Girls Inc. Eureka!®

"At Eureka!, I was introduced into the field of Engineering; a field I was not aware of until the program. I came to realize I was actually fascinated with this field; it has so much to offer with math, science, and best of all technology. Engineering requires creativity, brainstorming and research. Attending the camp caused me to push harder and push my knowledge and abilities to extreme lengths."

Jada Watson, age 13,
Girls Inc. of Memphis, TN 2012 Eureka! participant

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 revel 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, 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 skill 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 positioned 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 years of 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.

[1]Author. 2000. *Educational Equity of Girls and Women*. National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington D.C. Quoted in: Author. 2007. New Formulas for America's Workforce 2: Girls in Science and Engineering. National Science Foundation. Washington D.C. http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2006/nsf0660/nsf0660.pdf

Girls Inc. Eureka!®

EUREKA!® WORKS!

Eureka! has been recently implemented by Girls Inc. affiliates with some exceptional results. Data shows 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 four-year university, an 88% increase from the pre-test.*

THE EUREKA!® EXPANSION

Results like those above provided the impetus for the network-wide Girls Inc. Eureka! Expansion Project, with the goal of bringing the program to 25 additional communities with Girls Inc. affiliates by 2016. Honored with an invitation in 2010 to join the Clinton Global Initiative, Girls Inc. has committed to reaching more than 2,000 girls with this transformational experience.

Girls Inc. plans to extend the expansion opportunity to new affiliates each year. In the summer of 2012, six sites began implementing Eureka!, serving an additional 200 girls. 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 smart phone 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:

"When I first heard about this program, I knew that this was a good opportunity to get me the help I need to get to college. The first day I didn't know what would happen, but I thought it would be boring. Man was I wrong! 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 Allison, age 12
Girls Inc. of Omaha, NE 2012 Eureka! participant