



## Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference

### Research to Action: *Volunteer Development*

Our outcomes brief, *Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference*, shows that Girl Scouting helps girls develop important leadership skills that in turn bolster their success in school. It highlights the importance of adult volunteers to the success of Girl Scouting—specifically, their critical role in developing strong girl leaders and strong students.

#### Action Items

- 1. Recruitment—share these findings in recruitment pitches to potential volunteers.** Girls report that Girl Scouting helps them become better leaders, and data show that improved leadership skills help them become better students. Thus, Girl Scout volunteers can make a difference on many levels.
- 2. Retention—use these findings to help Girl Scout volunteers recognize their impact and importance.** Having supportive relationships with adults in Girl Scouting helps girls (especially Cadettes) develop problem-solving skills that are essential to school and life. Such relationships are particularly impactful for girls who are less academically connected.
- 3. Training—provide training that supports volunteers in implementing the Girl Scout processes. Volunteers are essential to creating a high-quality experience for girls.** Our research shows that high-quality experiences are ones in which girls have opportunities to work together in meaningful ways (cooperative learning process) and take on leadership roles (girl-led process) in Girl Scouting. Girls who get more of these types of experiences demonstrate greater problem-solving and challenge-seeking leadership skills, and by applying these skills, they achieve greater academic success.
  - Offer adult volunteers special training that helps them to understand and implement the Girl Scout processes.
  - Encourage council staff and volunteers to play the Girl Scout Process Game available online at <http://girlscoutsgames.org> (without video) and <http://girlscoutsgames.org/video.html> (with video).
  - Keep your eyes out for “3 Processes = One Powerful Program,” a workshop that GSUSA will offer at each Act Now conference in fall 2012. Resources will be available online following the conference.

#### Girls Talk “Troop Leaders”

“I love being part of a troop. I now act like Girl Scouts is my second family. My leaders are the best! They motivate our troop and us as individuals in the best way possible. Girl Scouts has made a huge impact on my life.” — *Ellie, 10, Massachusetts*

“Our troop leader is a great influence for us and teaches us things way above our age.”  
— *Alexandra, 11, California*

“My leader is really good at what she does. She advises us on what to do, and she always tries to get new activities for us to do each week.”  
— *Lauren, 13, Ohio*

“My leaders are the best. I used to be very shy when I was a Daisy, but now I’m not, and it’s because of joining Girl Scouts, making friends, and learning.”  
— *Vicki, 12, Pennsylvania*

“Girl Scouts made me feel important. I respect what [my leaders] taught me throughout the year and I really had fun and had time to experience what I learned from everything you guys taught. I would just like to say thank you for everything we did and accomplished.” — *Veronica, 10, Georgia*

“I have been in Girl Scouts since first grade and will continue next year too. I like my troop and my troop leaders and that I am able to pick what we do in our meetings and for our community service.” — *Emily, 12, California*

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## Research to Action: *Program Delivery*

Our outcomes brief, *Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference*, provides evidence of the effectiveness of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), particularly the outcomes of resourceful problem solving and challenge seeking. Not only do these outcomes significantly contribute to academic success, they are also highly associated with girls' own perceptions that Girl Scouting impacts their leadership.

### Action Items

1. **Get girls engaged in intentional programming that supports the GSLE outcomes.** Girl Scout programming that supports the GSLE outcomes can help girls be leaders in their own lives and the world and succeed in school.

- Encourage council staff to adapt and use Leadership Journey activities to address local needs and circumstances. (Journeys offer content and activities that are intentionally tied to girls' specific outcome achievement.)
- Ensure that girls are actively engaged in *planning* the Girl Scout activities and projects they work on (e.g., Take Action projects, community service projects, field trips, etc.).
- Identify girls who are not challenge seekers (girls who tend to "avoid doing things that are hard for me") and design programming especially for them. For example, group them together and help them support one another in completing difficult tasks.

2. **Provide training that supports volunteers in implementing the Girl Scout processes.** Girls who have opportunities to work together in meaningful ways and take on leadership roles in Girl Scouting demonstrate greater problem-solving and challenge-seeking leadership skills, and by applying these skills, they achieve greater academic success.

- Offer adult volunteers special training that helps them to understand and implement the Girl Scout processes.
- Encourage council staff and volunteers to play the Girl Scout Process Game available online at <http://girlscoutsgames.org> (without video) and <http://girlscoutsgames.org/video.html> (with video).
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### Leadership Journey Activities That Promote...

#### Resourceful Problem Solving

- "Who Will Do What?" (p. 77, *How to Guide Girl Scout Juniors on Agent of Change*)
- "Tips for Creating a Storyline" (p. 61, *How to Guide Girl Scout Juniors Through aMUSE*)
- "Planning for Air Care Field Observation" (p. 57, *How to Guide Girl Scout Cadettes on Breathe*)
- "Slicing into the Big Media Pie" (p. 54, *How to Guide Girl Scout Cadettes on MEdia*)

#### Challenge Seeking

- "Animals, Energy and Movement" (p. 45, *How to Guide Girl Scout Juniors Through GET MOVING!*)
- "Showtime!" (p. 77, *How to Guide Girl Scout Juniors Through aMUSE*)
- "Becoming 'View' Finders" (p. 33, *How to Guide Girl Scout Cadettes on MEdia*)

And remember to check out the outcome grids in all of the adult guides for even more connections!



**3. Spread the word.** *Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference* provides compelling evidence for the role of leadership development in building the academic behaviors, skills, and competencies of young women. Share it!

- Use these data to forge stronger partnerships with schools. Share findings with school leadership to acquire program space, time, and support for Girl Scout programming conducted during the school day or after school.
- Share findings with funders to obtain support for Girl Scout programming that targets the GSLE outcomes of problem solving and challenge seeking or for students of comparatively low socioeconomic status (SES).
- Provide Girl Scout membership staff with this brief, for use as they reflect on their community profiles and target Girl Scout programming that focuses on these two outcomes (e.g., in lower-SES communities that might benefit greatly from them).

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## Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference

### Research to Action: *Membership Growth*

Our outcomes brief, *Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference*, shows that Girl Scouting helps girls develop important leadership skills, like problem solving and challenge seeking, that in turn bolster their success in school. Such positive findings are likely to attract the attention of parents and potential community partners.

### Action Items

- 1. Recruitment—share the findings when pitching to parents, school administrators, and community partners.**  
Girls report that Girl Scouting helps them become better leaders, and data show that improved leadership skills help them become better students. Girl Scouts who've gained experience solving problems and seeking challenges in Girl Scouting are more academically engaged, value school more, and feel more scholastically competent than girls who've made less progress in these areas.
- 2. Partnership building—highlight particular findings to build a stronger case for Girl Scouting with new schools and community organizations committed to academic success.** Girls who have opportunities to work together in meaningful ways and take on leadership roles in Girl Scouting demonstrate greater problem-solving and challenge-seeking leadership skills, and by applying these skills, they achieve greater academic success.
  - Finding 1: Girl Scouting influences academic success as much as, and sometimes more than, non-Girl Scout factors known to impact academics, such as positive student-teacher relationships and regular participation in other outside-of-school-time programs like sports and music lessons.
  - Finding 2: Girls who've gained experience solving problems and seeking challenges in Girl Scouting are better students.
  - Finding 3: Girls from families of comparatively low socioeconomic status report greater impact of Girl Scouting on their leadership skills and personal development. They seem to particularly benefit from Girl Scout experiences that hone their problem-solving skills—skills that are also essential to academic success and resilience.
- 3. Shining a light—share the conceptual model with partners and parents who are interested in academic outcomes to show how it all computes.** Review this model on page 5 of the brief.

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## Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference

### Research to Action: *Fund Development*

Our outcomes brief, *Linking Leadership to Academic Success: The Girl Scout Difference*, addresses how Girl Scouting helps girls develop important leadership skills that in turn bolster their attitudes, strategies, and performance with regard to school. The benefits of Girl Scouting seem especially pronounced for girls whose mothers haven't attended college and girls who don't have positive relationships with their teachers.

### Action Items

- 1. Develop funding proposals and initiatives targeting girls from families of comparatively low socioeconomic status ("lower-SES" girls).** Girls whose mothers have less than a college education (indicating lower SES for purposes of this research) report greater impact of Girl Scouting on their leadership skills and personal development. They seem to particularly benefit from Girl Scout experiences that hone their problem-solving skills—skills that are also essential to academic success and resilience.
- 2. Emphasize that participating in Girl Scouts may help girls compensate for negative effects of lower SES and academic detachment.** Girls whose moms have less than a college education report lower grades and less perceived scholastic competence than their peers. However, lower-SES girls who have achieved the resourceful problem solving outcome through Girl Scouting indicate levels of perceived scholastic competence equivalent to or higher than girls whose moms have at least a college education. Similarly, girls with lower-quality student-teacher relationships report stronger academic success outcomes when they've felt supported by adults in Girl Scouting.
  - For initiatives involving lower-SES girls, highlight Girl Scout experiences that develop girls' problem-solving skills—Leadership Journey activities, girl-led activities, well-planned Take Action projects, and work toward Girl Scout awards.
  - For initiatives involving less academically connected girls, focus on the role of Girl Scout volunteers in providing emotional support as well as guidance, mentoring, instruction, and opportunities for experiencing the Girl Scout processes.
- 3. Share findings with funders to obtain support for Girl Scout programming at schools.** Our brief provides compelling evidence for the role of leadership development in building the academic behaviors, skills, and competencies of young women—a natural fit for school-based programming, whether during the school day or after school.
- 4. Develop funding initiatives targeting girls likely to be the first in their families to attend college.** Girls with mothers who have less than a college education report significantly more supportive relationships with adults in Girl Scouting than their peers. In particular, they're more likely than girls with more-educated mothers to say that it's "very true" that "there are adults in Girl Scouting who have helped me think about my future."

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