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STONELEIGH-BURNHAM SCHOOL

AT A GLANCE

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When Mt. Alvernia closed, some were anxious about all-girls education in Mass. But today, it's thriving.

All-girls schools are on the rebound post-pandemic, with enrollment numbers trending up and opportunities for innovation around every corner.

By Abby Patkin | October 25, 2023

The sudden closure of Mount Alvernia High School last spring made waves among Massachusetts' small-but-mighty contingent of all-girls schools, sparking controversy as news spread that the Franciscan sisters who owned the Newton property would soon be selling.

With the new school year underway, however, it's now clear that Mount Alvernia's closure wasn't a herald of uncertainty for all-girls education in Massachusetts. In fact, several independent school leaders who spoke with Boston.com were optimistic as they shared their post-pandemic outlook, discussing growing enrollment trends and highlighting opportunities for innovation around every corner.

'They're never dimming their lights'

So, why an all-girls school? According to Brown at Dana Hall, it depends on whom you ask.

"In many ways, there aren't differences between a single-gender school and a co-ed school," she said. "People tend to assume that a single-gender school may not be as rigorous as a co-ed school, or may not offer as many courses, or sports, or co-curricular activities, and that just simply is not true."

Jane Bell, a Stoneleigh-Burnham alumna turned faculty member, said there's a set core of values that unites students there, regardless of their favorite class or the sports they play.

"They are caring, compassionate. They're always the one that's going to give you a high-five on the soccer field. They're always the one that's going to give you that pep talk if you need it," Bell said. "And I think every moment where we gather at school, I feel that, and it feels so special to be here."

Looking ahead

When it comes to meeting students where they're at, leaders at both **Stoneleigh-Burnham** and Penguin Hall cited the need for adaptability.

"We're looking at the whole student; we're looking at how students learn as individuals, what their needs are," Lambert said. "We're also very nimble because we are small, and we can adapt to the needs of our student body and the needs of our community."

She cited, as an example, the school's flexibility in helping one student shift her coursework around and compete in the Vex Robotics World Championship in Texas last spring.

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