

The National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE) is a nonprofit organization of approximately 50 groups dedicated to improving educational opportunities for girls and women. Our mission is to provide leadership in and advocate for the development of national education policies that benefit women, girls, and all students. The Coalition works to enforce Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. Title IX affects all areas of education and promotes equity for both girls and boys.

The following list highlights recommendations for the first year of the Obama Administration in areas in which NCWGE as a coalition has unique expertise. In addition, we support many of the priorities identified by other civil rights organizations and organizations promoting educational quality and improvement.

1. Improve Equity in Athletics

- Immediately announce rescission of the 2005 “Additional Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics Policy: Three-Part Test – Part Three.” The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) should promptly rescind the 2005 Clarification – under which schools can show they are providing equal participation opportunities to women simply by sending an email survey to their female students and counting a failure to respond as evidence of a lack of interest in playing sports. OCR should make clear that the governing standards are those detailed in the 1996 Policy Clarification.
- Support the introduction of legislation that requires high schools to report the gender breakdown of their athletics programs. This legislation, versions of which were introduced in the 110th Congress, would require that high schools report information on the gender breakdown of their athletics programs. Currently, only colleges are required to report this information. Access to such data will enhance compliance with Title IX and aid in the continued expansion of athletic opportunities for girls at the high school level. The Department of Education may be able to impose these reporting requirements by regulation in lieu of legislation.

2. Restore Safeguards in Single-Sex Education

- Rescind the 2006 single-sex regulations. The Department of Education should, through notice and comment rulemaking, rescind the final regulations issued in 2006 which revised longstanding rules to permit more single-sex educational programs. The 2006 regulatory changes roll back the safeguards against sex discrimination and segregation in the U.S. Constitution and Title IX and have resulted in increased sex discrimination and stereotyping.
- Issue guidance clarifying the extent to which single-sex public school programs are permissible in light of the rescission of the 2006 regulations, and offer technical assistance to schools to ensure compliance.

3. Enhance Enforcement of Title IX

- Conduct systematic reviews of institutions’ compliance with Title IX in areas including: athletics; career and technical education; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education; and the treatment of pregnant and parenting students.
- Issue guidance and provide technical assistance to federal funding recipients clarifying the protections provided to pregnant and parenting students under Title IX.

- Ensure that all federal agencies that provide funding for education programs or activities, including the Department of Energy, NASA, and NIH, monitor compliance with Title IX and that they fully enforce their own rules. The Administration also should issue guidance on how to recognize and address barriers to women’s participation in STEM fields and encourage participation in non-traditional occupations.
- Issue updated guidance on new case law developments with respect to the detection, prevention, and handling of sexual harassment in schools.
- Make gender equity a priority at the Department of Education, including providing for adequate staffing and budget for offices such as OCR, and restore funding for regional, state and local gender equity initiatives.

4. Support Equity in Education for Women and Girls

- Include enhanced data collection requirements for subgroup performance – including disaggregating graduation rate data by gender and by status as a pregnant or parenting student – in NCLB reauthorization. All data should be maintained in a format that can be cross-tabulated by race/ethnicity and gender, to enable stakeholders to compare the performance of specific subgroups of students (e.g. Hispanic girls and Hispanic boys). The Department of Education may be able to establish many of these requirements by regulation in lieu of legislation.
- Target dropout prevention programs to meet the needs of both boys and girls, including pregnant and parenting students. Among other things, the Administration should support gender-based research into dropout prevention strategies; require comprehensive sexuality education; direct schools to track the academic progress of pregnant and parenting students; and fund programs that would provide enhanced supports for these students, such as on-site child care.
- Include in the Administration’s first budget funding to improve access for all to higher education. The budget should include increased funding for programs that decrease the cost of post-secondary education and support students in their efforts to succeed, such as Pell grants, Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program, the Women’s Educational Equity Act and Patsy Mink fellowships, which support women and minority students interested in becoming professors and require recipients to engage in teaching activities.
- Support passage of the Civil Rights Act of 2009, which includes a provision that would restore adequate protections from sexual harassment in school (undermined by the Supreme Court in a pair of 5-4 decisions) by creating for students the same legal protections against harassment that apply to employees in the workplace.
- Reinstate and fund a White House Office on Women’s Initiatives and President’s Interagency Council on Women.

For more information about NCWGE’s policy priorities in a number of the above areas, download the Coalition’s “Title IX at 35” report at www.ncwge.org. For additional information, you may also contact Lisa Maatz at the American Association of University Women (Chair of NCWGE) at 202-785-7720 or maatzi@aauw.org or Jocelyn Samuels at the National Women’s Law Center (Vice Chair of NCWGE) at 202-588-5180 or jsamuels@nwlc.org.