

## **2025-2026 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 (NJDHVS) 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.*

*The 2025-2026 school year was the 16<sup>th</sup> year of the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program. 58 high schools (public, private and technical) from 19 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 49 of the 58 participating schools (84%). A total of 49 faculty advisors responded to the survey. Lenape Regional HS District had 5 advisors respond. Steinert HS had 3 advisors respond. Lindenwold, Oakcrest, and South Brunswick had 2 advisors respond to the survey. Barnegat, Bordentown Regional, Bound Brook, Bridgewater-Raritan, Burlington City, Camden Academy Charter, Chartertech High School for the Performing Arts, Colts Neck, Columbia, Dover, Dunellen, Edison Academy Magnet School, Hammonton, Immaculate Heart Academy, Indian Hills, Kittatinny Regional, Lakeland Regional, Mainland Regional, Manchester Regional Day School, Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science, Matawan Regional, Middletown High School North, Middletown High School South, Pequannock Township, Piscataway, Red Bank Regional, Saint Joseph, South Plainfield, South River, Spotswood, Thomas A. Edison Career & Technical Academy, Union City, West Milford, West Orange, and Westwood High Schools 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.*

**Question #1** asked for the name of their high school. 49 advisors answered this question.

**Question #2** asked the participants to ***“rate your response to each activity using a 7-point scale ranging from (1) very hard to (7) very easy”***. 49 advisors answered this question.

In response to the question, ***“communicating with the student team members about the project...”*** 34 advisors (69%) found that it was either *“easy”* or *“very easy”*, while 1 advisor (2%) found communicating with students to be *“hard”* or *“very hard”*.

In response to the question, ***“getting support from school administrators was...”*** 33 advisors (67%) found that it was *“easy”* or *“very easy”*, while 3 advisors or 6% stated that getting support from school administrators was *“very hard”*.

Schools seemed to have a more difficult time getting their communities involved, with only 39% of advisors answering it was *“easy”* or *“very easy”* ***“getting the community involved”*** while 1 respondent answered it was *“very hard”*.

Schools seemed to have an easier time managing their finances with most respondents (76%) answering that it was *“easy”* or *“very easy”* to ***“manage the program’s finances”*** while 2 advisors (4%) found that managing the finances was *“very hard”*.

In response to the question ***“finding time to meet with student team members”***, 21 advisors (43%) thought that it was either *“easy”* or *“very easy”* to, while 4 advisors (8%) thought that it was either *“hard”* or *“very hard”* to find the time to meet with students.

Over half of the respondents were able to ***“get student team members to take a leadership role,”*** with 57% of respondents stating that it was either *“easy”* or *“very easy”* while 2 respondents or 4% stating that it was *“hard”* or *“very hard”*.

Respondents had an easier time ***“planning the program,”*** with over half (59%) of the respondents stating that it was either *“easy”* or *“very easy”* to plan the program and 2 respondents, or 4%, stating that it was *“hard”* to plan for the program.

Over half of the respondents (69%) thought that it was either *“easy”* or *“very easy”* to ***“advise the students”***, with 2 respondents (4%) thought that it was *“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”***. 49 respondents (100%) answered this question.

Advisors overwhelmingly described the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program as a valuable opportunity to increase traffic safety awareness while empowering students to become leaders in their schools and communities. Many highlighted the program's ability to foster meaningful student engagement, strengthen community partnerships, and establish a lasting culture of

safety. Advisors also praised the resources, support, and funding provided through the program, noting that these elements helped expand the reach and impact of their initiatives.

Student leadership and engagement emerged as one of the program's greatest strengths. Advisors consistently noted that students became more invested in promoting traffic safety, developed leadership and teamwork skills, and took ownership of planning and implementing campaigns. One advisor shared, *"This program really allows students to take the lead... it provides them the opportunity to reach out beyond the classroom."* Another commented, *"Our students learned advocacy & the importance of community help."*

Many respondents emphasized that the program helped increase awareness of safe driving, pedestrian safety, and bicycle and e-bike safety throughout their schools and surrounding communities. Advisors described how students used awareness events, social media campaigns, school signage, and peer education to keep transportation safety visible throughout the year. As one advisor explained, *"Participating in the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program has helped our students develop safer driving habits, such as avoiding distractions and wearing seatbelts, while also building leadership and teamwork skills through peer-led activities. It has brought recognition to our program, boosted pride in our program, and contributed to a safer environment both on campus and in the local community."*

Advisors also highlighted the program's ability to strengthen community partnerships and expand outreach beyond the school. Schools collaborated with local police departments, mayors, community organizations, elementary schools, and municipal leaders to promote transportation safety. One advisor shared, *"We have built a relationship with the new mayor and he is interested in our ideas for safer roads."* Another noted, *"Students are passionate about raising awareness for safe driving practices that positively impact not only our school community, but the community as a whole. The program also brings together students from different groups and backgrounds, allowing them to collaborate in a positive environment while creating impactful and innovative campaigns."*

Many respondents appreciated the resources, guidance, and financial support provided through the Champion Schools Program. Advisors stated that the stipend allowed them to implement projects without fundraising, while program staff, educational materials, and opportunities to collaborate with other schools helped strengthen their campaigns. One advisor commented, *"Having the stipend available to be able to run programs without the burden of fundraising is a huge benefit."* Another noted, *"Very easy to use information and resources. Staff at U Got Brains was very helpful."*

Several advisors observed that participation has helped create a lasting culture of transportation safety within their schools. Long-term participants explained that after many

years, the program has become a recognized tradition that students, faculty, and the community anticipate each year. One advisor stated, *"After 16 years of involvement, the program is no longer just an initiative—it has become a tradition. That consistency has helped build a strong culture of safe driving, where students are already familiar with the message before they even get behind the wheel. Instead of starting from scratch each year, we build on a foundation that past students created, making our efforts more effective and meaningful."* Another advisor shared, *"It helps increase student awareness of traffic-related safety. For example, putting up signs for Pedestrian Safety Month throughout October raises awareness among students, parents, and anyone who visits our school during the month. Posting on social media weekly and tagging other groups. We have been very fortunate to be recognized for the work the club has done. The prize money has been invested in items for use in driver education, health classes, and community outreach events."*

Advisors also described additional benefits that extended beyond the classroom, including:

- **Expanded Community Impact:** Students partnered with elementary schools, local governments, community organizations, and public safety agencies to promote transportation safety.
- **Recognition and School Pride:** Schools received community recognition, increased visibility through media and social media, and celebrated student accomplishments through awards and events.
- **Student Networking and Career Development:** Students gained experience working with community leaders and organizations while developing valuable leadership, communication, and advocacy skills.
- **Program Growth and Sustainability:** Several schools reported increased student participation, expanded campaigns, and stronger support from administrators and community partners each year.

**Question #4** asked the participants to ***"describe any disadvantages with participating in the U Got Brains Program at your school."*** 48 advisors (98%) answered this question.

Based on the 48 advisor responses, the overwhelming theme is that there are very few inherent disadvantages to the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program itself. In fact, approximately one-third of advisors explicitly stated that there were no disadvantages, using responses such as *"None," "No complaints," "Nothing,"* or describing the program as entirely positive. The challenges that were identified were largely related to implementation within schools, rather than concerns with the program's design or value.

While many advisors reported no significant disadvantages associated with participating in the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program, those who did identify challenges overwhelmingly described logistical and school-based barriers rather than shortcomings of the program itself. The responses indicate that the program is well-regarded, with most obstacles stemming from competing priorities, scheduling constraints, and administrative processes.

The most frequently mentioned disadvantage was the significant time commitment required to successfully implement the program. Advisors consistently reported that students' busy schedules—including sports, clubs, jobs, academics, and family obligations—made it difficult to schedule meetings and maintain consistent participation throughout the school year. Advisors also noted that balancing program responsibilities with their own teaching, grading, and extracurricular duties added to the challenge.

*"It is very time consuming and a lot of students have other extracurricular activities on top of our club."*

*"The biggest challenge is time. Between academics, athletics, and other commitments, it can be difficult to consistently bring students together."*

*"Our students have so much going on, so it was tough to find a common time to meet."*

Several advisors also described maintaining student engagement and motivation as an ongoing challenge. Participation sometimes declined over the course of the year as students became busy with other commitments, particularly seniors approaching graduation. Advisors found that keeping momentum and ensuring equal participation required continuous encouragement and organization. *"Finding time and getting the kids motivated sometimes."* Another advisor said, *"One disadvantage was that it could sometimes be difficult to balance program activities with schoolwork, sports, and other extracurricular activities. Planning events and finding times when students were available required a lot of coordination. It was also sometimes challenging to keep students consistently involved throughout the year."*

Another common theme involved administrative and school-level support. Advisors reported delays in obtaining approvals for assemblies, parent programs, transportation, and field trips. Some noted that administrators were supportive in principle but unable or unwilling to actively assist with implementation. District purchasing procedures and reimbursement processes also created additional work. One advisor explained that it is ... *"Hard to get admin approval for things. Slow communication and response time,"* while another advisor said, *"My administration is not unsupportive but more aptly apathetic towards our campaign."*

Several respondents cited transportation, funding, and scheduling conflicts as barriers to fully participating in showcase events and recognition activities. School budgets, testing schedules,

district field trip requirements, and transportation limitations prevented some schools from attending the annual Showcase or other program events despite successfully completing their campaigns. One advisor explained *"Our school's budget prevented us from attending the Showcase, which was a huge disadvantage."* Another advisor explained, *"The only negative experience... is scheduling the field trip to the Awards Showcase. My school district just doesn't make things easy with this."*

Some advisors also reported program startup and sustainability challenges. Schools that joined the program late or had first-year advisors described a learning curve and difficulty gaining momentum. Longtime advisors expressed that after many years of participation, creating fresh campaign ideas became increasingly difficult while still delivering engaging programming. One advisor explained, *"One real challenge of being part of the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program—especially after 16 years—is keeping the campaign fresh. When a program has been around that long, many of the core ideas, activities, and messages have already been used in some form. It can be difficult to come up with new concepts that feel original and still deliver the same strong impact."*

Finally, a small number of advisors noted technology or reporting requirements as minor inconveniences, including using PowerPoint for documentation rather than more familiar collaborative platforms.

Despite these challenges, one finding stands out clearly: many advisors saw no disadvantages at all. Numerous respondents described the program as valuable, well-supported, and beneficial for both students and their school communities.

Question #5 asked the participants ***"what kinds of things made it easier for you to have the program at your school?"*** 49 advisors (100%) answered the question.

Advisors identified several key factors that helped facilitate successful implementation of the program in their schools. The most frequently mentioned enablers were administrative support, student engagement, established program credibility, funding and resources, and strong support from program staff and community partners. These factors allowed schools to overcome logistical challenges, build participation, and sustain meaningful programming throughout the year.

Administrative and School Leadership Support was the most commonly cited facilitator. Advisors repeatedly emphasized the importance of supportive principals, administrators, teachers, and staff who provided approval, resources, flexibility, and encouragement. One advisor shared, *"A supportive administrative team."* Another noted, *"Our current administration*

*made it very easy.*” Schools with strong leadership support found it easier to schedule activities, gain participation, and integrate the program into existing school initiatives.

Student Engagement and Leadership emerged as another critical factor. Advisors reported that enthusiastic, motivated students helped drive campaign success by taking ownership of projects, recruiting peers, and leading awareness efforts. One respondent explained, *“Student enthusiasm and participation made the program easier to implement.”* Another stated that success came from *“students actively participating and taking lead roles and assisting and organizing awareness opportunities.”* Schools with dedicated student leaders consistently described smoother implementation and stronger overall engagement.

Established Programs and Previous Experience also contributed to ease of implementation. Several advisors noted that having run the program for multiple years increased recognition, credibility, and community buy-in. As one advisor explained, *“After so many years, the program has built credibility and more people want to work with it.”* Others noted that staff and students were already familiar with expectations, making planning and execution more efficient.

Funding and Financial Support were frequently mentioned as important resources. Advisors appreciated grants and stipends that helped cover materials, transportation, events, and student activities. One respondent shared, *“Definitely the grant so we could use it for things like the crossing guard breakfast and transportation.”* Another simply highlighted the importance of *“funding”* and the availability of stipends for project materials and campaign activities.

Support from Program Staff and Organizational Partners played a significant role in helping schools navigate implementation. Several advisors specifically praised program representatives and support staff for their guidance, communication, and responsiveness. One respondent noted, *“Delmy is amazing and helped greatly.”* Others cited the support of BIANJ, Jersey Drives, EndDD, and other organizations as important contributors to program success.

Community Partnerships and External Support further strengthened schools' efforts. Advisors highlighted assistance from local police departments, township officials, community organizations, and other stakeholders. One advisor stated that *“the support of the school and community”* helped sustain the program, while another emphasized the value of working with local police and engineers who partnered directly with students on traffic safety initiatives.

Time, Scheduling Flexibility, and Existing Structures helped reduce barriers to participation. Schools found it easier to implement the program when they had dedicated meeting time

during the school day, incorporated activities into existing classes, or built campaigns around established student clubs.

Communication Tools and Program Resources also supported implementation. Advisors valued email reminders, virtual meetings, planning materials, checklists, social media tools, and access to morning announcements. These resources helped schools stay organized, communicate effectively, and maintain momentum throughout the year.

Overall, advisors described successful implementation as the result of a supportive network that included engaged students, committed school leaders, experienced advisors, sufficient funding, strong organizational support, and community collaboration. Together, these factors created the conditions needed for schools to effectively deliver the program and expand its impact within their communities.

Question #6 asked the participants ***“What kinds of things made it harder for you to have the program at your school?”*** 48 advisors (98%) answered this question.

While many advisors reported few significant barriers, those who did identify challenges most cited time constraints, competing student commitments, scheduling difficulties, administrative processes, and transportation or resource limitations. These challenges primarily affected participation, planning, and the ability to carry out activities consistently throughout the school year.

Time Constraints and Scheduling Conflicts emerged as the most frequently reported obstacle. Advisors described the difficulty of finding meeting times that worked for students with busy academic, athletic, and extracurricular schedules. One advisor shared, *“The biggest challenge was finding times that worked for all students to meet and participate.”* Another noted, *“Scheduling can sometimes be difficult because students are so busy with other classes, sports, jobs, etc.”* Schools often struggle to coordinate activities around AP exams, sporting events, field trips, and other school commitments.

Competing Student Responsibilities and Engagement Challenges were also commonly mentioned. Many students involved in the program were highly active in multiple clubs, sports, and leadership activities, limiting the time they could dedicate to the campaign. One advisor explained that students were often *“pulled in too many directions with other clubs, sports and activities.”* Others noted challenges maintaining engagement and keeping safe driving messages fresh and relevant throughout the year.

Administrative Requirements and Approval Processes created barriers for some schools. Advisors reported that obtaining approvals for events, spending funds, and completing required paperwork could be time consuming. One respondent stated, *"Paperwork/approval needed for almost everything."* Another commented that *"there are a lot of hoops we have to go through for approval of every aspect we intend to do."* These processes sometimes delayed activities and increased the workload for advisors.

Transportation and Logistics Challenges were identified by several schools. Limited bus availability, transportation issues, and students living in different communities sometimes make it difficult to attend meetings and events. One advisor noted that transportation concerns made meeting participation more difficult, while another simply cited *"Transportation"* as a major challenge.

Limited Resources and Budget Constraints were obstacles for some schools, particularly those with large student populations or limited supplemental funding. Advisors noted difficulties funding certain activities and incentives, obtaining supplies, and accessing technology support. One respondent cited a lack of a technology department, while others described challenges carrying out projects with limited financial resources.

Communication and Organizational Challenges occasionally made implementation more difficult. Some schools reported challenges coordinating between multiple groups or maintaining consistent communication among participants. One advisor noted that communication between collaborating groups was sometimes *"a little lax,"* requiring additional effort to keep activities moving forward.

Leadership Turnover and Student Initiative presented challenges for a few schools. Advisors observed that changes in student leadership, graduating members, or varying levels of initiative among student leaders could affect the pace and effectiveness of campaign activities. Some advisors found that newer student leaders required more guidance and structure than previous groups.

Administrative and School Support Challenges, while less common, were mentioned by a small number of respondents. Most schools described administration as supportive; however, a few advisors reported experiencing roadblocks related to approvals, decision-making, or limited administrative support that complicated implementation efforts.

Overall, advisors indicated that the greatest challenges stemmed from limited time, busy student schedules, competing responsibilities, administrative processes, and logistical barriers.

Despite these obstacles, many respondents emphasized that strong student leadership, supportive administrators, and flexibility helped schools successfully navigate challenges and continue implementing the program effectively.

Question #7 asked ***“What aspects of the program worked really well and why?”***. 100% of the participants answered the question.

Advisors highlighted several program components that were particularly successful. The most frequently cited strengths were student leadership and engagement, community outreach and partnerships, social media and awareness activities, program structure and support, and opportunities for creativity and student ownership. Together, these elements helped schools increase participation, expand their reach, and create meaningful traffic safety initiatives.

Student Leadership, Teamwork, and Engagement emerged as the strongest theme across responses. Advisors consistently reported that motivated student leaders took initiative, collaborated effectively, and generated new ideas that drove campaign success. One advisor noted, *“I have a great group of students right now so they took initiative and worked well together.”* Another shared, *“We had a good group this year of students who took initiatives and had new ideas to bring to the project.”* Schools also reported success when students were actively involved in planning, dividing responsibilities, and supporting one another throughout implementation.

Community Outreach and Partnerships were widely viewed as highly effective components of the program. Advisors praised collaborations with local police departments, hospitals, elementary schools, community organizations, libraries, and local businesses. One respondent noted success through *“community outreach and guest speakers/presentations,”* while another highlighted partnerships with *“the police department and Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.”* These collaborations allowed students to extend safety messages beyond the school environment and connect with broader community audiences.

Social Media Campaigns and Awareness Activities were repeatedly identified as successful outreach tools. Advisors reported that social media helped them reach students where they already spend their time while making safety messages more engaging and relatable. One advisor explained, *“Our social media campaign was effective because it reached students where they already spend time and made the message more engaging.”* Schools also found success with PSA campaigns, tabling events, spirit days, morning announcements, awareness weeks, and interactive school-wide activities.

Interactive, Visible, and Hands-On Activities worked especially well because they encouraged active student participation. Advisors noted strong responses to activities such as seat belt checks, parking spot incentives, pledge campaigns, contests, fundraisers, awareness presentations, and outreach events. One advisor shared, *“The activities that worked best were the ones that were visible, interactive, and offered rewards.”* Another reported that hands-on activities successfully combined education with meaningful student engagement.

Program Structure, Organization, and Ongoing Support were also highly valued. Advisors appreciated the clear expectations, organized materials, check-ins, virtual meetings, and planning tools provided throughout the year. One respondent stated, *“It’s very organized, we didn’t have any questions on what was needed to submit.”* Others noted that mid-year check-ins, meetings with Jersey Drives staff, and the ability to complete projects in manageable phases helped keep students engaged and on track.

Community Engagement and Advocacy Opportunities allowed students to make meaningful connections between traffic safety and real-world issues. Advisors reported success when students engaged directly with community members, younger students, and local stakeholders. One advisor cited *“advocacy and involvement”* as a major success, while another noted that community events increased student awareness and expanded the impact of safety messaging beyond school grounds.

Student Choice and Creativity were important contributors to success. Advisors appreciated the flexibility that allowed students to select topics, design campaigns, create videos, develop social media content, and implement unique activities tailored to their school community. One respondent highlighted *“the freedom to allow students to choose,”* while others praised the creativity students demonstrated through campaign projects and awareness initiatives.

Funding and Program Resources were also identified as valuable components. Stipends and available funding allowed schools to create promotional materials, support events, fund transportation, and develop visible campaign activities. Advisors noted that financial support helped increase student enthusiasm and gave schools the resources needed to bring ideas to life.

Established Programs and Returning Student Leaders contributed to success in schools with long-standing participation in the program. Advisors reported that returning members, experienced advisors, and established traditions provided continuity and helped new students become engaged more quickly. Many schools noted that each year’s efforts built upon previous successes and strengthened program sustainability.

Overall, advisors described the program's greatest strengths as its ability to empower student leaders, foster community partnerships, support creative and interactive activities, and provide structured guidance throughout the year. These elements worked particularly well because they encouraged meaningful student participation, increased community visibility, and helped schools deliver engaging and impactful traffic safety campaigns.

**Question #8** asked "***What aspects of the program did not work so well and why?***" 46 participants answered (94%).

While many advisors reported that the program worked well overall and several indicated that they had no major concerns, those who identified challenges most commonly pointed to scheduling and time constraints, student participation and engagement, difficulties reaching broader audiences, and logistical or organizational barriers. These challenges often reflected the realities of busy school environments rather than concerns with the program itself.

Scheduling and Time Constraints were the most frequently cited challenges. Advisors consistently described difficulties coordinating meetings, activities, and events around students' academic, athletic, and extracurricular commitments. One advisor shared, "*Meeting attendance and scheduling were the most difficult aspects of the program.*" Another noted that "*students involved are very involved in activities outside of the program so finding time for them to meet was a little hard.*" Schools also reported challenges scheduling virtual meetings, organizing field trips, and finding time to implement activities within already packed school calendars.

Competing Student Responsibilities and Follow-Through also limited implementation efforts. Many students involved in the program were heavily engaged in sports, clubs, jobs, leadership activities, and other obligations, making it difficult to maintain momentum throughout the year. One advisor reported "*Student leaders not following through in a timely manner – their busy schedules.*" Others noted that students had creative ideas but lacked sufficient time to fully implement them.

Maintaining Student Engagement and Reaching the Entire Student Body was another recurring challenge. Some advisors found it difficult to get all students excited about traffic safety topics or to sustain participation over time. One respondent simply identified "*Getting students excited*" as a challenge, while another noted difficulty "*engaging the total student body.*" Several schools reported that awareness campaigns competed with many other school activities for students' attention.

Community Outreach and Broader Participation did not work as well for some schools. Advisors noted challenges expanding efforts beyond their core student groups and generating participation from community members. One respondent shared, *“Trying to get the community involved—that is an improvement we need for next year.”* Others reported difficulties reaching broader audiences with safety messages or building community engagement around events.

Program Activities that Relied on Passive Communication Methods were viewed as less effective than interactive approaches. Some advisors noted that posters, announcements, and other passive awareness efforts did not always capture students’ attention. One respondent observed that *“relying only on posters or occasional announcements”* was less successful because students responded better to hands-on, interactive activities and direct engagement.

Organizational and Coordination Challenges were mentioned by several schools. These included managing larger groups, coordinating multiple activities at once, keeping projects on schedule, and ensuring clear communication among participants. Advisors found that group coordination could be difficult when students had different availability and competing priorities.

Administrative and Approval Barriers occasionally affected implementation. A few schools reported difficulty obtaining approval for assemblies, events, or other activities. One advisor noted that an assembly proposal was not approved because of competing school priorities, while another expressed frustration with the length of time required to move projects and changes through school approval processes.

Leadership and Participation Dynamics also emerged as challenges in a small number of responses. Some advisors noted uneven participation within leadership teams, dominant personalities within groups, or difficulties getting quieter students involved. Others reported challenges engaging a larger portion of the club beyond a small executive board or core leadership group.

Timeline and First-Year Implementation Challenges were cited by newer programs. Advisors noted that launching activities within a limited timeframe made it difficult to accomplish all of their goals. Some first-year schools felt they needed more time to establish their programs, recruit participants, and build awareness.

Overall, advisors indicated that the aspects that worked least well were generally related to limited time, scheduling conflicts, competing student commitments, participation challenges, and logistical coordination rather than shortcomings in the program design itself. In fact, many respondents explicitly stated that there were few or no major aspects of the program that did

not work well. The findings suggest that increasing scheduling flexibility, expanding strategies for student and community engagement, and providing additional opportunities for participation may help schools strengthen implementation in future years.

**Question #9** asked participants, **“How did you get student members to participate in the program?”** 100% of the participants answered this question.

Advisors described a variety of successful recruitment and engagement strategies that helped attract and retain student participation in the program. The most cited approaches included leveraging existing clubs and classes, empowering student leaders, promoting the program through multiple communication channels, offering incentives, and creating meaningful opportunities for students to make a difference in their schools and communities.

Existing Clubs, Classes, and Established Programs were the primary recruitment channels for many schools. Advisors frequently integrated the program into SADD clubs, Safe Driving Clubs, Driver Education classes, Health classes, Safety Ambassador programs, and other existing student organizations. One advisor explained, *“We have a club that works on Safe Driving PSAs that we also do this program with,”* while another noted that participation was *“built right into our Option Two program.”* Embedding the program into existing structures made recruitment easier and ensured a steady pool of interested students.

Student Leadership and Peer Recruitment were also highly effective. Many advisors intentionally created student-led programs, allowing student leaders to take ownership of activities and recruit their peers. One advisor shared, *“I made sure the program was student led so seniors really stepped up and organized our club.”* Other schools relied on word-of-mouth promotion, with current members encouraging friends and classmates to join. Advisors reported that once students saw the activities and impact of the program, participation often grew organically.

Promoting the Program Through Multiple Communication Channels helped schools reach a wider audience. Advisors recruited students through classroom presentations, school announcements, social media, activity fairs, parent organizations, teacher recommendations, and direct outreach to students. One respondent explained that they advertised through *“morning announcements, social media pages for students and parents, and teacher and administrator recommendations.”* Schools that actively promoted the program throughout the year reported stronger participation rates.

Providing Students with Purpose and Leadership Opportunities helped motivate involvement. Advisors emphasized community impact, advocacy, leadership development, and the opportunity to improve traffic safety. One school encouraged participation by emphasizing *“leadership opportunities, community involvement, and the impact students could have on improving traffic safety awareness.”* Many students were attracted to the program because they wanted to make a meaningful difference within their school or community.

Incentives and Recognition were another commonly used strategy. Schools reported success using prizes, gift cards, service hours, club points, scholarships, parking spot incentives, Six Flags trips, food, merchandise, and other rewards to encourage participation. One advisor noted that students enjoyed the *“perks aka Six Flags, free lunches, missing class time, etc.”* Others used community service hours, National Honor Society credit, or showcase eligibility requirements to increase engagement and accountability.

Creating Interactive, Fun, and Student-Centered Activities helped sustain interest throughout the year. Advisors found that students were more likely to participate when activities were creative, engaging, and allowed them to contribute ideas. Social media campaigns, PSA creation, contests, fundraisers, awareness events, video production, and design competitions were frequently cited as successful engagement tools. One advisor explained that they *“tried to make our team fun and engaging”* and create a group *“everyone wants to be a part of.”*

Offering Choice and Ownership also increased participation. Several advisors described giving students flexibility in selecting projects, choosing campaign topics, and determining how they wanted to contribute. One respondent shared, *“We gave them options for what they wanted to do, and they chose to do some things but not all.”* Allowing students to take ownership of activities fostered stronger commitment and greater enthusiasm.

Building on Previous Successes and Established Traditions contributed to continued participation in many schools. Several advisors noted that students joined because the program had been successful in prior years or because older members encouraged younger students to become involved. One advisor explained, *“Momentum from last year's campaign helped us easily recruit students.”* Others reported that freshmen who joined early remained engaged throughout high school and eventually assumed leadership roles.

Advisor Enthusiasm and Personal Recruitment also played an important role. Many advisors described directly encouraging students to join, speaking to classes, personally recruiting members, or fostering excitement around the program. One respondent observed that student

enthusiasm often reflected advisor enthusiasm, noting that *“students feed off the emotions of the adults.”*

Overall, advisors reported that student participation was strongest when schools connected the program to existing clubs and classes, empowered student leaders, provided meaningful opportunities for impact, promoted the program widely, and made participation engaging and rewarding. These strategies helped create a culture where students felt motivated to join, stay involved, and take ownership of program activities.

**Question #10** asked participants *“to rate your response to each statement using a scale from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree.”* 49 advisors (100%) answered these questions.

In response to the statement, *“Student team members worked cohesively together,”* 34 respondents (69%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” while 1 respondent (2%) “strongly disagreed.”

63% of respondents (31 advisors) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement that *“Student leaders held regular meetings that I attended,”* while 1 respondent (2%) “strongly disagreed.”

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 36 advisors (73%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement that *“Students had all the materials and resources they needed,”* while no respondents (0%) disagreed with the statement.

In response to the statement, *“I had enough time to advise the students,”* 31 respondents (63%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” while 2 advisors (4%) either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”

In response to the statement, *“I felt supported by my school's administration,”* 35 respondents (71%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” while 1 advisor (2%) “disagreed.”

In response to the statement, *“I felt supported by the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ) staff,”* an overwhelming 44 respondents (90%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” while no respondents (0%) disagreed with the statement.

A large majority of respondents, 35 advisors (71%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, *“I felt supported by my fellow teachers,”* while no respondents (0%) disagreed with the statement.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents, 28 advisors (57%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“The program activities went as I had planned,”*** while no respondents (0%) disagreed with the statement.

In response to the statement, ***“I collaborated on the mid-year report with the students,”*** 33 respondents (67%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” while 1 respondent (2%) “disagreed.”

Most respondents, 36 advisors (73%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“I collaborated on the final report with the students,”*** while 1 respondent (2%) “disagreed.”

A large majority of respondents, 37 advisors (76%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“Student team members were engaged with the program,”*** while no respondents (0%) disagreed with the statement.

Just under half of respondents, 24 advisors (49%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“The community was engaged with the program,”*** while 3 respondents (6%) either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”

A majority of respondents, 30 advisors (61%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“The student body was engaged with the program,”*** while 1 respondent (2%) “disagreed.”

An overwhelming 42 respondents (86%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“My interactions with student team members were positive,”*** while no respondents (0%) disagreed with the statement.

Most respondents, 35 advisors (71%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“Being an advisor helps my career,”*** while 1 respondent (2%) “disagreed.”

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 43 advisors (88%), either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, ***“Overall, I’m happy with my advising experience this year,”*** while no respondents (0%) disagreed with the statement.

Overall, survey responses from 49 advisors reflected a highly positive experience with the Champion Schools Program. Advisors reported that student teams worked well together, students were engaged, and interactions with student team members were overwhelmingly positive. Respondents also expressed exceptionally strong support from BIANJ staff, with 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they felt supported. Most advisors indicated they had the resources needed, collaborated with students throughout the project, and were satisfied with their advising experience. While responses regarding community engagement (49%), student body engagement (61%), and whether program activities went as planned (57%) were somewhat more mixed, the overall findings demonstrate a successful program characterized by

strong student leadership, advisor satisfaction, and meaningful support from BIANJ and school communities.

Question #11 asked participants, ***“What would make things better next year?”***. 41 participants (84%) answered this question.

Advisor responses suggest that while the program is viewed very positively overall, improvements next year would primarily focus on earlier planning, stronger scheduling structures, increased student engagement and leadership, enhanced communication, and greater access to resources and community partnerships.

#### Earlier Planning and Clearer Timelines

The most common recommendation was to start planning earlier and provide clearer timelines. Advisors noted that knowing key dates, especially the showcase date, further in advance would help schools avoid scheduling conflicts and allow more time to order materials, organize activities, and execute campaigns. Several respondents indicated that simply having a better understanding of the program timeline this year would make participation easier next year.

#### More Structured Meeting Times and Scheduling Support

#### Increased Student Participation and Leadership

Another major theme was strengthening student involvement. Advisors expressed interest in recruiting more members, increasing membership growth, developing dedicated student leaders, and encouraging students to take greater ownership of activities. Several respondents believed that stronger leadership teams and more active participation would improve productivity and program impact.

#### More Community Engagement and Partnerships

Respondents frequently requested more resources, including guest speakers, presentations, planning tools, funding, transportation support, helmets and safety equipment, and lists of potential partner organizations. Advisors also noted that increased administrative support and clearer planning documents could help schools implement activities more effectively.

#### More Interactive and Engaging Planning

Several advisors suggested increasing opportunities for student-to-student collaboration, interactive activities, safety demonstrations, social media outreach, and guest speaker sessions.

Respondents felt that keeping the program fresh, hands-on, and engaging would help maintain enthusiasm and participation.

## Overall Summary

The feedback indicates that the program is highly valued and many respondents stated that little or nothing needed to change. However, advisors consistently identified earlier planning, clearer timelines, structured meeting opportunities, stronger student leadership, expanded community partnerships, and additional resources and support as the key factors that would make the program even more successful next year.

Question #12 was a set of questions that asked participants ***“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’”***. 48 advisors answered the questions, (98%)

In response to the question, ***“my interactions with the Brain Injury Alliance staff were...”*** 83% of the respondents stated that they were *“helpful”* or *“extremely helpful”*. 4 participants (8%) answered *extremely unhelpful*, while 1 (2%) answered *“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 (46%) stated that the visit was *“very helpful”* or *“extremely helpful”*; 3 respondents (6%) stated that the visit was either *“unhelpful”* or *“extremely unhelpful”*, while 16 participants (33%) answered *“did not use”*. \*

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

In response to the question, ***“The technical assistance calls were...”*** 16 (33%) of the respondents answered that the calls were either *“very helpful”* or *“extremely helpful”*, 3 of the respondents (6%) found the calls to be *“unhelpful”* or *“extremely unhelpful”*, 22 respondents (46%) answered they *did not use it*.

In response to the question, ***“JerseyDrives.com was...”*** 32 respondents (67%) answered *“helpful”* or *“extremely helpful”*, 5 respondents (10%) found the website to be either *“unhelpful”* or *“extremely unhelpful”*, while 2% responded, *“did not use”*.

**Question #13** asked, ***“How often did you visit the U Got Brains website to access the “Tools for Schools?”*** 0% stated they accessed the website *“0 times”*, 26% responded *“1-2 times”*, 30% responded *“3-5 times”*, and 45% responded *“6+ times”*. 47 advisors answered (96%)

**Question #14** asked, *“About how often did the student team members meet?”* 0% responded that they met “0 times”, 0% responded “1 time”, 4% responded “2-3 times”, 9% responded “4 times”, and 87% responded “5+ times”. 46 advisors answered (94%).

**Question #15** asked, *“How often did the student team members meet with you?”* 0% responded “0 times”, 0% responded “1 time”, 4% responded “2-3 times”, 6% responded “4 times”, and 89% responded “5+ times”. 47 advisors answered (96%).

**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.”* 78% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree”; 2% responded “strongly disagree”. 46 advisors answered this question (94%).

**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.”* 79% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement; 0% responded “strongly disagree”. 47 advisors answered this question (96%).

### **General Conclusions from the Faculty Advisor Survey Evaluations:**

#### **Advantages of the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program**

- Students gained leadership, communication, and advocacy skills.
- Students took ownership of campaigns and became active problem-solvers.
- Many advisors reported increased student confidence and engagement.
- Raised awareness of safe driving, pedestrian safety, bicycle safety, and e-bike safety.
- Increased visibility of transportation safety issues throughout schools and communities.
- Fostered relationships with police departments, municipal leaders, community organizations, hospitals, and elementary schools.
- Created opportunities for students to engage directly with community stakeholders.
- Expanded the reach of safety messages beyond the school environment.
- Stipends and grants allowed schools to implement projects without fundraising.
- Helped establish long-term traditions focused on safe driving and transportation safety.
- Increased school pride and visibility through recognition, awards, and media exposure.
- Many schools have reported program growth, continued participation, and stronger support over time.
- Students developed real-world skills in public speaking, collaboration, project planning, and advocacy.

#### **Aspects of the Program that Worked Well**

- Students effectively planned activities and lead campaigns.
- Student ownership contributed to stronger engagement and project success.

- Partnerships with police departments, hospitals, community groups, libraries, and local businesses were highly successful.
- Community outreach expanded awareness and strengthened campaign impact.
- Students were able to connect safety issues with real-world community needs.
- Social media campaigns successfully reached students where they already spent time.
- Schools reported success with: PSA campaigns, awareness weeks, morning announcements, spirit days, tabling events, and school-wide safety initiatives.
- Advisors valued: clear expectations, check-ins and virtual meetings, planning tools, resource materials, and communication from BIANJ staff.
- Flexibility of the campaign allowed students to choose topics and tailor activities to local school needs. Advisors appreciated the freedom to implement innovative ideas and unique projects.
- Schools with long-standing participation benefited from: established traditions, returning student leaders, increased program credibility, and greater efficiency in implementation.

### **Challenges of the Champion Schools Program**

- Students struggled to balance: academics, athletics, jobs, clubs, and family commitments.
- Some advisors found it hard to schedule meetings and activities.
- Participation often declined during busy times of the year.
- Seniors and highly involved students sometimes struggled to remain engaged.
- Advisors noted challenges maintaining momentum and ensuring equal participation.
- Delays obtaining approvals for events, assemblies, transportation, speeding funds, and field trips.
- Some advisors described administrative support as passive.
- Some schools found it difficult to involve the broader community, increase participation beyond core supporters, and sustain community engagement throughout the year.
- Schools experienced challenges with bus availability, transportation funding, showcase attendance, and scheduling field trips. These barriers limited participation in the showcase for one school.
- Some schools reported limitations with resources and budget. Some reported that there were limited budgets for larger projects, difficulty obtaining supplies and incentives, and technology support challenges.
- Leadership turnover and sustainability. New leaders often required additional guidance and support, while graduating student leaders sometimes created continuity challenges.
- Schools found it harder to engage students beyond the core club membership.
- Passive approaches such as posters and announcements were often less effective.

The survey paints a highly positive picture of the Champion Schools Program. Advisors overwhelmingly identified student leadership development, community partnerships, traffic safety awareness, strong BIANJ support, and meaningful student engagement as the program's

greatest strengths. Challenges were largely related to time, scheduling, student availability, community engagement, and administrative logistics, rather than the program itself. The findings suggest that strengthening scheduling support, increasing opportunities for community involvement, and providing earlier planning timelines would further enhance an already successful program.