

Boys and Girls Together, Taught Separately in Public School

Jennifer Medina, New York Times | Friday, March 13, 2009

BRONX — The single-sex classes at Public School 140, which started as an experiment last year to address sagging test scores and behavioral problems, are among at least 445 such classrooms nationwide, according to the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education.



Most have sprouted since a 2004 federal regulatory change that gave public schools freedom to separate girls and boys. The nation's 95 single-sex public schools — including a dozen in New York City — while deemed legal, still have many critics. But separation by a hallway is generally more socially and politically palatable. And unlike other programs aimed at improving student

performance, there is no extra cost.

At the Bronx's Eagle School, there is also little evidence so far of improvement, at least of the easy-to-measure variety. Students of both sexes in the co-ed fifth grade did better on last year's state tests in math and English than their counterparts in the single-sex rooms, and this year's co-ed class had the highest percentage of students passing the state social studies exam. But these numbers are as much a reflection of who is in which room. In general, struggling students are steered toward the single-sex classes (anyone who objects can opt out). While test scores might not show it, Mr. Cannon and his teachers said there have been fewer fights and discipline issues, and more participation in class and after-school activities, since the girls and boys were split up.

Mr. Napolitano, one of four men among the school's 30 classroom teachers, said he thinks of his students as "23 sort-of sons," and engages them with Marvel Comics and chess. He proudly held up the book "Patrol Boy," with a picture of a young man with a large tattoo on his back, as an example of material he would not have used in a co-ed class. There is a sisterhood equivalent in the girls' classroom, where a recent assignment was to research influential black women (several wanted to interview Ms. Hudson, but she directed them to the Internet for higher-profile subjects like Harriet Tubman and Michelle Obama).

1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses regarding gender-based instruction. Illustrate a Venn Diagram to organize your thoughts. **(GPS – Grades 6 – 8: MRC a, d)**
2. Mr. Napolitano reconfigured the "Patrol Boy" poster into the shape of a rather large cylinder as his class obtained the following measurements of the newly formed figure: base = 4 inches and the height = 36 inches. He explained that the surface area is the areas of all the space needed to cover the poster. Additionally, the volume of the figure is the number of cubes required to fill it. Identify the difference between the surface area and volume of this figure and explain how we can use this information beyond a traditional mathematics problem solving scenario. Assuming one were to split the cylinder vertically and flatten it out, what figure would exist? Illustrate and label the figure before and after it was split. **(GPS - Grade 6: M6G2a)**
3. Ms. Hudson's learning objective for her female students is to understand the relationships among scale factors, length ratios, and area ratios between similar figures. Incorporating technology with instruction, she has directed them to the Internet to obtain information for higher-profile subjects like Harriet Tubman and Michelle Obama. Suddenly, a teachable moment presented itself. "Ok class, Michelle Obama believed to be 71 inches tall and around 190 pounds. Founder of the "Underground Railroad" Harriet Tubman was 11 inches shorter. If Tubman had the same build and figure as Obama (historically speaking – she most certainly did not), what might she have weighed? Explain your answer." **(GPS Grade 7: M7G3b)**
4. Mr. Cannon passionately explains, "Pythagoras was a Greek mathematician who lived about 2500 years ago, and who developed the most famous formula in geometry, possibly in all of mathematics! Today we will recognize and interpret the Pythagorean Theorem as a statement about areas of squares on the sides of a right triangle in the following scenario: the projected image on the screen measures 72 inches tall and 80 inches wide. The length of the diagonal measures the actual size of the projected image. What is the size of the image? Explain. **(GPS Grade 8: M8G2b)**
5. Upon completion of this assignment, how far have we progressed through the 2008-09 series of *The Daughtry Times*®? Express your answer interchangeably as a fraction, decimal, percentage, and circle graph. **(GPS – Grade 6: M6N1 f, g; M6D1c; Grade 7: M7D1 f)**
6. Using contextual clues only, define the following italicized words: *regulatory*, *steered*, *counterpart*, *palatable*, *equivalent*, and *influential* obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(GPS – Grades 6 –8: MRC a, c, d)**

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) adapted from georgiastandards.org. Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with the curriculum map and annotated adjacent to the respective grade level inquiry.

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