

Girls Inc. Media Literacy[®]

Why This Program?

From magazines to marketing campaigns to music videos, girls today are bombarded by media images. According to a 2004 study, girls ages 8 to 18 reported media exposure for 8 hours 27 minutes per day, and media use for 6 hours 19 minutes per day.

The media that girls are consuming contain strong messages that girls' worth is tied to their appearance. Girls also receive powerful messages from the media about sexual behavior, substance use, and violence:

- Content analyses of TV programming show that sex is portrayed as risk-free, and that most people think about and have sex frequently without much concern for health, love, or the stability of the relationship.
- An overwhelming majority of research has shown that media violence engenders intense fear, as well as violent behavior in some children.
- Current research has found that alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, or over-the-counter/prescription medicines are depicted in nearly all (98%) major films, with less than half (49%) of these films portraying consequences of use.

About the Program

Girls Inc. Media Literacy[®]

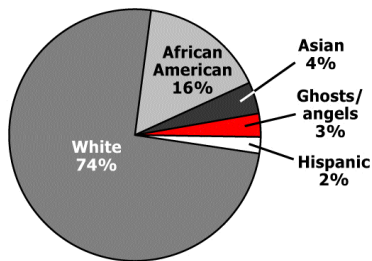
encourages girls to examine how media messages are constructed, how these messages reflect social values, and how girls' active participation can influence the messages—and the values. The comprehensive after-school program equips young women to think analytically about media messages and ask critical questions such as: Who is communicating and why? Who is the intended audience and what is the intended result of the message? Whose point of view is presented and whose is left out? What does this text say to me and other girls?

The program also provides opportunities for girls to craft and communicate their own messages, integrating media, technology, and civic engagement to help them build 21st Century skills. Throughout the program, girls explore the business side of media, learning about advertising and commercial interests, media and democracy, and career options.

Girls Inc. Media Literacy consists of five age-appropriate components:

- **Media and MeSM**: Girls ages 6 to 8 celebrate positive roles for girls and women in media, investigate different types of media, consider fiction versus nonfiction media content, practice creating their own media messages, and tackle issues of concern such as violence and stereotypes in media.
- **Media SmartsSM**: Girls ages 9 to 11 investigate the use of slogans, logos, merchandising, and target marketing in media; consider the realness of reality TV; find ways to overcome bias in the news; practice creating strong, smart, and bold characters, TV show treatments, and media campaigns; and tackle issues of concern such as beauty, diversity, and stereotypes in media.

On-screen representation of women during prime-time TV, 2000-2001 season.



"Girls Inc. Media Literacy made me listen more to song lyrics. I used to listen to music that degraded girls and women. Now I try to be more aware of what I listen to."

—Nikki, age 13

- **Girls Take Another LookSM**: Girls ages 12 to 14 explore the variety of media available to them; practice deconstructing obvious and hidden media messages; question the media's focus on appearance and narrow definition of beauty; experiment with character development and storyboarding; consider the relevance of news media; investigate the use of brand names, logos, and other marketing tools; learn how to influence the media by communicating their opinions to those in power; and explore careers in a variety of media fields.
- **Girls Get the Message[®]**: Girls and young women ages 15 to 18 analyze messages and create and edit storyboards to change the messages in music videos and reality TV programs, conduct audits of magazines for advertising content and of newspapers for equity in gender coverage, consider the biases in various news sources, develop political campaign slogans and materials, screen films made by and about women, develop character sketches for TV shows and treatments for documentaries, and plan and conduct field trips to explore media businesses.
- **Girls Make the MessageSM**: In this companion production-based community action project, girls and young women ages 15 to 18 put into practice what they learned in the previous components by crafting and communicating their own messages into digital video public service announcements and participating in public dialogue around issues important to them via community interviews, screenings, and discussions about their productions.

Results

Girls Inc. Media Literacy is in development and has not yet been evaluated. Pilot tests of the draft curricula and program materials were conducted in 2002 and 2004.

Funders

Time Warner Foundation, AFTRA-Industry Cooperative Fund, JP Morgan/Chase, and Screen Actors Guild-Producers Industry Advancement and Cooperative Fund

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 2004, Girls Inc. nearly reached 800,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, our website, and educational publications.

**Girls Incorporated
National Headquarters**
120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005-3902
Tel: (212) 509-2000
Fax: (212) 509-8708
www.girlsinc.org

**Girls Incorporated
National Resource
Center**
441 West Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3233
Tel: 317 634-7546
Fax: 317 634-3024

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