

“Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes”

Findings from ACLU’s Campaign to Stop Single-Sex Education Based on Gender Stereotypes in Public Schools

**NCWGE Webinar
January 28, 2015**



Because Freedom Can't Protect Itself

“Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes”

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Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes

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March 28, 2013

The ACLU has long fought to end the practice of separating boys and girls in public schools based on discredited “science” that is rooted in outdated gender stereotypes. Single-sex proponents say that boys and girls are “hardwired” to learn differently, and that the most effective way to teach them is to separate them based on their sex and use different teaching strategies. For example, teachers are instructed that girls should not have time limits on tests because, unlike boys, girls’ brains cannot function well under these conditions; and that boys who like to read, do not enjoy contact sports and do not have a lot of close male friends should be firmly disciplined, required to spend time with “normal males” and made to play sports.



dok1 / Flickr
Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes

That’s not science. Those are dangerous stereotypes. It’s time for our public schools to stop short-changing students. Single-sex programs are not only unfair;

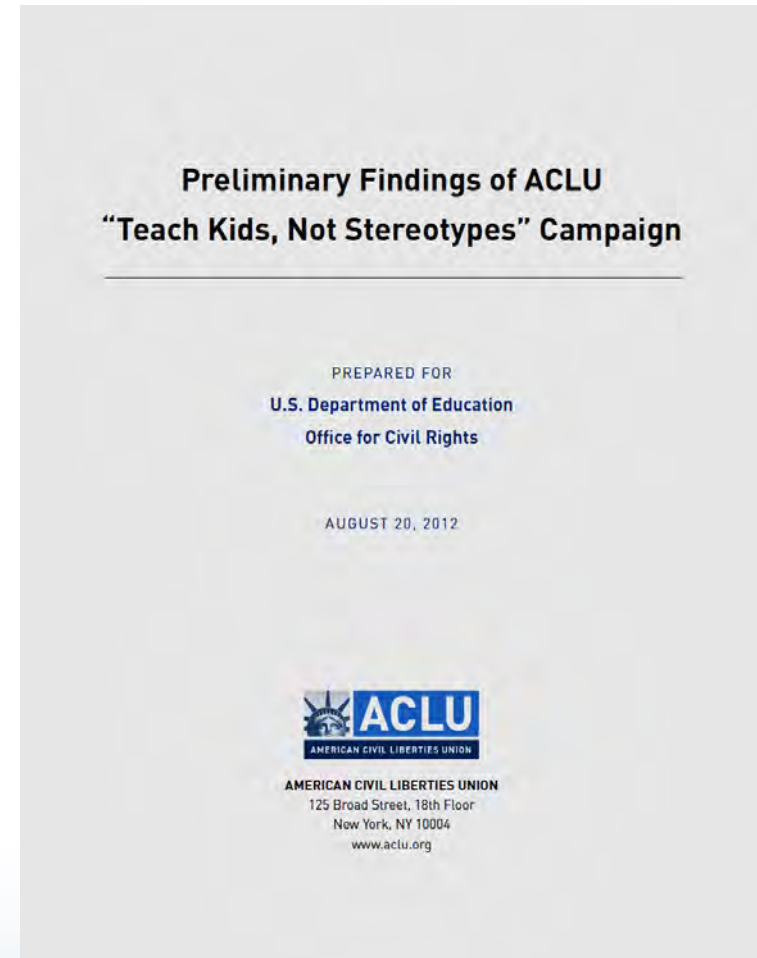


A high school in California is planning to give the boys business internships while teaching the girls to dress ‘like ladies’.

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ACLU findings and report to OCR

- Lacked justification/had shoddy/illegal justification
- Involuntary or “opt-out”
- Lacked substantially equal coed alternative
- Failure to conduct required evaluations
- **Premised on “hardwired” difference theory**
- **Stereotypes prevalent**



Theory of “hardwired” brain difference

The Brain Develops Differently

GIRLS- the language areas of the brain develop before the areas used for spatial relations and for geometry.

BOYS- it is the other way around.

Teaching that ignores this difference will produce boys who can't write and girls who think they're "dumb at math".

The Brain is Wired Differently

GIRLS- emotion is processed in the same area of the brain that possesses language. So, it's easier for most girls to talk about their emotions.

BOYS- The brain regions involved in talking are separate from the regions involved in feeling. The hardest question for a boy to answer is, "Tell me how you feel."

Leonard Sax training produced in response to ACLU records request

Theory of biological differences

Girls Hear Better

The typical teenage girl has a sense of hearing seven times more acute than a teenage boy.

- That's why daughters complain that their fathers are shouting at them.
- That's why the boy in the back of the classroom whose soft-spoken teacher calls on him responds by saying, "Huh?".

Girls and Boys Respond Differently to Stress

GIRLS- Stress impairs learning.

BOYS- Stress enhances learning.

This is true in every mammal that scientists have studied.

Leonard Sax training produced in response to ACLU records request

Brain difference → learning difference

Brain differences

The brains of girls and boys differ in important ways. These differences are genetically programmed and are present at birth. Brains can be identified by sex as early as 24 weeks into pregnancy. The areas of the brain involved in language, in spatial memory, in motor coordination and fine motor skills develop in a different order, time, and rate in girls compared to boys.

Learning styles

Girls and boy have different learning styles in part because of innate, biologically-programmed differences in the way the brain works. As a result, single-sex classes have unique advantages for girls and boys.

Stetson University, Nina Hollis Institute, *“Why Single Gender Classes?”*
(teacher training presentation)

Debunking “hardwired” difference

- Boys and girls brains are more similar than different
- Differences among boys and among girls are more significant than differences between boys and girls
- Brain “Plasticity”
- Physiological differences make no pedagogical difference



Lise Eliot, Pink Brain, Blue Brain (2010)

Debunking “hardwired” difference

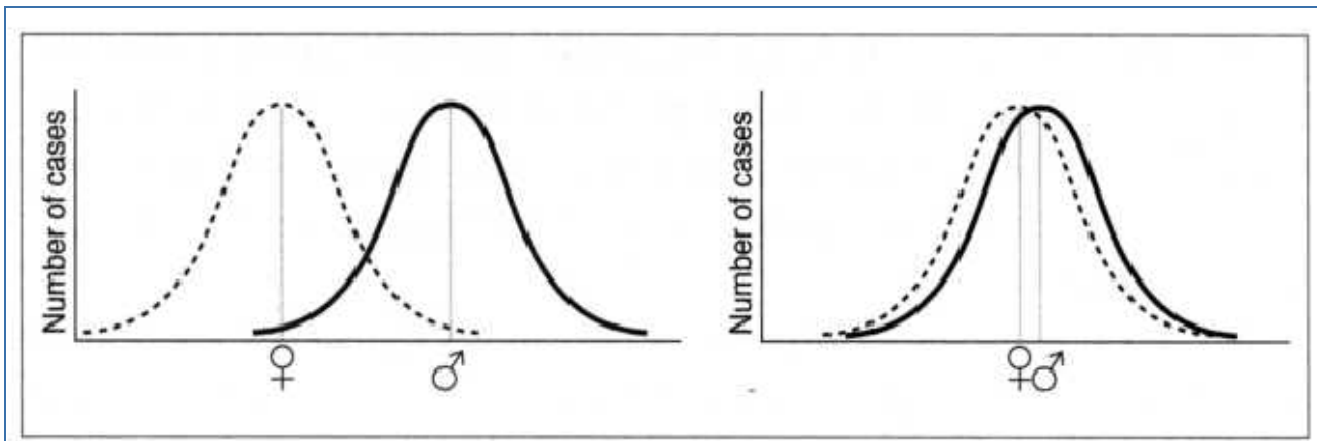
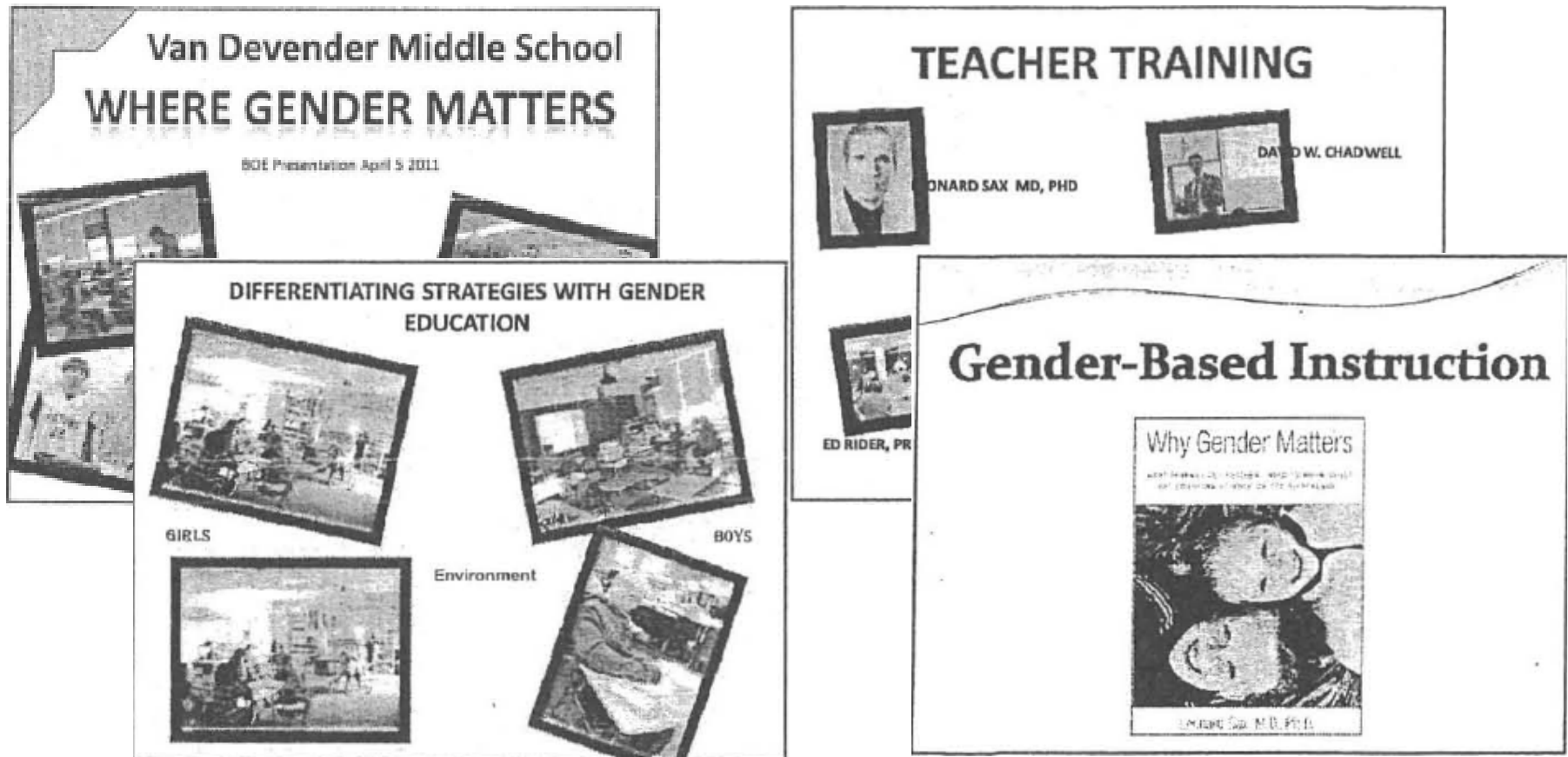


Figure 0.1. Distribution of performance for two traits that differ with d values of 2.6 and 0.35, respectively. Females are represented by the dashed curve, males by the solid curve. Mean score for each sex is shown by the vertical line at the middle of the curve. The graph on the left shows the sex difference in adult height, which is considered very large and for which there is little overlap between men and women. The graph on the right shows the distribution for a sex difference with a d score of 0.35, which is actually on the large side for many psychological differences. Note that the curves overlap extensively. Of the many psychological sex differences that have been repeatedly measured, 77 percent are *smaller* than the difference between the curves on the right.

Lise Eliot, Pink Brain, Blue Brain (2010)

“Gender-based” strategies in action



*School Board presentation produced in response to ACLU public records request
Wood County, WV*

Different classroom environments



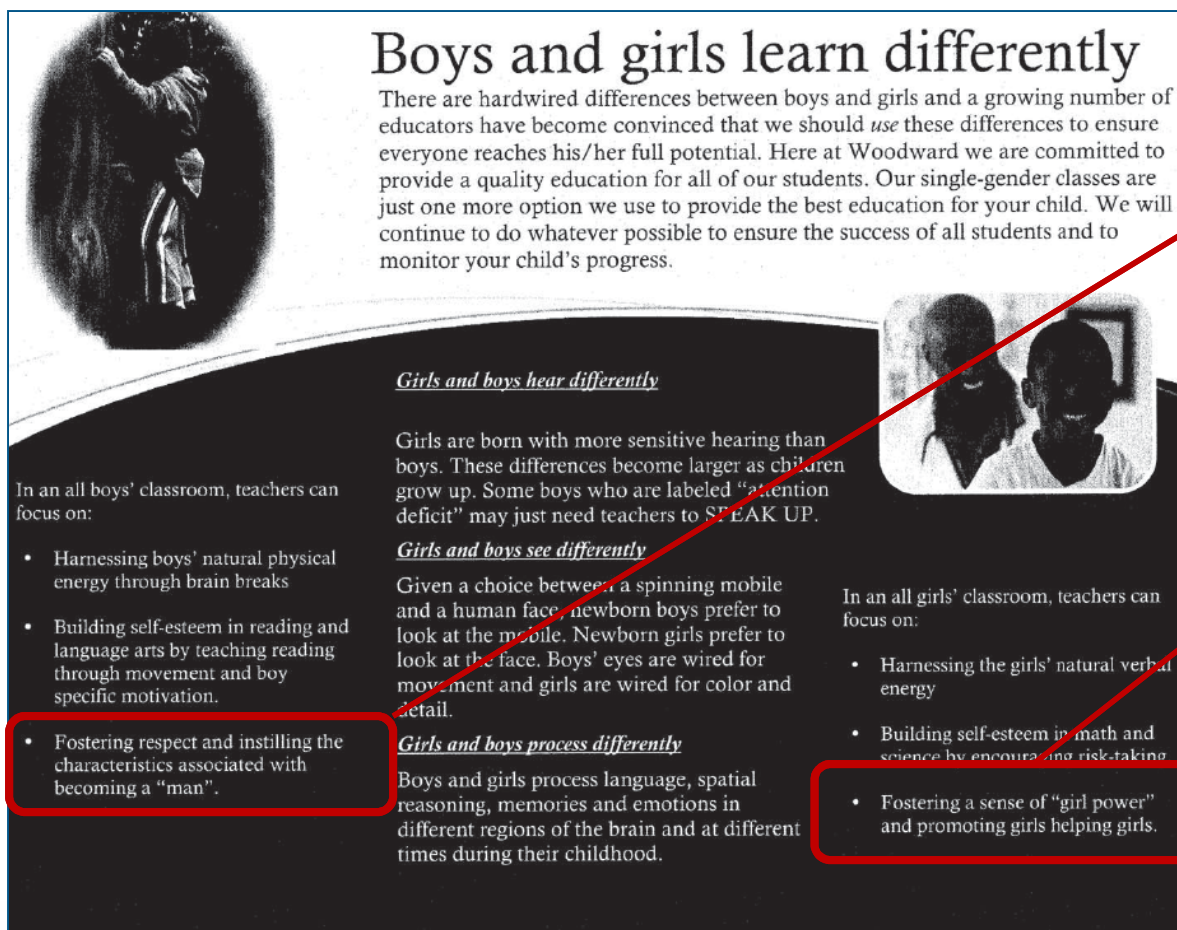
Different classroom environments

“[W]hen [boys] look each other in the eye it becomes more of a confrontational type thing. Girls . . . sit around tables, where they can make eye contact, where they can make relationships, and that sort of thing.”

Steve Taylor, Principal, Van Devender Middle School, Wood County, WV




Biased outreach materials




Boys and girls learn differently

There are hardwired differences between boys and girls and a growing number of educators have become convinced that we should *use* these differences to ensure everyone reaches his/her full potential. Here at Woodward we are committed to provide a quality education for all of our students. Our single-gender classes are just one more option we use to provide the best education for your child. We will continue to do whatever possible to ensure the success of all students and to monitor your child's progress.



Girls and boys hear differently

Girls are born with more sensitive hearing than boys. These differences become larger as children grow up. Some boys who are labeled "attention deficit" may just need teachers to **STREAK UP**.



Girls and boys see differently

Given a choice between a spinning mobile and a human face, newborn boys prefer to look at the mobile. Newborn girls prefer to look at the face. Boys' eyes are wired for movement and girls are wired for color and detail.

Girls and boys process differently

Boys and girls process language, spatial reasoning, memories and emotions in different regions of the brain and at different times during their childhood.

In an all boys' classroom, teachers can focus on:

- Harnessing boys' natural physical energy through brain breaks
- Building self-esteem in reading and language arts by teaching reading through movement and boy specific motivation.
- **Fostering respect and instilling the characteristics associated with becoming a "man".**

In an all girls' classroom, teachers can focus on:

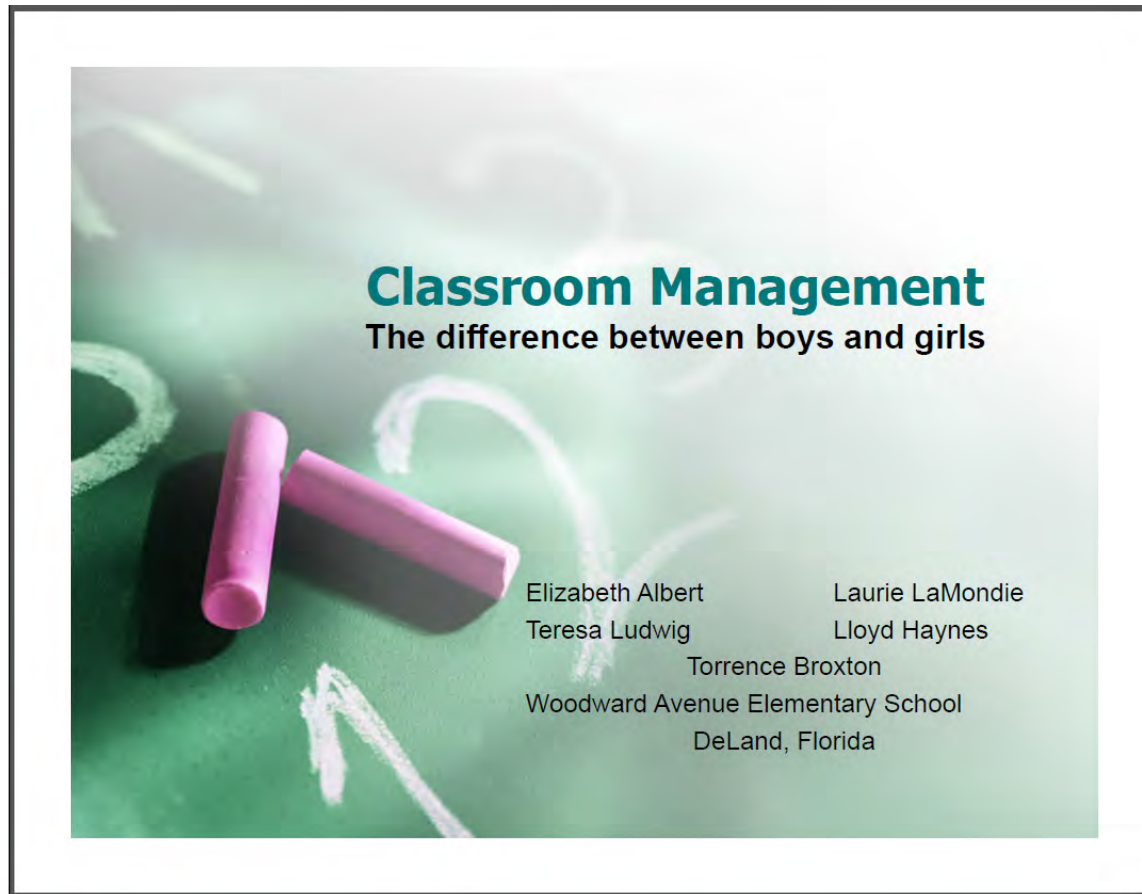
- Harnessing the girls' natural verbal energy
- Building self-esteem in math and science by encouraging risk-taking
- **Fostering a sense of "girl power" and promoting girls helping girls.**

Boys: "Fostering respect and instilling the characteristics associated with "becoming a man"

Girls: "Fostering a sense of 'girl power' and promoting girls helping girls"


*Flyer produced in response to ACLU records request
Volusia County, FL*

“Gender-based” teacher trainings



*Teacher training presentation produced in response to ACLU records request
Volusia County, FL*

“Gender-based” teacher trainings



Effective Strategies to Motivate Girls

- ❖ Post and review the schedule, but explain **FLEXIBILITY**
- ❖ Use real world examples, whenever possible, across the curriculum
- ❖ Create a model simultaneously, to create individual thinking, creativity
 - ❖ *Model making mistakes*
- ❖ State expectations and procedures, allow time for questions--**THOROUGHLY**
- ❖ Allow time for discussions, **HOWEVER**, set a limit on the students questions/comments
- ❖ Restate concepts/ways to solve problems in a variety of ways
- ❖ Encourage risk taking
- ❖ Provide time for students to share their work with the class
- ❖ Create opportunities for small group, paired, and team activities
- ❖ Set limits
- ❖ Use **color**
- ❖ Utilize movement and music whenever possible
- ❖ The teacher is the **SOCIAL FACILITATOR**
- ❖ **Celebrate learning!**

Effective Strategies to Motivate Boys

- Provide consistent modeling
- Practice procedures
- Require respect for everyone all the time
- Use the same language time and time again
- Provide time and more time for movement
- Create challenging situations for problem solving
- Offer immediate praise in front of the cohort group for a job well done
- Create mentoring/leadership experiences with other children
- Allow for freedom of inquiry and respectful expression
- Display work samples or photos of the boys working appropriately

The teacher is **ALPHA MALE**

Teacher training presentation produced in response to ACLU records request
Volusia County, FL

ACLU litigation & OCR complaints

- Litigation:
 - *Doe v. Vermilion Parish* (LA)
 - *Doe v. Wood County School Board* (WV)
 - *A.N.A. v. Breckinridge* (KY)

- OCR complaints:
 - Florida: Hillsborough, Volusia, Hernando, Broward
 - Texas: Austin
 - Idaho: Middleton Heights
 - Wisconsin: Barron, Beloit
 - Alabama: Birmingham

Contact information & resources

- ACLU Home Page, “Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes”
<https://www.aclu.org/womens-rights/teach-kids-not-stereotypes>
- ED Regulation on nondiscrimination on access to classes and schools:
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/reg/ocr/edlite-34cfr106.html>
- ED Q&A on single-sex classrooms:
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/faqs-title-ix-single-sex-201412.pdf>
- Galen Sherwin, gsherwin@aclu.org



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