

# Update

## District Changes Policy Over Same-Sex Class

A 13-year-old scuba diver, firefighter cadet and kung fu student who filed a lawsuit against the Livingston Parish School Board in New Orleans in a first-of-its-kind case over its plans to segregate her middle school by sex won.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed the lawsuit in August in federal court for Michelle Selden, who started eighth grade at Southside Junior High School, and her parents, Darren and Rhonda Selden. The district dropped plans to segregate the middle schools by sex only a day after the suit was filed.

It was ACLU's first lawsuit over the issue. Previous cases have been resolved without going to court, says

### BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES?

According to the lawsuit, one expert cited by the school system contended: "Because of biological differences in the brain, boys need to practice pursuing and killing prey, while girls need to practice taking care of babies. As a result, boys should be permitted to roughhouse during recess and play contact sports, to learn the rules of aggression. Such play is more dangerous for girls, because girls are less biologically able to manage aggression." —Associated Press

Emily J. Martin, deputy director of the ACLU Women's Rights Project.

The suit contended the program was based on discriminatory stereotypes.

"Psychological research demonstrates that on average, boys and girls are psychologically more alike than different," the suit stated.

Supporters of separate classes argued that boys and girls learn differently, and separating them can help both do better. Critics compared it to "separate but equal" segregation-era classrooms.

Martin says the program at Southside would have been illegal even if federal rules proposed to make it easier for school districts to set up same-sex schools and classes were already in effect. Those rules would require any co-educational public school which offers classes segregated by sex to also offer coed classes for all "non-vocational" subjects.

The student was in the position

of not attending any of the parish's other junior high schools, according to the lawsuit.

But her parents never asked for a transfer, stated school Superintendent Randy Pope. "We will allow transfers between other schools, as we always have, for academic reasons."

According to the lawsuit and a statement filed by Darren Selden, the family had learned about the plans at a parents' meeting in May.

At that meeting, Principal Alan Joe Murphy said that "the decision to provide only single-sex classes had already been made and that the school board backed this decision," Selden wrote.

Selden wrote, "If I had wanted my daughter to go to a single-sex school, I would have sent her to a private school. I believe that if my daughter is forced to attend sex-segregated classes that are taught based on stereotypes about how girls learn, that she may very well be harmed by this discriminatory environment."

### Public Concern Regarding Childhood Obesity

**89%**

agree childhood obesity will lead to higher health care costs for all Americans.

#### A MAJOR PROBLEM

2006.....84%  
2005.....77%

#### A MINOR PROBLEM

2006.....15%  
2005.....21%

#### NOT A PROBLEM

2006.....2%  
2005.....2%

Source: Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll

### MOBILITY the Key in 2011

Predictions from a national survey of the top 2,500 U.S. school districts show that more than half of all student-computing devices will be mobile by 2011 while online learning will grow at an annual rate of 26 percent until 2011.

America's Digital Schools 2006 study, conducted by The Hayes Connection and The Greaves Group, shows that 87 percent of schools with one-to-one computing claim substantial academic improvement.

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