

Schools must recognise sex differences: researcher

A visiting US psychologist and physician has urged Australian teachers to take into account physiological differences between the sexes when in the classroom.

Dr Leonard Sax, author of *Why Gender Matters: What Parents and Teachers Need to Know About the Emerging Science of Sex Difference*, made the comments during a tour sponsored by Lauriston Girls' School.

Sax argues that differences in male and female hearing, stress responses and brain physiology and development mean boys and girls respond best in single-sex classes.

But Sax emphasised that simple segregation would not work. "We have many sad stories to tell about the bad things that can happen if you just put boys in one room and girls in the other," he said. "Very often you'll have educational catastrophe if you put 20 boys in a room with a teacher who has never led an all-boys classroom."

Sax also said schools should take a co-operative approach to the challenges posed by gender-based differences in learning. "The best form of preparation we've found, is to link up teachers with single-sex schools ... by subject area. What you'll get at a school like Lauriston is not only excellent teachers, but teachers who have thought about this a lot."

One of the pitfalls of the debate about sex differences

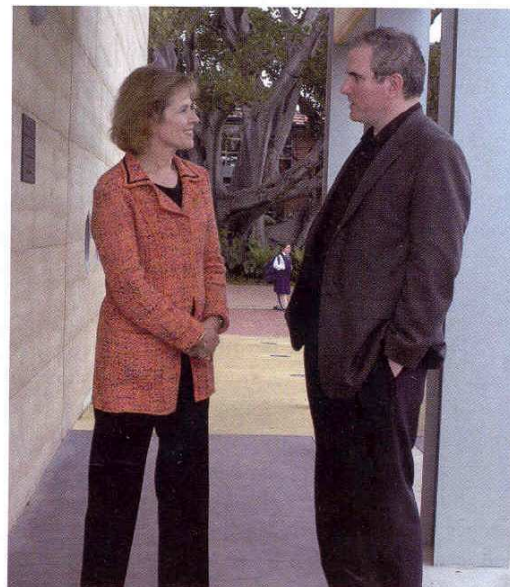
in education was "all the myth and stereotype", Sax said. "It's very important that information given to teachers is evidence-based."

Sax, who co-founded the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE), said though NASSPE had had success dealing with schools and university schools of education, the US system would always present problems. "We've worked with 10 universities and 200 schools in the US and Canada," he said, "but there are 90,000 schools in the US."

"Our most important function is to create a network of educators so that teachers don't have to reinvent the wheel – they don't have to try and fail, they can consult with other educators in similar circumstances."

Lauriston's principal Meg Hansen says she noted a key difference between her students at co-educational schools and at Lauriston. "Girls seemed ... to be very confident, very articulate and able to hold their own in any kind of discussion," Hansen said. "In a single-sex environment girls are able to assert strong opinions without any self-consciousness at all."

www.singlesexschools.org



Lauriston Girls' School principal Meg Hansen chats with Dr Leonard Sax during his tour of Australia.

Rebecca: Teaching in the USA

Schools must recognise sex differences: researcher

A visiting US psychologist and physician has urged Australian teachers to take into account physiological differences between the sexes when in the classroom.

Dr Leonard Sax, author of *Why Gender Matters: What Parents and Teachers Need to Know About the Emerging Science of Sex Difference*, made the comments during a tour sponsored by Lauriston Girls' School.

Sax argues that differences in male and female hearing, stress responses and brain physiology and development mean boys and girls respond best in single-sex classes.

But Sax emphasised that simple segregation would not work. "We have many sad stories to tell about the bad things that can happen if you just put boys in one room and girls in the other," he said. "Very often you'll have educational catastrophe if you put 20 boys in a room with a teacher who has never led an all-boys classroom."

Sax also said schools should take a co-operative approach to the challenges posed by gender-based differences in learning. "The best form of preparation we've found, is to link up teachers with single-sex schools ... by subject area. What you'll get at a school like Lauriston is not only excellent teachers, but teachers who have thought about this a lot."

One of the pitfalls of the debate about sex differences

in education was "all the myth and stereotype", Sax said. "It's very important that information given to teachers is evidence-based."

Sax, who co-founded the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE), said though NASSPE had had success dealing with schools and university schools of education, the US system would always present problems. "We've worked with 10 universities and 200 schools in the US and Canada," he said, "but there are 90,000 schools in the US."

"Our most important function is to create a network of educators so that teachers don't have to reinvent the wheel – they don't have to try and fail, they can consult with other educators in similar circumstances."

Lauriston's principal Meg Hansen says she noted a key difference between her students at co-educational schools and at Lauriston. "Girls seemed ... to be very confident, very articulate and able to hold their own in any kind of discussion," Hansen said. "In a single-sex environment girls are able to assert strong opinions without any self-consciousness at all."

www.singlesexschools.org



Lauriston Girls' School principal Meg Hansen chats with Dr Leonard Sax during his tour of Australia.

Rebecca: Teaching in the USA