



Girl Matters[®]: It's Elementary
Pilot Results Summary

See the Program

Girl Matters[®]: It's Elementary is an in-school suspension intervention program for girls in grades K-5, piloted at two schools that had the highest rates of girls' suspensions in the district.

The program intervenes early in girls' lives to improve school success and to stop suspension and expulsion. Research clearly establishes the link between academic failure and juvenile justice system involvement. Based on individual needs, girls receive crisis intervention, one-to-one skills building with interns, referrals to community services, counseling and home visits. Girls meet in small groups or individually to learn about personal safety, relationships, communication, emotions and identity.

Girl Matters[®]: It's Elementary also provides support and coaching for teachers and administrators for girl-centered practices including crisis intervention and effective classroom management techniques. Care Managers collaborate with school administrators to promote changes in policies and practices that negatively impact girls, including overuse of suspension.

See the Need

From 2011 to 2014, 713 girls were served (293 girls in the full intervention program, 420 girls in a 4-week prevention program.) The top five reasons girls were referred to Girl Matters[®]: It's Elementary are classroom disruptions, relational aggression, minor infractions, depressed/withdrawn behavior and academic failure.

Many of the stressors faced by Girl Matters[®]: It's Elementary girls related to family challenges.

- 46% of girls reported parent/caregiver had gone to jail
- 24% of girls reported experiencing domestic violence
- 35% had parents who lost their job
- 13% experienced the death of a primary caregiver in the previous year
- 29% had lived somewhere without their parents
- 26% experienced the death of a close friend or relative
- 9% had been in foster care

See the Impact

After implementation, positive changes were evidenced for individual girls, the schools, and the community.

For Girls - Number of Suspensions Decreased

- 89% of the girls who enrolled in Girl Matters[®] in 2011-2012 were not suspended in 2013-2014.
- By 2013-14, there was an **84% reduction in the average number of suspensions for girls** participating in Girl Matters[®] who entered in the first year. The average number of suspensions per girl went from 1.07 to 0.17.
- Both schools decreased school-wide girl suspensions. At "School A" the number dropped from 80 suspensions per 100 girls in 2011-12 to 30 suspensions per 100 girls during the 2013-14 school year, a **62.5% reduction in school-wide girl suspension**. Similarly, at "School B" the suspension rate dropped from 64 per 100 girls to 15 per 100 girls, a **76.5% reduction in school-wide girl suspension**.

For the Schools - Shifts in Teachers' Attitudes and Changing Policies and Practices

- Teachers felt more competent working with girls with gains in confidence rising with each year.
- When teachers were asked about the challenges of working with girls, their perceptions during the

first two years were focused on girls, “having attitudes,” with a tendency towards blaming girls, whereas in the 2013-14 school year, teachers demonstrated increased understanding of girls’ behaviors within the context of girls lived experiences.

- The schools changed policies and practices such that teachers used Girl Matters®: It’s Elementary as an alternative to suspension and were able to address mental health issues more sensitively. Teachers increased their rating for effectiveness of school policies related to addressing girls’ problematic behaviors.

For the Community- 64 Graduate and Undergraduate Interns Increased Competency for Working with Girls

- After 40 hours of girl-centered practice training, 75% of interns felt very/extremely competent working with girls. After a semester of working with girls, 94% felt very/extremely competent working with girls.
- “My perception was that elementary girls would face less trauma or stress. However after working with the girls, I began to realize their experiences begin in elementary school and escalate as they grow older...”
- Intern

See the Future

The Girl Matters®: It’s Elementary replication manual will be released on September 30, 2014 providing a roadmap for schools, communities and states to develop Girl Matters®: It’s Elementary programs.

Based on the success of Girl Matters®, the Policy Center has a partnership with Southside Middle School to develop a Girl Matters® program specifically for girls from immigrant and refugee communities.

Girls also see better futures for themselves:

- “[I will] ask my teacher for help and let my feelings out.”
- “[I learned] how to pick friends carefully.”
- “[I will] stop hanging with the wrong crowd.”
- “[I will] try and work my way up to the A/B honor roll.”
- “[I learned about my] temper and how to keep more calm about things that make me angry.”

Stakeholder Quotes

98% of girls identified the Girl Matters®: It’s Elementary program as helpful:

- “I trust everybody in Girl Matters because they’re not harming me. They’re helping me learn. And sometimes we don’t learn, we play.”
- “[My] teacher [is] getting nicer, [and] I’m getting my grades up. [It’s] like a fresh start.”
- “My mentor suggested moving my seat to the front of class. My grades went from [an] F to [a] B!”
- “[My mentor] has been nice to me. She’s the only person I know outside of my family who has been nice to me.”

Teachers said:

- “This program is vital at this school and is highly effective!”
- “The program has proven to be extremely beneficial to not only the girls but also the school and those who are involved in relationships with the girls.”

Parents said about their daughters:

- “[She is] feeling better about herself and being more respectful to others.”
- “When the Care Manager has talked to her or one of the other counselors, she has straightened up her behavior.”
- “She’s more focused on her work.”

GIRL MATTERS®: IT'S ELEMENTARY RESULTS



Research clearly establishes the link between academic failure and juvenile justice system involvement.

69% OF DUVAL COUNTY GIRLS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED



Girls who have been suspended Not suspended

Percentage of Girl Matters®: It's Elementary participants who avoided suspension

