

Introduction

Girls Inc. empowers girls to succeed by providing trusting mentoring relationships, a girls-only environment, and research-based, hands-on programming. Three critical goals drive our programming: to help girls achieve healthy lives, succeed academically, and acquire the life skills needed to prepare them for adulthood. We work to ensure that girls participate in programs and activities that support and expand on their school-based learning and engagement. It is also important that girls are motivated to set and achieve educational and career goals, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

The Eureka! Program

Girls Inc. Eureka! is a STEM-based approach to engaging and empowering 8th - 12th grade girls to see themselves as an important part of the workforce of the future. During the Eureka! program, girls get to participate in a variety of exciting and compelling activities that explore the cutting edge world of STEM - nanosciences, robotics, DNA research, forensic science - through hands-on experiences in a college campus environment. With complementary activities in sports and physical fitness, healthy living, and financial literacy, Eureka! fully fosters educational, professional and personal development.

Eureka! is a five year program that brings girls, including many who will be first generation college applicants, onto local college/university campuses for an intensive summer program. As Eureka! continues through the school year, cohorts of 30 girls stay together throughout the course of the program, sharing hands-on, minds-on, untimed and ungraded opportunities for guided exploration and skills and knowledge building. Girls test themselves mentally and physically and discover that they are capable of far more than they had ever thought possible. And, perhaps most important, participants and their families, many for the first time, are introduced to the requirements and resources that will make higher education and interesting employment that pays a living wage possible.

Eureka! helps girls understand STEM career opportunities and be well prepared to join the community's workforce in these fields. Without

intervention, girls' interest and confidence in STEM can begin to wane as early as elementary school. Between 4th and 8th grade, more girls than boys begin to turn away from science, technology, engineering, and math, making it critical to engage girls in middle school before they begin making selections for the high school classes they need to pursue STEM careers. The issue is not just about curiosity in the subject matter, but also confidence in the skills needed to do the work. For girls, building self-assurance in their abilities in STEM areas early in their education is key, as is ongoing reinforcement throughout high school.

The successful Eureka! program is a community-wide effort that thrives on partnerships and interaction with schools, community-based organizations, and local businesses and corporations. Girls need exposure to real career opportunities, and Eureka! incorporates multiple internships during the high school years. Local partners also provide volunteer support, field trips, and funding for the program, ensuring that girls meet role models and mentors who provide support and inspiration.

Eureka! Works

Eureka! has been recently implemented by Girls Inc. affiliates with some exceptional results. Data show that girls participating in Eureka! stay engaged in math and science through high school, preparing them for a world that is increasingly technological. Many Eureka! girls go on to college, making up a high percentage of Girls Inc. scholarship recipients each year, and often becoming the first in their families to attend a university.



Of the Girls Inc. scholars and involved alumnae currently tracked by our organization, 40% are pursuing STEM related majors and/or careers. At two of our longest running Eureka! sites, in Orange County and Alameda County in California, the results are impressive:

- In Alameda County, an average of 80% of Eureka! girls indicated that they are interested in pursuing careers in the medical fields as surgeons, doctors, nurses, and more. Girls in their third and fourth years also listed marine biologist, scientist, engineer, zoologist, and crime scene investigator/ forensic scientist.
- Also in Alameda, 80% of girls in their first year, 87% of girls in their second, and over 90% of girls in their third and fourth years expressed that they were confident taking on new challenges and risks.
- In Orange County, 90% of girls in their first year can list the A-G requirements to be eligible for entrance to a California state university, up from 9% who could do so before the program.

Expanding Eureka!: An Ongoing Priority

Results like those above provided the impetus for our ongoing network-wide effort to increase significantly the number of affiliates implementing this transformational experience. The Eureka! expansion effort began in earnest with the five-year commitment we made in 2010 when we proudly accepted the invitation to join the Clinton Global Initiative.

Girls Inc. is working with affiliates across our network that are interested in and prepared to start implementing Eureka! in the near future. Our approach to supporting affiliates is to provide training and resources to new sites, and where possible, to leverage funding to encourage community ownership of the local Eureka! program. At \$2,000 per girl per year, the cost of Eureka! reflects the intensity and highly educational qualities of the experience.

The true value of such an investment in Eureka! is captured by the faces of girls learning to develop a smartphone application, by the Girls Inc. scholar alumna who is accepted to medical school after being the first in her family to attend college, and Nia's words below following her first year of Eureka! at Girls Inc. of Omaha:

“ We did so many hands on activities like building our own robots and doing courses to help us get more used to the robots. As the weeks would go on we would learn about other different things that had to do with STEM. Some of these things include cells, life sciences, math, and animals. EUREKA! really blew my mind. I feel so grateful that I have the chance to be in this amazing program!

- Nia ”

About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Our comprehensive approach to whole girl development equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow up healthy, educated, and independent. These positive outcomes are achieved through three core elements: *people* - trained staff and volunteers who build lasting, mentoring relationships; *environment* - girls-only, physically and emotionally safe, where there is a sisterhood of support, high expectations, and mutual respect; and *programming* - research-based, hands-on and minds-on, age-appropriate, meeting the needs of today's girls. Informed by girls and their families, we also advocate for legislation and policies to increase opportunities for all girls. Join us at girlsinc.org.