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# SHOULD SINGLE-GENDER EDUCATION BE AN OPTION FOR FAMILIES OR SHOULD ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS BE CO-ED?

Word Generation - Unit 3.12

## Focus Words

gender | comprise | adapt | conduct | paradigm



## WEEKLY PASSAGE

Jenny lives with her mother, grandmother, and little sister. She is a junior at an all-girls high school where she is an excellent student. Jenny has applied to the University of Massachusetts. She is concerned about living in a co-ed dorm. She has not spent a lot of time interacting with boys her own age. Has Jenny's high-school experience prepared her for the real world?

For years, many private schools have separated boys and girls. A new law has made single-**gender** education available to students who cannot afford to get into private schools.

Supporters of this law say that children can learn better in single-gender settings. Teachers of single-gender classes report that girls participate more and boys are able to pay attention better when they are separated. Teachers are able to plan activities specifically to address boys' and girls' needs. For example, lessons for boys include more movement and competition. Lessons for girls include more group work and start with a story that makes the lesson relevant to real life. Some scientists think these differences could help more boys enjoy languages and art and more girls enjoy math and science.

However, schools also help students learn about how to behave socially. Men and women **comprise** the work force. If children grow up without the experience of

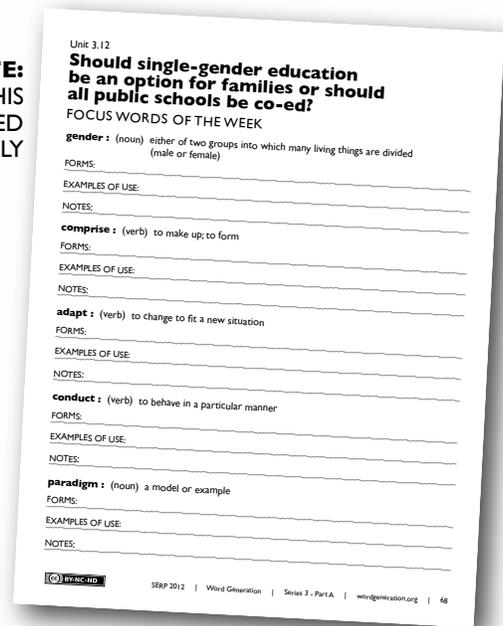
working together, they may have trouble **adapting** to mixed-gender situations. To prepare students to succeed as adults, they must learn how to **conduct** themselves around the opposite sex.

Some single-gender schools are having great academic success. The Bright Choice Charter School of Albany, New York has been open since 2005. They offer a boys' school and a girls' school. In 2005, these schools ranked first and second on New York state tests. Some argue that other factors besides single-gender education affected the children's success, but teachers and parents at Bright Choice believe in the single-gender **paradigm**. Are the academic advantages of single-gender education more important than the social learning opportunities provided in regular schools?

### TEACHER: Discussion Questions

- ▶ In this passage, why is Jenny worried living in the college dorms?
- ▶ What are advantages of single-gender education for boys? For girls?
- ▶ What are disadvantages of single-gender education for boys? For girls?
- ▶ How could single-gender lessons make it difficult for boys or girls to adapt to situations with both genders?
- ▶ Would you like to attend certain classes with all girls or all boys? Which classes? Why?

**PLEASE NOTE:**  
THE STUDENT VERSION OF THIS  
PAGE IS FORMATTED  
DIFFERENTLY



Unit 3.12  
**WORD CHART FOR TEACHERS**

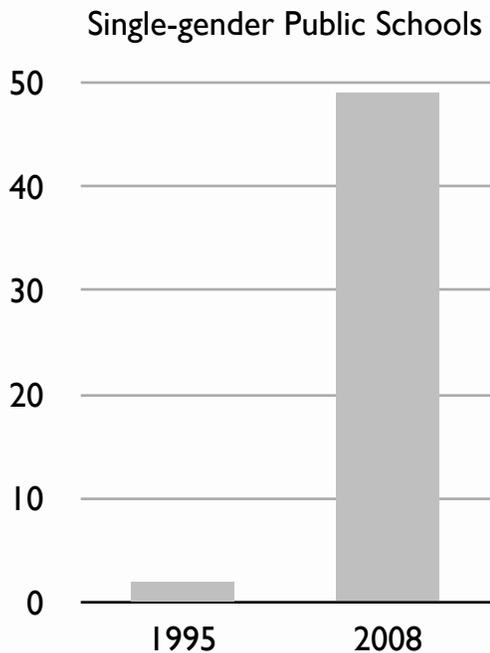
This chart is not in the student book. It is a resource for teachers to support students in the use of the focus words each. Students are provided one page in each unit immediately following the weekly passage with a basic definition printed and space for taking notes.

| Word     | Meaning  | Forms   |                    |  | Related Words                                     |
|----------|--|---|--------------------|--|---|
|          |  | Inflectional  | Basic Word Classes | Prefixes/ Suffixes   |   |
| gender   | (n.) - either of two groups into which many living things are divided (male or female) | genders   |                    | engender   | generate<br>genus<br>generic<br>genre<br>genotype |
| comprise | (v.) - to make up; to form   | comprised<br>comprises<br>comprising                |                    | comprisable  | comprehend<br>prison<br>prey                      |
| adapt    | (v.) - to change to fit a new situation  | adapted<br>adapts<br>adapting                       |                    | adaptable<br>adaptation<br>adaptability<br>adaptedness<br>readapt      |   |
| conduct  | (v.) - to behave in a particular manner  | conducts<br>conducted<br>conducting<br>conduct (n.) |                    | conductor<br>conductible<br>conductibility<br>misconduct<br>conductive | duct<br>ductile<br>abduct                         |
| paradigm | (n.) - a model or example  | paradigms   |                    | paradigmatic<br>paradigmatically                                       |   |

# Should single-gender education be an option for families or should all public schools be co-ed?



## PROBLEM OF THE WEEK



**Option 1:** American schools must **adapt** to a competitive world. Schools are looking for ways to boost achievement and improve student **conduct**. Schools or classes **comprised** of just one **gender** might help reach these goals. More public schools are considering the single-gender **paradigm**. In 1995, there were just 2 single-gender public schools. In 2008, there were 49.

Which of the following best describes what happened to the number of single-gender public schools?

- A) the number doubled
- B) the number decreased by one-third
- C) the number increased dramatically
- D) the number increased by 300%**

**Option 2:** Dr. Leonard Sax has championed the single-gender **paradigm**. He claims that classes **comprised** of only girls or only boys allows teachers to **adapt** each class to boys' or girls' different needs. One study was conducted that found that males prefer a temperature of  $71^{\circ}$  and females prefer a temperature of  $77^{\circ}$  when wearing bathing suits. In regular clothing, Dr. Sax thinks males will prefer a temperature of  $69^{\circ}$ , and females will prefer a temperature of  $76^{\circ}$ .

Assume Dr. Sax is right. Let  $f$  = the preferred temperature for females. Let  $m$  = the preferred temperature for males. Write an algebraic expression that shows the relationship between the two variables.

Answer:  $f = m + 6$  OR  $m = f - 6$  OR  $f - m = 6$

**Discussion Question:** Will **conducting** studies on **gender** differences help us do a better job of educating students? Should schools **adapt** to students, or should students **adapt** to school? Which **paradigm** seems right to you? Why?

Source: Weil, E. (2008, March 2). Teaching boys and girls separately. New York Times.

Retrieved on July 17, 2008 from [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/02/magazine/02sex3-t.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=weil%20single%20gender&st=cse&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/02/magazine/02sex3-t.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=weil%20single%20gender&st=cse&oref=slogin)

## Should single-gender education be an option for families or should all public schools be co-ed?



### THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

Ms. Kahn gave her students many assignments to complete as groups. She wondered whether group work was an effective teaching **paradigm**. Every year, she asked her students to work in groups to design a bridge with toothpicks. This year, her class decided to **conduct** an experiment to see if groups build better bridges than individuals. They divided the class into two conditions. Half of the class would work in two groups **comprised** of five students each. The other half of the class would work individually. They would rate each bridge on how long it took to build and how much weight it could hold. If students work better in groups than alone, they will **adapt** their class plans to include more group activities.

→ Ms. Kahn's student Tanya wondered if working in groups helped with problem solving. She worked with Ms. Kahn to develop a way to test a hypothesis as her class did a project where they made toothpick bridges.

#### Question:

Is group work an effective way to solve challenging problems?

#### Hypothesis:

The students who work in groups will build stronger bridges.

#### Materials:

- ▶ Toothpicks
- ▶ Glue
- ▶ Timers

#### Procedure:

1. Begin with a class of 15 students. Divide the students into two groups of 5 students each and 5 students working alone. Students in groups decide on their roles.
2. Monitor the amount of time the students spend building the bridges.
3. When the bridges are complete, measure how much weight the bridge can hold before it breaks.

#### Data:

|                               |   | Hours to complete the bridge | Mass held by bridge |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Working as Groups</b>      | A | 17                           | 30g                 |
|                               | B | 18                           | 25g                 |
| <b>Working as Individuals</b> | 1 | 12                           | 25g                 |
|                               | 2 | 6                            | 5g                  |
|                               | 3 | 10                           | 15g                 |
|                               | 4 | 14                           | 15g                 |
|                               | 5 | 11                           | 10g                 |

Do the data give you information about the effectiveness of group work?

Groups A and B built stronger bridges. However, they spent more time constructing the bridges than the individuals.

*This isn't necessarily true, but let's speculate that one gender learns better in single-gender classrooms and the other does not. IF this were the case, do you think it would be fair to let people choose?*

Could you change this experiment to compare gender groups instead of groups and individuals? How?

The experiment could be changed to include groups that are comprised of all boys and groups that are comprised of all girls, as well as groups comprised of both boys and girls.



# Should single-gender education be an option for families or should all public schools be co-ed?

## DEBATING THE ISSUE

### Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

**A** Single-gender education has many academic advantages. Therefore, single-gender education should be mandatory.

**B** Social learning is just as important as academic learning. Co-ed schools should be mandatory.

**C** Students should attend single-gender elementary schools and co-ed high schools to prepare them for college and real life.

**D** People should at least have the option to go to single-gender schools, but such schools might not provide a good environment for everyone.

**E** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### TEACHER

Whatever debate format you use in your class, ask students to use academically productive talk in arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should also be encouraged to take their own positions on the issue at hand.

### Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

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# GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

*In my experience...*

*That's similar to what I think.*

*What makes you think that?*

*When I re-read the text, it reminded me...*



# Should single-gender education be an option for families or should all public schools be co-ed?

## WRITE ABOUT IT

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.  
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

### Focus Words

gender | comprise | adapt | conduct | paradigm

#### TEACHER

Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.

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**Source References:**

American Association for University Women. (n.d.). AAUW’s position on single-sex education. Retrieved August 18, 2008, from [http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue\\_advocacy/actionpages/singlesex.cfm](http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/actionpages/singlesex.cfm)

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More information for teachers:

Before 1972, many schools offered separate classes for boys and girls. Girls attended home economics classes where they learned to cook, sew, and clean. Boys went to a workshop class where they learned how to fix and build things. Many people argued that students were getting an unequal education if they did not have equal choices. In 1972, Title IX made it illegal for schools to offer classes or schools to only one gender and not the other. However, in 2006 the Bush Administration gave public schools the choice to try single-gender education if it would benefit their students.