Argumentative Task:
Co-Ed or Single-Gender Schools?
During the early 1990s, research reports showed that girls were not receiving the full benefit of a public school education. In one study, a group of researchers visited more than 100 coeducational elementary school classrooms in schools located in five states. The researchers noticed that teachers would praise a boy who yelled out a correct answer to a question. If a girl yelled out an answer, the teacher would tell her that she should have raised her hand instead. Teachers tended to respond to a girl’s comment with a simple acknowledgement. In contrast, teachers responded to a boy’s comment with praise or a helpful critique. In addition, a teacher would often help a girl who was having trouble with a homework problem. However, if a boy had trouble with a problem, the teacher encouraged him to solve it for himself.

Some people saw this unequal treatment as a serious flaw in the school system. They recommended implementing single-gender education. Advocates said that girls would be more comfortable responding to a teacher’s questions and sharing ideas in class.

In 1999, the Jefferson Leadership Academies (Long Beach, CA) started an experiment. It became the first public middle school in the US with single-gender classes. Soon school officials saw their efforts bear fruit. Boys and girls who studied in single-gender classes had higher grade point averages.

“We have seen many students start to focus heavily on academics,” principal Jill Rojas told Education World. “They no longer clown or try to impress the opposite sex. Girls are more apt to answer questions aloud in class, as well as ask them. Girls are learning to be more academically competitive and boys are learning to collaborate.”

Around the world, researchers have found numerous benefits of single-gender education. A study taken in South Korea saw that girls who attended all-girls schools were more likely to advance to a four-year college than girls who went to a co-ed school. The same held true for boys. Researchers also saw a trend that has been reported in the US and at least seven other countries. They found that single-gender schools helped to remove gender stereotypes of certain courses. Boys in all-boys schools are more likely to study drama, art, and music as opposed to boys in co-ed classrooms. Girls in all-girls schools are more likely to study computer science, advanced math, and physics. Advocates of single-gender schools highlight this effect. They argue that the chance to study non-traditional subjects may be the greatest benefit for girls who get an education in a girls-only school.

Some people argue that, despite the learning benefits, students in single-gender schools miss out on socializing with members of the opposite sex. While this is true, and it is an important factor for those who feel socialization is a priority, there is always the choice to attend a coeducational school.

Researchers have found yet another advantage of single-gender schools—an improvement in self-esteem for both boys and girls. Considering the other proven benefits of single-gender schools, it is safe to say that this form of education is here to stay.

*“Single-Gender Schools Make the Mark”* by Phillip Jones. This article was written for educational purposes.
In the early 1990s, a report entitled “How Schools Shortchange Girls” claimed girls were not getting the full benefit of a public school education. Some people believed the problem could be resolved by separating boy and girl students. Soon single-gender schools popped up all across the country.

However, the reality did not seem to live up to the early hopes. Enthusiasm for single-gender schools began to wane. Some reports claimed that the single-gender school experiment was flunking. Others stated single-gender schools provided little benefit over co-educational schools.

For years, backers of single-gender schools pointed to particular school programs as successes. Students from these schools seemed to perform much better than co-ed students did. Critics of the single-gender approach claimed that these examples were “cherry-picked” by fans of single-gender schools.

In 2014, researchers published a report that supported the critics’ claims. The researchers analyzed 184 studies that looked at almost two million primary and secondary students in 21 nations. The purpose was to test the effects of single-gender schools compared with co-ed schools on students. After looking at 184 studies, the researchers failed to find significant advantages of single-gender schooling over co-ed schooling for either boys or girls.

Critics of single-gender schools say this type of learning environment lacks an advantage that co-ed schools have. They admit that the opposite gender can be distracting for students in a co-ed classroom. Sometimes boys show off around girls or vice versa. Nonetheless, students also benefit from the diversity of learning in the company of the opposite gender. A co-ed classroom is made up of students who have a wide range of interests and many different points of view. In a way, the classroom experience closely resembles life that a student encounters in the real world.

“School is preparation for adult life,” Dr. Diane F. Halpern told the Monitor on Psychology. “How can boys and girls learn how to interact as equals in the workplace if they have no experience interacting as equals in school?” Dr. Halpern has served as an expert witness in court cases about single-gender learning in public schools. She is also one of the founders of the American Council for CoEducational Schooling (ACCES). ACCES is a group that promotes and improves coeducation in schools.

Co-ed schools may still have problems with gender equality. However, groups (like ACCES) are working to improve co-ed schools. Co-ed schools truly do have advantages over single-gender schools. Despite claims made by fans of single-gender education in the 1990s, co-ed schools will always be the better choice.
Multiple reports during the early 1990s described inequality in public schools; they claimed that schools shortchanged female students. It was assumed that implementing single-gender schools would resolve the situation.

*The Christian Science Monitor* interviewed Monique Harrington while she was a junior at the Philadelphia High School for Girls. Monique said that the all-girls school enabled her to focus on academics as opposed to distractions. “You don’t worry about your boyfriend—who he’s talking to,” Monique said.

The girls become motivated to pursue advanced education. “It would be a waste of time if you didn’t go to college after going to Girls High,” said sophomore Adikaira Martinez.

Some perceive that one of the issues with public education is that a limited number of female students take STEM subjects. “STEM” stands for science, technology, engineering, and math. Senior Geraldine Agredo discovered that she, indeed, greatly enjoys computer science. She attends The Young Women’s Leadership School of Astoria in New York City.

Senior Brittany Greve also praises The Young Women’s Leadership School of Astoria for facilitating her discovery of technology subjects. “I feel like if I weren’t in this school, I never would have tried it at all,” she told the *Monitor*. “Now, I am venturing into the STEM fields, and I love every minute of it.” Many students, it seems, who attend schools with only one gender feel the same way.

Not all female students harbor fond recollections about their single-gender school experience. “With more than a touch of adolescent hyperbole,” Juliet A. Williams states, “I regarded my ninth-grade year in an all-girls school as akin to serving time in prison.” In her book *The Separation Solution*? (2016) Juliet describes her experience with the Philadelphia High School for Girls. Her first year at the school was quite unlike “the inspiring images of sisterly empowerment” associated with single-gender schools. Moreover, she felt that her schoolwork, in fact, actually reinforced gender stereotypes.

“*The Students’ Points of View*” by John Smith. This article was written for educational purposes.
GRADE 7 ARGUMENTATIVE TASK
CO-ED OR SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS?

WRITING PROMPT

Write an argumentative essay in which you argue whether single-gender or co-ed schools are better for students and why. Use information from the passages in your essay.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to:

- include a claim;
- address counterclaims;
- use evidence from multiple sources; and
- avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multi-paragraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.