Girls Athletic Leadership Schools’ Whole-Bodied Education Model addresses the physical, emotional, and psychosocial needs of female students so they are empowered to be leaders of their own lives.

OVERVIEW

The Whole-Bodied Education Model by Girls Athletic Leadership Schools (GALS) aims to support young women to become powerful advocates for themselves and leaders for their communities. It reflects GALS’ belief that academic growth is strengthened through social, emotional, and physical health support. All students are challenged, take risks, learn from failure, and leverage their individual strengths through rigorous, standards-based academic programming.

Specifically, Movement Modules and active pedagogy ensure students experience the connection between pushing themselves physically and thriving academically. In addition, they learn to be self-aware, to set goals, and to become advocates in their learning and growth through the GALS Series, a homegrown SEL curriculum that focuses on female adolescent development and empowerment. The single-gendered context is embraced as a strength, while difference and individuality within what it means to be female is celebrated as part of the distinct community that makes up the school. GALS Overview

There are three GALS schools operating in Denver and Los Angeles and serving 512 students, and two GALS-inspired schools exist in Guatemala and Israel. Students of GALS express confidence in their ability to be successful. GALS offers school visits, professional development, 1:1 coaching, and its GALS Series curriculum for schools interested in implementing the Whole-Bodied Model.
What Makes This Model Innovative?

**Whole-Child Focus**
The Whole-Bodied Model nurtures the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive factors that impact students' learning, overall health, and well-being.

**Affirmation of Self & Others**
The single-gendered environment at GALS is rooted in positive identity. Girls develop confidence in themselves and respect for others.

**Connection & Community**
The Whole-Bodied Model ensures each student is known well by an adult and creates space to authentically connect with peers.

### DESIGN

**Goals**
GALS' Whole-Bodied Education Model empowers girls to succeed academically, lead confidently, live boldly, and thrive physically. Four Habits of Heart and Mind establish the foundation for girls to live out these goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>The ability to learn from mistakes, take risks, and dismiss the pressure to be perfect, leading with self-compassion and demonstrating resilience by recovering quickly from adversity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>To know, respect and express oneself authentically, taking control of decisions and actions and taking responsibility for the outcomes. Using influence and unique attributes to positively impact others, and leading with a strong sense of self and sense of responsibility toward justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Embrace differences and seek to understand others. Listening empathetically and speaking assertively, by using strategies that help care for and challenge one's physical, intellectual, and emotional self. Leading with both heart and mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Having hope for the future by knowing how to actualize short- and long-term goals. Exploring one's values, identity, and position in the world and defining one's gender identity. Leading with a strong internal compass.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Transcend Inc. & GALS Inc., 2022
Experience
The Whole-Bodied Model from GALS takes a holistic stance on development that recognizes the deep connection between a healthy mind and a healthy body. Through the integration of a health and wellness curriculum addressing the physical, emotional, and psychosocial needs of female adolescents, GALS helps students to emerge as leaders of their own lives. The young women at GALS have the ability to pursue their strengths and passions, and to understand their responsibility to the local and global community.

This is accomplished through an integrated approach that focuses on social-emotional learning, movement, and diversity all within a single-gendered context. Students start each day with movement to activate their brains and bodies for learning. The single-gendered context ensures all girls have a safe space to fully develop themselves. They participate in Wellness Teams and engage in the GALS Series curriculum to develop and affirm their identities. They are exposed to and embrace diverse backgrounds. These components of the model drive a holistic approach to supporting young women's learning and development.

Social-Emotional Learning
Social-emotional learning is embedded into the curriculum as well as the overall school culture, providing students with the resources and support to guide and empower them through their middle school years and beyond. The single-gender context is a pivotal element of girls' social-emotional learning. Girls' schools empower girls to find their voices and learn how to use them, and inspire girls to imagine and explore novel possibilities for their lives and futures. As a result, graduates of girls' schools are more likely to pursue STEM careers and leadership positions. Students develop, affirm and support their social-emotional learning through four main activities:

GALS Series
Girls tap into their social-emotional learning and well-being through the GALS Series. The course meets daily and is taught by a full-time trained instructor. Its workshop style provides a formal learning space focused on six themes: Voice, Relationships, Mindfulness, Health and Wellness (including Sexual Health), Goal Setting/Intention, and Identity. Students reflect on their personal growth through journaling, project-based learning tasks and performances, personal statements and self-efficacy surveys, all documented in their personal journal. 📝GALS Series Overview

GALS Pledge
The GALS Student Pledge is made up of positive affirmations that capture the essence of what makes GALS a unique place to learn and grow. Students and staff recite the pledge each morning after a school-wide morning workout. Affirmations support students (and staff) in
developing and maintaining a positive, healthy, responsible mindset and self-image. The Pledge is also a living document that is integrated into the school community to reinforce positive behaviors and redirect negative ones, via restorative justice practices, and in student self-reflection. ▶️ GALS Mission & Student Pledge

**School-Based Counseling**
Most adolescents do not yet know who they are, and many do not feel that they matter. School-based mental health teams offer a range of services from wellness and prevention to supporting students with the short-term problems of growing up to more intensive support including crisis intervention as well as responding to family challenges and emerging mental health issues that may require outside referral. Students may be referred to counseling services by their parents, as recommended by a teacher, or request it for themselves.

In keeping with the movement focus, the director and lead counselor are dance/movement therapists, incorporating a trauma-informed, somatic approach to counseling. As part of the Whole-Bodied Model, students work on self-awareness and creative expression to explore their emerging identities. They learn what feels good and what does not, how to set boundaries when necessary, and how to best take care of themselves physically and emotionally.

**Wellness Teams**
Wellness Teams also play an important role in students’ social-emotional learning. Students in every grade are part of an 18–20 student advisory group (called “Wellness Team”) that explores the issues directly relevant to female adolescent development and ensures that every student is known well by an adult (called a “Wellness Coach”) and a group of peers in the school. All core teachers serve as Wellness Coaches. Wellness teams meet daily at the beginning of each day as well as when scheduled during weekly community meetings. Wellness coaches keep track of student academic and social progress and serve as powerful mentors and resources for their students. Wellness coaches are the main point of contact with families on student academic and social well-being. They communicate with GALS administration and GALS teachers to ensure that GALS faculty are able to support students with both academics and social-emotional realities. Wellness teams also play a critical role in the movement-based learning experience for students.

**Movement-Based Learning**
Movement optimizes learning potential, boosts cognition and memory, and ignites a positive self-image in students. Students witness their capacity for growth and strength in movement, which translates powerfully in the classroom. Kinesthetic learning is infused throughout the school day to enhance daily lessons. Movement is incorporated in a range of ways throughout the day to facilitate learning.

**Movement Module**
The Movement Module is an important component of the GALS model. Four days a week, all students and teachers begin their day with movement via the “Morning Movement” block. The timing is intentional. Developing minds are not most alert at 8:30am, and this block helps awaken learners and prepare them for the day ahead. The goal is to raise the heart rate to 40–80% of its capacity for 20 minutes or more as it creates a window of learning. The class is 40 minutes in duration and designed to support and challenge students to push themselves physically. These activities are adapted for students with physical disabilities. Students experience a range of morning movement classes over the course of the year as determined by space and weather. Classes include running, cycling, circuit training, dance, and yoga. Participation in all classes can be modified or adapted for students with special needs. Students rotate through different athletic modules which include running, yoga, self-defense, team games, sports, and more. The single-gendered context of the school ensures that girls are able to move freely and develop compassion for themselves and others through movement. ▶ Cool Schools: Denver all-girls school gets students up and moving

Active Pedagogy
Active Pedagogy is at the center of the Whole-Bodied Model. It is based on the positive correlation between physical activity, cognition, social-emotional awareness, and neuro-developmental growth. By not only starting each day with movement, but also infusing movement throughout the entirety of the school day, GALS emphasizes the importance of holistic, kinesthetic, mind-body awareness and its positive effect on social, emotional, and academic success. Students and staff engage their bodies in service to their brains. The GALS Whole-Bodied Model does this using three primary strategies during academic classes that vary in length:

1. **Brain Boosts**: These range from 3–5 minutes in duration and give students the opportunity to re-engage, wake up their brain, or prepare for a lesson transition. Brain boosts can be small, motor-skill activities or larger, more dynamic activities involving full-body movement. Most of these activities can take place in the classroom or the hallway. An example of this is One-song Workouts, where different cardio activities, such as jumping jacks, burpees, and squats are repeated for the length of one song played on classroom speakers.

2. **Delivering Content through Movement**: Delivering content, or checking for understanding, through movement typically takes around 10 minutes and entails teacher-guided classroom activities that allow students to move in order to learn. This is applicable across all content areas and is a strong pedagogical technique for delivering or reviewing content. In Movement Multiple Choice, students demonstrate their selection from a multiple choice review through the associated movement. For example, answer A = 3 squats, answer B = tree pose, answer C = 3 high knees.

3. **Enhancing Content through Movement**: This activity involves instructional strategies lasting 20 minutes, where content is delivered primarily through full-body investment in

© Transcend Inc. & GALS Inc., 2022
an activity. These movement activities lend themselves to deepening student understanding of the material and are often content-specific. Students with a 504 plan or with disabilities will be accommodated. One activity is Human Numberline/Human Grid, where a math teacher lays a number line or coordinate graph on the floor using painter’s tape or other material. Students represent points or algebraic transformations through moving their bodies from one coordinate to another.

These strategies enable students to move their bodies as a way to re-engage, learn or deepen understanding of different content, and across contexts.

Supporting Structures
The GALS model can be adapted and adopted into a school’s existing overall model with a few shifts in aspects of the school such as curriculum and instruction, culture, and adult roles.

The Whole-Bodied Model requires integration of specific curricular topics and pedagogical practices to support holistic learning and gender affirmation.

The GALS Series curriculum covers six key themes relevant to girls’ adolescent development. These include Wellness, Mindfulness, Voice, Relationships, Goals and Intentions, and Identity. The GALS Series lessons include a Warm-up, Check-ins and Lesson Launch. This is followed by direct instruction to model a project, maker-space time to build or practice the project, and a closing circle.

In addition, schools interested in Whole-Bodied Education must be willing to use Active Pedagogy, including activities such as Brain Boosts, Delivering Content through Movement, and Enhancing Content through Pedagogy to stimulate student learning. According to research, sitting for 12–20 minutes or more decreases brain cell activity. Movement during class is designed to engage students in their own learning and prevent passive learning. Infusing movement throughout the entirety of the school day emphasizes the importance of holistic, kinesthetic, mind-body awareness and its positive effect on social, emotional, and academic success.

School culture and community should affirm girls’ diverse identities and provide a safe environment for development.

GALS believes that schools must teach girls confidence to reverse the internalized perception that women are inferior to men. As a result, their Whole-Bodied Model is best supported by a culture that emphasizes female leadership and healthy competition. While this is possible within a multi-gendered context, GALS believes this is best accomplished in single-gender spaces. Through the single-gendered context, girls are given their own space to feel at home in their own academic setting. It provides
the freedom to develop without societal pressure to perform for the opposite sex. This is a fundamental aspect of the GALS experience, where students are integrated into a sisterhood. It is in this environment that girls are able to develop and affirm their own identities, as well as understand others. "Why All Girls?"

In addition, a highly racially, ethnically, and economically diverse school community helps young women build meaningful relationships with other young women across lines of difference. The Whole-Bodied Model encourages a community that embraces the challenges of creating a culture immersed in diversity. Culturally relevant learning and conversations should be integrated into classes every day, highlighting thoughtful leaders whose voices are disproportionately missing from popular culture and curricula. Students should also have opportunities to explore issues often viewed as “taboo” or charged. They discuss politics and expand the experience of not only minority students but also the collective classroom community. Students are surrounded with peers of different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities. From the GALS Series classes to community meetings to wellness teams, students embrace different ideas and perspectives as a methodology and practice in developing their own voices and their distinct form of self-agency.

All adults are role models and must work on their own holistic development, so they can support students in theirs.

The Whole-Bodied Education Model emphasizes the role of adults in modeling development across domains. All staff should model aspects of the vision—including movement, mindfulness, vulnerability, self-care, positive gender focus, values, and risk-taking—so that they experience their own development across dimensions like physical and mental health and social-emotional and identity development. In addition, administration and leaders should commit to treating adults as whole people with individual needs. This, in turn, enables adults to support student development in these areas. Led by well-supported adults, students may experience accelerated academic development.

An example of this is, during morning movement, every teacher—from a former college athlete to one with no formal athletics background—teaches a class as a Movement Coach. Some teachers excel in yoga; others prefer to teach cycling or running. Movement Coaches are not required to be an expert of the module they are teaching, but rather model working hard and persevering. Girls of various body types or athletic backgrounds see themselves in a teacher who is modeling an active lifestyle. Role of the Movement Coach

Diversity is a crucial component of the leadership and adult roles as well. By
fostering connection across lines of class and race, we model and raise girls to advocate for justice in all spheres they choose to occupy.

**Schools should leverage rotating schedules to maximize learning.**

Each day should start with morning movement. This timing is intentional, as leaders noted that “developing minds don't awaken until 10, so this is how we jump-start the brain via the body.” In addition, students and teachers should follow a rotating schedule each day of the week.

The benefits of a rotating schedule are two-fold:
1. The rotating schedule allows for different classes to occur after morning movement as well as recess, which allows for the different courses to benefit from morning movement.
2. GALS teachers and students report that they find a rotating schedule beneficial because both students and teachers say they perform differently at different times of the day.

As an example, four days a week, the daily schedule follows the same bell-schedule each day. There are two academic core course blocks before lunch, and two after lunch. However, the courses within those blocks rotate. On Monday, the order is Block 1, 2, 3, 4. On Tuesday, the order rotates to 4, 1, 2, 3 and so on.  

**Students need to have a broad, supportive community to develop holistically.**

Family and community are an important aspect of Whole-Bodied Education. For girls to develop confidently, they must have family and community support. Communication with family is an important aspect of ensuring the wellness and continuation of learning for each student. Wellness Coaches play an active role in ensuring the communication between families and the school is open.

In addition, students have access to school-based counseling services through partnerships with community-based organizations. For example, GALS LA partners with HerHealing Community to provide school-based counseling services to students. Counseling services include free individual...
30-minute therapy sessions and group therapy sessions for GALS students.

School Based Counseling at GALS LA

The physical space must be intentionally designed to encourage movement.

Classrooms are set up to encourage students to move as they learn—sitting on yoga balls, in rocking chairs, or on a stationary bike. Spaces are created to be active rather than sedentary and encourage students to build awareness for their own needs. For example, if a student feels sleepy in class, getting water and changing positions (standing, rather than sitting) can refresh a student’s ability to learn.

Athletic equipment is available for students to participate in a range of movement-related activities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Supports Offered

GALS offers the following supports to help you implement their approach.

School Visit

Cost Associated

School visits include observing key practices of the Whole-Bodied Model at GALS. Visitors will see the movement model and morning movement in action, observe a GALS Series lesson, and talk to students, teachers, and administrators. Free Community Tours are offered twice a year at GALS LA.

Get in Touch
Professional Development

Professional development includes two types of on-site training for school staff.

- 2-day training for becoming a Movement Coach (on-site)
- 1-day training on implementing the GALS Series (on-site)

Get in Touch

1:1 Coaching

GALS provides 1:1 coaching for using the GALS Series for SEL. Coaching plans are customizable and can include lead teacher coaching, teacher teams coaching or administration coaching.

Get in Touch

GALS Series Curriculum

The entire GALS Series curriculum is available for purchase on the Thrively platform. Becoming a member of the Thrively platform also provides access to a range of additional SEL resources.

Access Now

Reach

3 GALS Schools
512 Students
235 Site Visitors

Impact

Students at GALS value their experience as indicated by a study done by University of Colorado, Denver's Evaluation Center. Highlights demonstrate that:

- 87% of all GALS students believe they are smart.
- 94% of all GALS students say they go to a good school.
- 99% of all GALS students believe they will graduate from high school.
- 95% of all GALS students say they get good grades when they try.
RESOURCES

▶ Girls Athletic Leadership School Los Angeles
See the GALS Whole-Bodied Model in action at GALS LA.

GALS Series Overview
Preview the GALS Series curriculum structure and components.

GALS Mission and Student Pledge
Read the GALS Mission and Student Pledge.

Cool Schools: Denver
all-girls school gets students up and moving
Learn about the Movement Module and movement-empowered learning at GALS Denver.

“Why All Girls?”
Learn why the single-gendered context is an important element of GALS culture.

Role of the Movement Coach
Understand the critical role of the movement coach in the Whole-Bodied Model.

Schedule by Day
A sample of the rotating schedule by day.

School-Based Counseling
Partnerships with Counseling organizations support girls through adolescent development.

© Transcend Inc. & GALS Inc., 2022