



## SUMMARY REPORT

# #CONFIDENCE IN HER WORDS

New research from Girls Empowerment Network shares girls' and women's experiences learning skills that enhance their self-efficacy.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Girls Empowerment Network knows girls are powerful. It's our mission to help them know it too. Girls Empowerment Network is a 501c3 nonprofit organization headquartered in Austin, Texas, founded in 1996 by women who were concerned about systemic decline in teenage girls' self-esteems and negative coping behaviors observed around disordered eating, self-mutilation and other behavior. Since that time, Girls Empowerment Network has grown into a powerful programmer and creator of signature curriculum and events for girls ages 8-18 provided by its trained staff via Texas schools and communities.

Our mission is to **ignite the power in girls by teaching them the skills to thrive and believe in their ability to become unstoppable.** Girls Empowerment Network provides services to schools in a five-county area in Central Texas, three counties in Greater Houston and in Dallas ISD. Girls Empowerment Network hosts its signature event, geared toward girls ages 8-13 and adults who care about them, called WE ARE GIRLS CONFERENCE annually in Austin and Houston.

Since 2001, Girls Empowerment Network has delivered programs to pre-teens and teens in small group formats both

in and out of school settings. All Girls Empowerment Network **programming and curriculum teach a range of skills called the "6 C's." The 6 C's are collaboration, communication, confidence, coping skills, creativity and critical thinking.** Our aim is the pursuit of improving girls' self-efficacy, which is described as "one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task" (Albert Bandura). Self-efficacy is a primary source of resilience and an indicator of pro-social behavior.

#CONFIDENCE - IN HER WORDS studied the experiences of recent participants (youth ages 15-18) and alumni (now adults) who participated in one of our small group programs. Specifically, our alumni respondents participated in program formerly known as clubGEN (now named Girl Connect), and teenage respondents participated in a program currently known as Pathfinder. We use the term "clubGEN" in this report because that is how our alumni knew the program. We asked all participants to reflect on, give feedback and describe the curriculum's impact on their lives in their own words.



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## METHODOLOGY

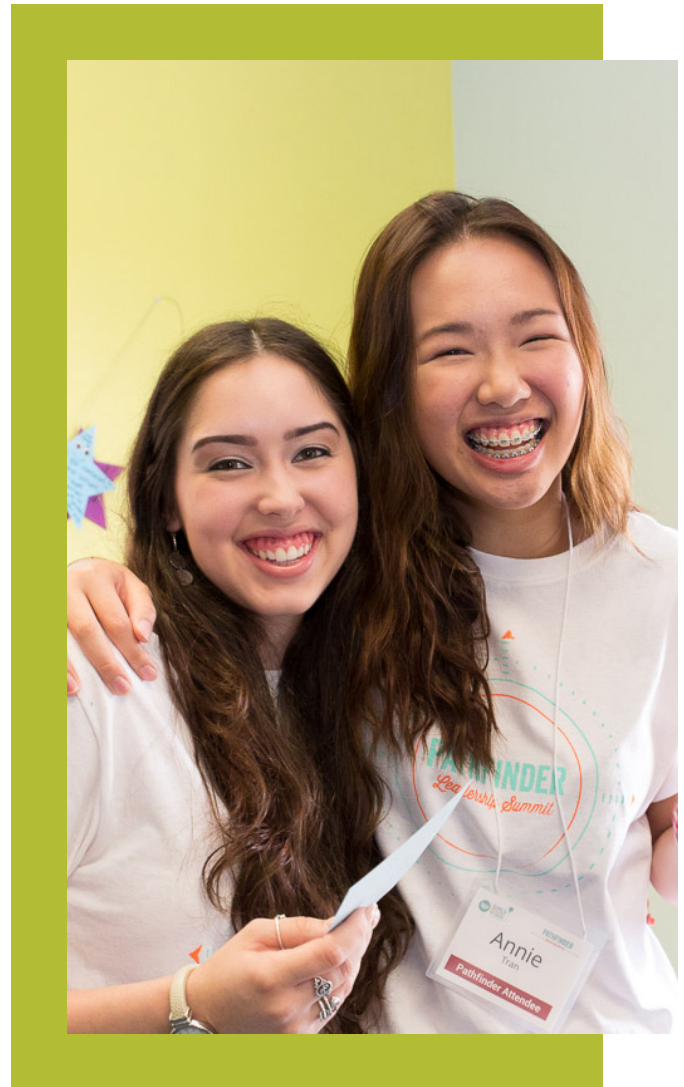
Working with Mosaic Insight Group, we designed qualitative research activities to engage both audiences and explore how, if at all, the key tenants of self-efficacy manifest in their lives. We conducted research in two parts: interviews and online exploration. We recruited 50 total participants. Three individuals participated in hour-long interviews. Thirty-four completed at least two online activities; and 28 completed all activities. Of those 28, 13 were adult women ("alumni," ages 19-33) and 15 were recent participants ("Pathfinders," ages 15-18).

**This qualitative study with a small group of participants is small relative to the thousands of girls who have participated in Girls Empowerment Network programs since 1996. While it's beyond the scope of this study to project or represent all alumni or Pathfinder groups as wholes, these findings support Girls Empowerment Network's intention to focus on development and measurement of self-efficacy in its programming.**

## FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

**Both alumni and Pathfinder participants named real world skill-building as the most important benefit of the Girls Empowerment Network connection. In their own voices, participants describe their experiences as a foundation for acquiring skills and practicing behaviors that improve self-efficacy.**

- Creating all-girl spaces such as clubGEN and Pathfinder contribute to improving girls' abilities to explore their insecurities and vulnerabilities, share common issues, learn from each other and their mentors/guides, and process their experiences. **Participants also reported the importance and value of self-compassion and coping skills.**



- Many stories and emotional moments related to the growth of confidence they experienced by learning to use their voices in a supportive environment.
- Other skills include self-acceptance and taking care of one's self — themes that came up throughout the study.
- Alumni were proud of skills they had mastered, including being visible, using her voice, managing her life and taking care of herself.





## KEY FINDING: USING HER VOICE

*Confidence, Collaboration and Communication*

Of the 6 C's, participants in Pathfinder and clubGEN programming reported that Confidence, Collaboration and Communication were strengthened the most.

**Public speaking and networking were the #1 skills learned by both alumni and Pathfinder participants. These skills were built on a foundation of self-acceptance and support from peers and mentors.**

**Alumni ranked Communication and Confidence highest, while Pathfinders' top choice was Collaboration.**

**Alumni ranked Communication as most important, followed by Confidence and Coping Skills.**

• They saw Communication as key in many aspects of life. Confidence provided motivating and taking calculated risks. While Coping Skills helped them deal with the inevitable challenges along the way.

**Confidence was most important to Pathfinders.**

• This trait was key to reaching their potential and feeling empowered.

### IN HER WORDS

[Girls Empowerment Network] offers a space for girls to embrace their power and learn tactical skills to maintain it despite society pressures. This can be from body image, to bullying, social pressure, sexual health, relationship with self, others, and romantically. It sets girls up to be empowered. – Amanda



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**Alumni strongest memories:**

- Leadership, leading clubGEN, specific exercises like public speaking, leading the girls, speaking at events
- Connections, friendships, making an impact on the girls

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*Girls Empowerment Network teaches girls to be confident in who they are and to learn and grow in who they are. It isn't just a boring class or two. Each activity or event is catered to each age group so that they know they aren't alone in what they are going through at that age.*  
– Keristen



**Every participant believed Girls Empowerment Network influenced their ability to succeed.**

- *They encouraged me and constantly told me that I am more than capable of success. They believed in my power and made me believe too.* – Erin
- *They helped mold who I am today: a hardworking, confident woman.* – Keristen

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***I feel like confidence was the one I was most lacking in and I did not even realize I lacked it. Now that I have grown in confidence, I feel empowered and more complete as a person. I learned to stand and articulate my power. This translated into things like confidence in presenting and public speaking and learning to lead groups.*** – Priya





*I remember one of our sessions around decision-making and healthy relationships. One of the middle school girls brought up that her sister was pregnant. Her sister was only 16, and most of her cousins were also that age. In her head, she felt doomed to follow down the same path. Our club that day helped her clarify that she is control, **that she gets to determine what kind of life she wants.** – Priya*

**In the future, participants saw themselves growing into their best selves, building on the lessons they learned from Girls Empowerment Network.**

**Alumni were proud of skills they had mastered, including:**

- Being visible, using her voice
- Adult skills, ability to manage her life
- Evolving as a human and taking care of herself – self-awareness, emotional regulation, health

**Pathfinders' skills understandably related to their week in the program:**

- Public speaking, communication
- Leadership
- Decision making, planning, organization
- Self-awareness – know myself, my strengths

**71%**

of participants say Girls Empowerment Network made a life-changing or big impact on their lives.

- More than half of alumni reported life-changing (31.3) or big impact (25)
- More than half of Pathfinders reported big impact (53.3)
- A third of Pathfinders reported life-changing (33.3)





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To review the full report, please contact Girls Empowerment Network at [julia@girlsempowermentnetwork.org](mailto:julia@girlsempowermentnetwork.org).

