

Girls Inc. Sporting Chance[®]

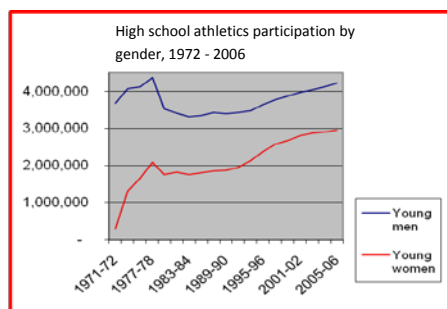
Why This Program?

Girls Incorporated aims to make sports an integral part of girls' lives and recognizes that girls have much to gain by early participation in sports. Although 50% of girls in grades 9 to 12 played on a sports team in high school in 2005-06, and the number of female athletes is growing, too many girls still encounter roadblocks that leave them sitting on the sidelines instead of sprinting toward the finish line. When girls' access to sports participation is limited, they miss the chance to develop skills that will help them succeed and habits that can keep them healthy throughout their lives. According to one survey, 82% of executive business women reported that they played organized sports as youth, including school teams, intramurals, and recreational leagues.

Research shows that just over one-fourth of girls ages 9 to 13 report no free-time physical activity, classifying themselves as sedentary outside of school. In a study of high school students, young women who participated in sports were less likely ever to have had sexual intercourse (40% vs. 50%) and more likely to use contraception if they were sexually active than nonathletes. Young women who participated in sports also were less likely to have smoked

cigarettes than those who did not. In addition, girls who were athletes in high school were more likely to have earned a bachelor's degree within six years of high school graduation. Adolescent girls who participate in sports are at reduced

risk for obesity and thinking about suicide. Further, although more research is needed, there is some indication that physically active children tend to have better academic achievement.



About the Program

Girls Inc. Sporting Chance provides girls with opportunities to have fun; learn basic movement and sport skills; increase their coordination, endurance, and strength; consider the career opportunities connected to sports; and learn about successful athletes and the history of women in sports. They learn how to be both cooperative and competitive, and how to discipline their bodies and their minds. In the Sporting Chance program, older girls act as "peer coaches," developing leadership skills, providing assistance to adult coaches, and gaining work experience. The program currently has two major age-appropriate components and one under development. It also includes one special project:

- **SteppingstonesSM** is a motor skill development program for girls ages 6 to 8 that gets girls running, jumping, leaping, twisting, bending, and balancing as they utilize a variety of sports and movement-related equipment, including jump ropes, balls, scooters, bats, bowling pins, nets, hoops, and scoops. They begin to move more confidently and skillfully, get used to structured physical activity, learn about the positive connection between physical activity and health-related fitness, and accept sport as legitimate activity for girls and women. The movement skills that girls develop in Steppingstones may later apply to the formal movement in a variety of games, sports, dance, and fitness activities.
- **BridgesSM** is a sports and motor skill development program for girls ages 9 to 11 that picks up where Steppingstones leaves off, enhancing girls' motor skills while introducing girls to the world of organized sports. Participants focus on the skills and strategies of four sports: softball (throwing, catching, and striking); soccer (kicking and agility); basketball (shooting and teamwork); and tennis (striking and individual competence). Girls learn the concepts of offense, defense, and teamwork, and develop skills in a progression that leads to game readiness. The four sport-specific skill sets can be applied to many other activities and provide a foundation for lifelong participation in sports.

"I think sports and girls go together. Bridges brings girls together and teaches them how much fun sports are. Sports are for girls." —Corinna, Girls Inc. of Carpinteria, CA

- **Girls enCourageSM**, for girls ages 12 to 14, is designed to sustain their interest in sports through adolescence by introducing girls to nontraditional activities and adventures that go beyond stereotypes and challenge them to set their own personal goals and create their own definitions of success. Program activities promote fitness training, team building, and athletic participation to develop girls' sense of personal power and worth. As they master new physical techniques and learn to take calculated risks, girls build not only physical strength, but also courage, confidence, self-reliance, and other critical life skills.
- **BoneZone[®]** is a special project designed to promote bone health for girls ages 9 to 12. Specifically, the activities integrate the key message that, by increasing weight-bearing physical activity and calcium consumption, girls can reduce their risk of developing osteoporosis later in life. Through fun activities, girls learn about physiology and nutrition; explore the connections between bone health, sports, dance, and strength training; and engage in leadership and advocacy related to bone health.

Results

During field testing, 92% of girls who completed Steppingstones improved their athletic skills. Among the skills these girls improved were running, throwing, jumping, and dribbling. Among girls who completed Bridges, 91% improved their sports skills in basketball, tennis, soccer, and softball. Nearly all Bridges participants (95%) reported an interest in participating in recreational or interscholastic sports. Seven out of ten Bridges participants (71%) felt that they could participate in sports without being embarrassed.

Partners

BoneZone was developed in collaboration with the National Bone Health Campaign, a public/private partnership among the Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Osteoporosis Foundation.

Funders

The following grant makers are among the many generous contributors who have supported the Girls Inc. Sporting Chance program and related initiatives: The Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, The Avon Foundation, Girls Inc. Olympic Torch Endowment, MetLife Foundation, National Football League Charities, Pepsico, United States Department of Health & Human Services, and Lulu C.Wang.

Girls Incorporated

Girls Incorporated[®] is a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and boldSM. With local roots dating to 1864 and national status since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls through research-based programs and public education efforts that empower girls to understand, value, and assert their rights. In 2006, Girls Inc. reached over 800,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, our website, and educational publications.

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