

## 2022-2023 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 (NJDHTS) 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 2022-2023 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 2022-2023 school year was the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the *U Got Brains Champion Schools Program*. 58 high schools (public, private and technical) from 18 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 from 35 of the 58 participating schools (60%). A total of 50 faculty advisors responded to the survey. Bordentown, West Milford and Lenape Regional HS District each had 3 faculty advisors respond. Immaculate Heart Academy, Passaic Academy for Science and Engineering, Marlboro, Robbinsville, Lindenwold, South Plainfield, Mary Help of Christians, Burlington County Alternative School and Oakcrest High Schools each had 2 advisors respond. Westwood, Scotch Plains, Nottingham, Bergenfield, South Brunswick, Burlington City, Somerset Academy, Salem County Vo-Tech, Rae Kushner Yeshiva, Dumont, LEAP Academy, Overbrook, Bound Brook, Neptune, Lakeland Regional, CharterTech High School for the Performing Arts, Colts Neck, Delaware Valley, Hammonton, Indian Hills, Kittatinny, Red Bank Catholic, and Matawan Regional High School each had one response from a faculty advisor. The survey consisted of 17 questions. A copy of the survey along with a tally of results from the respondents is attached.

**Questions #1** asked for the name of their high school. 50 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"***. 50 advisors answered this question.

In response to the question, ***"communicating with the students about the project was..."*** almost 3/4 of the advisors (74%) found that was either ***"easy"*** or ***"very easy"***, while 2 advisors (4%) found communicating with the students to be ***"hard"*** or ***"very hard"***.

In response to the question, ***"getting support from school administrators was..."*** Almost three-fourths of the advisors also stated that it was either ***"easy"*** or ***"very easy"*** (70%), while 3 advisors or 6% stated

that getting support from school administrators was “hard” or “very hard” and 3 advisors (6%) stated that it was “somewhat hard”.

Schools seemed to have a more difficult time getting their communities involved, with only 34% of respondents stating that “**getting the community involved**” was either “easy” or “very easy” while 5 respondents (10%) stated that it was “hard” or “very hard” to get support from the community and 2 advisors (4%) stated that it was “somewhat hard”.

Schools seemed to have an easier time managing their project finances, with most respondents (74%) answering that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to “**manage the program’s finances**” while 3 advisors or 6% found that managing the finances was “very hard”.

Approximately half of the respondents (52%) thought that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to “**find time to meet with student team members**”, while 5 advisors (10%) thought that it was either “hard” or “very hard” to find the time to meet with students.

Almost half of the respondents were able to “**get student team members to take a leadership role,**” with 48% of respondents stating that it was either “easy” or “very easy” while 4 respondents or 8% stating that it was “hard”.

Respondents had an easier time “**planning the program,**” with over half (58%) of the respondents stating that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to plan the program and 1 respondent, or 2%, stating that it was “hard” to plan for the program.

Most of the respondents (68%) thought that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to “**advise the students**”, with 2 respondents (4%) 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**”. 40 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. 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, “*This is our fourth participating with a whole new team, so seeing the students emerge as leaders is good. Another positive is students' hidden talents that I don't discover until they share a suggestion or creative idea.*” Another advisor commented, “*Our students obtain key information of our town’s at-risk areas and dangers around the school. We also had a good chunk of students who are now using the crosswalk. These are major changes that were influenced by this contest and our campaign.*”

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, “*All my students come from a long road of disappointment and being told they are no good, so working together to achieve one goal is an honor to watch them*”, while another stated, “*Due to the economic environment they don't usually have the opportunity to network with other schools outside their community. Hence, it is a great experience for our urban school kids to be exposed to the program and see what other schools in the state are doing.*”

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. One advisor stated, *“The best part about this project was getting our students to talk about safe driving. It was nice seeing our school come together for a common goal to raise awareness and care about their safety.”* Another advisor commented about the program that *“Students were able to make a difference in their community while earning experiential learning hours toward their personal goal.”* Other advisors from schools who have long been a part of the program talked about the legacy and culture of safe driving that exists in their schools because of their involvement with the campaign. *“After years of participating, the legacy of the prior students has become part of the culture,”* and *“After all these years, we have created a strong campaign where our school community recognizes what we are trying to do”*.

Other respondents talked about the importance of the stipend to their campaigns and the technical assistance they received from the Brain Injury Alliance of NJ. *“The funding through U Got Brains is crucial for our program. We are a very small school. We always have to outsource companies to help us with filming our PSA's and videos,”* and another advisor commented, *“There's a lot of resources provided by the organization to help show the students what is expected. Everyone at U Got Brains is very responsive.”*

**Question #4** asked the participants to ***“describe any disadvantages or ‘bad things’ associated with having a Champion School Project at their school”***. 48 advisors responded to this question. Twenty-one (44%) of the respondents said that there were no disadvantages to having a project at school. According to the advisors, the biggest disadvantage to the program this year was time management. One advisor stated, *“It is always difficult to get the kids to meetings and to all actively be involved in all aspects of our project because so many of them are involved with athletics and other clubs and responsibilities.”* Other disadvantages included lack of commitment from the students to stay involved throughout the year, some advisors feeling frustrated because it seems like the same schools win every year, and disappointment that the Showcase had to be cancelled due to poor air quality.

**Question #5** asked the participants ***“what kinds of things made it easier for you to have the program at your school?”*** 47 advisors responded to the question. According to the advisor responses, support was the biggest factor in helping to implement their programs. Almost half (45%) 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. Five (9%) 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. Several advisors commented that the willingness of the students to participate made it easier to implement their program. This year, for the first time, advisors mentioned that social media made it easier to implement their programs. 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, *“The community and our building administration is very accepting of our campaign because of the number of years we have been involved as well as our connection to the local police department and other safety organizations!”* Finally, one advisor commented that *“No COVID”* made it easier to implement their program.

**Question #6** asked participants ***“what kinds of things made it harder for you to have the program at your school?”*** 45 advisors answered the question. 24% of the advisors answered that there was nothing that made it harder to have the program at their school. Almost half of the respondents (44%) commented that students and teachers are so busy, and time is so limited that it is hard to schedule

meetings. One advisor noted, *“A lot of our students are 3-sport athletes who have practice right after school, so meetings are hard and implementing our ideas are hard with the limited time they have. Also, a lot of our students are primary providers for their household, so they are constantly working in any spare time they have which limits time to work on the program..”* Other issues that advisors stated made it harder to have programs at schools included motivating students to stay committed to the program, and small schools feeling that they cannot compete with the larger school programs. It was suggested that we implement different levels of winners based on school size.

**Question #7** asked, *“What aspects of the program worked really well and why?”* 47 advisors answered this question. Most of the respondents stated that the PSA and social media aspects of the campaign worked well. Advisors commented on various ways they promoted their campaigns including a billboard, electronic messaging boards, weekly social media posts and safety messages included in their prom packets. Many advisors also commented on how the virtual visits and continuing tech support 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 the collaboration between students and advisors, the leadership roles taken by students, and the connections made within their community made the program easier. The stipend provided by the program was another factor that helped to make the program run well. Some advisors remarked that their students enjoyed brainstorming and planning for their projects and the advisors loved seeing their students’ creativity and passion for their campaigns.

**Question #8** asked participants, *“What aspects of the program did not work so well and why?”* 46 advisors answered the question. 35% of respondents said that all aspects of the program went well and did not have any problems. Advisors also commented that scheduling meetings was difficult, and that it was sometimes difficult to find students willing to take on leadership roles.

**Question #9** asked participants, *“How did you get student members to participate in the program?”* 46 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 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 a class curriculum, an elective period, 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. A few schools mentioned that the end of year trip to Six Flags was a big incentive and advisors used a point system or hours working on the project as a tool to decide which students qualified to come to Six Flags.

**Question #10** asked participants *“to rate your response to each statement using a scale from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree* (42 advisors answered these questions)

In response to the question, *“student team members worked cohesively together,”* around 3/4 of the respondents (78%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement with 1 respondent (2%) who *“strongly disagreed.”*

Around 3/4 of the respondents (72%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement that ***“student leaders held regular meetings that I attended”***, while 5 respondents (10%) either *“disagreed”* or *“strongly disagreed”* with that statement.

Over 3/4 of the respondents (78%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement that ***“students had all the materials and resources that they needed”*** while 2 of the advisors (4%) *“strongly disagreed”* with that statement.

In response to the question, ***“I had enough time to advise the students,”*** 60% of the respondents either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement while 5 advisors (10%) *“strongly disagreed”*.

In response to the question, ***“I felt supported by my school’s administration,”*** 78% of the respondents either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, while three of the advisors (6%) 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 1 advisor (2%) *“strongly disagreed”*.

A large majority of respondents (74%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, ***“I felt supported by my fellow teachers”***, while 1 respondent (2%) *“strongly disagreed”*.

A little less than 3/4 of the respondents (72%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, ***“The program activities went as I had planned”***, while 2 respondents (4%) *“strongly disagreed”* with the statement.

In response to the question, ***“I collaborated on the mid-year report with my students,”*** 74% of respondents either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, while 3 respondents (6%) *“strongly disagreed”*.

Most respondents (80%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, ***“I collaborated on the final report with my students”***, while 6% *“strongly disagreed”*.

82% of the respondents either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, ***“Student team members were engaged with the program”***, while 2 respondents (4%) either *“disagreed”* or *“strongly disagreed”*.

60% of respondents either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, ***“The community was engaged with the program”***, while 12% either *“disagreed”* or *“strongly disagreed”*.

A larger number of respondents (72%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement that ***“The student body was engaged with the program”***, while 2 respondents (4%) either *“disagreed”* or *“strongly disagreed”*.

Almost all the respondents (94%) either *“agreed”* or *“strongly agreed”* with the statement, ***“My interactions with student team members were positive”***, while 1 respondent (2%) *“strongly disagreed”*.

Most respondents (68%) either “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “***Being an advisor helps my career***”, while 8% either “*disagreed*” or “*strongly disagreed*”.

A large majority of respondents (84%) either “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “***Overall, I’m happy with my advising experience this year***”, while 0 respondents “*disagreed*”.

**Question #11, “What would make things better next year?”** Forty-two advisors answered the question. 21% 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 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. Some advisors stated that moving the time of the Awards Showcase back to the end of May would make things easier. One advisor suggested having less requirements for the program would make things easier, because it was hard to track and hit all of the target requirements.

**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’***”. (42 advisors answered the questions, 0 skips)

In response to the question, “***my interactions with the BIANJ staff were...***” almost 40% of the respondents (39%) stated that they were either “*very helpful or extremely helpful*”; 1 participant (2%) responded “*extremely unhelpful*”, while 9 (18%) 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 (47%) stated that the visit was either “*very helpful or extremely helpful*”; 1 respondent (2%) replied that the visit was “*extremely unhelpful*”, while 24 respondents (49%) responded “*did not use*”. \*

\*(Technical visits were made to all participating schools)

In response to the question, “***The technical assistance calls were...***” 37% stated the calls were either “*very helpful*” or “*extremely helpful*”, 1 respondent (2%) found the calls to be “*extremely unhelpful*”, while 61% responded, “*did not use*”.

In response to the question, “***JerseyDrives.com was...***” 69% stated that the website was either “*very helpful*” or “*extremely helpful*”, 1 respondent (2%) found the website to be “*extremely unhelpful*”, while 22% responded, “*did not use*”.

**Question #13** asked, “***How often did you visit the U Got Brains website to access the ‘Tools for Schools?’***” 4% stated they accessed the website “*0 times*”, 14% responded “*1-2 times*”, 51% responded “*3-5 times*”, and 31% responded “*6+ times*”.

**Question #14** asked, “***About how often did the student team members meet?***” 2% responded that they met “*0 times*”, 0% responded “*1 time*”, 2% responded “*2-3 times*”, 2% responded “*4 times*”, and 94% responded “*5+ times*”.

**Question #15** asked, *“How often did the student team members meet with you?”* 2% responded “0 times”, 0% responded “1 time”, 2% responded “2-3 times”, 0% responded “4 times”, and 96% 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.”* 82% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree”; 2% responded “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.”* 82% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement; 2% responded “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**

- 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 participated 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 is 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.