

The Continuing Struggle for Girls' Sports in PA Schools

Bristol Borough School District (2008) – The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) received a complaint stating that female athletes were treated unfairly in coaching, assignment of game and practice times, equipment and supplies, locker rooms, publicity, booster club contributions and competitive facilities.

Bucks County School Districts (2008) –Eleven school districts in Bucks County are currently under investigation by OCR as a result of complaints that booster club contributions were made to boys' teams and not matched for girls' teams.

Southwestern PA High Schools (2007-2009) – At New Castle High School, girls' athletic opportunities are 17% lower than they should be, based on the student population. Girls have fewer opportunities to play sports than their percentage of the student population at Albert Gallatin High School (14% fewer opportunities) and McKeesport High School, (13% fewer). Similar inequalities exist throughout southwestern PA.

Haverford Township School District (2007) –After OCR received a complaint regarding the inferiority of the entire girls' athletic program, the school district entered into a compliance agreement to provide equitable equipment and supplies, uniforms, publicity and scheduled game times for the boys' and girls' teams.

New Hope-Solebury School District (2007) – After a self-audit revealed that the school district provided 10% fewer athletic opportunities for girls than were provided to boys, the district refused to add teams for girls, yet added JV and varsity football teams. The Women's Law Project filed an OCR complaint on behalf of students.

Central Bucks School District (2007) – A complaint filed with the OCR stated that the girls' basketball teams were treated unfairly compared to the boys' teams in terms of scheduling, publicity, and professional facilities.

West Perry High School (2007) – Dramatic differences between the baseball and softball fields prompted the school district to commit to improving facilities after a parent filed a complaint with the OCR.

Penns Valley High School (2007) – Unequal athletic opportunities for boys and girls prompted parents to advocate successfully for the addition of girls' volleyball as a varsity sport.

Wissahickon High School (2003-2006) –Research conducted in 2003 revealed that girls had 10% fewer opportunities to participate in athletics compared to their percentage of the student population. In addition, girls were assigned only 1 of 4 athletic locker rooms and had only 41% of the coaching staff. After complaint was filed with OCR in 2006, the district agreed to provide the girls more opportunities.

Southwestern Pennsylvania (2001) – The *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* reported that only 14 of 129 schools, or 11%, offered girls and boys equal athletic opportunities. Widespread inequalities exist in the region: two out of three high school athletes were male; 69 cents of every dollar spent on athletics was spent on male sports; and facilities and equipment provided for boys were far superior to those for girls.

2009-2010 Title IX Audit of the Pittsburgh Public Schools

On April 7, 2010, a Title IX consultant presented the Board of Directors for the Pittsburgh with a gender equity audit of athletics programs at the nine district high schools. The audit was conducted at the request of the Women's Law Project following complaints from parents and student athletes that girls were being treated unfairly.

The audit revealed that **not a single high school is offering girls a fair share of athletic opportunities**. In order to give girls the same access to athletic opportunities that boys have, the school district has to create 784 new athletic opportunities for girls.

The auditor noted numerous "moderate disparities" in the treatment of female athletes in areas including facilities and locker rooms, scheduling of practices and competitions, number of competitions, coaching, equipment and supplies, training, and publicity. Among the findings:

- The boys' locker room at **Oliver** High School holds 55 lockers, but the girls' locker room holds only 43 lockers—along with all the equipment for the girls' basketball and volleyball teams.
- **Brashear** High School provides the coaches of football, boys' basketball and baseball with office space, but there is no office space for the coaches of girls' teams.
- At **Langley** High School, football and wrestling are given necessary protective gear, but the girls' volleyball team does not have enough knee pads to go around.
- All high school football teams and six of the nine wrestling teams are supplied with protective gear, but none of the girls' teams are: instead, they must buy their own.
- The girls' basketball coach at **Perry** High School notes that many girls' games are played without an athletic trainer on site, a problem the auditor characterized as "a serious liability concern."
- The girls' varsity, JV and middle school basketball teams at **Brashear** practice in the auxiliary gym, which is not regulation size, while the boys' teams practice in the main gym.
- At **Schenley** High School, while the baseball team has access to the main gymnasium for practice during inclement weather, there is no indoor practice space for the girls' softball team.
- Girls are unwelcome in the weight rooms at several schools. One female student-athlete reported that the **Oliver** weight room is "for boys only." Female athletes at **Schenley** and **Westinghouse** said they would like more time in the weight room.
- The varsity football teams of **all nine high schools** compete at Cupples Stadium, a "premiere facility" to which no girls' team has equivalent access. Football competitions are scheduled at the most convenient and desirable times; no girls' sport receives equivalent treatment.

The attitude reflected in the audit's findings can be summed up in a quote from an unidentified **Westinghouse** coach: in Pittsburgh, "girls' sports are not that important."

The audit, which left many questions unanswered (for example, the audit apparently did not examine or analyze the schools' athletic budgets), is an important step in addressing systemic sex-based discrimination in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.