

Assignment

Begin by reading the passage below

Boys and Girls Together, Taught Separately in School

Michael Napolitano speaks to his fifth-grade class in the Morrisania section of the Bronx like a basketball coach. “You — let me see you trying!” he insisted the other day during a math lesson. “Come on, faster!”

Across the hall, Larita Hudson’s scolding is more like a therapist’s. “This is so sloppy, honey,” she said as she reviewed problems in a workbook. “Remember what I spoke to you about? About being the bright shining star that you are?” Ms. Hudson, who is 32 and grew up near the school, has a room full of 11-year-old girls, while Mr. Napolitano, a 50-year-old former special education teacher, faces 23 boys.

The single-sex classes at Public School 140, which started as an experiment last year to address decreasing test scores and behavioral problems, are among at least 445 such classrooms nationwide. “We will do whatever works, however we can get there,” said Paul Cannon, principal of P.S. 140. “We thought this would be another tool to try.”

“Before it was all about showing the girls who was toughest, and roughing up and being cool,” said Samell Little, whose son Gavin is in his second school year surrounded only by boys. “Now I never hear a word from teachers about behavior problems, and when he talks about school, he is actually talking about work.”

The nation’s 95 single-sex public schools — including a dozen in New York City — have many critics. Kim Gandy, president of the National Organization for Women, said separate classrooms reinforce gender stereotypes. “A boy who has never been beaten by a girl on an algebra test could have some major problems having a female supervisor,” she said. While some advocates believe that girls are more likely to participate in class when no boys are present — and that boys, particularly those from low-income families, tend to focus better without girls around — academic research has not definitively confirmed this.

Jennifer Medina (New York Times, March, 2009)

Writing Directions

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author’s most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.