



Initial Comments

Mayoral Task Force on Career and Technical Education Innovation's Preliminary Recommendations

June 12, 2008

Legal Momentum¹ would like to congratulate the members of the Mayor's Task Force on the ambitious plans expressed by their preliminary recommendations. These plans will no doubt enhance the education and work-readiness of CTE graduates and provide the City with an educated and prepared workforce.

We are also encouraged that the Guiding Principles discuss equitable access to male and female students and that gender equity is recognized as an important goal in the Recommendations for Informing Student and Family Choice and Recommendations for Family and Public Communications (numbers 6 and 7). This demonstrates interest and good faith on the part of the Task Force and gives us confidence that you want to redress the long history of sex segregation in New York City CTE schools.

As we discussed in the paper entitled "Gender Equity in NYC CTE Schools" that we prepared for you at the request of CTE director Gregg Bethel, NYC CTE schools were first cited for sex segregation in 1982. Reports in 1994, 2000 and 2008 have continued to find that sex segregation has not been comprehensively and effectively addressed in NYC CTE schools.

The gender imbalance in CTE schools contributes to the gender imbalance of poverty. Adult women are 40% more likely to be poor than adult men. Wages are substantially higher for male-dominated careers than for female-dominated careers. Ending sex segregation in CTE schools would open the doors of economic opportunity to countless girls in our public school system and substantially change the future experience of women in the workforce.

¹ With offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., Legal Momentum is the oldest legal advocacy organization in the United States dedicated to advancing the rights of women and girls. Since its founding in 1970, Legal Momentum has been a leader in establishing legal, legislative and educational strategies to secure equality and justice for women across the country. Its public policy and litigation agenda focuses on four areas that are of greatest concern to women in the United States: freedom from violence against women; equal work and equal pay; securing the health of women and girls; and strong families and strong communities. Legal Momentum advances this women's agenda through its five national legislative and educational programs: Employment and Housing Rights for Victims of Domestic Violence, Equality Works, Immigrant Women Program, National Judicial Education Program, and Sexuality and Family Rights Program. In addition to its public policy work, Legal Momentum litigates in state and federal courts across the country

In short, the innovations that are needed to reach the stated goal of bringing CTE schools into the 21st Century must bring to an end the long-standing sex segregation in CTE schools. To achieve this result, it is imperative that the Task Force consider gender throughout its report and recommendations. Truly opening all CTE programs to students of both sexes is a very significant challenge, and this should be discussed in the Challenge section of the report. The Vision statement likewise should reflect a vision of gender equality in the workplace – equality that is especially lacking in some of the very fields that CTE schools prepare students to enter. And just as the Framework recognizes achievement gaps that affect particular groups of students, it must also recognize the opportunity gap that affects female students. Finally, the Core Competencies of graduates include not only being able to “work effectively on teams with a collaborative attitude” but also being able to work effectively in a diverse workplace. If we do not prepare our students to understand the rights and responsibilities of a diverse workforce, we are not preparing them for the workforce, nor how to work with each other.

Specifically, the Task Force recommendations should:

1. Set recruitment goals for each school with non-traditional career tracks until the result at least meets the State Education Department goal of 28%. The demonstration schools should make this goal their minimum standard.
2. Designate an office at the Department of Education to be responsible for working with schools to meet recruitment goals by implementing proven techniques and designing creative strategies as needed, and assign that office as well, to monitor and report on school’s progress in ending “gender tracking.”
3. Require periodic training for administrators, teachers and staff to help create school environments that are non-discriminatory and welcoming to both girls and boys.
4. Develop CTE curriculum and instructional practices that prepare students to succeed in a diverse workplace, and that address the challenges of gender integration in traditionally single sex fields.

We appreciate the opportunity to share these initial comments with you. We look forward to working further with the members of the Task Force in order to assist in ensuring that their commitment to opening the opportunities of revitalized CTE schools to girls and boys alike makes this a truly transformative moment for New York City’s CTE schools.

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