

“For me, the program was a lot of teaching, learning, and fun for our children. Thank you for helping us in this way. My daughter learned a lot of new things and I am very happy with the success she has obtained.

- Parent, Girls Inc. of Tarrant County, TX

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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 are able to read fluently and with understanding, and read for both information and for pleasure.



Why is a literacy program for girls important?

Reading at grade level by the third grade is a critical benchmark in a child's development. During kindergarten through third grade, students are taught how to read. When they enter fourth grade, schools assume that students can read at grade level and use their literacy skills to learn about other content areas, meaning that they are reading to learn. Students who are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade risk falling further and further behind in all subject areas. Children who can read at grade level by the end of third grade are more likely to experience academic success and graduate high school on time. They will also be

better prepared to plan for college and eventually secure and hold jobs to support themselves.

Low-income students are not as likely to read at grade level, to spend less time reading outside of school, and to have limited access to books and to adults who encourage reading. Children from low-income communities especially need opportunities and encouragement to read outside of school. A child who has these opportunities typically reads almost two million words per year outside of school. In comparison, a child with less access to books and to adults who encourage reading typically will read only 8,000 words per year outside of school.

About the Girls Inc. Literacy Initiative

The Girls Inc. Literacy Initiative addresses the literacy-based needs of girls in grades K-3 by using a model that involves working closely with schools to align programming with school-day learning. This approach allows for Girls Inc. to create quality, outcomes-based literacy programming that is grounded in the Girls Inc. approach to programming, which includes interactive, hands-on activities. Literacy staff also assess each individual girl's skills to monitor her progress and target areas where she needs extra support.

The Girls Inc. Literacy Initiative inspires girls to use reading as a tool to discover new and exciting worlds and to learn new information about topics that interest them. Girls learn to think critically by forming connections between stories and their own lives, identifying with characters in books, and examining messages that books convey.



Families play a key role in the Literacy Initiative. Our goal is for families to be engaged in their daughters' academic success through communication with Girls Inc. staff and teachers about their daughters' progress with literacy. Families also provide support for their daughters to read outside of school by reading with them at home and joining in activities that target the girls' literacy-based needs.

The Girls Inc. Literacy Guide

The Girls Inc. Literacy Guide: Bringing Literacy to K-3 Out-of-School Time Programs takes Girls Inc. staff through the steps necessary for developing a fun and effective literacy program for girls in grades K-3. The guide uses a flexible approach that allows each Girls Inc. affiliate to create a new program or strengthen an existing one as well as tailor the program to the girls and schools in the communities it serves.

The Girls Inc. Literacy Framework

The Literacy Framework builds on The Girls Inc. Literacy Guide and presents a literacy program model that reflects what Girls Inc. believes to be the strongest level of literacy programming for the Girls Inc. network. Woven throughout the Framework are strategies and tips based on the experiences of four Girls Inc. organizations that piloted this approach.



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.

