Leveraging Multiple Communities & Networks to Expand Understanding of Professional Development for Informal STEM Educators in Gender Equitable Teaching Strategies

"SciGirls curriculum provides a space for girls to reflect on their own abilities, interests & potential."  
—SciGirls Reflect Participant

**SCIGIRLS REFLECT:** Leveraging Multiple Communities and Networks to Expand Understanding of Professional Development for Informal STEM Educators in Gender Equitable Teaching Strategies was a one-day event that brought together 25 SciGirls trainers, educators, and partner organization representatives to reflect on their experiences with SciGirls. Data was collected throughout the day via panel presentations, small group discussions and partner interviews. Nineteen of these participants also conducted follow-up, broadening the discussion interviews with 22 SciGirls trainers and educators to gather additional data.

“(SciGirls was) instrumental in having me look at a different approach to education and pushing me to ensure all of my learners were valued.”  
—SciGirls Reflect Participant
KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

♦ **THE VALUE OF THE SCI GIRLS RESOURCES CANNOT BE OVERSTATED.** The quality of the SciGirls resources and how they are packaged help educators provide engaging STEM activities and programs. Educators especially appreciate that the SciGirls strategies and resources are research-based. This gives them confidence that they will be effective and helps to make the case to incorporate them into their work.

♦ **EDUCATORS INCORPORATE THE SCI GIRLS SEVEN STRATEGIES CONSISTENTLY INTO THEIR WORK.** The strategies used most often include incorporating role models, making content personally relevant and meaningful, and conducting hands-on, open-ended projects and investigations. Interestingly, some of the strategies that educators use extensively and believe positively impact their students are also ones that can be challenging to implement.

♦ **SCI GIRLS POSITIVELY IMPACTS YOUTH PARTICIPANTS.** Educators firmly believe the youth they serve are significantly impacted by participating in programs and opportunities that incorporate the SciGirls Seven strategies and SciGirls resources, including increased confidence and interest in STEM and increased awareness of STEM careers and possibilities for their future.

♦ **STUDENTS ARE SOMETIMES CHALLENGED BY OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLABORATE, THINK CRITICALLY AND CHART THEIR OWN PATH.** Similar to educators’ experiences, strategies that can be beneficial for students can also be challenging, especially if they are not a consistent part of students’ educational experience.

♦ **ROLE MODELS ARE IMPORTANT.** Incorporating role models into programs was mentioned more than any other strategy as being valuable and impactful (as well as sometimes challenging). In addition to role models having a positive impact on girls, educators may find this strategy more significant because they have less experience with it or it is easier to distinguish from the other strategies and corresponding outcomes.

“Girls participating in SciGirls-type activities gain confidence in themselves and in their own understanding of scientific concepts.”

—SciGirls Reflect Participant