



GRADUATION FOR ALL

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Graduation for All Girls • www.idra.org • March 2009

March is National Women's History Month. People often think of the dropout problem in the U.S. as a "boys' crisis." And it's true that schools lose about one in every three boys to attrition. In some states, almost fifty percent of freshmen boys who are Black, Latino or Native American don't graduate with a diploma four years later. But a report by the National Women's Law Center (NWLC), "[When Girls Don't Graduate We All Fail](#)," finds that dropout rates for female students are also "dangerously high." NWLC reports that on average one in four female high school freshmen in the U.S. does not graduate with a diploma four years later. When girls don't graduate, they face even starker economic hardships than their male counterparts: higher unemployment rates, lower earnings and greater health risks.

Take action. Women's History Month is a chance to celebrate the accomplishments of women in our society and our communities. It is also a chance to take stock of where we are in raising graduation rates for girls and making sure that every girl has access to an excellent, equitable education. In this issue of Grad4All, you'll find resources that can help.

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Schools and Communities in Action

Trends to Track: Resources to Act. When you're trying to anticipate what's ahead, it helps to listen not just for the obvious trends but also for quiet, distant trends that seem to be growing louder. So says futurist Mary O'Hara-Devereaux, CEO of Global Foresight and author of *Navigating the Badlands, Thriving in the Decade of Radical Transformation*. Below are three such trends to track, with resources to act, as we work to make sure that all girls graduate and thrive.



#1: Girls lost to attrition at alarming rates. In 2004, fully 37% of Hispanic female students, 40% of Black female students and 50% of Native American/Native Alaskan female students did not graduate in four years according to the report described above by NWLC. School and community leaders can learn more at www.nwlc.org/pdf/DropoutReport.pdf.

Resources for Action:

- *Listen in!* to "[Gender Equity at 36](#)," an IDRA podcast on [Title IX](#), which prohibits discrimination in schools based on sex. This conversation with Bradley Scott, Ph.D., director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity, examines where we are in terms of gender equity in the country, what challenges affect girls and boys in schools today, and what schools must do under the law.
- *Listen In!* to "[The Watch on Racism Cannot Stop](#)," a keynote presentation on gender, race and education by Dr. Shirley Nash Weber, delivered at last year's annual conference of the Association for Gender Equity Leadership in Education (AGELE), which was co-sponsored by the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. Dr. Weber is a professor and former chair of the Department of Africana Studies at San Diego State University.
- See "[School failure harder on girls than boys: U.S. study](#)" to learn more about the impact of school suspension, expulsion and dropout on girls.
- Visit "[When Girls Don't Graduate We All Fail](#)" for recommendations on how schools can ensure that girls have access to rigorous relevant curricula and that girls who become pregnant or are parents get the supports they need to stay in school and graduate.

- *Create* a school-community partnership to raise graduation rates for all students. For strategies for schools communities and families, visit: www.idra.org/School_Holding_Power/Communities_in_Action/

#2: Gaps shrinking in math and science course-taking, but persist in test-taking, outcomes and employment. The National Center for Education Statistics finds that more girls are now taking algebra II, biology, AP/honors biology, and chemistry—but boys are still [more likely to take AP exams in science and calculus and to score higher on those tests](#). And in adulthood gaps persist. Women are still over-represented in lower paying fields and less likely than men to earn degrees in engineering, physics, and computer science.

Resources for Action:

- *Listen In* to “[Science is a Key to Life](#).” Schools that improve science teaching practices can “open giant doors for students, particularly for girls, minority students and English language learners.” To find out how visit: *Science is a Key to Life*, a podcast featuring a conversation with Veronica Betancourt, M.A., an IDRA education associate and developer of IDRA’s Science Smart! model.
- *Visit* “[Releasing the Mathematician and Scientist within Students](#)” by Kathryn Brown and Veronica Betancourt, M.A. to learn more about what schools can do to better engage students in math and science.
- *Got Science?* Students can virtually move mountains, trace fossilized footprints or travel through time to look at technology at home from 1900 to the present at www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/tryit/
- “**Outreach in a Box: Discovery IT**” created by the National Center for Women & Information Technology is a web-based toolkit for IT professionals who want to partner with schools to introduce middle-school students to computing.
- *See* “[New Formulas for America’s Workforce: Girls in Science and Engineering](#)” for a comprehensive set of resources on engineering careers, improving access to education, and student achievement that increases diversity in science.

#3: Decline in girls liking school. Back in 1980, one in two high school girls, when asked about school, said they liked it “very much.” Twenty years later, [the percentage of girls liking school dropped precipitously to twenty-nine percent](#), according to NCES.

Resources for Action:

- **Ensure Gender Equity.** Listen In! to “[Fostering Gender Equity in the Classroom](#),” an IDRA Classnotes podcast conversation with Frances Guzmán, M.Ed., an IDRA education associate, about how gender inequity shows up in classrooms and how educators can make changes to ensure equity for girls and boys.
- **What about single sex schooling?** Listen In to “[A Conversation about Single Sex Education: Sound Practice or Sheer Politics?](#)”, an IDRA Classnotes podcast conversation with Kathy Rigsby, assistant director of the Interwest Equity Assistance Center in Denver, that took place at the conference of the Association for Gender Equity Leadership in Education.

Toolbox

Celebrate National Women’s History Month! For resources, visit the [National Women’s History Project](#).

For more resources on improving gender equity in schools, visit: [Beyond Title IX: Gender Equity Issues in Schools](#) by The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center

Youth Voices

“I remember seeing my tutees’ flashing white smiles as I entered their classroom. Who would have thought that I, the always quiet and shy girl, could have changed their minds about learning in school?”

- Crisol Otoño, Coca-Cola Valued Youth tutor and third place middle school winner in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth National Essay Contest Award. Crisol Otoño is a Middle School student at [Ann Richards Middle School](#), La Joya, Texas.

The [National Essay Contest](#) kicks off a year of celebration of the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth

