

green frogs

and Good Practices – “How Girls Thrive”



As Chatham Hall faculty members walked into the classroom for the Professional Development session this fall, their faces changed. A puzzled look flickered across the eyes of some. A smile of recognition spread across the lips of others.

Green frogs. Green plastic frogs sat in every chair. Green frogs? What did they have to do with educating girls?

JoAnn Deak, Ph.D., a nationally recognized expert on gender-related learning differences, stood at the front of the room. Her eyes sparkled. She could tell by the reactions which teachers had already finished reading her book, *How Girls Thrive: An Essential Guide for Educators (and Parents)*.

The frogs were a visual reminder of one of the stories Deak used in her book and in her presentation about what girls need and which teaching methods are most effective with females.

In the frog story, a five-year-old entrepreneur named JoAnn attends a fishing camp with her family. There she discovers an effective strategy for catching green frogs. So what? Well, it seems that green frogs are the only bait that the fish are biting this year. So of course green frogs are highly prized. All the children are hunting

green frogs, but JoAnn is by far the most effective at catching them. The fact that she is the youngest and the only girl makes her success all the sweeter. Thus the point of the story: girls need to feel competent.

Using a series of stories to illustrate her points, Deak shows that girls need to feel: competence, confidence, and connectedness.

Teaching methods proven to encourage these factors are: mentoring, challenge courses (think Outward Bound), cooperative learning, and single-gender classes.

Now all the teachers were smiling. These methods are in place at Chatham Hall, and experience shows they work.

One sees it in the girls: in the challenges they tackle, in the certainty in their gaze and gait, and in their sense of community — that closeness among the girls and between the students and their many mentors that shines through their laughter and shared tears and talks.

Months have passed and still green frogs are found at Chatham Hall — tucked in chalk trays, balanced on computers, or peeping out of bookcases and desk drawers.

Green frogs. Good to remember.