

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

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Dear Lions:

I work with Barb McMorris for the Prevention Research Center (PRC), the University of Minnesota's center sponsoring the research aspect of Lions Quest. Each week, I have the privilege of observing Lions Quest in action at Brooklyn Middle School. I am present in classrooms during the first hour on Mondays to watch the interactions of middle school students and teachers as they work through the Lions Quest lessons. It is a beautiful sight!

During the Lions Quest lessons to build social emotional skills, young people are wrestling with all kinds of topics that they otherwise would have to navigate on their own with little guidance. For instance, as the choice of whether or not to use alcohol and tobacco products is addressed in the Lions Quest program, I saw 7th graders discuss why the media targets them with advertising about these substances. For other lessons, groups of students create skits where youth practice how to actively support a friend who is being bullied, rather than simply standing to the side as complacent bystanders. Additionally, I have witnessed teachers discuss sensitive topics with their students, using the teacher resources that the Lions Quest provides that are likely bolstering their ability to broach such subjects that they may not have had the words or activities to tackle previously.

My favorite part of Lions Quest at Brooklyn Middle School is something I do not see in the classrooms, because it is an optional take-home component. Each of the take-home assignments build on the lesson that week, such as family members talking to their teens about wanted qualities in friendships. Our PRC research team felt we could not require that teachers implement this aspect of Lions Quest. However, one teacher decided to do it anyway. She reported back to all her colleagues about the benefits of the take-home component:

- She has learned much about family situations of her students;
- Her students are excited to talk to a family member about topics such as tobacco and bullying; and
- Families become more acutely aware of the issues their young people are facing.

Her report emboldened the other teachers to try it, too. In my latest round of classroom observations, every teacher's classroom that I visited is now doing the family component! As a researcher, I know that this home

component is part of best practice implementation of the program, and as a mom of middle schoolers myself, I also understand the need to capitalize on that connection of family members to children. I honestly wish every school in the state was doing Lions Quest, including the take home parts!

I cannot thank you enough for supporting Lions Quest both in the 7th grade and in the 6th grade this year. You met the 6th grade teacher who has taken this on as her *quest*. In this past school year, a pilot year, Sarah was able to encourage enough 6th grade teachers to use it that they are now planning that all 6th graders will get it next school year. In fact, in her recent report to us, she said, "I can't imagine why we would not keep doing it. Teachers and kids really like it!" Therefore, next year, we are confident that Lions Quest will become a program used by all three of the grades in Brooklyn Middle school for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders

From a research perspective, it is too soon to discuss any specific student changes or impacts the curriculum has had. The data are not all in yet.

However, from an anecdotal perspective (and the mom in me, too), I am positive that each child in Brooklyn has gotten something useful and lasting out of one or all the lessons.

Thank you again for your support of Lions Quest. The University of Minnesota, the Prevention Research Center, Brooklyn Middle School and I are personally and deeply appreciative.

Jenny Oliphant, EdD, MPH
Research Associate
University of Minnesota

and

Mom to two middle schoolers who could use this.