

## Legislation

Local school boards have a responsibility to assure equal opportunity in state elementary and secondary schools. Both federal and state laws make it illegal for a school board to allow discrimination in any education program on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, marital status, religion, or disability.

### Federal

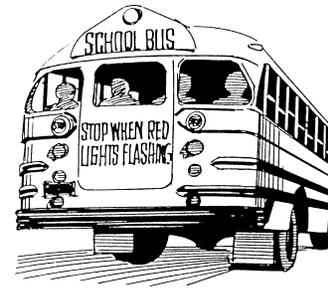
**Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972** forbids sex discrimination in any educational institution receiving federal assistance. With few exceptions, Title IX forbids discrimination in admissions, recruitment, access to courses and participation in extracurricular activities, treatment of students, services and financial aid, use of facilities, student employment, and employment of personnel.

**The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998** continues earlier provisions of Federal vocational education legislation that prohibit sex discrimination, sex bias, and sex stereotyping in vocational programs.

### State

Under Iowa Law, all public and accredited private elementary and secondary schools are required to utilize multicultural, gender fair approaches to the entire educational program. Curriculum is to be taught from a multicultural, gender fair approach. To assure gender fair approaches and curricula, schools must comply with Chapter 12 of the Iowa Administrative Code, which requires that goals and activities related to multicultural, gender fair education be an integral part of comprehensive school improvement plans. Copies of the state's school accreditation rules as well as other materials related to gender fair approaches to educational programs are available from the Department of Education, Grimes Building, Des Moines, IA 50319, 515/281-8170. They can also be found on the Department of Education's web site: <http://www.state.ia.us/educate>.

The Iowa Civil Rights Act also prohibits sex discrimination in state educational institutions. Exclusion of females or males from participation in academic, extra curricular, research, occupational training, or other educational programs or activities is specifically prohibited. Although single-sex athletic programs are allowed under Iowa law, the educational institutions must provide comparable opportunities for both sexes in intramural and interscholastic athletic programs. State law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of pregnancy or marital status in educational institutions. This act applies to any public preschool, elementary school, secondary school, community college, and area education agency and their governing boards. For more information, contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, 515/281-4121 or 800/457-4416.



# Sexism in Education

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*Does Gender Equity Exist  
in Your Community School District?*



*Making a difference in  
the lives of Iowa women*

Iowa Department of Human Rights  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Telephone: 515/281-4461 or 800/558-4427

Fax: 515/242-6119

E-mail: [dhc.icsw@dhc.state.ia.us](mailto:dhc.icsw@dhc.state.ia.us)

Web site: [www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw](http://www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw)

Revised October 2001

## Look at Your Local School District

### Curricular Materials

- Do readers and textbooks have comparable numbers of stories with females and males in major roles? ...*or does the number of stories featuring males as major characters tip the scale?*
- Are both females and males pictured in a variety of interchangeable roles? ...*or do you find that females are pictured in predominantly quiet or submissive roles while the males are pictured in active and adventurous roles?*
- Are the contributions and history of women adequately represented in curricular materials? ...*or are materials male dominated with females excluded, or "included" only in generic terms such as mankind and manpower?*

### Curricular Offerings

- Does each child in the school feel that every course is as available and acceptable for a person of one sex as it is for a person of the opposite sex? ...*or are the agriculture and industrial technology courses considered "boys' classes" while the family and consumer science courses are considered "girls' classes?"*
- Are students sectioned into classes according to like interests or abilities? ...*or are classes sectioned merely on the basis of gender, and as a result taught differently?*

### Guidance Services

- Is each child encouraged to explore all alternatives and possibilities for fulfillment of individual potential? ...*or are assumptions made about the child's future that affect the choice of study areas? i.e., is it assumed that females will marry and have children and therefore need specific preparation for this role but that males do not, or that other types of career or technical training are of less importance than college preparation courses?*
- Are tests used for vocational interests and preferences free from sex bias? ...*or do tests reflect traditional sex roles and stereotyping?*

### Extracurricular Activities

- Do females and males have the same opportunities for participation in all activity areas? ...*or does the athletic program reflect greater opportunities for the males in use of facilities, supervisory personnel, sports offered, length of season, or publicity?*
- Does the budget for extracurricular activities reflect equal opportunities and equal quality in programs for males and females? ...*or do you find that the bulk of the financial resources support programs for males?*
- Are leadership positions occupied by women and men alike? ...*or do you find few, if any, women administrators in your district?*
- Do the administrators provide staff development programs and encourage curriculum revision to reflect changing sex roles in society? ...*or do they resist positive change?*
- Are nontraditional role models available? ...*or do only men teach science, math, industrial technology and social studies, while only women teach English and foreign language courses?*
- Does your school district have a functioning Title IX Coordinator? ... *or is no one assigned active oversight responsibility?*
- Does your school district have a grievance procedure for student, parent, or employee complaints of gender discrimination? ...*and are students, parents, and employees aware of this procedure?*

*If your answers to the above questions do not reflect a balanced program in every aspect, your school system is not meeting the needs of its female and male students, and is not in compliance with state or federal laws.*

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## Take Action

1. Visit your school board and school superintendent and discuss your concerns with them.
2. Volunteer to serve on your district's school improvement advisory committee.
3. Monitor your own school district for compliance with state and federal legislation.
4. Question your school administrators, school board members and teachers and inform them of your concerns.
5. Establish a coalition of community groups to work with the school system toward needed change.