



Girl Scouts – Partners in Educational, Personal and Leadership Success

21st Century Standards: More than Academics Alone –

Girl leaders have been at the heart of Girl Scouts since its founding in 1912, when Juliette Gordon Low recognized that developing girls' leadership abilities was critical for ensuring they would be the change-makers of the future. Since Low's time, the world has changed dramatically. Social, cultural, and economic shifts, that once took shape over a generation or more, are now rapid and often have a global impact. This ever more complex and uncertain world clearly requires a new kind of leader – one who values diverse cultures and viewpoints and who is capable of critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and teamwork to address changing conditions and challenges.

“To be successful in the 21st century, children and youth need access to experiences... that will help them develop the skills to understand, interpret, and utilize knowledge in the `real world.’”¹ Girl Scouts prepare girls for today and tomorrow by providing this type of learning experience.

Educators, government and private industry describe the most important skills, knowledge, and behaviors “students” will need to be successful in the work environment and life.²

- Good communication skills
- Team work
- Building relationships
- Thinking creatively
- Strong ethics
- Thinking critically
- Problem-solving skills
- Application of knowledge
- Ability to innovate
- Positive attitude

These skills areas are congruent with 21st Century Skills: *Ready by 21* identified by the Forum for Youth Development³ and reflected by the efforts of the *Partnership for 21st Century Skills*.⁴

Girl Scouts: A National Example for 21st Century Learning –

Girl Scouting offers more than a safe and accepting, all-girl environment during high-risk, non-school hours. Girl Scouts give girls life skills, primarily by engaging girls and teaching them to apply a learning and decision-making process, rather than by directing them to participate in any specified type of activity. All Girl Scout activities are designed so that girls will:

- Decide what activities they want to learn or do (girl-driven)
- Work in small groups and teams to discuss, debate, discover, practice, and teach (cooperative learning)
- Reflect on their activities and use experience to guide further plans and actions (experiential learning)

As a non-formal, educational organization, Girl Scouting has a long history of partnering with parents, schools and the community to prepare girls, both personally and as leaders to succeed in school and in life. Grounded in the *Girl Scout Promise and Law*, Girl Scouts' non-formal, experiential, and cooperative learning program promotes girls' personal growth and leadership development. Partnering with caring adults, girls design fun and challenging activities that empower them to raise their voices within a local, national, and global movement for girls. Girl Scouts' mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. This mission is a cornerstone for all Girl Scout activities.

Girls' Leadership Preferences Match 21st Century Standards –

Research shows that girls value a more inclusive and empowering approach of shared leadership. Girls state that actions taken by a good leader include the following: making decisions, listening well, resolving conflicts, getting consensus, speaking in front of others, taking charge, taking responsibility, teaching others, serving as a role model and preparing and organizing. Girl Scouts' leadership development approach encourages girls to take increasing responsibility for designing and implementing activities. This process results in opportunities for girls not only to see how decision-making and critical thinking affects their own lives but also to see how their actions can impact the lives of others.⁵

The Girl Scout Research Institute, in their study on girls and leadership,⁶ concluded that an effective leadership development program should:

- Create a supportive environment for girls to express themselves freely and experiment with their leadership identities
- Provide teamwork, collaborative experiences, and networking opportunities with peers.
- Debrief girls by reviewing what they learned and how they learned it.

The Girl Scout personal and leadership development process, in which girls learn to work together to decide what they will do, set goals, develop and implement plans to carry out their goals, and evaluate and reflect on their experiences to gain understanding for future decisions, is aligned with the developmental processes that youth development research tells us prepares youth for success – academically and in life.⁷

Girl Scouts learn and grow in the 21st Century skills sets identified by formal educators and commercial leaders. Transformation occurs when girls apply the learning and positive youth development processes that underlie every Girl Scout activity. Girls' growth and development is documented using outcomes and indicators related to developmental success in these areas.

Girl Scouting makes a difference. Whether it is workforce readiness, financial literacy, business skills, support of formal education or leadership, girls and adult leaders report (and our outcomes research confirms) that Girl Scouting provides a unique and valuable role in equipping girls to be successful in life today and prepared for success in the future.

¹ The Harvard Family Research Project Evaluation Exchange, "Supplementary Education: The Hidden Curriculum of High Academic Achievement", Spring 2005.

² Ohio Department of Education, September, 2008 Volume 2, Number 7, A (Updating U.S. Department of Commerce, *Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills*, "What Work Requires of Schools," 1991.)

³ Karen Pittman, *Ready by 21: The Big Picture*, The Forum for Youth Investment, 2008.

⁴ Partnership for 21st Century Skills: U.S. Department of Education, AOL Time Warner Foundation, Apple Computer, Inc., Cable in the Classroom, Cisco Systems, Inc., Dell Computer Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, National Education Association, SAP, et. al., 2002.

⁵ The Girl Scout Research Institute, 2003, 2004, 2006.

⁶ *Change It Up! What Girl Say About Redefining Leadership*; Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008.

⁷ Gambone, Kolb, Slavin and others.