

The All Girls School Experience

Where I learned to "listen, learn, love, and lead."

Da'Naia Holden in 500 Words On on Apr 19, 2016

I learned four important things while attending a private all girls Catholic high school: "*listen, learn, love and lead.*" This mantra was drilled into my brain during the course of my four year high school experience. Being apart of my high school's alumni, I can admit that I never considered the importance of this mantra until my senior year. What were these four words truly supposed to mean?

There is no definitive "message" that each girl must take away from this mantra; however, when you spend four years with one another, it is likely that the same message will be received. Each word in the mantra is attributed to the four different grade levels. During freshman year, the freshmen are being taught to *listen*. I know that sounds weird, but allow me to explain. When freshmen enter into high school, how often are they already familiar with their surroundings? Not often at all. High school is a new environment and an entirely new experience. Most freshmen are anxious before entering high school -- they have no idea what to expect and they have no idea what is expected of them. This is where listening comes into the picture. Freshmen are likely to take heed to the advice of those older than them. After all, "*whatever helps my sister, helps me*" (another popular mantra during my high school years).

Advancing to sophomores, the new expectation is to *learn*. Sophomores are known as "wise fools" for a reason. It is clear that sophomores now know more than they knew as freshmen, but there is still much to learn. New knowledge needs to be acquired, and at the same time, sophomores are now coming into themselves. Sophomore year is the year to begin figuring yourself out and thinking of your future: Who are you? Who do you want to be? Where do you see yourself in ten years?

By the time junior year arrives, a class bond is expected to have developed (in my high school, at least). Junior year is the year to express *love* for yourself, as well as your "sisters." During this time, everyone is preparing to take SATs and beginning to think about the colleges they wish to apply to. There is no secret that this process is overwhelming; however, you can always count on the support of your class to help you through these difficult times.

Seniors are the evident leaders of the school and they are expected to *lead* by example. The world is on your shoulders at this point (literally). Seniors feel the pressure of having to walk along the correct path, while making sure the underclassmen don't stray.

When I mention to people that I attended an all girls high school, I receive the obvious *what is wrong with you?* stares. Do I regret my decision? Not for one second. I miss the sisterhood, the friendship, and the love. I miss the education, the intelligence, and the passion. I miss the excitement about women playing sports, the leadership, and the creativity. I miss the daily reminders that just because I'm a young woman, I can do anything and achieve everything!

It is one thing to continuously be reminiscent, but it is another to put to action what I have learned. The seed was planted, it sprouted, it grew, and it has blossomed. For the alumnae who have ventured on to greater things, we are succeeding and exhibiting the positive outcome of attending an all girls school.



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