

OPINION

Equal Academic and Athletic Access

The promise of Title IX

BY MARC H. MORIAL

The nation recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of Title IX, the landmark Education Amendments of 1972, which mandate that girls and women receive equal access to academic and athletic opportunities in our nation's schools and colleges.

A White House press release noted that, "At a time when many universities barred the admission of women, and when female sports teams were scarce, Title IX marked a momentous shift for women's equality in classrooms, on playing fields, and in communities through-



out our nation."

While best known for its emphasis on gender equality in sports, the law has been instrumental in advancing women's rights in many other areas.

President Obama, who coaches his daughter Sasha's basketball team, commented that "Title IX isn't just about sports. From addressing inequality in math and science education to preventing sexual assault on campus to fairly funding athletic programs, Title IX ensures equality for our young people in every aspect of their education. It's a springboard for success."

The Associated Press reports, before Title IX, fewer than 300,000 high school girls – 1 in 27 – played sports. Now more than 3 million

high school girls – 1 in 2 – play sports. More than 191,000 females played NCAA sports in 2010-11.

Title IX is also responsible for the increasing numbers of women in the nation's law and medical schools. Education Secretary Arne Duncan is right when he says "Title IX is one of the great civil rights success stories in education." But it is also true that girls and women are still underrepresented in many areas of education and there remain gaps in Title IX enforcement that must be closed.

A report by the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), notes that "In the last three fiscal years, OCR received nearly 3,000 Title IX-related complaints – more than ever before in a similar period – and launched more than 35

investigations."

The study also found that while girls make up 49 percent of high school enrollment, they still only comprise 42 percent of athletes. And of the 10,000 schools in the study that offer single-sex athletics, 57 percent offered fewer athletic teams for girls than for boys.

In addition, while women outnumber men in the population and in college graduation, they remain woefully underrepresented in the STEM fields -- the growth industries of the future. According to OCR, in 2008-09, women earned fewer than 18 percent of all bachelor's degrees in computer and information sciences, and women from underrepresented minorities earned less than seven percent of bachelor's degrees in those fields. Less than four per-

cent of degrees in engineering were awarded to women from underrepresented minorities.

Clearly, the promise of Title IX has not yet been fully realized. We applaud the Obama Administration for taking steps to improve enforcement and further close gender gaps. And we will intensify our own efforts in support of quality education for all, including greater access to community-based STEM learning for African American boys and girls.

Title IX has served the nation well for the past 40 years. We must uphold the spirit and the letter of the law for the next 40 years and beyond.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Schools and Leaving Judgment Behind

Teaching to the test

BY JAN RESSEGER

The blogosphere went wild recently when Reuters reported that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has granted \$1.4 million to university researchers to investigate the use of biometric, galvanic skin response bracelets to measure whether teachers are engaging students' interest.

This is one more step in the move to de-professionalize teaching, part of the idea that it doesn't help teachers to go through the college certification process. Today's so-called education reformers believe we need to replace "qualified" (certified) teachers with "effective" teachers, as measured by students' standardized test scores or perhaps galvanic skin responses.

We've come to trust counting and measuring instead of our judgment and our hearts.

I like to browse among college bookstore shelves stocking the required books for students studying to be professional, certified



school teachers—books like Mike Rose's *Possible Lives* and Gloria Ladson-Billings' *The Dream-Keepers*.

Just read the titles. They are books of hope, the stories of excellent school teachers. Ladson-Billings, whose book is subtitled "Successful Teachers of African American Children," describes professionals who honor their students' home culture, help children understand their world and equip

Though the chapters offer a number of portraits of good teachers, there is no single profile of the Good Teacher...I recommend no final list of good practices...Such profiles and lists have value...but they also have a tendency to be...reduced to slogan or commodity.

— Mike Rose, Author

them to improve it. She celebrates teachers who understand themselves as members of their communities and simultaneously lifelong professionals called to nurture children steadfastly, creatively and thoughtfully.

For four years, Rose traveled the United States, visiting classrooms where fine teachers in cities, towns, and even a one-room

school in Montana's Grasshopper Valley inspire children to explore and work together.

Rose begs us not to look for a one best measurable way to replicate good teachers: "Though the chapters offer a number of portraits of good teachers, there is no single profile of the Good Teacher.... I recommend no final list of good practices.... Such profiles and lists have value...but they also have a tendency to be... reduced to slogan or

commodity."

These books, published in the mid-1990s, have become classics. I encourage you to read them, although the students learning to be school teachers still read *The Dream-Keepers* and *Possible Lives*, because many of us outside the colleges of education no longer understand teach-

ing as the kind of profession these books present. Our understanding of teaching has changed, as our understanding of public education itself has narrowed.

In a recent graduation address at Teachers College of Columbia University, Linda Darling-Hammond, a Stanford University expert on teaching, declared, "The new scientific managers like to rank and sort students, teachers and schools, rewarding those at the top and punishing those at the bottom while issuing multimillion-dollar contracts for testing and data systems to create more graphs, charts and report cards on which to rank and sort."

She continued, "The new scientific managers cleverly construct systems that solve the problem of the poor by blaming the teachers and schools that seek to serve them, calling the deepening levels of severe poverty an 'excuse,' rewarding schools that keep out and push out the highest-need students. The United States now has a far higher poverty rate for children than any other industrialized country. Our leaders do not talk about these things. They simply say of poor children, 'Let them eat tests.'"

Jan Resseger is minister for Public Education for the United Church of Christ.

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