**Single-Sex Education Is Assailed in Report**

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[Single-sex education](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/e/education_and_schools/single_sex_education/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) is ineffective, misguided and may actually increase gender stereotyping, a paper to be published Friday asserts.

The report, “The Pseudoscience of Single Sex Schooling,” to be published in Science magazine by eight social scientists who are founders of the nonprofit [American Council for CoEducational Schooling](http://lives.clas.asu.edu/acces/), is likely to **ignite** [start] a new round of debate … about the effects of single-sex education.

It asserts that “sex-segregated education is deeply misguided and often justified by weak...scientific claims rather than by valid scientific evidence.”

But the strongest argument against single-sex education, the article said, is that it reduces boys’ and girls’ opportunities to work together, and reinforces sex stereotypes. “Boys who spend more time with other boys become increasingly aggressive,” the article said. “Similarly, girls who spend more time with other girls [will buy into traditional female roles.]”

The authors are psychologists and neuroscientists from several universities who have researched and written on sex differences and sex roles. The Science article is not based on new research, but rather is a review of existing research and writing.

The lead author, Diane F. Halpern, is a past president of the American Psychological Association who holds a [chair in psychology at Claremont McKenna College](http://www.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/dhalpern/index.html) in California. She is an expert witness in **litigation** [law] in which the American Civil Liberties Union is challenging single-sex classes — which have been suspended — at a school in Vermilion Parish, LA [Louisiana].

The article calls on the Education Department to **rescind** [take back] its 2006 regulations weakening the Title IX **prohibition** [restriction] against sex discrimination in education because they argue that there is no scientific evidence [that supports] the idea that single-sex schooling results in better academic outcomes. Under [Title IX rules], single-sex classes may be **permitted** [allowed] as long as they are voluntary, students have a substantially equal co-educational option and the school reasonably believes separation will produce better academic outcomes.

Russlynn H. Ali, the assistant secretary for civil rights at the Education Department, said it was reviewing the research.  “There are case studies that have been done that show some benefit of single-sex, but like lots of other educational research, it’s mixed,” she said.  “When you’re talking about separating students, treating them differently, you want to do it in a way that’s **constitutional** [legal under our Constitution], and you want to make sure that there is **adequate** **justification** [strong enough reasons why]. We certainly want to **safeguard** [protect] against stereotyping.”

The article comes at a time when single-sex education is on the rise. There were only two single-sex public schools in the mid-1990s; today, there are more than 500 public schools in 40 states that offer some single-sex academic classes or, more rarely, are entirely single sex.

Many of them began separating the sexes because of a belief that boys and girls should be taught differently that grew out of popular books, speeches and workshops by Michael Gurian, Leonard Sax and others.

Dr. Sax, executive director of the [National Association of Single Sex Public Education](http://www.singlesexschools.org/), was singled out for criticism in the Science article, for his teachings that boys respond better to energetic, **confrontational** [argumentative and assertive] classrooms while girls need a gentler touch.

“A loud, cold classroom where you toss balls around, like Dr. Sax thinks boys should have, might be great for some boys, and for some girls, but for some boys, it would be living hell,” Dr. Halpern said in an interview. She said that while girls are better readers and get better grades, and boys are more likely to have reading disabilities, that does not mean that educators should use the group average to design different classrooms. “It’s simply not true that boys and girls learn differently,” she said. “Advocates for single-sex education don’t like **the parallel with** [the comparison to] racial segregation, but the parallels are there. We used to believe that the races learned differently, too.”

Dr. Sax criticized the article on many counts, and said it did not fairly reflect his current views. He **vehemently** [strongly] rejected the comparison to racial segregation, and the use of the term “sex segregation.”

“We are not asserting that every child should be in a single-sex classroom, we are simply saying that there should be a choice,” Dr. Sax said in an interview.

The authors of the article, though, say that because there is no good scientific research backing such a choice, the government cannot lawfully offer single-sex education in public schools.

The article cites a review commissioned by the Education Department, comparing single-sex and co-ed outcomes, concluding that, “as in previous reviews,” the results are **equivocal** [unclear].

The article also said that research in other countries, and data from the [Program for International Student Assessment](http://www.pisa.oecd.org/pages/0,2987,en_32252351_32235731_1_1_1_1_1,00.html), also found little overall difference between single-sex and co-ed academic outcomes.

“This is very much a live issue, and I think it’s snowballing,” said Galen Sherwin, a staff lawyer for the Women’s Rights Project of the A.C.L.U., who is handling the Louisiana case. “I see news stories every single week about new proposals, usually based on the idea that boys and girls learn differently. Often it’s people who have attended training programs by Sax or Gurian, saying these programs will cater to boys’ and girls’ specific learning styles.”