

National Coalition of Girls' Schools



# Steeped in Learning: The Student Experience at All-Girls Schools

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A REPORT PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL COALITION OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS

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## The robust learning environment encountered by students at all-girls schools is highlighted by a recent survey of high school students.

In the spring of 2013, a total of 2,013 students attending member schools of the National Coalition of Girls' Schools (NCGS) participated in the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), which explores facets of students' attitudes, behaviors, and school experiences that are known to affect learning. Also participating in the HSSSE study were 5,210 girls from coeducational independent schools and 5,741 girls at coeducational public schools. The resulting report compares the experience of girls at all-girls schools with that of girls enrolled in coeducational institutions.

### Overview of the Results

The survey reveals that girls attending all-girls schools are more likely to have an experience that supports their learning than are girls attending coeducational schools. In particular, girls attending all-girls schools report:

- having higher aspirations and greater motivation than their female peers at coeducational independent and public schools.
- being challenged to achieve more than girls at coeducational independent and public schools.
- being more likely to engage actively in the learning process than their female peers at coeducational independent and public schools.
- being more likely than girls at coeducational public schools to engage in activities that prepare them for the rigors of the real world.

The girls' responses provide unequivocal support for the value of an all-girls educational environment.

- more frequently encountering a learning environment that welcomes an open and safe exchange of ideas than girls at coeducational independent and public schools.
- gaining more facility than their peers at coeducational independent and public schools with core academic skills such as writing, speaking, critical thinking, and independent learning.
- experiencing higher levels of support from their classmates, teachers, and school personnel than girls at coeducational public schools.

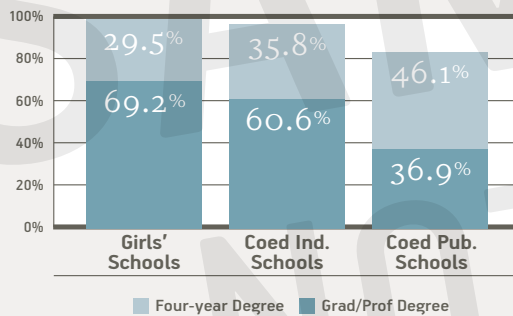
In the pages that follow, these facets of girls' experiences at all-girls schools are explored in more detail.

# Key Findings

## Girls' Expectations Matter

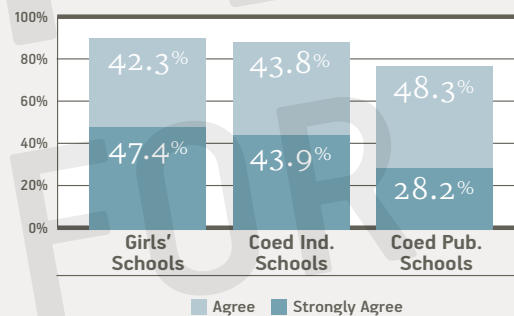
The attitudes and aspirations of a student's peers have a powerful influence on the student's own outlook. Students at all-girls schools are steeped in an environment in which learning and success are valued. **They have higher aspirations and greater motivation than their female peers at coeducational independent and public schools.**

### The highest degree girls expect to earn



Virtually all students at all-girls schools expect to earn a four-year degree and more than two-thirds expect to earn a graduate or professional degree. This compares favorably to the response of girls enrolled at coeducational independent and public schools.

### Pride in quality of school work



Students at all-girls schools set high standards for themselves. Ninety percent agree with the statement, I take pride in the quality of my school work, which compares favorably to the response of girls at coeducational independent and public schools.



### Desire to learn and succeed outside of school

When asked what motivates them, **94.9%** of students at all-girls schools (compared to 93.5% of girls at coeducational independent schools and 86.7% of girls at coeducational public schools) agree or strongly agree they are **motivated by their desire to succeed** outside of school and **83.9% by their desire to learn** (compared to 81.0% of girls at coeducational independent schools and 66.1% of girls at coeducational public schools).