

**SCHOOL DOCUMENT NO. 19 -
1890. MAJORITY AND MINORITY
REPORTS OF THE SPECIAL
COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT OF
CO-EDUCATION ON THE SEXES**

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School Document No. 19 - 1890. Majority and Minority Reports of the Special Committee on
Subject of Co-Education on the Sexes by Various

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VARIOUS

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From Pres. Angell
May 13, 1892
SCHOOL DOCUMENT NO. 19—1890.

MAJORITY AND MINORITY REPORTS

OF THE

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE

ON SUBJECT OF

CO-EDUCATION OF THE SEXES.

Boston School Committee



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1890.

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IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE,
BOSTON, Sept. 9, 1890.

Laid on the table.

Attest :

PHINEAS BATES,
Secretary.

IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE, BOSTON, Sept. 23, 1890.

Ordered, That one thousand copies of the Report of the
Special Committee on the Co-education of the Sexes be
printed.

Attest :

PHINEAS BATES,
Secretary.

MAJORITY REPORT.

IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE, Sept. 9, 1890.

At the regular meeting of the Board, March 25th of the present year, on motion of Mr. Winship, it was ordered, "That a special committee of three be appointed to consider and report upon the subject of co-education of the sexes, with special reference to future school-buildings."

In compliance with this order we submit the following:—

It appears that not until 1790 were girls admitted to our public schools, when they were permitted to enter the grammar schools then established, on an equal footing with boys. A few years prior to 1830 several unsuccessful attempts were made by members of the School Committee to separate the sexes. It was not until the latter date that Lemuel Shaw succeeded in influencing the committee to make the departure. The School Committee, Jan. 15, 1830, directed a sub-committee "to inquire whether essential improvements may not be introduced by a modification of the present system, or by the adoption of some other." This sub-committee reported, May 11, 1830, through their chairman, Lemuel Shaw.

From this report the following abstracts are taken:—

"The last defect, which the committee will notice, arises from the attendance of children of both sexes, on the same masters, at the same houses, and pursuing in all respects the same modes and branches of study.

"The committee recommend that an entire separation be established between the schools, designed for children of

different sexes. By this management we think some evils and dangers will be avoided, and decisive advantage gained. Under the present system, through the strict attention of the masters, little evil, perhaps, has been experienced.

"It is well understood that, until the year 1790, there was no public provision whatever for the education of females in this town. The Latin grammar schools and the public writing schools being the only schools supported by the public, were designed exclusively for boys. By the system then adopted, an English grammar department was added to each of the three public writing schools, and then, for the first time, a provision was made that girls might attend these schools for six months, and no more, in each year. This system continued in operation, with some slight alteration, by enlarging the term for the attendance of girls to eight months in each year, until about two years since, when it was determined by the committee that girls should be privileged to attend the whole year.

"The committee have thought that all the girls who now attend the seven schools may all be accommodated in the three largest school-houses, the Franklin, Bowdoin, and Hancock, which would be conveniently situated for the purpose, in the southerly, central, and northerly parts of the city; and that the other four, namely, the Adams, Boylston, Mayhew, and Eliot, would conveniently accommodate all the boys."

The following resolution was proposed by Judge Shaw for his committee:—

"That the present arrangement of the Eliot, the Hancock, the Mayhew, the Bowdoin, the Adams, the Boylston, and the Franklin Schools be changed, and that the system set forth in the foregoing report be substituted therefor."

The main propositions of the report were adopted by the School Committee, June 30, 1830.

By the regulations adopted by the School Committee February, 1833, it appears that the Eliot and Mayhew Schools

were exclusively for boys, while the Bowdoin and Hancock Schools were used for the instruction of girls only, the other five grammar schools remaining as formerly, for boys and girls.

Thus was rooted in our school system an error which may take many years to fully eradicate.

Since then this objectionable departure, this rut, has broadened and deepened, with no obstacles in its way, no influential objection to its sway, until now we have thirty normal, high, and grammar schools, or school-buildings, in fifteen of which boys alone are taught, while in the other fifteen buildings girls alone are admitted; and, in the buildings intended for boys and girls together, there are seventy-four classes, containing nearly thirty-seven hundred scholars, of which thirty-nine classes are formed of boys alone, and the remaining thirty-five classes of girls.

This gives only about 12,547, or 36 per cent., of our scholars in the schools mentioned who are co-educated.

Thus this city of Boston, that spends relatively more money for the education of her children than any other city of the Union, if not of the world, that prides herself upon her educational facilities, hampers more than any other city the rightful advance of girls, and lessens the refining influences in boys by this separation of the sexes in our schools.

The subject is of far weightier importance than a casual or superficial view would give it. It involves the question of the development of the maximum ability of the scholars in moral, intellectual, and physical training. Underlying it, is that subtle psychological element which should not be lost sight of, and it is therefore to be hoped that each member will give it grave consideration.

In these modern times of push, there is, in certain localities, a great lack of delicate courtesy or chivalry, particularly among young people.

The refining influence of woman is well exemplified by

Wendell Phillips' story of the young man in the smoking-car, who excused himself for using questionable language, by emphasizing the fact "There are no women here." A like story is attributed to Grant. This check upon questionable utterances and acts is noticeable in all places where boys or young men are in companionship with the opposite sex; and herein lies the greatest good resulting from co-education. Such constant companionship represses or subdues the rough and gross nature in young men.

It is either right or wrong to have co-education in our high and grammar schools. There is no middle ground in considering this subject. If a lower quality of scholars attends school in a certain district, that quality applies to the girls as well as to the boys; and, if the boys are separated from the girls, still the low quality remains, and is only divided.

If it is right for brothers and sisters to live in the same house, and eat at the same table, then it is right that they should attend school together. Let them be brought up separately, and, if they meet only clandestinely, great harm is likely to result.

If wedlock is right and proper, then co-education is right and proper. If men and women are to marry, they should know each other summer and winter before marriage, and the more they know of each other the less likely will divorces result.

The serious objection raised by physicians to co-education is based upon the delicate organic condition of girls; but, by the introduction of the excellent system of physical culture made in our public schools, the weak and delicate girls will become strong, and the objection will ultimately vanish.

At Wellesley College, by its special attention to physical and hygienic culture, over one thousand young women are required to enter into a thorough course of physical training, and it is represented that these students pride themselves on

their excellent physical condition, which they first endeavor to attain before subjecting themselves to serious mental strain.

To gain the most impressive conclusions upon this subject, it was decided by your committee that persons interested in education — intellectual, moral, and physical — be invited to give their views. Accordingly circulars were sent to the several masters of our schools, superintendents, pastors, physicians, and others.

The returns are so varied and interesting, that it has been considered advisable to introduce into the report abstracts, over the signatures of the writers, in the following order: —

SUPERVISORS.

I was sub-master in the Adams School from 1856 to 1864. At that time, as now, both sexes were educated under the same roof, but not in the same classes. I requested the master (Mr. P. W. Bartlett) to allow me to try the experiment of teaching both in my room. Previous to that date (about 1858-9) the boys and girls were mixed in the *first* class only. My request was granted, and the experiment was so successful that soon it was the common practice in other schools. Of late years I have watched the high schools in the outlying districts where boys and girls study and recite in the same rooms, and I feel sure that the results are very satisfactory. I am heartily in favor of "co-education" in well disciplined schools.

R. C. METCALF.

I believe in co-education of boys and girls. The mutual influence is refining and strengthening to both. The natural emulation is a healthy stimulus and motive to study and thought. The moral effect is purifying and elevating, making the relations between them less artificial and giving each a true appreciation of the other, leading to juster comparisons of the sexes and more hearty respect and good-will on both sides. Co-education corrects some of the most troublesome incidents of school discipline and throws increased interest into school work; it also develops symmetrically and naturally the social feelings and cultivates courtesy and helpfulness in all the relations of life.

LOUISA PARSONS HOPKINS.