

The Advantage of an All-Male Educational Environment...

In 2006, Dr. Leonard Sax wrote a book called *Why Gender Matters* in which he raised a concern about an increased number of boys not succeeding in traditional schools in addition to being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

When Dr. Sax compared this decline in achievement with the latest medical/brain research regarding the process of learning among adolescent boys, Dr. Sax concluded that current traditional schools are designed to favor the learning potential of girls. Consequently, Dr. Sax also concluded that boys are best served by a different learning environment, particularly single-gender schools, which can amount to increased levels of academic success for boys. See Dr. Sax's research in single gender public education: <http://www.singlesexschools.org/home-leonardsax.htm>

In the summer of 2013, Damien's Faculty Supervisor, Chris Douglas, and Principal Dr. Merritt Hemenway attended the International Boys School Coalition (IBSC) Conference at which they heard much of the latest research in successful all-boys education from around the globe.

In the summer of 2014, six additional Damien faculty members attended the IBSC conference and have brought back a plethora of ideas for improving learning among boys. These ideas have subsequently been shared with all Damien teachers. This includes a recently implemented "Return to Learn" protocol for students who have suffered a concussion. A number of faculty members have also read and reported on the book *I Can Learn From You* by Michael Reichert and Richard Hawley, which highlights the need for teachers to focus on the relational dynamics that help boys succeed as learners.

At the International Boys School Coalition Conference on all-boys education, attendees also learned that boys love to move around, to compete, to use technology, and to exercise a level of control over their environment.

The Advantage of a Damien Education...

Many of these researched concepts are learning modalities that have been used for years at Damien High School. In fact, one of the great advantages we have as a single-gender school is that we can work towards enhancing such models to ensure that the young men of Damien thrive and succeed.

As we apply these principles school-wide, we seek to create a more favorable learning environment for young males. Consider Damien's new Engineering classroom. There is

plenty of room to move about as students engage in a day's lesson. Sit in a one of the new classroom chairs and you'll notice that it moves with you! Finally, you'll note that traditional classroom desks have been replaced with specially designed tables for flexible classroom design. While our Engineering class currently epitomizes our commitment to an educational experience tailored for young men, we have initiated plans to re-design all of our classrooms with a consideration of the learning needs of young men. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

Our tri-school association with Pomona Catholic and St. Lucy's certainly allows for plenty of interaction with young ladies, but this interaction does not take place from 7:45-2:55 pm, which is a time that is reserved for learning. What this means for a Damien student is that the students they are competing with for grades are their peers. By the time of graduation they are not merely peers, but brothers. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

Our unique House system supports this brotherhood among grades 9 through 12. Each House is comprised of students from each grade level, which increases the level of camaraderie among the student body. Through friendly competition among the houses, students compete as brothers across grade levels, not simply as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors (a distinction that often emphasizes student division as opposed to unity). The students themselves also determine yearly House Competitions (past tournaments have included quiz bowl, music bowl, bocce ball, kick-ball, 3-on-3 basketball, ultimate Frisbee, flag-football and of course the Spartan Olympics which takes place in May). Freshmen are also paired with a Big Brother who guides and mentors them through their first year at Damien. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

We are also blessed with outstanding on-campus athletic facilities. As noted by the San Gabriel Valley Tribune last year, Damien HS maintains the #1 athletic facilities in the valley. This certainly makes for a great environment for athletic competition, and students don't have to travel far to practice. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

And of course Damien has The PIT (also noted in the Tribune as one of the top cheer groups in the valley) where the girls come to join *the boys* in cheering. Participation in The Pit is unique and vibrant aspect of the campus life. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

Also consider the history of Honors at Entrance scholarship recipients as well as the AP Scholars at Damien. We offer merit scholarships (Honors at Entrance) to students scoring at or above the 90th percentile on the Placement Exam. Currently, 184 students (almost 20% of the Damien student body) receive this award. This makes for a very competitive learning environment. This also explains why of the 212 graduates

from the class of 2014, 122 of them were AP Scholars of some degree including 75 AP Scholars, 16 AP Scholars with Honor, 31 AP Scholars with Distinction, and 8 National AP Scholars. We are indeed blessed with many scholars. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

Recently, Damien alum, William Saito '87, wrote an autobiography called *An Un-Programmed Life* (available through Amazon) in which he noted many memorable experiences from his time as a Damien student. Not surprisingly, he emphasized what is the historical hallmark of Damien and that is opportunity to engage in acts of Christian Service. Indeed, we are proud of our history of service, which so often fosters among our students a lifelong commitment to serve our greater communities. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

Lastly, our campus ministry programs are an essential component of the Damien experience. This includes the opportunity to participate in student retreats, which begins during the freshman year and continues through the sophomore year with one-day on-campus retreats. As juniors, students have the opportunity to participate in an Emmaus retreat, which is held for two days off campus. Finally, the culmination of this retreat experience is the four-day Kairos Retreat, which seniors often describe as the highlight of their four years at Damien. Traditionally 95% of the all senior classes attend Kairos, which is a special "time out" in the busy part of life to explore one's relationship with others and ultimately our creator God and His son, Jesus. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

In fact, there are many advantages shared on a campus consisting of all male students, and Damien proudly upholds these exceptionalities that make our school community so much more than a "traditional school." Ultimately, Damien is a place where a young man can thrive and fulfill their best leadership, academic, and spiritual potential. ***That's the Damien advantage.***

