

7 ESSENTIALS THAT Turn Girls Into Leaders



PLUS: Case Studies on Empowering Girls



SAINT DOMINIC ACADEMY
EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP SINCE 1878

7 Essentials That TURN GIRLS INTO LEADERS

It takes the right environment to transform girls into confident, successful leaders. That happens at all-girls schools, where students are encouraged to explore and achieve – in the classroom, sports and activities. When considering high schools, look for these 7 essentials that transform girls into leaders.

ESSENTIAL #1: High Standards

A school culture that consistently sets and adheres to high expectations is critical for girls to transform into leaders. These principles should be infused across the entire school experience – academically, ethically, behaviorally and socially – for girls to develop all the skills and abilities to lead. Effective leaders in the 21st Century are intelligent, but also principled, compassionate and empathetic.

How can you tell if a high school is setting high standards for girls? Here are three indicators to look for on a school visit or tour:

1. **School Honor Code** – Honor codes are a common practice in many schools, so ask questions to determine if the honor code is merely perfunctory or truly embraced by the entire school community. How was the honor code developed? How is it lived in the school community? How has the honor code helped solve a problem or issue in your school?
2. **Opportunities for Intellectual Growth** – Schools need to continually improve and provide enhanced opportunities for students to set the bar higher. How does the school encourage students to move out of their comfort zone? What opportunities are available to students beyond AP courses? Can students earn actual college credit while still in high school?
3. **Supportive Environment** – A positive school community where students feel welcomed and included says a lot about the priorities and values of a high school. Does the school encourage visitors to talk to different groups of students, beyond the tour guide or student ambassador? What three words would students use to describe their school community? How do they think their school community could improve?

ESSENTIAL #2: Strong Bonds of Sisterhood

Leadership doesn't develop in a vacuum. Sisterhood and camaraderie are baked into the experience at all-girls high schools. When girls feel accepted and supported they are confident and motivated to step up, try something new or tackle significant problems and challenges.



CASE STUDY: Academic Advantage of the All-Girls Classroom

In a study¹ comparing the results of single-sex versus coeducational learning, researchers assigned 401 8th graders (male and female) to either single sex or coeducational physics classes for the academic year. Students were tested at the end of the year and the research team found that girls assigned to the all-girls classroom were more engaged in physics and less likely to view physics as a “boy’s subject” compared to girls in the coeducational classroom.

1. When Being a Girl Matters Less: Accessibility of Gender-Related Self-Knowledge in Single-Sex and Coeducational Classes and its Impact on Students' Physics-Related Self-Concept of Ability, (2008), The British Journal of Educational Psychology.

Things to look for in a positively-connected all-girls school:

1. Opportunities for girls in upper and lower grades to interact and socialize; friendships aren't limited to students in your grade.
2. Formal and informal peer mentoring programs with robust participation by students.
3. Young alumnae who have enough distance from their high school years to recognize the impact of all-female camaraderie on the path of their lives.

ESSENTIAL #3: Teachers Who Believe in Girls

At all-girls schools, faculty understand the way girls learn. Classrooms and curriculum are designed for girls to be constantly exposed to positive examples of what they can be. Teachers who believe in girls show students the path to their goals. By the time they graduate, girls know what they want, and more importantly, how to get there.

ESSENTIAL #4: Activities That Empower

In a single-sex setting, girls lead all activities in student government, service projects and clubs. This places girls in the optimum setting to exercise the power of their voice and express opinions, set goals, resolve conflict and identify solutions to problems.

You can gauge how well a school empowers girls through activities by asking these questions:

1. How do the school's extracurricular activities meet the different or varied interests of students?
2. Can a student start a new club or activity? What is the process for that?
3. What role does the faculty advisor play in clubs and activities?

ESSENTIAL #5: Athletics that Celebrate Girls' Achievements

In an all-girls school, girls occupy every team position – so they take center stage at every sporting event. Every team captain is female, and every fan who attends a game, meet or match is there to cheer on girls.

Female athletes thrive in a school culture that celebrates girls' teams and their accomplishments. They become better competitors, teammates and leaders.

CASE STUDY:

How an All-Girl School Empowers

One great advantage of an all-girls high school is that students have more incentive to explore subjects that take them out of their comfort zone. Most high school students, male and female, choose activities where they are likely to excel rather than risk failure or embarrassment.

In an all-girls school, the Introduction to Engineering elective or student council election is 100% female. Girls are more likely to step up, take a risk and gain lifelong lessons from trying something new and different than reverting to classes and activities where their success is guaranteed.



ESSENTIAL #6: Commitment to Diversity

Leadership flourishes in schools committed to diversity. Learning alongside classmates with different perspectives and experiences is critical for students to question assumptions, engage in deeper learning and develop critical thought. Interacting and forming friendships with classmates of various races, ethnic groups and economic status also mirrors what girls will encounter in college and in the workforce.

ESSENTIAL #7: Successful Graduates

Young alumnae of all-girls schools can provide valuable insight into the power of single sex education. In numerous studies², alumnae attribute their self-confidence, leadership skills and academic success in college to attending an all-girls school. Colleges, too, notice the difference. As one faculty member noted in a study, "I could identify students from all-girls schools... on the first day of class, they were the young women whose hands shot up in the air, who were not afraid to defend their opinions."

Here are a few ways to gauge if female graduates are empowered to excel in college and careers:

1. What percentage of the student body are awarded college scholarships?
2. Are college scholarships awarded consistently, year after year?
3. Do colleges and universities actively recruit from the all-girls high school you are considering? This is a sure sign that graduates are well prepared and successfully transition to college.
4. Are alumnae well represented in leadership roles across a wide variety of professions?

2. *The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools*, (2005), National Coalition of Girls' Schools. *Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and Transition to College*, (2009), UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies.



CASE STUDY: Girls' Participation in Sports

By age 14, girls drop out of sports at two times the rate of boys, according to the Women's Sports Foundation. Reasons range from lack of access to social stigma, decrease in the quality of experience and lack of positive role models. All-girls schools have a real edge in countering this statistic. With a variety of teams solely dedicated to the success of girls and a wealth of positive role models, girls become highly motivated to participate in sports.



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For 140 years, Saint Dominic Academy has empowered young women to lead with courage and conviction in a global society. An independent, Catholic college preparatory school in the tradition of the Dominican sisters of Caldwell, NJ, Saint Dominic Academy offers:

- Accelerated curriculum for high achieving girls in 7th and 8th grade
- Outstanding 9-12 program that includes:
 - Honors and AP courses
 - Earn college credit while in High School
 - STEM
- Robust extracurricular activities and sports

Our Jersey City location attracts students from every town in Hudson County and communities in Bergen and Essex counties. Bus transportation to our campus is also available. Saint Dominic Academy is also accessible by public transportation.

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