

SEPARATE IS NEVER EQUAL: THE EXPERIENCE OF MT. LEBANON  
Testimony of a High School Pitcher by Ruth Colker

Many people have finally come to recognize that physical fitness is equally important for females and males. One such group is the State Board of Education. But agreement on this one principle in no way quells the controversy regarding female participation in athletics because the question still exists of how to achieve this physical fitness. Two schools of thought exist: separate but equal programs and co-educational programs for males and females.

On August 12-14, 1974, the State Board of Education held hearings to learn how the public felt this physical fitness should be achieved. The Board had before them a proposal which would integrate the male and female physical education and athletic programs. I testified before these hearings because I have an acute interest in this problem as a female interested in physical fitness and as a person who has done extensive research on this question in regard to my school system--Mt. Lebanon.

I graduated from Mt. Lebanon High School in June, 1974. I experienced discouragement and discrimination in regard to physical education although Mt. Lebanon subscribed to the separate but equal doctrine. I will analyze my school experience to show how the proposed regulation changes of co-education could have prevented much of this unequal treatment. My major emphasis will be on my high school experience but I will also briefly look at my experience prior to the high school level.

In second grade, boys and girls in my district were separated for physical education. For girls, the emphasis was on skills such as tumbling and scooter racing, whereas for boys the emphasis was on life-long sports such as softball, football, basketball, and soccer. Personally, the result was that I lacked confidence in game situations as well as the fact that it made me recognize the uselessness of athletic skills for me as a girl. For instance, when I was in elementary school I wanted to be a baseball pitcher like many nine or ten year-olds. Therefore the summers of third and fourth grades I spent throwing a baseball against a target on the wall. But I gave up in fifth grade because I realized I would never have a chance to test my skill in a game situation.

In terms of extra-curricular activities, my junior high school sponsored an intramural and interscholastic program for boys in wrestling, football, basketball and track. The intramural program was open to any boy who wanted to participate. As a girl, however, I had no such open program. The only program open to me was one in which you had to tryout for and was thereby limited to twenty or twenty-five girls. Personally, I had no skills to show at a tryout--only interest--so that no athletic opportunities were open to me.

I then progressed to high school level where my district claimed it gave girls and boys equal opportunities to participate in athletics. Their proof consisted of the fact that they offered boys nine varsity sports and girls seven, which met the interest that the girls had demonstrated. However, in reality the girls' program was unequal in all respects of the proposed regulation changes which include: school facilities, instruction, scheduled program time, number of activities, equipment supplies and services, co-ed activities, and funding, which I will now enumerate.

SCHOOL FACILITIES--Gyms: The boys have exclusive use of a double gym which is centrally located, has a seating capacity of 2400, modern electronic scoreboard, two locker rooms, whirlpool bath, and excellent lighting. The girls have exclusive use of the oldest gym, which is a single gym with a seating capacity of 800, has fold-out bleachers which go against the foul lines and often interfere with play, very poor lighting, and is located at the extreme end of the building far from the parking lot. I remember spending five or ten minutes the first time



I went to a girls' athletic event, trying to find the entrance to the gym. Fields: The boys have exclusive use of a football, soccer, and double basketball field. By contrast, the girls have to share a boys' Little League field which they must vacate by six p.m. Since practice did not begin until 3:30 p.m. this was often an inconvenience.

INSTRUCTION--Officials: Unlike the boys, the girls do not pay clock operators or scorekeepers, which often promotes cheating especially in track and basketball. Coaches: Boys and girls varsity teams are the same sizes but the girls have less coaching. When the boys have two coaches for a particular sport, the girls have one, and where the boys have three the girls have two. Although the girls' coach must do more work because she or he is responsible for more girls, the girls' coach gets paid far less. A boys' intramural coach is on the same pay scale as a girls' varsity coach, although the intramural coach works at least ten hours less a week than a varsity coach.

Here is a comparison of the coaches' salaries for the same years experience and the percentage, girls' of boys'.

Boys' basketball.....	\$1680	50%
Girls' basketball.....	\$840	
Boys' baseball.....	\$673	63%
Girls' softball.....	\$ 421	
Boys' track.....	\$1121	55%
Girls' track.....	\$617	
Boys' swimming.....	\$1121	70%
Girls' swimming.....	\$784	

These percentage disparities are constant throughout the pay scale. And you get what you pay for. On the whole, the girls' coaching is far inferior to that of the boys'. Personally, I played varsity fast-pitch softball in eleventh and twelfth grades. In eleventh grade, the teacher who coached us was so poor that at the end of the year he did not receive tenure and was fired. Although I was the starting pitcher for the team, I received no pitching assistance and was never even told that I would be pitching until it was time for the team to go on the field. I often strained muscles because I could not adequately warm up. The next year, however, the coaching was even worse. The coach often displayed even an ignorance of the rules. The coach for the boys' intramural softball would have been willing to coach girls' varsity softball except that the salary for the intramurals was the same and it required much less work. Because of this poor coaching, no girl had an opportunity to achieve her potential as an athlete.

SCHEDULED PROGRAM TIME--Pool time: The swimming seasons for boys and girls do not overlap since most schools only have one pool. Therefore, the girls' season encompasses the first two months and the boys' the next two months. The boys, however, practice in the mornings and after school from 2:20 to 3:20 exclusively during the girls' season in September and October. When the girls, however, need to practice for the state qualifier during the boys' season, they are only given one lane for the twenty girls from 3:20 to 5:00. Competing at the state level is one of the highest goals a swimmer can reach, and it is important that she practice hard to compete at that level.

In terms of number of games played, the girls generally play less games per season than the boys. Game situations, of course, are the true tests for all athletes. This disparity is often due to the fact that there are fewer nearby schools with girls' teams than boys'. This



would be eliminated if all schools were forced to offer girls equal opportunities to participate.

NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES--I have already mentioned that my school offered nine varsity sports for boys and seven for girls, but when one studies the details of their opportunities, it is clear that many more boys can and do participate than girls. For instance, the boys' track team has a no-cut rule so that fifty to one hundred boys can be on the team, whereas the girls' team cuts to twenty-five girls. The boys also have a special program for freshmen in football, wrestling, and basketball, which the girls do not have. In 1973, Mt. Lebanon estimated that 470 boys participated in interscholastic athletics and only 210 girls did.

EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, AND SERVICES--Swimming: The boys are allowed to keep their T-shirts and suits at the end of the season whereas the girls must return theirs, and in fact, have an insufficient number of suits for the full team. Track: The girls get nothing for practice and wear old warm ups in meets. They have only twenty uniforms for twenty-five girls. By contrast, the boys allocate money each year for new meet shorts, shirts, sweats, shoes, and spikes. For practice, they allocate money for new shorts, T-shirts, hoods, and sweats. Basketball: The boys allocate \$284 for equipment and supplies whereas the girls allocate nothing. In terms of quantity and quality, the boys have a cartload of leather balls whereas the girls have a few old rubber balls from the gym program. Publicity: The school graphic arts department prints the boys' schedule in a leaflet which is passed out to all students. In addition, the boys have several trophy cases in a Hall of Champions. The girls have none of these advantages.

CO-ED ACTIVITIES-- Except for riflery, which is a highly successful varsity sport, no intramural or interscholastic activities are open to both males and females. During the 1973-4 school year Student Congress sponsored an intramural football program in which varsity football players coached girls in the fundamentals of the game. This program was highly successful with nearly one hundred girls participating because it was their first opportunity to learn the fundamentals of the game. An attempt was also made to organize co-ed gym classes by choice. This program failed, however, because of a lack of cooperation by the boys' teachers. If a regulation such as the one before the State Board would be passed, such teachers would be required to cooperate.

FUNDING--I researched the monetary disparities between boys' and girls' athletics during the 1973-4 school year. It was very difficult to get specific information from both the boys' and girls' athletics departments but through much perseverance and often luck, I was able to obtain information from which I draw the following conclusions: Per participant in both intramural and interscholastic athletics combined, at the high school level the girls receive 40% of what the boys receive; at the junior high level, 49%, and at the elementary level, 52%. Next, I tried to compare expenditures per sport because many people argued that football expenditures caused the boys' inflated budget. Comparing the totals for girls' and boys' swimming, track, baseball/softball, and basketball expenditures, the expenditures for girls are only 57% of the expenditures for boys. Here, of course, the boys and girls have the same number of participants. I also analyzed the available data a third way--per pupil. There are the same number of boys and girls in the school system; however the athletics expenditures for girls are only 37% of that for boys. Very clearly, no matter how you analyze the data, the girls get less than half of the athletic training that the boys get.

And if you look around you, the results are obvious. It is sad when you look around to see how many teenaged girls do not know how to hold a bat or grip a football or gasp for breath after walking short distances. Our school athletic programs expect girls to be in poor physical



condition and unfortunately they meet that expectation.

The purpose of athletics is the same for boys and girls--to develop sportsmanship, physical fitness, and self-confidence. By recognizing the equal importance of physical fitness for girls and boys the State would improve many of the negative attitudes of the school system and of the girls toward themselves. Girls also need to be given the opportunity to excel so that they can achieve recognition, self-esteem, and scholarships like the boys presently do. A clear directive is therefore needed from the state to discard the antiquated separate but equal doctrine and instead accept co-education as the way to improve the present situation so that boys and girls can together achieve these same goals of athletics.

A final note: The following information might be valuable to anyone who wants to do research in their own school and doesn't know where to look for information. The participation comparison in which I concluded that, per participant, at the high school level girls receive only 40% of what the boys receive came from a N. O. W. questionnaire to the superintendents office. This questionnaire can be obtained from Pennsylvania N. O. W. at P. O. Box 86024, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221.\* The total expenditures comparison in which I concluded that, per pupil, the girls receive 37% of what the boys receive came from the 1973-4 school budget, which by law is a public document. The coaches' salaries information came from a pamphlet in the high school principal's office which listed the Extra Duty Recompensation as negotiated in the teachers' contract with the school system. The comparison of the totals for comparable sports was drawn from specific (item by item) budget information held by the boys' and girls' athletic directors.



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