

PROJECT LIFT

2017-2018 SCHOOL YEAR REPORT

Background

Project Lift is a free after school prevention program for students in grades 1 through 5. Sponsored and implemented by Franklin Community Center, the program has been operating in the Saratoga Springs City School District since 1984. Project Lift works with students and their families and uses a Risk and Protection framework with research-based activities focusing on enhancing protective factors and reducing risk factors associated. During the 2017-2018 school year, the program ran from October to June, two days a week in all six of the elementary schools.

Project Lift Provides the Following Protective Factors

- A safe and caring environment
- Bonding with positive, supportive, and professional adult role models
- Clear and consistent expectations, rules and standards of behavior
- Opportunities for meaningful participation, contribution & involvement in a social environment
- Family opportunities for positive involvement
- Recognition for skills development and mastery

Research Based Curriculum

Too Good for Drugs and *Too Good for Violence* are comprehensive drug and violence prevention programs designed to mitigate risk factors and build protection against problem behaviors. The Too Good program is a framework of social and emotional skills that develops goal-setting, decision-making, and effective communication skills. The lessons also build skills for peer pressure refusal, pro-social bonding, conflict resolution, and media literacy.

I Can Problem Solve curriculum focuses on problem-solving skills, recognizing other's feelings and acting appropriately. It teaches children *how* to think, not *what* to think. The goal is to teach children thinking skills used to help resolve or prevent people problems.

Positive Youth Development Curriculum

Discussions on character education, self-esteem, and team building are ongoing throughout the year. Additional lessons focus on topics including good sportsmanship, hygiene, and how to be a friend. Presenters allow our students access to new experiences. This year's experiences included regular therapy dog visits as well as visits from Eat Smart NY, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Camp Chingachgook, Saratoga Bridges, Saratoga Springs Public Library, Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park, the Children's Museum at Saratoga, Saratoga Children's Theatre and others.

2017-2018 Year in Review



All 135 families received referrals, enabling them to accomplish individual and family goals. In addition, all of our families also utilized basic need services and/or holiday assistance.

Project Lift Annual Family Events

- Harvest Festival
- Winter Festival
- Family Fun Day
- Spring Fling
- Spring Art Show
- Fifth Grade Graduation
- End of the Year Picnic

Seven events occur throughout the school year. These events help to strengthen the parent-school relationship by providing a positive school experience for parents. School staff regularly attend these events, which helps to develop their own relationships with families. For our students, the goal of our family events is to provide opportunities to interact positively with family members and practice implementing skills such as effective communication, teamwork, positive attitude, manners and respect. During this school year, 669 family members attended family events at the six schools.

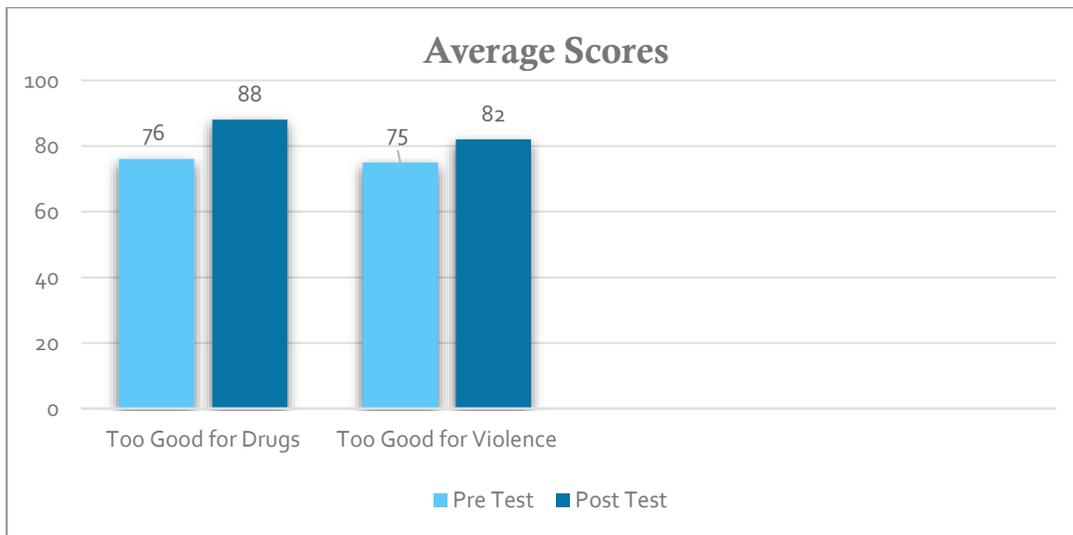
Our year-end picnic had a total of 320 students and their families representing all six elementary schools. This collaboration to bring all six schools together included a catered meal from Saratoga Casino Hotel's Hands for Hope, family photographs, a DJ, healthy beverage choices from Eat Smart NY and Child Safety ID kits from the Saratoga Springs Police Department.

Volunteers

Saratoga High School students, ages 16-18 comprise the majority of our volunteers. Many of these students are fulfilling course requirements for community service hours. 133 volunteers donated 3,418 hours to working with Project Lift this year. Fifty six percent of these students worked beyond their required hours and stayed with the program the full school year, which is a 16% increase over last year.

Project Lift Objectives Achieved

- ❖ 87% of the students enrolled participated in Project Lift programming at least 75% of the time.
- ❖ 58% of the student increased their ratings as reported by their teachers on our social behavior report in the categories of: is respectful, demonstrates self-control, accepts responsibility for actions and develops positive relationships.
- ❖ 48% of the Lift students increased their ratings in self-esteem as measured by the Coopersmith Inventory. Several students increased ratings by 15 or more points out of 100 possible points.

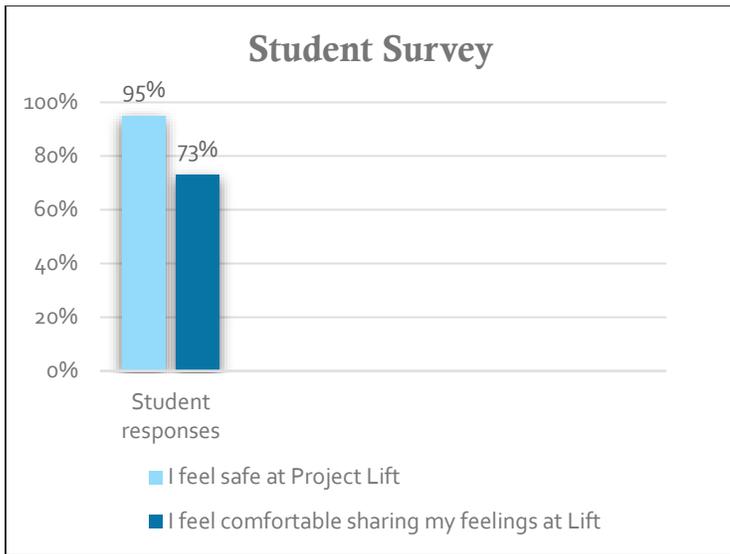


Students are pre and post tested during the *Too Good for Drugs* and *Too Good for Violence* curriculum.

- ❖ 88% of students tested stayed the same or improved their scores for the *Too Good for Drugs* program.
- ❖ 79% of those tested improved or stayed the same for the *Too Good for Violence* program.

Feedback

Project Lift students, their classroom teachers, their parents and our volunteers are surveyed annually for feedback and input. Evaluations continue to be extremely positive and indicate the benefits of the program to the families, school and students.



The overwhelming majority of students surveyed indicated they liked learning about making good choices and being a friend. The Family Fun Day, Spring Fling and Art Show events are student favorites as well as visits from our many guest presenters. They also noted how they enjoyed seeing their Family Outreach Educator in the school during the school day.

Feedback from teachers has shown the impact Project Lift is having in the building.

“I’ve seen a growth in confidence and self-advocacy with my student.”

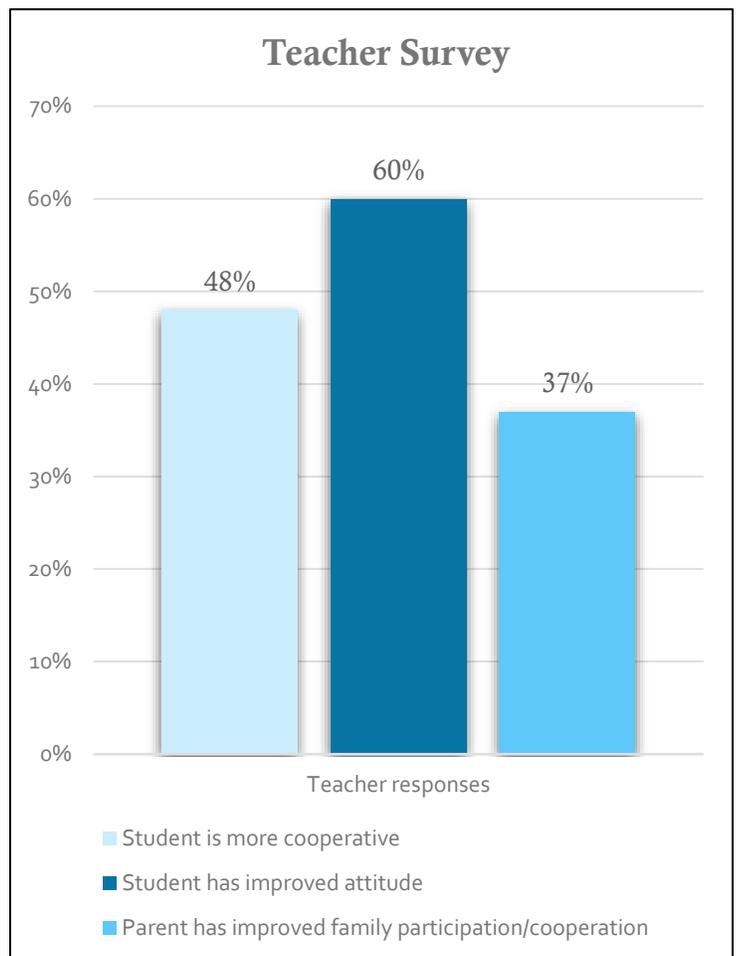
“I had one of my students tell me he learned about violence and drugs and how it’s not good to do either.”

“My student has started to remind students who are misbehaving of the appropriate behaviors and had really developed into a model student.”

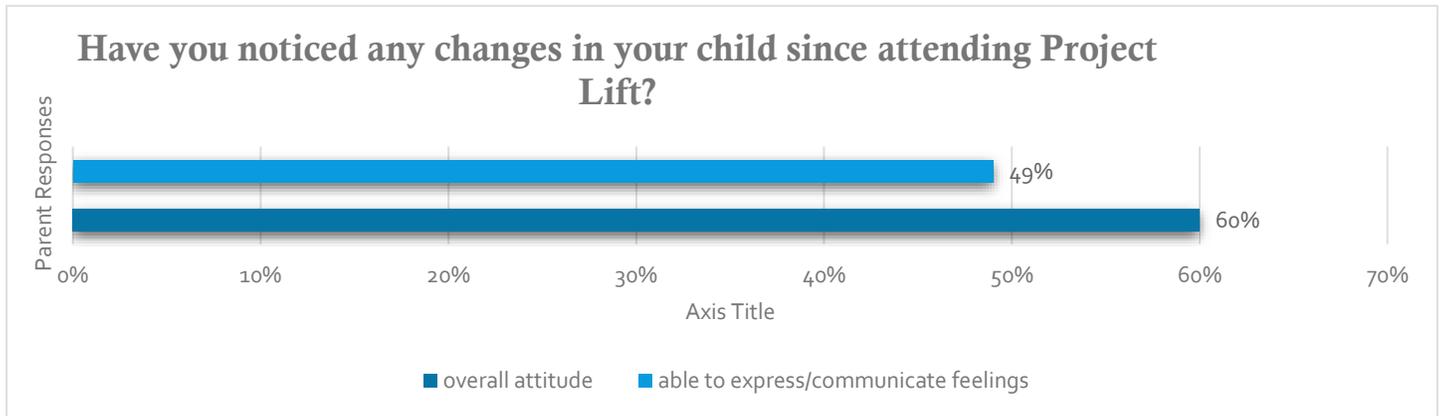
“Project Lift offers students a chance to interact with others and learn how to make positive choices.”

“Project Lift does an amazing job building the bridge between school and home.”

“It provides a safe haven of encouragement and attention. It exposes them to things they might otherwise miss out on.”



Of the parents surveyed, the majority indicate they liked the friendships and social skills building that Project Lift provides for their child. Parents have also consistently noticed changes in behavior.



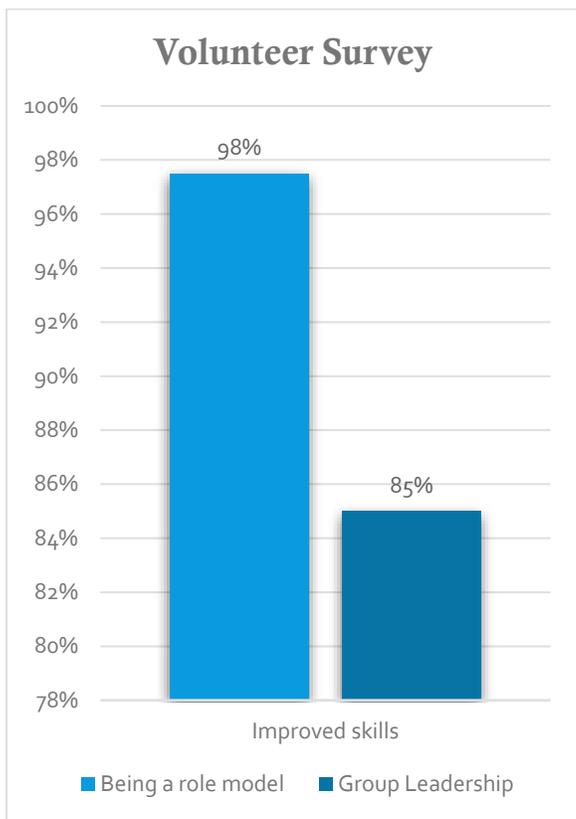
Parent comments were overwhelmingly positive about the Project Lift experience.

“The program not only helps my child but my family too.” “PL was there for me when I was having hard times.”

“She went from a shy little girl to a very outgoing girl.” “Everyone is very helpful and nonjudgmental.”

“PL has made it easier for my son to come out of his shell and make friends.”

“My child has such a great time and has done so well since joining Project Lift.”



When surveyed, 100% of the volunteers indicated they would recommend the experience to others. They also shared positive comments on what they enjoyed most about volunteering.

“The aspect I enjoyed most was getting out of my own comfort zone and gaining /strengthening my own social skills.”

“I like how I made a difference in a child’s life.”

“I truly enjoyed working with all the young kids at Project Lift. I loved being given responsibilities as a volunteer.”

“I liked how the program is set up. The lessons taught to the kids are appropriate and valuable. The best part about being a volunteer is that the staff are kind and welcoming.”

“The thing I enjoyed most about volunteering at Project Lift was seeing the students smile and have fun. It was truly rewarding to see that I contributed to their happiness.”

2017-2018 Accomplishments

The curriculum instruction for *Too Good for Drugs* and *Too Good for Violence* is by grade level and builds on skills taught the previous year. All students have continued to score well on the testing. Those students who have had multiple years of the program have shown continued growth each year.

Each school has built a strong relationship with Project Lift. Based on feedback from students and school staff during the 2016-17 year, our Family Outreach Educators have increased their interactions at breakfast and lunch times with Lift students. Being able to observe Lift students during these unstructured times has helped to strengthen the students' self-esteem and their relationships with our staff.

Family involvement has continued to improve. Project Lift asks that family members attend at least one of the annual family events during the school year. The majority of the 135 families with Project Lift attended two or more events this year. This number was especially high for our year-end picnic, which had record-breaking attendance.

The collaboration over the summer with the school district's 4-week long Summer Explorers program has been a great benefit in staying connected with our Lift students and their families. Each week, two full time Lift staff members conduct lessons for 132 students. In addition, with the assistance of a variety of scholarships, there are 81 Lift students participating in 160 weeks of various summer camps this year.

Goals for 2018-2019 School Year

In October 2018, we will begin a separate pilot program with the Maple Avenue Middle School. Held after school two days per week, this program will specifically target sixth graders and assist in setting them on a positive path. Goals of the program will be to cultivate the students' sense of confidence and self-worth as well as encourage involvement with the many clubs and activities offered in the middle school.

The Project Lift staff continues to seek new ways to implement lessons and team building games. The feedback from students, parents, teachers and volunteers assists in planning for the year ahead. As a team, the goal is to meet or exceed our objectives in attendance, self-esteem ratings, pre, and posttests on curriculum for all six schools in the coming year. In addition, we will be working to increase the family participation and cooperation with the schools.