

2020-2021 U Got Brains Champion Schools Program

Faculty Advisor Survey Report

The Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ) is a recipient of a New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety (NJDHHS) Comprehensive Traffic Safety Grant. In 2010, to address the issue of teen driving safety, BIANJ created the *U Got Brains Champion Schools Program*. This statewide peer-to-peer program challenges teams of students, guided by a faculty advisor, to create a teen safe driving campaign in their school and community. The Champion Schools Program has been a part of the BIANJ Comprehensive Traffic Safety Grant since 2010 and has grown steadily both in the number of participating schools as well as the number of corporate and non-profit sponsors.

In 2014, the fourth year of the program, BIANJ partnered with The Research Institute at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) to create a faculty advisor survey to help evaluate the effectiveness of the Champion Schools Program. CHOP conducted a series of telephone interviews with the advisors to evaluate the 2013-2014 program from their perspective. CHOP then analyzed the results of the survey and created a report of their findings.

For the 2020-2021 program, BIANJ used an amended version of the original faculty advisor survey to evaluate the effectiveness of this year's program from the perspective of the faculty advisors. BIANJ staff posted the survey online, tallied the results and wrote the following summary report of their findings: **(Complete tally results are included with this summary report)*

The 2020-2021 school year was the 11th year of the *U Got Brains Champion Schools Program*. 46 high schools (public, private and technical) from 17 counties participated in the program. As a prerequisite for being chosen, schools signed a participation agreement which stated that they would participate, to the best of their ability, in a survey of the Champion Schools Program. BIANJ Champion Schools technical support staff informed the faculty advisors of the survey at their technical support visits, in emails to the faculty advisors and during technical support conference calls. The online faculty advisor survey was posted in May, and emails went out to the faculty advisors in May and June reminding them to complete the survey.

Responses were received from faculty advisors of 33 of the 42 participating schools (79%). A total of 40 faculty advisors responded to the survey-Lenape Regional HS District and Kearny HS each had 3 faculty advisors respond. Robbinsville, Colts Neck and Oakcrest High Schools had 2 faculty advisors respond., Indian Hills HS, Matawan Regional HS, Nottingham HS, Bound Brook HS, Immaculate Heart Academy, Westwood HS, Rae Kushner Yeshiva HS, Red Bank Catholic HS, Red Bank Regional HS, Kittatinny HS, JP Stevens HS, Cedar Grove HS, Clearview Regional HS, Delaware Valley Regional HS, North Arlington HS, Nutley HS, Marlboro HS, Regional Day School, Riverside HS, Saint Joseph HS, Salem County Vo-Tech HS, Scotch Plains-Fanwood HS, Middle Township High School, Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Sciences (MATES), Freehold Township HS, Collingswood HS, Egg Harbor Twp. HS, and CharterTech High School for the Performing Arts each had one response from a faculty advisor. The survey consisted of 17 questions. A copy of the survey along with tally results from the respondents is attached.

Questions #1 asked for the name of their high school. 40 advisors answered this question.

Question #2 of the survey asked the participants ***"to respond to the ease or difficulty a series of activities based on a scale from 1-7, with 1 being very hard and 7 being very easy"***. 40 advisors answered this question.

In response to the question, ***"communicating with the students about the project was..."*** a little over half of the advisors (55%) found that was either ***"easy"*** or ***"very easy"***, while 2 advisors (5%) found communicating with the students to be either ***"hard"*** or ***"very hard"***.

In response to the question, "**getting support from school administrators was...**" a majority also stated that was either "easy" or "very easy" (65%), while 1 advisor or 2.5% stated that getting support from school administrators was "hard".

Schools seemed to have a more difficult time getting their communities involved, with only 15% of respondents stating that "**getting the community involved**" was either "easy" or "very easy" while 7 respondents (18%) stated that it was either "hard" or "very hard" to get support from the community.

Schools seemed to have an easier time managing their project finances, with a majority of respondents (65%) answering that it was either "easy" or "very easy" to "**manage the program's finances**" while 0 advisors or 0% found that managing the finances was either "hard" or "very hard".

Only 20% of respondents thought that it was either "easy" or "very easy" to "**find time to meet with student team members**", while 6 advisors (15%) thought that it was either "hard" or "very hard" to find the time to meet with students.

The results were similar for the question that asked about "**getting student team members to take a leadership role**", with only 38% of respondents stating that it was either "easy" or "very easy" while 5 respondents or 13% stating that it was "hard".

Respondents seemed to have a similar time "**planning the program**", with only 35% of the respondents stating that it was either "easy" or "very easy" to plan the program and 3 respondents, or 8%, stating that it was either "hard" or "very hard" to plan for the program.

A majority of the respondents (55%) thought that it was either "easy" or "very easy" to "**advise the students**", with 4 respondents (10%) thought that it was either "hard" or "very hard".

Question #3 asked the participants to "**describe any advantages or 'good things' associated with having a Champion School Project at their school**". 38 respondents answered this question.

Comments varied, but many respondents stated that having the opportunity to get students involved, getting the message out, and saving lives were advantages of the project. Several advisors stated that their projects brought their communities together and caused a heightened awareness about the issue of teen safe driving in both their schools and towns. Other respondents talked about how the program fostered student leadership and empowerment from the students involved and how it allowed the students to care for and help fellow students. According to one advisor, "*Our participation also allows our club members to take advantage of leadership opportunities which are hard to come by especially in a school year like this one*". Many advisors talked about the advantages of peer-to-peer learning that allow the students to work together as a team where they create and control the project while the teacher guides and assists them. Several respondents talked about how the program gave them the opportunity to work together on an extremely important topic with students they do not normally get to teach. One advisor stated, "*We get to involve student and community in an important life skill/message; it enhances our school curriculum across many content areas*", while another stated, "*Brought kids together during a very challenging time. It was something in their control and gave especially the seniors purpose and fun. We found our seniors to be struggling, seniors look forward to this and it was a success. Different kids took leadership roles*". Another advisor commented that he "*...used this program in conjunction with a business class. The program provides hands on project management*", while another advisor stated that "*Students in my class (Honors III TV Production) enhanced their storytelling abilities and editing skills being involved*."

Many advisors commented on how the program allowed them to spread their safety messages out to their school and communities. One advisor stated that the program, *“Got our students to think more about the GDL law and communicate it to our community members”*. Another advisor commented that the program, *“Brought an awareness of NJ pedestrian and bicycle laws”*, while another stated, *“It Promotes Save Driving within my school and community”*. Other respondents talked about the support they received from their administration and the technical assistance they received from the Brain Injury Alliance of NJ. *“Our administrators love the positive feedback we receive from the general school population and our parent groups. BIANJ Tech Support helpful!”*

Question #4 asked the participants to ***“describe any disadvantages or ‘bad things’ associated with having a Champion School Project at their school”***. 38 advisors responded to this question. Sixteen (42%) of the respondents said that there were no disadvantages to having a project at school; in fact, one respondent replied that *“Nothing with the program itself; the resources are great!”* By far, the biggest disadvantage to the program this year was the disruption of the school year due to COVID-19. Sixteen (42%) of the respondents stated that virtual/hybrid learning made it difficult to meet with the students and complete projects. Most schools had major disruptions in the events and activities they had planned to host. Some schools were not able to complete their campaigns. One advisor commented, *“Covid and virtual learning/meetings has made these past 2 years very difficult. The kids are already overwhelmed with adapting to new things and it was at time tough to meet regularly and get everyone involved”*. However, many advisors also commented on how proud they were of their students who managed to carry-on with their campaigns despite COVID-19. One respondent commented, *“The pandemic hindered a lot of our initial plans but also showed students how to overcome adversity!”*

Question #5 asked the participants ***“what kinds of things made it easier for you to have the program at your school?”*** 39 advisors responded to the question. According to the advisor responses, support seemed to be the biggest factor in helping to implement their programs. Almost 1/3 (28%) of the respondents stated that support for the program from their administration and other faculty members made it easier for them to have the program. Six (15%) of the respondents cited the support that they received from the staff of BIANJ and commented on how easy it was to communicate with them. Several advisors mentioned that the stipend given by BIANJ helped to defray the costs of their campaign and allowed them to purchase resources and materials. Some respondents commented on the fact that they have access to technology or worked with the technology staff at school to help implement their program. Several advisors commented that their students were great, and they made it easier to implement their program. Schools who had participated in earlier years noted that they were now familiar with the program and it was easier to get the project completed. One advisor commented, *“Things that made it easier for us to have the program at our school include our passionate students, past participation in the program, and support from both faculty and administration. Our club members feel very strongly that this is an important program especially as we've experienced a few serious teen driving accidents in recent years, and they want to do all they can to get our safety messages out to the community. The students have also had really positive experiences with this program, and our initiatives have garnered a lot of attention from the student body which helps us recruit other participants throughout the year. Finally, I personally have wonderful peers who are not only willing to share resources but also help spread the word*

about our club initiatives through their respective outlets. This support is echoed by our administration as well”!

Question #6 asked participants **“what kinds of things made it harder for you to have the program at your school?”** 39 advisors answered the question. 8% of the advisors answered that there was nothing that made it harder to have the program at their school. However, 72% of the advisors stated that COVID-19 and the disruption to the school schedules that it brought was by far the biggest challenge that they had to overcome in implementing and completing their campaigns. Virtual/hybrid learning were factors noted by the advisors. Some commented that students and teachers are so busy, and time is so limited that it is hard to schedule meetings. One advisor noted, *“It was definitely a challenge this year with our hybrid schedule trying to meet with the students. Even with virtual meetings it just wasn't the same as in person.”*

Question #7 asked, **“What aspects of the program worked really well and why?”** 39 advisors answered this question. Several respondents remarked on how being able to communicate with students virtually worked well and some commented that they will keep the virtual format as an extra tool to communicate with their student teams. A few advisors also commented on how the virtual visits from BIANJ staff worked well. Advisors liked having categories of topics to choose from and the flexibility that the program offered. Many of the respondents commented on how having freedom of choice for the topics and having the program led by the students made the program easier. Teamwork by their students was also listed as helping the program to run well. The stipend provided by the program was another factor that helped to make the program run well. Other advisors commented that using Google classroom allowed their students to stay connected. Some advisors remarked that their students enjoyed working on their PSAs and the Share the Road Pledge Contest as side projects and these helped to keep the students engaged. Some advisors remarked that they liked participating in the weekly social media posts hosted by BIANJ and used them as part of their campaign.

Question #8 asked participants, **“What aspects of the program did not work so well and why?”** 37 advisors answered the question. 22% of respondents said that all aspects of the program went well and did not have any problems. Once again, the pandemic and resulting closing of schools was listed as the biggest factor in the program not working well-33% of advisors listed that as the top reason their program did not work so well. Advisors also commented that there was not enough time in the day, that it was difficult to find the time to schedule meetings due to too many other activities that students were involved in. Other respondents commented on the difficulty they had getting support from local businesses. One advisor said that they were not able to get their parking signs up this year due to the chaotic year.

Question #9 asked participants, **“How did you get student members to participate in the program?”** 39 advisors answered the question. Advisors employed a variety of strategies to get students to participate in the program. Several respondents said that their students recruited the members. They promoted the program digitally and on social media. They spread the word on morning announcements, in Google Classroom, with flyers, emails, and sign-in sheets; and they spread the program by word of mouth. Other advisors said that all they had to do was ask-the students were really excited to be a part of the program because the topic was relevant to them and they wanted to help keep their friends and themselves safer on the roads. Other advisors said that students volunteered. Some schools offered incentives to students who joined their team, such as gift cards, community service and extra credit for their classes. Some advisors talked about building on the success of the previous year's project. It encouraged students to come back. Many of the advisors stated that recruitment was helped by

collaborating across subjects. Advisors also promoted the program in the Driver Education classes and some made the campaign part of the curriculum or a class project. Some schools advisors said that they have participated in the program for many years and it is now part of the school culture. New students look forward to participating in the teen safe driving campaign.

Question #10 asked participants **“to rate your response to each statement using a scale from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree** (40 advisors answered these questions)

In response to the question, **“student team members worked cohesively together”**, half of the respondents (50%) either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement with 0 respondents either **“disagreed”** or **“strongly disagreed”**.

Twenty-three of the advisors (58%) either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement that **“student leaders held regular meetings that I attended”**, while 3 respondents (8%) **“disagreed”** with that statement.

A majority of the respondents (70%) also either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement that **“students had all the materials and resources that they needed”** while one of the advisors (3%) **“disagreed”** with that statement.

In response to the question, **“I had enough time to advise the students”**, 48% of the respondents either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement while 3 advisors (8%) either **“disagreed”** or **“strongly disagreed”**.

In response to the question, **“I felt supported by my school’s administration”**, 80% of the respondents either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement, while 2% of the advisors either **“disagreed”** or **strongly disagreed”**.

In response to the question, **“I felt supported by BIANJ staff”**, an overwhelming majority (98%) of the respondents either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement, while 0 advisors (0%) either **“agreed”** or **“strongly disagreed”**.

A large majority of respondents (75%) either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement, **“I felt supported by my fellow teachers”**, while 1 of respondent (3%) **“strongly disagreed”**.

This year, due to the pandemic, a little less than half of the respondents (48%) either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement, **“The program activities went as I had planned”**, while 8% **“disagreed”** with the statement.

In response to the question, **“I collaborated on the mid-year report with my students”**, 73% of respondents either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement, while 3% **“disagreed”**.

A majority of respondents (78%) either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement, **“I collaborated on the final report with my students”**, while 3% **“disagreed”**.

75% of the respondents either **“agreed”** or **“strongly agreed”** with the statement, **“Student team members were engaged with the program”**, while 1 respondent (3%) **“strongly disagreed”**.

43% of respondents either “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “**The community was engaged with the program**”, while 15% either “*disagreed*” or “*strongly disagreed*”.

A larger number of respondents (48%) either “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” with the statement that “**The student body was engaged with the program**”, while 3 respondent (8%) either “*disagreed*” or “*strongly disagreed*”.

Almost all of the respondents (98%) either “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “**My interactions with student team members were positive**”, while 0% either “*disagreed*” or “*strongly disagreed*”.

A large majority of respondents (83%) either “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “**Being an advisor helps my career**”, while 8% “*strongly disagreed*”.

A majority of respondents (88%) either “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “**Overall, I’m happy with my advising experience this year**”, while 0 respondents (0%) either “*disagreed*” or “*strongly disagreed*”.

Question #11, “What would make things better next year?” Thirty-five advisors (88%) answered the question while 5 advisors (13%) did not answer. 6% of the advisors that responded to the question stated that the program runs well now and does not need to be improved. Once again, the issue of the disruption of the school year and the pandemic was listed by 37% of the advisors as the main challenge facing the teams. Several advisors echoed similar sentiments as the advisor who responded, “*No more COVID!*” Once again, the issue of time is key-with advisors stating that they wish they had applied earlier, had more time to get students involved, to organize and plan the campaign, and to hold meetings. Other advisors stated that bringing back the in-person Awards Showcase to Six Flags would be better. Some advisors had advice for BIANJ to make the program better including: starting the application process earlier, holding an orientation workshop for students, stipulating that students could not film in moving cars, or moving the date for submission of the final reports to April to come before school testing starts.

Question #12 was a set of questions that asked respondents “*about how unhelpful or helpful certain resources are. Please rate each resource on a scale from (1) Extremely Unhelpful to (7) Extremely Helpful. If you did not use the resource, please select ‘Did Not Use’*”. (40 advisors answered the questions, 0 skips)

In response to the question, “*my interactions with the BIANJ staff were...*” a large majority of the respondents (88%) stated that they were either “*very helpful or extremely helpful*”; 1 participant (3%) responded “*extremely unhelpful*”, while 2 responded “*did not use*”. *

*(BIANJ staff had interactions with all schools)

In response to the question, “*the technical assistance visit (where a representative from the Champion School Program presented information) was...*” almost half of the respondents (48%) stated that the visit was either “*very helpful or extremely helpful*”; 1 respondent (3%) replied that the visit was “*extremely unhelpful*”, while 19 respondents (48%) responded “*did not use*”. *

*(Technical visits were made to all participating schools)

In response to the question, ***“The technical assistance calls were...”*** 10% stated the calls were either “very helpful” or “extremely helpful”, 0 respondents (0%) found the calls to be either “unhelpful” or “extremely unhelpful”, while 70% responded, “did not use”.

In response to the question, ***“JerseyDrives.com was...”*** 68% stated that the website was either “very helpful” or “extremely helpful”, 0 respondents (0%) found the website to be either “unhelpful” or “extremely unhelpful”, while 20% responded, “did not use”.

Question #13 asked, ***“How often did you visit the U Got Brains website to access the “Tools for Schools?”*** 5% stated they accessed the website “0 times”, 40% responded “1-2 times”, 33% responded “3-5 times”, and 23% responded “6+ times”.

Question #14 asked, ***“About how often did the student team members meet?”*** 0% responded that they met “0 times”, 3% responded “1 time”, 8% responded “2-3 times”, 5% responded “4 times”, and 85% responded “5+ times”.

Question #15 asked, ***“How often did the student team members meet with you?”*** 0% responded “0 times”, 3% responded “1 time”, 8% responded “2-3 times”, 5% responded “4 times”, and 85% responded “5+ times”.

Question #16 asked, ***“In general, do you think students are safer drivers because of your project of the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program? Please rate your response from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree.”*** 88% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree”; 0% responded either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”.

Question #17 asked, ***“In general, do you think students are safer passengers because of your project of the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program? Please rate your response from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree.”*** 90% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement; 0% responded either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”.

General Conclusions from the Faculty Advisor Survey Evaluations:

Advantages of the Champion Schools Program

- A large majority of the faculty advisors think that their students are safer drivers and safer passengers because of their U Got Brains Champion Schools Project.
- Champion Schools Program brings the school and local community together around the issue of teen driving safety.
- Champion Schools Program offers the opportunity to discuss and promote safe driving practices.
- Champion Schools Program helps to get the message out and heighten awareness of teen driving safety.
- Champion Schools Program helps to bring about a change in both student and community behavior when it came to teen driving safety.
- Champion Schools Program is a student-centered and student driven peer-to-peer program.
- Students are given the opportunity to speak as advocates for teen driving safety.
- Students experience a sense of pride that comes from accomplishing something important.

Aspects of the Program that Worked Well

- Returning school advisors commented that it was easier to get students involved with their project because they knew the Champion Schools Program
- Cash stipend made it easier to fund the program
- Faculty advisors who felt supported by their administration, parents and local community stated that this support helped their project go well.
- Faculty advisors overwhelmingly felt supported by BIANJ technical support staff.
- Most faculty advisors felt that they were happy with their advising experience.

Challenges of the Champion Schools Program

- The disruption of the school schedule due to the pandemic was the biggest challenge to the program this year.
- Finding the time to meet with students and plan for the program was challenging for many schools.
- Finding the time to fit the program into the existing school calendar was challenging for some schools. Many students were involved in multiple activities.
- Lack of student involvement and getting students to follow-up on ideas was challenging for some schools.
- Getting the community involved was challenging for some schools.
- New Champion Schools struggle with the process of the program more than schools who are returning Champion Schools (although the process seems to be easier with each returning year).

Overall, the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program was found to be an effective tool to engage students to help raise awareness in their schools and communities about teen driving safety and to help change both teen driver and teen passenger behaviors. Feedback from the participating faculty advisors and students will help the Brain Injury Alliance of NJ to continually improve the *U Got Brains Champion Schools Program* and allows us to offer a proven, effective statewide peer-to-peer teen driving safety program. By partnering with the NJ Division of Highway Safety and our corporate sponsors, we can continue to help keep our roadways safer for New Jersey's newest drivers and their passengers.