

May 13, 2014

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*Via UPS Overnight Shipping and Email:*      Commissioner@fldoe.org;  
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***Re: Administrative Complaint Against Hillsborough, FL, School District***

Dear Sir and Madam:

Enclosed is a complaint brought by the ACLU and the ACLU of Florida against Hillsborough County Public Schools (“the District”) asserting violations of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) and the regulations and policies promulgated thereunder by the U.S. Department of Education (“ED”), and filed with the United States Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights. The complaint presents evidence, gleaned largely from the District’s 2012 and 2013 responses to ACLU requests under Florida Public Records Law, that the District has violated Title IX by instituting single-sex

oversight of single-sex classes and schools in Hillsborough County and, as our continuing investigation is revealing, throughout Florida.

This

***The District Sponsored Extensive Training in Teaching Methods based on Sex Stereotypes.*** For example:

- The District runs a targeted multi-day professional development program for teachers of single-

- Last summer, teachers of boys, but not girls, were invited to a program entitled “Engaging Students with Debate and Discussion,” described as follows:

How can we engage stu

used for boys and girls based on theories of sex-based brain development or that teacher trainings would be conducted promoting the use of different teaching methods based on sex.

***The District's Single Sex Magnet Middle Schools Also Promoted Sex Stereotypes, and the District Failed to Offer a Substantially Equal Coeducational Alternative.***

- Videos on the website of the Franklin and Ferrell Preparatory Academies' websites feature students articulating numerous supposed biological differences between boys and girls, and touting the different teaching methods employed at the two schools.
  - A female student in the Girls' Preparatory Academy video states:

Science shows us that there are basic biological and neurological differences in males and females. ... We tend to process more sensory data. We have strong senses of smell and hearing, tend to adapt to more kinds of light and take in information tactilely. Our classrooms are designed to help support learning using all of our senses. Color, music, scents are incorporated to help facilitate our learning. We're usually able to read facial expressions and body language well. ... We work and play well in face-to-face situations. Our frontal cortex matures early which means we are less likely to be impulsive. We tend to take a very personal approach to learning.
  - A male student in the Boys' Preparatory Academy video states:

Teaching is tailored to the ways we learn. Boys generally have strong development in certain areas of the right hemisphere of the brain providing them with heightened spatial skills such as map reading, mechanical skills and measuring. Boys rely more heavily on nonverbal communication rather than on verbalizing feelings and responses. Music is a whole brain activity, engaging both hemispheres at once. It can help wake up the brain. Research shows that boys tend to respond to louder voices or sounds. Boys also tend to hear better with their right ear. The composition of the male eye makes it attuned to motion and directions. Boys interpret the world as objects moving through space. Boys tend to create pictures of moving objects like space ships, cars and trucks.

However, as stated above, further action by your agency is necessary beyond the remedies sought from OCR in this specific complaint. The Department should, at the very least, develop and promulgate a list of professional development providers to assist participating schools with scheduling and instructional strategies. To be included in the department's list, a professional development provider must only promote methods that: (1) are supported by valid, scientifically-based research;<sup>1</sup> and (2) do not rely on or promote the concept of inherent differences between boys' and girls' brain structure or development, or on generalizations about their purportedly different learning styles, preferences, abilities, or interests.

These actions, along with the investigation we have previously requested by your agency, are necessary to ensure that the teacher training programs on "gender-based" teaching methods, which that are based on and perpetuate sex stereotypes, are halted, and that further training programs along these lines are not initiated pursuant to the newly enacted law.