

Donna Lopiano

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

...no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...

Lopiano Speech

Let me close by thanking you for doing those things and by telling you my favorite true story...

I was at the University of Texas; this is what I think it's all about. At the University of Texas my basketball coach said, "Would you come over and meet one of my top basketball recruits." I said, "You bet." This is the best basketball player in Texas. She was a 6'2" power forward; great kid and she brought her little sister with her. Her little sister stood about this high and she was six years old. I tried to start up a conversation with this little kid, who's hanging on to her sister's leg. This is a really, really tall leg. And I said to her sister, "Do you play sports?" And the little kid says, "Yep." Doesn't even look at me. I said, "Well, what sport do you play?" And she said, "Track." This was going to be a tough conversation. I said, "Well, what event - do you run or do you throw? What event in track do you do?" She says, "800." 800. Now I don't know track, but I know enough about track that only masochists run the 800. Is this right? You live in fear of the coach who says, "I know the event for you, the 800." But I wasn't about to doubt this young lady. I wasn't about to say anything negative and I said, "Wow! That's terrific." Did I believe her? I don't know. I got her sister over in the corner before I left and I said, "Does your little sister really run the 800?" And she said, "Yes." I said, "Well, how did she get to that?" Very simple, I have a twin brother, he and I run track in the off season, every Saturday morning we practice on a club team and my mother works on Saturdays and we bring my little sister. We've always invited her to run with us. And she's the rabbit on our team. We send her out, she starts before we do and she has a one lap start, 440 track, or 400 track, one lap start and she has been running the 800 ever since we've been taking her to practice. The real moral of the story was, the kid's starting to walk away and she turned to me and said, "That's not really the reason why she runs the 800. The reason is, because nobody ever told her she couldn't."

Excerpt from an April 1995 speech by Donna Lopiano, Director of the Women's Sports Foundation, at Mount Holyoke College

Activities

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Creative Thinking

- Read the description of Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972. Ask some questions: Why was this law necessary? How, if at all, has it changed your world? Ask the adults in your life if they remember what access girls had to athletics when they were younger.

Reading/Writing

- Read Donna Lopiano's speech excerpt. Why do you think she tells this story? Do you have a favorite story about a sports activity that you share with an older sibling or other person in your life? Write a short story about it.

Working Independently and Collaboratively

- Donna Lopiano is the Executive Director of the Women's Sports Foundation. Write her a letter and tell her why Title IX is important to you or someone you know.

Learning Resources and Information Technology/Quantifying

- Do some investigating in your own school: Are there sports available to both girls and boys? Do some research and see if your school is Title IX compliant.