

The High School Athletics Accountability Act of 2007

The High School Athletics Accountability Act requires that high schools report basic data on the numbers of female and male students and athletes, as well as the budgets and expenditures made for each sports team. The report includes the numbers of male and female participants per team and budget and expenditure information regarding equipment, travel, uniforms, facilities, training and medical facilities, publicity, and coaching. Schools must submit an annual report to the Commissioner for Education Statistics, who will make the information publicly available.

MYTH 1: The High School Athletics Accountability Act is not needed because Title IX has leveled the playing field.

FACT 1: Girls still do not receive as many opportunities to play sports as boys do.

Despite the growth of female athletic participation since Title IX was enacted, the gap in athletic participation opportunities between boys and girls has widened from 1.13 five years ago to 1.3 million today.¹ Girls make up half of the high school population,² but receive only 41% of all athletic participation opportunities.³ No state is providing athletic opportunities to its female athletes in numbers that are proportionate to their enrollment in school. Even when girls are given opportunities to play, they often receive inferior treatment as compared to male athletes. This translates into lost opportunities to reap the benefits of participation⁴ as well as access to college athletic scholarships.⁵

MYTH 2: The High School Athletics Accountability Act imposes an undue burden on school administrators.

FACT 2: School officials already collect the information that they are required to report under the High School Athletics Accountability Act, but it is not readily available to the public.

The National Federation of State High School Associations already requires that school administrators submit annual reports of their athletic participation numbers by sport and gender to their state high school athletic associations. Additionally, school bookkeepers already keep records of all school expenditures—including those made within the athletic department—and athletics administrators maintain budgets for each male and female sport. Therefore, the Act merely requires that schools transfer this existing data into a report that is publicly available, a task that should take an administrator from two to six hours maximum, depending on the number of sports offered.⁶

MYTH 3: The information required to be collected by the High School Athletics Accountability Act serves no useful purpose.

FACT 3: The High School Athletics Accountability Act shines a spotlight on the athletic opportunities that schools provide to girls and boys, which will help ensure that girls are not deprived of equal opportunities to play sports.

In states like Georgia and Kentucky, flagship newspapers have collected and published data identical to that required by the Act (by requesting it under open records laws). Public reaction to the lack of opportunities and support for girls' athletic programs revealed by the data ignited state gender equity legislation that requires regular, public data reporting and provides incentives for compliance. This state legislation helps high school administrators assess and ensure compliance with Title IX. Currently, while colleges are required by federal law to publicly report such data, high schools are not, making it difficult for high schools, parents and communities to determine whether their athletics programs are treating boys and girls fairly.

MYTH 4: The requirements of the High School Athletics Accountability Act cannot actually be implemented.

FACT 4: Legislation similar to the High School Athletics Accountability Act has already been adopted and successfully implemented in several states and localities.

For example, Kentucky and Georgia have adopted and successfully implemented state legislation that requires high schools to submit annual reports with information regarding their athletic participation rates as well as budgets and expenditures. Since the implementation of this legislation, the administrators of the compliance programs in the Kentucky and Georgia State High School Athletic Associations have said they have seen significant improvements in the Title IX compliance of their member schools.⁷

¹ National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). *2005-2006 High School Athletics Participation Survey*. http://www.nfhs.org/web/2006/09/participation_in_high_school_sports_increases_again_confirms_nf.aspx.

² National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). 2004-2005. (<http://nces.ed.gov/>),

³ See note 1.

⁴ Research shows that girls who play sports have a reduced risk of breast cancer, heart disease, and depression; they have higher grades, are less likely to drop out, and have higher graduation rates than their non-athletic peers; and they have lower rates of sexual activity/pregnancy and are less likely to smoke or use drugs. For more information, see Sabo, D. et al. (2004). *Her Life Depends On It: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls*. East Meadow, NY: Women's Sports Foundation.

⁵ For some, an athletic scholarship is the only path to college. Minority female athletes are more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities and become leaders in their communities than minority females who don't play sports. But minority girls are more likely to participate in sports on school sponsored teams than through private athletic clubs that charge staggering fees for "travel team" participation. See Sabo.

⁶ Conversations between Women's Sports Foundation staff and compliance officers at the Georgia and Kentucky State High School Athletic Associations and high school athletic directors in Missouri. May 2007.

⁷ See note 6.