

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL 2016

#IDG2016

#WHENGIRLSGRADUATE

International Day of the Girl, on October 11, was founded in 2011 to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. To celebrate this important day, Glamour's The Girl Project will host the first-ever global, real-time digital conversation with and for girls around the world, featuring First Lady Michelle Obama and Glamour Editor-in-Chief Cindi Leive, to bring awareness to the issue of girls' education.

The Girl Project provides access and tools to the more than 50 million girls around the world who aren't getting a quality secondary education. Girls Inc. is proud to partner with The Girl Project as one of six nonprofit partners committed to helping girls overcome obstacles to achieve in school. While many people may perceive access to education as a challenge outside the U.S., a host of barriers exist for girls living right here in the U.S., especially girls living in low-income communities.

Girls Inc. provides girls with the resources and support to increase their love of learning, improve their performance in school, prepare for college, and explore non-traditional careers. Through life-changing experiences, Girls Inc. addresses every aspect of a girl's development to equip her to achieve her academic, personal, and professional goals.

## FIVE BARRIERS TO EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN THE U.S.

### 1 SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY POLICIES

Zero-tolerance policies that automatically impose severe punishments on students, regardless of the circumstances underlying their behavior, have led to dramatic increases in rates of suspension. Girls of color are disproportionately affected by harsh, exclusionary discipline practices that in some cases are based on stereotypes and labels (e.g. "sassy" or "defiant"). These practices place girls at greater risk of leaving school, which increases their risk of being sexually exploited, and entering the juvenile justice system. Girls Inc. supports replacing unfair and overly punitive school disciplinary policies and practices with strength-based alternatives such as Restorative Justice Practices and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and ensuring that educators get training on implicit bias and on the impact of trauma on student behavior and learning.

### 2 PREGNANCY AND PARENTING

Across the U.S., too many young women do not have access to the information necessary to make informed decisions about their sexual health. Fewer than half of all high schools and only 20% of middle schools in the U.S. provide comprehensive sex education. And pregnancy and parenting are leading causes of school dropout (or pushout) among teen girls. Girls Inc. educates girls about their bodies, reasons to avoid early pregnancy, how to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships, and how to resist peer pressure. Girls Inc. advocates for legislation that supports the health and wellbeing of young people such as The Real Education for Healthy Youth Act, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, and the Title X Family Planning Program.

## 3 BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

One of the most enduring and underrated problems in schools, bullying and harassment create unsafe environments not conducive to learning. In addition to sexual harassment, some girls experience harassment based on their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or religion. Whether it takes the form of taunts and threats, propositioning, public embarrassment or social isolation, or fights and physical assault, bullying and harassment have an effect on everyone involved – the victim, the harasser, and the by-standers – as well as the learning environment. Girls Inc. helps girls to positively advocate for themselves and others, and supports laws like Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and other policies that protect the dignity and rights of young women and girls, especially those from vulnerable communities.

## 4 VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA

One in four girls in the U.S. will experience some kind of sexual victimization before she turns 18. One in nine female high school students reports being physically forced to have sexual intercourse. Young women who experience sexual violence are at high risk for depression and anxiety, alcohol and drug use, and antisocial behavior – leading to problems in school and increased risk of dropout. Girls Inc. teaches girls that they have every right to protect themselves and works to break down the attitudes, norms, and beliefs that can perpetuate sexual violence. Girls Inc. advocates for strong enforcement of laws like Title IX that protect the rights of young women, and for policies that address the root causes of sexual violence.

## 5 UNEQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Educational and economic disparities prevent countless girls and young women from accessing meaningful educational opportunities and reaching their goals. Schools with a high concentration of students of color and schools in high-poverty areas tend to have less science teachers with advanced degrees and do not offer the full range of math and science classes. Additionally, negative stereotypes and expectations about girls' math and science abilities undermine their performance and interest in STEM. Girls Inc. exposes girls to meaningful STEM opportunities and encourages them to consider STEM careers. Legislation like the Women and Minorities in STEM Booster Act help more girls discover their talents and become the next generation of STEM leaders.

### RESOURCES

Day of the Girl: <http://www.dayofthegirl.org/>

Let Girls Learn: <https://letgirlslearn.gov/>

The Girl Project: <http://thegirlproject.com/>

National Women's Law Center: <https://nwlc.org/issue/education-title-ix/>