



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 28, 2012

R.I. School District Bans Father-Daughter Dance as Discriminatory

A Rhode Island school district has banned father-daughter dances, along with mother-son activities, saying such events violate the state's prohibition on gender discrimination. Rhode Island's [Providence Journal](#) reported that the Cranston school district made the move to ban the activities after the ACLU sent a letter to the district on behalf of a single mother who complained that her daughter could not attend a father-daughter dance at her school.



The district's superintendent, Judith Lundsten, "said school attorneys found while federal Title IX legislation banning gender discrimination gives an exemption for 'father-son' and 'mother-daughter' events, Rhode Island law doesn't," reported the *Journal*. In a letter to school organizations Lundsten acknowledged that while "many of these events have long traditions, and for many parents these types of gender-based events are not an issue ... this is a public school system and under no circumstances should we be isolating any child from full participation in school activities and events based on gender." She admonished the groups to be "all-inclusive when planning your events."

The *Journal* noted that the district is asking the state legislature to modify the state statute on gender discrimination to allow such traditional activities, but some local residents said the conflict itself points out the absurdity of measures supposedly intended to fight discrimination. "I am utterly disappointed to have such a time-honored tradition under attack," Cranston Mayor Allan Fung said in a statement. "I implore the Cranston School Committee to review this decision and find a way to make this work for the children and their parents. I encourage all parents that are upset with this decision to contact their school committee members and make their voices be heard."

The district's policy change was actually made months ago, but came to light in recent days after local resident Sean Gately, a Republican candidate for the state senate, promised that he would work to change the policy if elected. "Having those little father-daughter dances and seeing her all dressed up in her pretty dress — it's a very special moment," said Gately of the school-sponsored "Me and My Guy" father-daughter dance that the ACLU targeted last May. He said that the ban "offended me as a father and a husband.... Nobody is being hurt by a father-daughter dance."

In a statement the ACLU called the change "old news," adding that the school district had caved in to its demands after realizing that "in the 21st Century, public schools have no business fostering the notion that girls prefer to go to formal dances while boys prefer baseball games. This type of gender stereotyping only perpetuates outdated notions of 'girl' and 'boy' activities and is contrary to federal law."

The secular legalist group assured that for the time being, parent-teacher groups "remain free to hold family dances and other events, but the time has long since passed for public school resources to encourage stereotyping from the days of Ozzie and Harriet. Not every girl today is interested in growing up to be Cinderella — not even in Cranston. In fact, one of them might make a great major league baseball player someday."



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The Cranston school district has been hit hard by the ACLU's efforts to sanitize faith and tradition out of society. The [Associated Press](#) reported that earlier this year the community "was the site of an emotionally charged, months-long battle over a prayer banner at a local high school. The banner was ruled unconstitutional and ordered removed by a federal judge after a lawsuit was filed by the ACLU on behalf of a student-atheist at the school."

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