority of students. They allow the teacher to organize a lesson in such a way that the students may feel more connected to it and take much more of an interest in what they are learning. This connection creates an atmosphere in which students are much more focused on their tasks and less disruptive to the learning of others.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

Even though gender specific classrooms take into account that boys and girls learn differently, does that mean that boys and girls should learn separately (Satterfield, 2004)? This question can only be answered by conducting research to answer the question: Do gender specific classrooms benefit students? However, once it is decided that there is merit in investigating gender specific classrooms, it becomes very important to learn about the potential benefits and challenges of these classes prior to undertaking the investigation.

Some documented benefits of gender specific classrooms are improved academic performance, promotion of academic diversity and reduced discipline problems (Jensen, 2004). However, if the researcher presents only the possible benefits to the stakeholders in the research project, subjectivity is increased, leading everyone in the direction that the researcher wants to see the project go. Gender specific classrooms, like almost every educational strategy, have both benefits and challenges.

1. BENEFITS OF GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

What are the benefits of gender specific classrooms for males and females based on the assumption that there are differences between males and females in the ways they learn? This studied identified numerous benefits for both males and females that are summarized below.

Three categories encompass the advantages of single gender classrooms for females:

a) They have an expanded educational opportunity.

Expanded educational opportunity means that females are more likely to explore non-traditional subject areas for girls, such as mathematics, computer science, and woodworking (Sax, 2004). The expansion occurs in gender specific classes because they encourage females to be daring without the risk of being demeaned by males. In this setting, females realize that the males will not be available to make fun of them when trying something new.

b) They have access to a custom-tailored learning environment.

If teachers adapt to females' learning style, they are setting up a custom-tailored learning environment. Females have many preferences for learning that are different from those of males. For instance, most females prefer to read fictional books. By having a gender specific classroom, the teacher is in the position to offer a novel study unit from which most students can enjoy learning. Females also like to use role-playing in learning new concepts

(Sax, 2004). This learning strategy allows the teacher to get students directly involved in the lesson and gain the most benefit from the class. For example, inductive exercises like, "Imagine you are..." can be used effectively in a female only classroom (Gurian, 2001). Many females in gender specific classrooms have mentioned that they are happy to finally have a "voice" in the classroom (Brennan, 2002). By having females learn in such an atmosphere, their chance for academic improvement substantially increases.

- c) There is potential for them to exercise greater autonomy, especially in heterosexual relationships (Sax, 2004).

What does greater autonomy, especially in heterosexual relationships, really mean when referring to gender specific classrooms? When females have the opportunity to participate in a gender specific classroom, the risk of teenage pregnancy is greatly reduced (Pellegrini, 2002). Females in gender specific classrooms are afforded the opportunity to build self-confidence and self-esteem (Gurian, 2001), which in turn enables them to make good choices regarding romantic relationships with other students. By making better choices regarding relationships, females will be equipped with tools to enhance their social development. Greater autonomy gained through the use of gender specific classrooms that encourages females' ability to assert themselves and make positive choices, in turn, enhances the social development of both males and females.

Males, as well, benefit from participating in gender specific classes. The benefits for them fall into two general categories (Sax, 2004):

- a) Males receive a better-rounded educational experience.

When males are enrolled in gender specific classrooms they are afforded the opportunity to participate in many activities that they generally would not participate in when studying in a traditional, coeducational class setting. Males are more apt to try new things in a single-sex environment. Without females present, males do not feel as embarrassed to try something new if there is a risk of failure. Gender specific classes have seen an increase in males studying arts education and language arts classes, which have been traditionally reserved for female students (Brennan, 2002). This participation in non-traditional classes allows males to receive a better educational experience. Sax goes so far as to say that coed classes tend to reinforce gender stereotypes, while single gender classes allow students to break free of those stereotypes (Sax, 2004). Males do not feel the need to act in accordance with certain gender roles and can gain a more positive educational experience.

In addition, without females in the classroom, males no longer need to bully other males to make themselves look better. The incidences of bullying by males are dramatically reduced in a gender specific classroom (DePape, 2004).

- b) Teachers can custom tailor their learning environment.

Males, like females, benefit from a custom tailored learning environment. For example, since males tend to prefer non-fiction, novel studies may be adapted to meet the interests of boys (Sax, 2004). Similarly, males usually prefer to use deductive exercises, rather than inductive exercises (Gurian, 2001). Competition between males can often lead to greater academic success. Unlike most females, most males like to get higher scores on exams in order to "beat" their classmates (DePape, 2004). So long as the competition is productive, it can be used effectively in a male classroom.

A point that may be somewhat controversial is the use of confrontation in all male classrooms. Sax suggests that confrontation works well with most males, where the teacher “gets in the face” of students to try and challenge them (Sax, 2004). Rather than retreating from the teacher, the male student will view it as a competition and try to win. The teacher can also adjust his or her teaching styles to accommodate the preferred learning styles of males. Teachers in male gender specific classrooms experience most success when they use loud voices and are much more aggressive (DePape, 2004). DePape found that when he taught with that style, the males were much more focused on the lesson and remained on task much more often.

Offering gender specific classrooms is a very important project for all teachers to consider participating in. If educators really want to make a difference in the lives of students, and create the most successful learning atmosphere possible, then gender specific classrooms are a viable option. Studies have shown these classes benefit students academically and socially. Students have the chance to improve their marks, increase their self-confidence, and take risks without worrying about what the opposite sex will think of them. Learning styles and brain development and function are very different for males and females, and gender classrooms even the “playing field” for all students. Overall, participating in a gender specific classroom can enhance the success of a student’s education.

2. CHALLENGES OF GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

Some opponents of gender specific classrooms argue that this strategy does not prepare students for the real world where males and females must work and live together (Finlay, 2004). Furthermore, opponents suggest that boys must be in coed classrooms in order for them to learn to respect girls (Finlay, 2004). The American Civil Liberties Union and National Organization for Women go so far as to suggest that separating boys and girls is discriminatory and promotes stereotypes (Balona, 2004).

There are arguments to counter these criticisms, however. When the sexes are separated, girls have a unique opportunity to build self-confidence and self esteem without worrying about boys interrupting this process. When a girl gets into the “real” world, she may then have the confidence to say no to a boy or give him her opinion. Moreover, boys can learn to respect girls without being around them during class time. There are several opportunities available outside of the classroom to interact with the opposite sex. It is possible that most of the opponents of gender specific classrooms may not truly understand what is happening in the schools where gender specific classrooms exist.

One potential challenge that is difficult to argue against is the fact that not all girls learn the same way, nor do all boys learn the same way. Similarly, not all girls are interested in the same things, nor are all boys. Consequently, there is a danger to boys and girls who are different if gender specific classrooms lead to gender stereotyping. It is important that these classrooms offer the same programs to students, just present them differently.

Implementing Gender Specific Classroom Research

The research took place at St. Michael School in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, which may be described as a small-city, elementary school in a Roman Catholic school division. Involved in the research were grade 7 and 8 students who were taught by six teachers in gender specific classrooms in the 2003-04 school year. There was one grade 6/7 class, one grade 7/8 class and one grade 8 class. Some grade 6 students in these classrooms also participated in the students surveys, but data on the students' academic performance was gathered from only the grade 7 and 8 students.

Two sources of data were used to help the researchers understand the impact of the project on the students involved: survey of the parents, teachers and students involved and analysis of the students academic performance.

1. SURVEY DATA

At the beginning of the project the researchers suspected that there would be concerns from parents, teachers and students regarding the gender specific classrooms project. Some parents did express a few minor concerns, but for the most part, parents were very willing to allow the project to proceed at St. Michael School. The project quickly gained the support of most parents once they recognized the benefits their children were experiencing.

In January parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire as part of a general review and assessment of the gender specific classroom project. The questionnaire that they received and the responses they provided are given in Appendices D and E. Parents of the students in grade 8 showed the strongest support for continuing to provide gender specific classrooms.

Students, on the other hand, were much more difficult to convince that the project had merit. For varied reasons, some of the students did not appreciate the opportunities they had by being in a single-gender classroom. It was quite frustrating to teachers to be constantly defending the purposes of the project to students, especially when the teachers could see the benefits to students all the time the project was being implemented. Although students knew their academic performance was improving and their on-task behaviour had increased, there were still several students who did not support being in a gender specific classroom. Having said that, however, there were also students who did support the project and were quite vocal about their support. This expression of support was very rewarding to the teachers who spent countless hours preparing their gender specific classrooms.

The views of the students about the gender specific classroom project were gathered formally at two points in the school year. Students were asked to complete a questionnaire in August (see Appendix F for the survey questionnaire and Appendix G for the student responses to the survey

questions). From the August 2003 survey, the researchers drew the following information about the students' views at the beginning of the project:

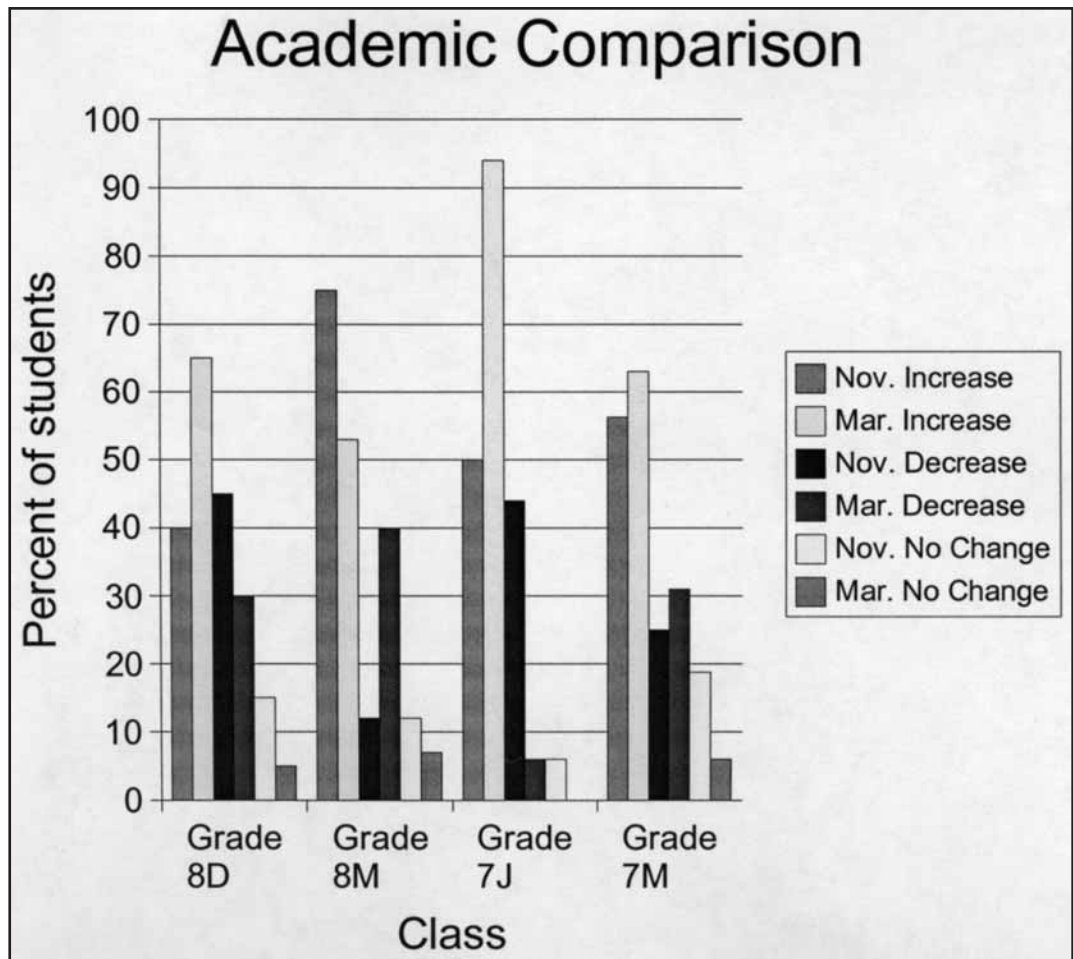
- 1) 19.6 percent of males prefer being in a gender specific classroom, while 56.5 percent of males prefer being in a coed classroom and 23.9 percent of males do not have a preference for either gender specific or coed classrooms.
- 2) 38.7 percent of females prefer being in a gender specific classroom, while 51.6 percent of females prefer being in a coed classroom and 9.7 percent of females do not have a preference of gender specific or coed classrooms.
- 3) 73.9 percent of males and 54.8 percent of females do not have a preference as to whether they have a male or female teacher.
- 4) 67.4 percent of males and 53.3 percent of females think that their grades will stay the same while in a gender specific classroom, while 19.6 percent of males and 46.2 percent of females think that their grades will improve while in a gender specific classroom.
- 5) 65.2 percent of males and 70 percent of females feel their attitude/behaviour will stay the same while in a gender specific classroom.
- 6) 37 percent of males and 36.7 percent of females feel St. Michael School should offer gender specific classrooms in the future.
- 7) 54.3 percent of males and 40 percent of females feel St. Michael School should not offer gender specific classrooms in the future.

From the survey, the researchers concluded that students saw more benefits than drawbacks to gender specific classrooms. This conclusion was reinforced by a second survey of the students that was conducted in February 2004 (see Appendix G for the survey form and Appendix H for the survey results). Again, support for gender specific classrooms was mixed, while most students recognized numerous benefits from being in a gender specific classroom.

In addition to the challenge presented by some of the students and a very few parents who did not support the project, the researchers recognized another challenge to the project. There are some students who will not benefit from being in a gender specific classroom. Some students have nothing in common with their same-sex classmates and would certainly benefit by being in the other gender classroom. Unfortunately, the researchers could not solve this problem and did find that some students were being unsuccessful in the gender specific classroom.

2. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

As shown in the Table 1, the percentage of students who increased their average marks in a gender specific classroom was generally greater than the percentage of students who decreased their average marks or experienced no change. The table indicates the percentage of students in each gender specific class studied who increased, decreased or experienced no change in their report card marks in November and March of 2003-04 in comparison to their report card marks in November and March of 2002-03 when they were in a coeducational class.



Generally speaking, the data gathered indicated that the gender specific classrooms project was quite successful. Not only did the researchers find that the students improved their academic performance, they also found a large improvement in classroom behaviour and discipline for both males and females. The incidences of bullying decreased while on-task behaviour improved. In addition, males were more interested in learning new things in the arts and english language arts, while females excelled in the areas of mathematics and science. The academic improvement was certainly expected, but the other benefits experienced in a single-gender classroom were a pleasant surprise.

Recommendations

Overall, the researchers found the gender specific project to be very successful. The benefits outweighed the challenges and student achievement was enhanced. However, we would advise other educators who are considering gender specific classrooms as an option in their schools to keep in mind the following recommendations:

1. Inform parents of all steps in the process, and make sure the school is up front about the project. This transparency will certainly aid in gaining the support of the parents.
2. Ensure that the teachers who teach in the gender specific classroom support the concept and can adapt their teaching styles to meet the needs of the new class arrangement.
3. Allow students to vocalize their concerns and try to involve them in the decision-making process. It is to be hoped that this involvement will encourage student support for being in a gender specific classroom.
4. Ensure that students do have opportunity to interact during the school day. The only time that should be gender specific is the actual instructional, class time. It is important that students continue to develop social skills with the opposite sex so that when they leave the gender specific classroom, they can still respect and appreciate the opinions and personalities of the opposite sex. For instance, ensure recess and lunch hours have coeducational opportunities where males and females can interact. In addition, SRC committees should also be coeducational, and there should be other extracurricular opportunities that are coeducational. By interacting with each other outside of class, students are still able to develop positive relationships with members of the opposite sex, thus making their gender specific classroom experiences that much more successful.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: COMPARISON OF STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN NOVEMBER: COED CLASSROOM AND GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOM

The following comparisons were made based on the students' report card marks from November 2002, when they were being taught in a coeducational classroom setting, and November 2003, when they were being taught in a gender specific classroom setting.

GRADE 7 BOYS (16 students)

- 9 students experienced an increase in their overall average
- 4 students experienced a decrease in their overall average
- 3 students experienced no change in their overall average

In this class students increased their report card average by 2.19 percent per student.

GRADE 7 GIRLS (16 students)

- 8 students experienced an increase in their overall average
- 7 students experienced a decrease in their overall average
- 1 student experienced no change in her overall average

In this class students decreased their report card average by 0.125 percent per student.

GRADE 8 BOYS (20 students)

- 8 students experienced an increase in their overall average
- 9 students experienced a decrease in their overall average
- 3 students experienced no change in their overall average

In this class students decreased their report card average by 1.05 percent per student.

GRADE 8 GIRLS (17 students)

- 13 students experienced an increase in their overall average
- 2 students experienced a decrease in their overall average
- 2 students experienced no change in their overall average

In this class students increased their report card average by 2.82 percent per student.

OVERALL COMMENTS

- 38 students increased their average, 22 students decreased their average and 9 students experienced no change in their average. In other words, 55 percent of the students have improved their average, 32 percent of the students have had a decline in their average and 13 percent neither increased or decreased their average mark.
- The largest, single increase came from a girl who had an increase of 14 marks.
- The largest, single decrease came from a girl who had a decrease of 11 marks.

APPENDIX B: COMPARISON OF STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MARCH: COED CLASSROOM AND GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOM

The following comparisons were made based on the students' report card marks from March 2003, when they were being taught in a coeducational classroom setting, and March 2004, when they were being taught in a gender specific classroom setting.

GRADE 7 BOYS (16 students)

- 15 students experienced an increase in their overall average
- 1 student experienced a decrease in his overall average (by one percent)
- 0 students have experienced no change in their overall average

In this class students increased their report card average by 4.63 percent per student.

GRADE 7 GIRLS (16 students)

- 10 students have experienced an increase in their overall average
- 5 students have experienced a decrease in their overall average
- 1 student has experienced no change in her overall average

In this class students increased their report card average by 1.63 percent per student.

GRADE 8 BOYS (20 students)

- 13 students experienced an increase in their overall average
- 6 students experienced a decrease in their overall average
- 1 student experienced no change in his overall average

In this class students increased their report card average by 1 percent per student.

GRADE 8 GIRLS (15 students)

- 8 students experienced an increase in their overall average
- 6 students experienced a decrease in their overall average
- 1 students experienced no change in her overall average

In this class students increased their report card average by 2.13 percent per student.

OVERALL COMMENTS

- 46 students increased their average, 18 students decreased their average and 3 students experienced no change in their average. In other words, 69 percent of the students improved their average, 27 percent of the students had a decline in their average and 4 percent had neither increased nor decreased their average mark.
- The largest, single increase came from a boy who had an increase of 16 marks.
- The largest, single decrease came from a girl who had a decrease of 10 marks.

APPENDIX C: PARENT SURVEY

GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOM REVIEW

January 19, 2004

A general review and assessment is being made of the gender specific classrooms project in which you and your child are participating. Part of this process involves collecting information from parents by means of this questionnaire, which is being circulated to all parents who have children in one or more of the gender specific rooms.

You are NOT asked to identify yourself. Your responses will provide the school with important information for future planning. Please complete the questions with which you are comfortable.

Please return the completed questionnaire to the school by **Wednesday, January 21st, 2004.**

Thank you very much for participating in the education of your child.

Sincerely,
 Dave DePape
 Vice-Principal

Please complete the questionnaire by circling the appropriate number corresponding to the following scale:

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, NS=Not Sure.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	NS
1. Teachers involved in the project are enthusiastic.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Our child(ren) enjoy being in a gender specific classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Students get along well in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. We are interested in how our child(ren) do at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Our child(ren) like to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Generally students are attentive in class. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. Our child(ren) feel they have value and worth by being a part of this project. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. Students behave well in these classes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. Our child(ren)s' self esteem has improved since being in the project. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. Our child(ren) are learning more by being in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. Our child(ren)s' marks have improved since entering the project. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. The school communicates effectively with parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13. Teachers vary their approach in teaching the lessons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14. Students are given good opportunity to succeed in their classes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15. We are aware of the goals of the project. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16. The community is kept informed about the project. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. Parents are encouraged to become involved with the project. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. We would consider this school to be fairly innovative. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19. The project places sufficient emphasis upon academic achievement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 20. The project is adequate for developing character and self-respect among students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 21. The project helps students learn to become problem solvers and lifelong learners. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 22. The project encourages students to develop self-discipline and initiative. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

23. We feel the project has been successful thus far. 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. We feel the project should be continued next school year. 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. The project pays adequate attention to the individual needs of children. 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. Overall, our child(ren) have experienced more success while in a gender specific classroom. 1 2 3 4 5 6

GENERAL COMMENTS: If you need more space, please use the back of the page.

1. What do you feel are the strengths of the project?
2. Do you have any suggestions for improving this project?

APPENDIX D: PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

PARENT SURVEY AVERAGE SCORES

1=Strongly Disagree, 3=Neutral and 5=Strongly Agree

	Gr 8D	Gr7/8M	Gr6/7J
1. Teachers involved in the project are enthusiastic.	4.36	4.17	3.67
2. Our child(ren) enjoy being in a gender specific classroom.	4.2	2.9	2.89
3. Students get along well in the classroom.	4.21	3.62	3.57
4. We are interested in how our child(ren) do at school.	4.8	4.86	4.78
5. Our child(ren) like to do well in school.	4.53	4.77	4.89
6. Generally students are attentive in class.	3.93	3.53	3.5
7. Our child(ren) feel they have value and worth by being a part of this project.	3.79	3.05	3.11
8. Students behave well in these classes.	4	3.58	3
9. Our child(ren)s' self esteem has improved since being in the project.	3.5	3.19	3.38
10. Our child(ren) are learning more by being in a gender specific classroom.	3.8	3.05	2.88
11. Our child(ren)s' marks have improved since entering the project.	3.29	3.09	3.13
12. The school communicates effectively with parents.	3.64	3.24	3
13. Teachers vary their approach in teaching the lessons.	4.17	3.5	3.86
14. Students are given good opportunity to succeed in their classes.	4.31	3.68	4.13

15. We are aware of the goals of the project.	4.08	3.79	3.5
16. The community is kept informed about the project.	4	3.33	3.63
17. Parents are encouraged to become involved with the project.	3.79	3.45	3.89
18. We would consider this school to be fairly innovative.	4.14	3.76	4
19. The project places sufficient emphasis upon academic achievement.	4.36	3.82	3.33
20. The project is adequate for developing character and self-respect among students.	3.79	3.38	3.13
21. The project helps students learn to become problem solvers and lifelong learners.	3.58	3.37	2.75
22. The project encourages students to develop self-discipline and initiative.	3.36	3.25	2.75
23. We feel the project has been successful thus far.	4.13	3.38	3.13
24. We feel the project should be continued next school year.	3.67	3	2.5
25. The project pays adequate attention to the individual needs of children.	3.79	3.25	2.88
26. Overall, our child(ren) have experienced more success while in a gender specific classroom.	3.5	3.05	2.71

APPENDIX E: TEACHER SURVEY

GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

TEACHER SURVEY

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. Have you been involved with gender specific classrooms prior to the 2003-2004 school year?
3. How are you involved with the project (homeroom teacher, classes taught, etc.)?
4. Describe the student/student relationship in your gender specific situation.
5. Describe the student/teacher relationship in your gender specific situation.
6. How did you feel when the gender specific project was first initiated?
7. How do you feel now?
8. Please describe any benefits you have found thus far in gender specific classrooms.
9. Please describe any challenges you have noticed thus far in gender specific classrooms.
10. Have you noticed a difference in participation in gender specific classrooms compared to a coed setting?
11. Have you noticed a difference in self-confidence in gender specific classrooms compared to a coed setting?
12. Have you noticed a difference in achievement in gender specific classrooms compared to a coed setting?
13. In teaching a gender specific classroom, are there any differences in the way you organize your instructional strategies?
14. What are the issues relating to class management of a gender specific classroom when compared to a coeducational setting?
15. To what degree do you see gender specific classrooms facilitating or hindering the success of the students?
16. How do you think the students feel about gender specific classrooms?
17. Any other comments?

APPENDIX F: AUGUST 2003 SURVEY OF STUDENTS IN GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOM STUDENT SURVEY AUGUST 28, 2003

Welcome back!!! We hope you had a great summer. It is going to be an extremely exciting year, with many opportunities and memories to be had. We would like to thank you for having an open mind and a willingness to participate in our project. This survey will give us some background on your expectations and hopes for this project. So prepare yourself for many new and rewarding experiences throughout the year.

1. Are you a boy or a girl? boy girl

2. Are you in grade 6, 7 or 8? 6 7 8

3. How long have you attended St. Michael School?

4. What will be the benefits of being in a gender specific classroom?

5. What will be the drawbacks of being in a gender specific classroom?

6. Do you think you would prefer being in a coed classroom or a gender specific classroom? Why?

7. In a gender specific classroom, do you prefer to be taught by...
 - a. a female teacher?
 - b. a male teacher?
 - c. both male and female?
 - d. does not matter?

- Why do you have that preference?

8. Do you think your marks will increase, decrease or stay the same while in a gender specific classroom? Why?

9. Do you think your attitude/behaviour will improve, decline or stay the same while in a gender specific classroom? Why?

10. What kinds of things would you like to see and do while in a gender specific classroom?

11. Do you think St. Michael School should have gender specific classrooms in the next school year? Why?

APPENDIX G: RESULTS OF AUGUST 2003 SURVEY OF STUDENTS IN GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL
GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOM STUDENT SURVEY
AUGUST 28, 2003

RESULTS

QUESTION 1.

Are you a boy or a girl?

Answers:

46 boys / 31 girls

QUESTION 2.

What grade are you in?

Answers:

38 grade 8 / 29 grade 7 / 10 grade 6

QUESTION 3.

What will be the benefits of being in a gender specific classroom?

Answers:

Grade 8 males

- marks will increase
- mature easier
- concentrate better
- marks will increase
- be with all my friends (5 student responses)
- girls won't bother us during work
- talk about "guy" stuff
- get to play "real" sports
- get to do things guys want to do
- can read "manly" books
- there are no benefits (3 student responses)
- no girls to bug you
- marks will increase
- don't have to learn "girly" stuff
- won't be as shy
- do things differently
- no distractions
- do more guy things
- can act how you want without having to impress the girls

Grade 7 males

- we have opinions on field trips
- field trips will be better and more boyish (2 student responses)

- being with all my friends (2 student responses)
- do more “boy” stuff (2 student responses)
- can do sports girls don’t want to do (5 student responses)
- girls won’t take things from us
- more work will get done

Grade 6 males

- get to do certain things
- learn new things
- don’t know
- always with friends
- doesn’t matter
- more friends
- learn better
- get to be with all my friends
- nothing
- seeing friends

Grade 8 females

- better chance to relate
- grades might go up
- get to be with all my friends
- not as many distractions
- PE will be easier because you won’t be scared to do things
- do things girls like to do
- learn different things
- will get a girl for a partner for sure
- bring up my marks
- get more prepared for high school
- be more open to discussion
- not afraid that I have to keep my ideas to myself
- talk about what we want to
- get better grades
- pink pens won’t get stolen
- less flirting
- less showing off
- less fighting and distractions
- might get what you want more often
- girls will be less shy
- we can have “girl” talks
- get to do what we want to do

Grade 7 females

- be with more girls
- boys won’t ruin stuff they do
- no boy-girl-boy line-ups
- boys can’t take charge
- get more and better things to do
- get to do more “girl” things (4 student responses)
- don’t have to do what boys want to do
- concentrate more
- get higher grades (2 student responses)
- see all my friends (2 student responses)
- do things that connect with us
- do things without wondering what the boys are thinking
- talk about “girl” stuff
- field trips for girls

QUESTION 4.

What will be the drawbacks of being in a gender specific classroom?

Answers:

Grade 8 males

- in grade nine we'll be in a mixed room (4 student responses)
- some people have many girls for friends (2 student responses)
- won't get to see girls as much (10 student responses)
- our social life will go down
- we're growing up and having feelings for the opposite sex

Grade 7 males

- there will be more talking
- no drawbacks (4 student responses)
- not seeing your friends
- too much talking (2 student responses)
- no girls (5 student responses)

Grade 6 males

- doing nothing
- all my friends are girls
- no girls (3 student responses)
- I don't know (2 student responses)
- it is too noisy
- bullies
- no drawbacks

Grade 8 females

- won't be able to laugh at stupid things boys do
- not as fun
- it's our last year and we're split up (2 student responses)
- can't watch guys goof off
- I don't know
- no boys (3 student responses)
- miss the humour of the boys
- more than half my friends are boys
- we want ideas from guys
- no drawbacks (2 student responses)
- boys make school more bearable and enjoyable
- more giggling
- less working

Grade 7 females

- it can get annoying
- no boys
- can't do boy-girl competitions in class
- can't meet people of the opposite gender
- some boys are our friends (6 student responses)
- no goofy boys
- not having enough change room space
- fighting
- no boys to make us laugh (2 student responses)
- no drawbacks (3 student responses)
- no guys to laugh at when they get into trouble

QUESTION 5.

Do you think you prefer being in a coed classroom or a gender specific classroom?

Answers:*Grade 8 males*

- 3 students preferred gender specific
- 11 students preferred coed
- 8 students said it doesn't matter

Grade 7 males

- 4 students preferred gender specific
- 9 students preferred coed
- 1 student said it doesn't matter

Grade 6 males

- 2 students preferred gender specific
- 6 students preferred coed
- 2 students said it doesn't matter

Grade 8 females

- 6 students preferred gender specific
- 10 students preferred coed
- 0 students said it doesn't matter

Grade 7 females

- 6 students preferred gender specific
- 6 students preferred coed
- 3 students said it doesn't matter

QUESTION 6.

In a gender specific classroom, do you prefer to be taught by:

- a. a female teacher?
- b. a male teacher?
- c. both male and female?
- d. doesn't matter?

Answers:*Grade 8 males*

- 1 student preferred a female teacher
- 7 students preferred a male teacher
- 1 student preferred both male and female
- 13 students said it doesn't matter

Grade 7 males

- 0 students preferred a female teacher
- 1 student preferred a male teacher
- 1 student preferred both male and female
- 12 students said it doesn't matter

Grade 6 males

- 1 student preferred a female teacher
- 0 students preferred a male teacher
- 1 student preferred both male and female
- 9 students said it doesn't matter

Grade 8 females

- 3 students preferred a female teacher
- 0 students preferred a male teacher
- 2 students preferred both male and female
- 11 students said it doesn't matter

Grade 7 females

- 6 students preferred a female teacher
- 0 students preferred a male teacher
- 3 students preferred both male and female
- 6 students said it doesn't matter

QUESTION 7.

Do you think your marks will increase, decrease or stay the same while in a gender specific classroom?

Answers:

Grade 8 males

- 5 students expected an increase
- 2 students expected a decrease
- 15 students thought their marks would stay the same

Grade 7 males

- 2 students expected an increase
- 2 students expected a decrease
- 10 students thought their marks would stay the same

Grade 6 males

- 2 students expected an increase
- 2 students expected a decrease
- 6 students thought their marks would stay the same

Grade 8 females

- 7 students expected an increase
- 0 students expected a decrease
- 9 students thought their marks would stay the same

Grade 7 females

- 7 students expected an increase
- 0 students expected a decrease
- 7 students thought their marks would stay the same

QUESTION 8.

Do you think your attitude/behaviour will improve, decline or stay the same while in a gender specific classroom?

Answers:

Grade 8 males

- 5 students expected improvement
- 5 students expected a decline
- 12 students thought their attitude/behaviour would stay the same

Grade 7 males

- 1 student expected improvement
- 1 student expected a decline
- 12 students thought their attitude/behaviour would stay the same

Grade 6 males

- 3 students expected improvement
- 1 student expected a decline
- 6 students thought their attitude/behaviour would stay the same

Grade 8 females

- 1 student expected improvement
- 0 students expected a decline
- 9 students thought their attitude/behaviour would stay the same

Grade 7 females

- 2 students expected improvement
- 0 students expected a decline
- 12 students thought their attitude/behaviour would stay the same

QUESTION 9.

Do you think St. Michael School should have gender specific classrooms in the next school year?

Answers:

Grade 8 males

- yes - 8 students
- no - 10 students
- doesn't matter - 4 students

Grade 7 males

- yes - 6 students
- no - 6 students
- doesn't matter - 1 student

Grade 6 males

- yes - 3 students
- no - 9 students
- doesn't matter - 2 students

Grade 8 females

- yes - 6 students
- no - 6 students
- doesn't matter - 4 students

Grade 7 females

- yes - 5 students
- no - 6 students
- doesn't matter - 3 students

APPENDIX H: FEBRUARY 2004 SURVEY OF STUDENTS IN GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOM STUDENT SURVEY FEBRUARY, 2004

We would like to know how you feel about the gender specific classroom project that you are participating in. Please complete the questionnaire by circling the appropriate number corresponding to the following scale:

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neither, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, NS=Not Sure.

You do NOT have to identify yourself. Thank you for participating in the project.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	NS
1. My teachers are enthusiastic.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. There are more benefits than drawbacks of a gender specific classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. My marks have increased since being in a gender specific classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. My attitude/behaviour has improved since being in a gender specific classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I would rather be in a gender specific classroom than a coed classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I have no preference of being in a gender specific or a coed classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I have no preference of being taught by a male or female teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I feel I have learned more since being in a gender specific classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I am more focused on my studies since being in a gender specific classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I have more fun in a gender specific classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. I can relate more to the subjects being taught in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. I am treated very fairly in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13. I feel I can express my opinions more freely in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14. I enjoy group work better in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15. I would like to be in a gender specific classroom again. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16. Gender specific classrooms are better to be in than I thought they would be. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. When I do something good or helpful for a group, my ideas and actions are noticed and liked by others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. It's easier to be accepted in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19. I don't like to be absent because I feel good about being at school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 20. I did not like the idea of gender specific classrooms when I first heard about them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 21. My self esteem has improved since being in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 22. People in my class accept me for who I am. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 23. There is less bullying in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 24. We do more things I am interested in, in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 25. I like to do well in school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 26. I think gender specific classrooms should be offered next year. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 27. If I had a choice, I would choose to be in a gender specific classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

APPENDIX I: RESULTS OF FEBRUARY 2004 SURVEY OF STUDENTS IN GENDER SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS

STUDENT SURVEY 2 AVERAGE SCORES

1=Strongly Disagree, 3=Neutral and 5=Strongly Agree

	6/7J	7/8M	8D
1. My teachers are enthusiastic.	2.75	3.7	3.92
2. There are more benefits than drawbacks of a gender specific classroom.	1.4	2.17	3.35
3. My marks have increased since being in a gender specific classroom.	2.32	2.82	2.85
4. My attitude/behaviour has improved since being in a gender specific classroom.	1.73	2.38	2.7
5. I would rather be in a gender specific classroom than a coed classroom.	1.09	1.82	2.79
6. I have no preference of being in a gender specific or a coed classroom.	1.32	1.95	3.11
7. I have no preference of being taught by a male or female teacher.	3.57	3.89	3.5
8. I feel I have learned more since being in a gender specific classroom.	.47	2.24	2.83
9. I am more focused on my studies since being in a gender specific classroom.	1.9	2.45	2.83
10. I have more fun in a gender specific classroom.	2	2.43	3.98
11. I can relate more to the subjects being taught in a gender specific classroom.	2.16	2.67	3.48
12. I am treated very fairly in a gender specific classroom.	2.95	3.3	3.82
13. I feel I can express my opinions more freely in a gender specific classroom.	2.3	3.1	4

14. I enjoy group work better in a gender specific classroom.	2.38	3.18	3.42
15. I would like to be in a gender specific classroom again.	1.05	1.61	2.69
16. Gender specific classrooms are better to be in than I thought they would be.	1.45	2.82	4.25
17. When I do something good or helpful for a group, my ideas and actions are noticed and liked by others.	2.86	2.95	3.35
18. It's easier to be accepted in a gender specific classroom.	2.26	2.61	3.32
19. I don't like to be absent because I feel good about being at school.	2.1	1.95	2.39
20. I did not like the idea of gender specific classrooms when I first heard about them.	3.68	4.14	4.05
21. My self esteem has improved since being in a gender specific classroom.	2.1	2.61	3.1
22. People in my class accept me for who I am.	3.71	3.85	3.35
23. There is less bullying in a gender specific classroom.	1.75	2.94	3.11
24. We do more things I am interested in, in a gender specific classroom.	3.05	2.74	3.95
25. I like to do well in school.	4.7	4.64	4.32
26. I think gender specific classrooms should be offered next year.	1	1.84	2.75
27. If I had a choice, I would choose to be in a gender specific classroom.	1	1.42	2.76

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