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SRCD Co-Develops Amicus Brief on Gender-Differentiated Policies and Practices

The Society for Research in Child Development, along with the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the Cognitive Development Society, and the Society for Research on Adolescence, submitted an amicus brief in support of plaintiffs-appellees-cross appellants in a United States Court of Appeals case (Bonnie Peltier v. Charter Day School, Inc.). A charter school in North Carolina was sued for enforcing a dress code requiring girls to wear skirts. The ACLU sued on behalf of the three families, stating that the requirement was based on unlawful gender stereotypes, constituted prohibited sex discrimination, and has harmful implications on the girls' development. The court ruled in their favor, and the school is now appealing the case. The amicus brief was filed in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit by the counsel for the amici curiae, Morrison & Foerster LLP.

At the request of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), SRCD policy staff, SRCD members, and legal counsel produced an amicus brief to address a narrow but important issue in this case: the effects that gender labels and gender-differentiated policies and practices can have on children—and on girls in particular—in school settings. Contrary to the Charter Day School's arguments, developmental research suggests that policies and practices, like the girl skirt requirement, perpetuate and reinforce harmful gender stereotypes related to adverse effects on their academic, mental, and social development.

Read the full Amicus Brief