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## LIFE ON A SCHOOL BOARD

### Gender equity in sports: Be prepared, be informed

Dan Schlafer

It was a sweltering summer day in 1996. Instead of knocking a white, dimpled orb around a golf course of choice, as was normally my modus operandi at that time of year, I found myself sitting in my initial school law graduate class, anxiously awaiting the legendary professor.

The crusty old buzzard entered the classroom, depositing his disheveled array of books, files, and papers on the wooden desk at the front of the room. Eschewing the normal and perfunctory

greetings and introductions, he belted, "If you drive a nail for the boys, you'd better drive the exact same nail with the exact same hammer in the exact same place for the girls or you'll be up that well-known creek without a paddle."

Title IX of The Educational Amendments Act of 1972 codified gender equity. Thirty-seven words forever changed the world of public education, to wit: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded

from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

This legislation applies to academics, athletics, and the arts. It is germane to extracurricular activities as well. Simply stated, what's good for the goose is good for the gander, even if an outside source provides the funding.

In the academic world, Title IX is cut and dried. A course that's offered for males must also be offered for females and vice versa. There can be no gender-specific offerings and neither sex may be excluded from participation.

With respect to athletics, there must be equity in the number of games played, equipment and supplies, practice time scheduling, the nature and extent of the opportunity to receive coaching and academic tutoring, the assignment and compensation of



coaches and tutors, the provision of medical and training facilities and services, and in the nature and extent of publicity.

What if the booster club buys lights for the baseball field? What if a parent group foots the bill for a charter bus so the football team can travel in style? What if a local restaurant wants to provide pregame meals for its favorite team? The answers will raise your eyebrows and curl what's left of your hair.

If a Title IX complaint is lodged with the Office for Civil Rights, your school system will be held liable for putting lights on the softball field and leasing a charter bus during the season for the equivalent female team, and the school system will pony up for pregame meals for the other gender. Clearly, it behooves us to be fully aware of the financial dealings of our well-intentioned support groups.

What must we board members do to ensure that we are in full compliance with Title IX? How can we avoid the liability from Title IX litigation that will most certainly arise from parental complaints?

## READINGS AND REPORTS

# From black boys to systemic reform

**Black boys and the race gap**  
[www.schottfoundation.org](http://www.schottfoundation.org)

Twice as many white boys as black boys are "Gifted and Talented," while black boys are twice as likely to be classified as "Mentally Retarded." Black boys receive out-of-school suspensions twice as often, and expulsion three times as often, as white boys. The Schott Foundation's 2010 report on public education and black males, *Yes We Can*, says that school discipline disparities like these may account for the

We must ensure that our school system has a Title IX compliance officer. A trained compliance officer at each school is an even better idea. Faculty, staff, coaches, parents, and students must be made aware of the law. Those meetings should be well documented. Keeping detailed records is a must. Addressing problem areas immediately while documenting what you did, when you did it, and who witnessed it is critical.

We're all familiar with the fancy football program that's sold at home games in the fall. Do we remember to include other sports as well? We're famous for pep rallies during the first semester of each year. Do we celebrate our spring sports teams in like fashion?

As many of us have found out the hard way, it's much easier to navigate the creek if we bring along the paddle.

Dan Schlafer ([dan@monroek12.org](mailto:dan@monroek12.org)) is a member of the Cumberland County Board of Education and serves on the Tennessee School Boards Association's board of directors. He also is the federal programs director for Monroe County Schools.

large number of black males who don't graduate.

**Charter school impacts**  
<http://ies.ed.gov>

*Evaluation of Charter School Impacts* shows that, on average, 36 lottery-based charter middle schools performed the same as their traditional cohorts in raising math and reading test scores. Charter schools in urban areas, and those serving more low-income and low-achieving students,



The teachers and administrators at Wisconsin's School District of La Crosse had great ideas, which they shared with one another at a yearly districtwide retreat. As the popularity of the retreat grew, district officials wondered about how teachers could share their great ideas all year-round.

La Crosse's solution won the district a 2010 Magna Award in the 5,000 to 20,000 enrollment category. The vidcast emerged as the most efficient and cost-effective way to share strategies throughout the district.

Teachers participate in a 10-minute interview with the superintendent about their best practices and classroom innovations. The interviews are recorded and put online for everyone to see and learn from.

Teachers are networking with one another in a way they hadn't done before, sharing information, ideas, and resources. The district has seen financial benefits, as resources and materials are shared among multiple buildings.

For more information, contact Susan Peterson, community outreach coordinator, at [speterso@lacrosse.schools.org](mailto:speterso@lacrosse.schools.org). The district's website is at [www.lacrosseschools.org](http://www.lacrosseschools.org).

To read about other district best practices and how to nominate your school board and district for a 2011 Magna Award, visit [www.asbj.com/magna](http://www.asbj.com/magna). The deadline for nominations is Oct. 15.