



ALL-GIRLS SCHOOLS MAKE GIRLS STRONGER



Our history is one built on the shoulders of very strong women. From our founder St. Madeleine Sophie Barat who established both the Society of the Sacred Heart and the first Sacred Heart School, to St. Rose Philippine Duchesne who crossed the Atlantic in 1818 to establish the first Sacred Heart School in North America, to Sr. Mary Aloysia Hardey who founded our School right here in Halifax in 1849. For 170 years, Sacred Heart School of Halifax has been nurturing strong girls. And while we do so now on a co-ed campus, we remain committed to and focused on our single-gender pedagogical approach because we know it works.

As a member of the National Coalition of Girls' Schools (NCGS), we are fortunate to share in their research and resources, and we advocate along with fellow member schools for the power of an all-girls education.

Here's why we believe an all-girls learning environment makes girls stronger:

1

SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS OFFER A MORE INSPIRATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In an all-girls classroom, girls don't have to compete to be heard among their male peers, they take center stage, which creates a climate that is more empowering, more supportive, and more compassionate. This holistic environment also invites a more open exchange of ideas and allows girls to find their voices, which in turn leads to greater confidence. "Nearly 87% of girls' school students feel their opinions are respected at their school (compared to 58% of girls at coed schools) - Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools*

2

SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS OFFER INCREASED ACADEMIC CONFIDENCE

In recent studies, girls' school graduates demonstrate stronger academic skills as measured by "habits of mind", which are a set of traits and behaviours associated with academic success, including finding alternative solutions to problems, learning independently, and thinking critically. NCGS reports that according to research by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, "60% of women from girls' schools report intellectual self-confidence compared to 54% from coed schools." At Sacred Heart, we offer advanced classes as part of the AP (Advanced Placement) Program, and girls have the option to take one or several courses focusing on their area of strength.



SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS PROVIDE MORE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Our Sacred Heart mission includes five Goals that give us our moral compass. Two of our Goals include social awareness and personal growth. Programming around these Goals, along with our single-gender environment, give girls more leadership opportunities than a typical coed school; opportunities like Student Council, Heads of House, Prefects, Volunteer Coordinators, Duty Coordinator and Class Representatives. These opportunities don't just build character and teach responsibility, they translate into the real world. NCGS reports: "93% of girls' school grads say they were offered greater leadership opportunities than peers at coed schools and 80% have held leadership positions since graduating from high school."

- Goodman Research Group, *The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools*.



SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS ENCOURAGE STEM AREAS OF FOCUS

Girls are typically underrepresented in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields. It's not because they're not smart enough, au contraire! It's that often girls aren't encouraged to pursue traditionally male-dominated STEM fields or they don't feel empowered to within typical coed environments. At SHSH, and other all-girls learning environments, girls are encouraged to pursue STEM fields. We offer advanced math and science courses that allow girls to focus on these areas. In fact, six of seven of our alum from the past four years studying medicine are women, and in 2017, one of our students was the co-winner of the prestigious Discovery Centre's Discovery Youth Award for Science. It's interesting to note that according to NCGS, "Girls' school grads are six times more likely to consider majoring in math, science, and technology compared to girls who attend coed schools."

- Goodman Research Group, *The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools*.

"With a world of vocations now open to young women, there is no better time for them to understand that if they work hard and go for it, there's nothing they can't have. I teach them that. I teach them that they can do and be anything in the world they want. And it's very empowering for them and for me."

— Chris Horne, Teacher



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SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS BETTER APPRECIATE DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

Girls and boys learn differently; that's simple science. We see it everyday in the classroom. Typically, girls thrive when robust context is provided, with opportunities to work cooperatively in groups, and they appreciate qualitative feedback from teachers and peers. Boys use fewer parts of their brains on most learning activity, are more competitive regarding individual results, and seek more quantitative results. Neither is better than the other - they're just different. Which is why after 170 years, we have learned a thing or two about how to educate girls in a way that works best for them. Our faculty has decades of experience teaching girls, and targeted professional development and our membership in the National Girls School Coalition allows us to continue to specialize and excel in this area.



SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO AIM HIGH

We believe in the talent and potential of every girl, and we do our best to help our girls understand that they can do and be anything they want to pursue or become. We have hundreds of examples of SHSH alum who have excelled in their field, locally, nationally, and globally. And within the broader Sacred Heart network we have countless examples of Sacred Heart alumnae who personify this ideal - women like musician and entertainer Stefani Germanotta (aka Lady Gaga), journalist Maria Shriver, lawyer and diplomat Caroline Kennedy, actress Selma Hayek, Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky, the former Prime Minister of Ireland Dr. Mary Robertson, and Empress Michiko Shoda of Japan. NCGS reports that "Students at all-girls schools have higher aspirations and greater motivation than their female peers at coed independent and public schools. Ninety-nine percent of students at all-girls schools expect to earn a four-year degree. More than two-thirds expect to earn a graduate or professional degree."

- Dr. Richard A. Holmgren, Allegheny College, *Steeped in Learning: The Students Experience at All-Girls Schools*



SINGLE-GENDER SCHOOLS PREPARE GIRLS FOR THE REAL WORLD

Countless numbers of our alumnae report that in their first year of university, they are more prepared for the rigors of their course work, have a better foundation in writing, speaking, and critical thinking, and are much more prepared to take on extra-curricular activities on top of their course load. That's because we take a very holistic approach to education here at SHSH - it's not just about academic subjects - the whole person is our subject! All of our graduates know what it means to perform community service; our students know that we all have a responsibility to give back to the community and the world. Our girls lead and participate in clubs, sports, debating, stage productions, orchestral and choral performances - on campus

"The environment fostered at Sacred Heart allowed me to spend my junior high and high school years in a place where I felt I could learn, respond, and participate in a manner that was 100% true to myself. There is no limit to the kind of self confidence that grows in students in a space like that, and it undoubtably gives you a step-up when you enter post-secondary life."

— Kelly Nichols '09



and across Halifax. Strong girls build meaningful relationships, learn to effectively manage teen stress and anxiety, develop their interests and talents, and learn to take good risks. Our well-rounded girls, strong in mind and spirit, are ready for the next phase of their life journey.



shsh.ca/stronggirls

