

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

NCWGE NATIONAL COALITION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN EDUCATION

July 28, 1999

Secretary Richard W. Riley
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Riley:

EDUC -
GENDER EQUITY

1999 JUL 30 P 5:15
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE) is a nonprofit coalition of more than 50 organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities and equality for women and girls. We are writing to express our concern regarding recent positions taken by the Department of Education (ED) that seem to de-emphasize the importance of the issue of gender equity in education.

First, it is our understanding that ED has decided that only Volume I of the Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Education will be provided to Congress and to terminate the Education Development Center's (EDC) work on Volume II. As you know, Volume I is the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) volume which presents statistical information, while Volume II, developed by EDC, is intended to provide a comprehensive report based on available research, in narrative form. Submitting only the NCES volume presents an incomplete and inaccurate picture of the full scope of both the progress made and the continuing needs to assure equal educational opportunity and achievement for women and girls. Additionally, the NCES volume itself is incomplete because the data presented on girls and women in education is not disaggregated by race, national origin or disability. The Department's decision to provide Congress with such limited and inadequate information regarding the status of women and girls in education seems inconsistent with the Department's own rhetoric regarding the importance of equity in education.

Second, NCWGE is concerned that the expansion of the Special Assistant for Gender Equity's responsibilities to include all equity issues has lessened the Special Assistant's ability to be effective in ending gender bias in schools. In fact, it is not clear to us whether there is any focus on gender equity issues at the current time. The job was created in the 1994 Improving America's School Act (IASA) because the administration was committed to ensuring equity for women and girls in education, and recognized that at least one staff person at ED should focus on that task. By enlarging the scope of the job, we believe that it is impossible to adequately reach the administration's 1994 goals relative to gender equity. While we believe that the Department must address all equity issues, it is essential that these issues not be handled by one person alone. Rather, staff should be assigned to each historically underserved population, including, girls, minorities, students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities.

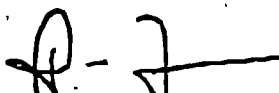
c/o American Association of University Women ♦ 1111 16th Street, NW ♦ Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785-7793 - FAX (202) 466-7618

Third, we are concerned about the Department's report on its review of the Title IX regulations and policies regarding single-sex education submitted to the Senate Appropriations Committee on February 12, 1999. In this report, the ED states that it is examining whether single-sex classrooms and schools are permitted under Title IX "where *comparable* educational opportunities are afforded to students of both sexes." The use of the word "*comparable*" in this report suggests a retreat by the Department from the long-standing legal principle of *equal* educational opportunities for all students.

Finally, the Department's ESEA proposal contains little of the gender equity language from the Educating America's Girls Act (HR2505/S1264), despite assurances to the contrary by several senior ED staff. This is in direct contrast to the commitment demonstrated to gender equity in the last ESEA reauthorization. We believe that in order for girls to continue to progress in our nation's public schools, it is essential to continue to address their educational needs. While we are pleased that ED's proposal includes the reauthorization of the Women's Educational Equity Act, provisions that address gender equity in technology and teacher training to ensure that girls reach their full educational potential are nearly totally absent from the Department's proposal. It is almost incomprehensible that an administration that asserts dedication to the advancement of women and girls has included so few provisions on gender equity in the new ESEA.

In order to address the issues above and to discuss more fully the Department's position on gender equity in education, we would like to schedule a meeting with you and representatives of NCWGE as soon as possible. We will contact you shortly to schedule a meeting. If you have any questions, please call Nancy Zirkin at 202/785-7720 or Leslie Annexstein at 202/588-5180.

Sincerely,



Nancy Zirkin
Chair



Leslie Annexstein
Vice-Chair

cc: Mike Cohen
Susan Frost
Judith Johnson

> Dear ?salutation?:

>

> Thank you for your letter expressing concern regarding recent positions

> taken by the Department of Education related to gender equity in

> education.

> I also am sending a response to ?cosigner?.

>

> Let me assure you that gender equity issues remain a high priority for the

> Department and this Administration. The Department devotes substantial

> staff resources to gender equity concerns. The Office for Civil Rights

> continues its important Title IX activities, including investigating

> complaints, reviewing compliance, issuing guidance on issues such as

> sexual

> harassment and intercollegiate athletics, and providing technical

> assistance related to Title IX issues. The Office of Educational Research

> and Improvement's Gender Equity Expert Panel identifies promising or

> exemplary programs in gender equity through the work of six subpanels that

> focus on different areas in gender equity: Core Gender Equity Issues;

> Gender Equity in Mathematics, Science and Technology; Gender Equity in

> Teacher Education and Professional Development; Gender Equity in

> Vocational

> Technical Education and School to Work; Gender Equity and Disability; and

> the Prevention of Sexual and Racial Harassment and Violence against

> Students in Higher Education. In addition, funding provided under many of

> our programs can be used to support gender equity activities.

>

> I have addressed each of your specific concerns below.

>

> ~~Termination of the Education Development Center's (EDC) Work on Volume II~~

> ~~of the Report of the Status of Women and Girls in Education.~~

>

> As you may know, EDC submitted a draft of Volume II to the Department late

> last year. Department staff reviewed this draft and found that it

> included

> some important information but ^{also} contained serious deficiencies in

> documenting its conclusions, in ^{also} providing a balanced view of the research

> and by not focusing on the educational status of girls and women. Thus,

> ~~was not the type of document that we could submit to Congress.~~

> Subsequently, the EDC agreed to revise the report according to specific

> written instruction provided by the Department and, as a first step, to

> provide us with a draft sample chapter this spring. The strong consensus

> of those throughout the Department who reviewed the draft was that it did

> not correct the serious problems with the previous draft and that EDC

> should not continue work on it. Based on that consensus, the Department

> terminated work on Volume II in early July.

>

> You expressed concern that, by going forward only with Volume I, we would

> be presenting an inaccurate and incomplete picture of the status of gender

> equity in education. Volume I, which is being completed by the National

> Center for Education Statistics, will present information on the status of

> women across a broad range of areas, ranging from preschool participation

> to academic performance at all levels to postsecondary attainment and

> computer usage. Our feeling is that the report will comprehensively

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etc.

- > present a national picture of the progress girls and women have made in
- > education and the challenges still at hand. The volume will include both
- > statistical tables and narratives and, where nationally representative
- > data
- > are available, it will include disaggregations by ethnic and racial group.

— how? — for ex?

- > ~~Expansion of the Special Assistant for Equity's responsibilities to~~
- > ~~include~~
- > ~~all equity issues.~~

? but little has -

- > The duties of the Special Assistant for Equity have not changed since the
- > position was created. The primary responsibility of this employee is to
- > promote, coordinate, and evaluate gender equity programs, including the
- > dissemination of information, technical assistance and coordination of
- > research activities. She is charged with advising the Deputy Secretary
- > and

need to acknowledge
the point + narrow
the scope of the survey

- > on all matters related to gender equity. The majority of her time is
- > spent on issues of gender equity both within and outside the Department.
- > More importantly, the Department considers gender equity to be the
- > responsibility of all offices. Every Senior Officer has been charged with
- > making gender equity a high priority.

- > To advise me effectively on matters related to gender equity, the Special
- > Assistant, like her predecessors, is involved in and handles other issues
- > of equity. The Special Assistant oversees the Department-wide Equity Task
- > Force. The Task Force was created to address issues of equity in all
- > Department programs and management decisions. Each office has at least
- > one
- > representative working on the Equity Task Force. The representatives
- > report directly to their Senior Officers on Task Force activities. Each
- > participant brings knowledge of his or her office programs and issues,
- > which helps the Special Assistant address gender equity concerns.

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- > Title IX regulations and policies concerning single-sex education.

- > It is my understanding that you spoke with my General Counsel, Judith
- > Winston, regarding this concern. Let me reiterate that the Department is
- > not retreating from its long-standing principle of ensuring equal
- > educational opportunities for all students.

- > Absence of gender equity language in the Department's ESEA proposal.

- > We believe that the Administration's ESEA reauthorization bill does in
- > fact continue the commitment to gender equity made in the last
- > reauthorization. It includes provisions to update the Women's Educational
- > Equity Act, such as the inclusion of new language on the gender gap in
- > upper-level mathematics and science, and computer science courses. We
- > also
- > added language in Title III, Technology for Education, to give that title
- > an appropriate focus on gender equity issues. These are some of the same
- > themes found in the Educating America's Girls Act. More broadly, we
- > believe that the focus of the ESEA reauthorization should be on all
- > children. Our proposals for high standards in every classroom,
- > accountability for student performance, strengthening teacher and

to define

> principal
> quality, and supporting safe, healthy, disciplined and drug-free learning
> environments will benefit all children, regardless of their gender, race,
> ethnic or economic background.
>
> I have asked Judith Winston, the General Counsel, Judith Johnson, the
> Acting Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, and
> Brenda Wolff, my Special Assistant for Equity, to meet with you to discuss
> more fully the Department's position on gender equity in education.
> Brenda
> will contact you to arrange the meeting.
>
> Yours sincerely,
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> Richard W. Riley
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>
> << File: PIC04777.PCX >>



Bethany Little
09/20/99 12:16:51 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP
cc:
Subject: RE: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education

I will follow this up with Mike, but wanted to get your reaction as well and perhaps strategize on how to proceed. Thanks!

----- Forwarded by Bethany Little/OPD/EOP on 09/20/99 12:16 PM -----



"Cohen, Mike" <Mike_Cohen@ed.gov>
09/17/99 07:48:01 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Bethany Little/OPD/EOP
cc:
Subject: RE: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education

I have not been on top of this issue, and generally find the debate as confusing (and uninteresting) as Bruce does. However, I think he's right that parts of this letter will antagonize the women's groups.

I don't have an immediate solution to this, but will try to get back to you later today. If Bruce wants significant changes in this, I suspect he is going to have to call Mike.

> -----Original Message-----
> From: Bethany_Little@opd.eop.gov [SMTP: Bethany_Little@opd.eop.gov]
> Sent: Thursday, September 16, 1999 9:05 PM
> To: Mike_Cohen@ed.gov
> Subject: Re: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education
>
> Would you mind taking a look at this when you have a chance? I have just
> faxed you a copy of the letter we are responding to. Please give me a
> call
> at 456-5543 with your thoughts. Thanks!
> ----- Forwarded by Bethany Little/OPD/EOP on 09/16/99
> 09:02 PM -----
>
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>
>

> Bruce N. Reed
> 09/16/99 12:43:23 PM
>
> Record Type: Record
>
>
> To: Bethany Little/OPD/EOP@EOP
> cc: andy rotherham/opd/eop@eop, Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP
> bcc:
> Subject: Re: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education
> (Document link not converted)
>
> I know absolutely nothing about this issue, and have a hard time
> understanding the debate. But at first glance, it seems awfully defensive
> and looks like it might only antagonize our friends. Can you show it to
> Eric, and also let me know Mike Cohen's view? Thanks.
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> (Embedded
> image moved Bethany Little
> to file: 09/15/99 12:03:27 AM
> PIC04777.PCX)
>
>
>
>
> Record Type: Record
>
>
> To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP
>
> cc: Andy Rotherham/OPD/EOP@EOP
> Subject: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education
>
> A few weeks ago you forwarded a letter from the National Coalition for
> Women and Girls in Education to me, and asked that I see how we planned to
> address the issues raised. After an extensive internal process, the
> Department has drafted the following letter. I think that it fairly
> addresses the issues raised by the coalition, but wanted to ensure that
> you
> had a chance to take a look at it before it was sent. Please let me know
> if you have any concerns, questions, or edits, and I will follow up.
> Thanks!
>
> National Coalition for Women
> and Girls in Education
> c/o American Association of
> University Women
> 1111 16th Street, NW
> Washington, DC 20036
>