



## **Lions Quest**

### **Enhancing Youth Development through Home-School-Community Collaboration**

## **Evaluation Report**

### **The Impact of Lions Quest Programs**

Lions Quest is a life-skills program dedicated to creating family-school-community partnerships for positive youth development. For 25 years, Lions Quest has assisted educators and other adults in guiding young people's healthy development through program materials and staff development workshops in life skills, character education, drug prevention, and service-learning.

A number of research studies evaluating Lions Quest programs have been completed to date and are listed on the Lions Quest website under 'Results'. This Evaluation report is a "snapshot" of how Lions Quest programs measure up.

### **What Is Needed for Positive Youth Development**

Incorporating risk, resiliency, and asset building research, Lions Quest programs engage families, schools, and community members in working together to increase the protective factors that promote young people's healthy development and reduce those factors that put children at risk for problem behaviors. This involves:

- Strengthening the bonds between youth and their families, peers, school, and community.
- Teaching the social competency skills young people need for caring relationships, positive commitments, and resistance to negative pressures.
- Encouraging healthy aspirations and achievement.
- Ensuring that all youth feel cared for, valued, and supported.
- Providing meaningful opportunities for youth participation and contribution.
- Setting clear, consistent expectations for behaviors, and promoting a no-drug use and no-violence philosophy throughout a student's school experience.

Lions Quest K-12 programs are research-based and comprehensive. They support schools in developing long-term prevention efforts.

### **How Lions Quest Programs Address Young People's Needs**

In a U.S. Justice Department report, key prevention strategies were identified as effective for schools. Here's how Lions Quest programs incorporate these strategies:

- **Promote School Improvement Efforts**  
Lions Quest programs provide a framework for positive school change through workshops and materials that help school staff, parents, and community members plan and carry out activities to improve their school. Program materials promote communication and cooperation between school and home; engage students in building safe, drug-free schools; and involve community groups, such as local Lions, in addressing school needs.

- Strengthen Positive Behavioral Norms and Reinforce Clear, Consistent Rules**  
 In Lions Quest workshops, teachers learn classroom organization and management strategies for establishing clear standards for behaviors. Curricular activities strengthen positive norms as students help develop classroom rules, practice handling negative pressures, and carry out school-wide campaigns against drug use, bullying, and violence. There are shared homework assignments to encourage parent-child discussions on drug and violence-related issues, skill-building parent meetings, and information on ways parents can help children grow up safe and drug-free.
- Teach Social Competency Skills**  
 Lions Quest programs provide sequentially designed, grade-specific classroom materials that teach competencies, such as self-discipline, communication, problem-solving, cooperation/collaboration, resistance, and conflict management skills. The lessons are highly interactive, and through guided skill practice, discussions, and service-learning, students practice and apply the skills they are learning. Evaluation studies indicate that programs targeting emotional and social competencies obtained effects twice as great as those not teaching such competencies.

### **Why Lions Quest Programs Are Effective**

#### **Build Developmental Assets**

Research at the Search Institute, a youth development research organization, has identified 40 specific factors—or assets— known to inhibit problem behaviors, such as substance abuse and antisocial behavior. These assets also promote positive behaviors, such as caring for one’s health, helping others, and success in school. The more assets present in young people’s lives, the more likely they will demonstrate positive, life-affirming behaviors. Dr. Peter Benson, president of Search Institute, stated that “When Lions Quest programs are fully implemented, they address 30 of the 40 assets that are necessary for positive youth development.”

#### **Incorporate Key Prevention Elements**

The School Intervention Implementation Study and the Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence established 11 categories of key program elements for evaluating substance abuse programs. Lions Quest programs cover all 11 of these critical prevention elements.

#### **11 Prevention Elements**

1. Planning and design, including identification of short- and long-term goals for students
2. Timing, including continuity over grade levels
3. Social factors, including cultural sensitivity
4. School policy, including school-sponsored activities and disciplinary policies consistent with the program
5. Staff training, including ongoing training and in-school support
6. Implementation, including use of up-to-date and engaging materials
7. Family and community involvement, including use of take-home assignments
8. Individualized curriculum, including tailoring appropriate grade levels and community characteristics
9. Individualized features, including skill building and active participation
10. Support services, including tutoring and counseling
11. Evaluation guidelines, including specific indicators of positive and negative classroom behaviors

## **How Lions Quest Programs Impact Young People**

### **Lions Quest *Skills for Growing* and *Skills for Adolescence***

In evaluation results from the research studies listed on the Lions Quest website, Lions Quest comprehensive life skills programs—*Skills for Growing* (grades K–5) and *Skills for Adolescence* (grades 6–8)—have demonstrated effectiveness in changing the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that lead to violence and substance abuse, and in strengthening the factors that protect young people from harmful, high-risk behaviors.

These findings, conducted by independent agencies, are highlighted below.

#### **Attitudes**

- Skills for Growing students at all K–5 grade levels demonstrated significant improvements in changing their attitudes about the risks of harmful substances, their knowledge of positive peer relationships and decision-making skills, and their feelings of positive self concept.
- Skills for Growing students had significant improvement, pre- to post-test, in feeling able to make decisions apart from peer-influenced ones.
- Skills for Growing students showed significant and positive impact on life and conflict management skills and positive perceptions of classroom environment compared to control groups for grades 4-5
- Skills for Adolescence (SFA) students had significant improvements in their attitudes toward and awareness of the harm of alcohol and other drugs when measured from pre- to post-testing. In comparison to non-SFA students, SFA students showed significantly higher perception of the harm to their health caused by alcohol and other drugs.
- Urban Skills for Adolescence students had higher expectations for success in school than the comparison students. Lions Quest students were also more willing to take responsibility for their own behavior in school.
- After completing the program, 63% of the Skills for Adolescence students disapproved of peers who used drugs compared to 55% of students not enrolled in the program.

#### **Knowledge**

- Skills for Adolescence students significantly improved (43%) their knowledge about the risks of alcohol and other drugs after the program: comparison students who took the same criterion-referenced test had only a 5% gain in knowledge.
- Skills for Adolescence students in grade seven had significant improvements on the nationally normed California Achievement Test in both reading and mathematics while comparison students' scores remained near their pretest levels.

#### **Behavior/Drug Use**

- Skills for Growing students had more positive health-oriented behaviors compared to control group students in grades K–1.
- Skills for Adolescence students had significantly lower self-reported rates of using beer, liquor, and chewing tobacco in the previous month when compared to non-SFA students.
- Skills for Adolescence students predicted significantly less future use of beer and liquor than non-SFA students.
- Skills for Adolescence students had lower predictions of use of five harmful substances in the next 30 days when compared to non-SFA students.
- After the program, Skills for Adolescence students in urban public schools attended at least two days more than non-SFA students in similar classes in the same schools.

### **Lions Quest *Skills for Action***

An evaluation of Lions Quest *Skills for Action*, a service-learning program for grades 9–12, assessed program impact on students' pro-social attitudes and behavioral changes, such as school drop-out rates, school tardiness, and other discipline problems. A sample of the results include:

- Unlike the comparison group, Skills for Action students maintained a low level of risk for dropping out of school. There was no significant difference in dropout rate at baseline between the two groups, but there was a significant difference at post-test. Findings were even stronger for those students identified at baseline as "at-risk" for dropping out. Findings for comparison "at-risk" students increased at a statistically significant rate.
- Grade 12 Skills for Action students had no significant rise in risk for dropping out of school whereas comparison students in grade 12 increased their dropout risk.
- Skills for Action students who participated in more than 15 hours of service in a semester showed significant attitudinal gains in positive community values and interpersonal competence (responsibility to and empathy for others, working effectively with others, belief in getting things done) compared to control groups.
- Grade 9 Skills for Action students showed no increase in drug use and maintained a low risk for dropping out of school while control students in the same grade level increased their lifestyle risks.
- Skills for Action students reported improvement in strengthening their communication skills, in dealing with diverse groups, and showing concern for the well-being of others.