

GIRLStart is a daily after school literacy program for kindergarten through third grade girls, whose teachers identified them as reading below grade-level or otherwise needing extra literary support. GIRLStart is designed to intentionally increase girls' literacy skills and bring them to grade level reading by third grade. This program is crucial because research shows students who are not reading at grade level by third grade have difficulty ever catching up and are less likely to graduate from high school.



As with all Girls Inc. programs, GIRLStart takes a "whole girl" approach and integrates literacy with other types of learning; including sports and fitness, art and science enrichment activities, and homework assistance. GIRLStart activities are fun and interactive, designed to captivate girls' attention after a long day in school while building their skills, confidence, self-esteem, and sense of what is possible. GIRLStart also strives to involve girls' guardians and larger community in their learning to increase overall support of literacy skills.

Girls Inc. of Alameda County offers a continuum of age-appropriate programs for girls ages 5-18. GIRLStart is the first of the five continuum programs. As each supports girls in building skills in a variety of areas, girls are encouraged to join in kindergarten and continue through their completion of high school.

How Girls Inc. GIRLStart program is meeting girls' needs:

Girls Inc.'s literacy program participants have many barriers to overcome as they work toward reading proficiency:

- The schools that GIRLStart participants attend are ranked among the lowest 40% of schools in the state, and some in the lowest 10%.
- Only 2% of all third graders at one of the GIRLStart locations and no more than 30% at any location met or exceeded the state's standards in English Language Arts.
- Over half of GIRLStart participants are English Language Learners or speak a language other than English at home; live with parents whose highest level of education is a high school degree or lower; and come from low-income homes – all of which can negatively affect students' literacy abilities.



Girls Incorporated®
of Alameda County

Inspiring all girls to be
strong, smart, and boldSM

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GIRLStart participants benefit greatly from supplemental educational programming that motivates them toward higher academic achievement, provides them with additional literacy support, and encourages them to build strong peer and adult relationships as they begin their academic careers.

Impact of GIRLStart:

- Typically in one year, the proportion of girls reading at grade level increases from 20% to 65%.
- 100% of GIRLStart participants in the first and second grades improved their reading abilities over the course of the 2006/2007 school year.
- Only 38% of first grade participants were reading at or above grade level in the fall; by the end of the school year 78% of girls were at or above grade level.

How to learn more about GIRLStart: In Oakland, GIRLStart is implemented in the following Elementary Schools: Parker, Lockwood, Community United, Futures, Think College Now, and International Community School. In San Leandro, GIRLStart is implemented at Wilson Elementary School. For more information contact the GIRLStart Program Manager at (510) 357.5515 ext. 234.



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