

What Works Clearinghouse



Skills for Adolescence

Program description

Lions Quest *Skills for Adolescence* is a schoolwide program designed for middle school students (grades 6–8). The program was designed to promote good citizenship skills, core character values, and social-emotional skills and discourage the use of drugs, alcohol, and violence. The program includes a classroom curriculum, schoolwide practices to create a positive school

climate, parent and family involvement, and community involvement. The curriculum may vary in scope and intensity, lasting from nine weeks to three years. The lessons use cooperative group learning exercises and classroom management techniques to improve classroom climate. A related program is reviewed in the intervention report on *Skills for Action*.

Research

One study of *Skills for Adolescence* met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. This study included

more than 7,000 students from 34 middle schools in the Los Angeles, Washington, DC–Baltimore, and Detroit areas.

Effectiveness

Skills for Adolescence was found to have potentially positive effects on students' behavior.

	Behavior	Knowledge, attitudes, and values	Academic achievement
Rating of effectiveness	Potentially positive effects	Not reported	Not reported
Improvement index ²	Average: +2 percentile points Range: –1 to +11 percentile points	Not reported	Not reported

1. The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.
 2. These numbers show the average and the range of improvement indices for all findings across the study.

Additional program information

Developer and contact

Lions Quest, Lions Clubs International Foundation, Professional Mailing Distribution Center (PMDS), PO Box 304, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-0304. Email: info@lions-quest.org. Web: www.lions-quest.org. Telephone: (800) 446-2700.

Scope of use

Skills for Adolescence, grades 6–8 is one of a suite of programs developed by Lions Quest. Other programs in the set include *Skills for Growing*, grades K–5 and *Skills for Action*, grades 9–12. The program, developed in 1985, is in its fourth revised edition. According to the developer, more than 50,000 teachers have been trained in *Skills for Adolescence* in the United States and more than 150,000 have been trained in 30 countries worldwide. The number of students participating in some parts of *Skills for Adolescence* alone has reached more than 1.7 million in the United States and about 2.7 million worldwide. *Skills for Adolescence* may have changed since the studies were conducted. The WWC recommends asking the developer for information about the most current version of this curriculum and taking into account that student demographics and school context may affect outcomes.

Teaching

Skills for Adolescence consists of 102 lessons in nine units based on building such positive character values as respect for others, personal and social responsibility, appreciation of diversity, good citizenship, ethics of service to the community, healthy life habits, and social and emotional skills. Year 1 lessons are organized into eight units, and an additional service-learning unit, taught in conjunction with these units, is infused into the curriculum. Year 2 and Year 3 booster units address healthy life habits and drug prevention. Lessons can be presented in nine-week mini-course, quarter, semester, year-long, or multi-year formats or integrated into existing curricula. Teaching methods include group work activities, skills practice, and classroom or community service projects. The positive school climate

component is operated through a school climate committee that includes teachers, students, parents, and community members.

The developer provides such teacher resources as curriculum materials, a curriculum manual, a teacher's resource guide, a *Drugs Information Guide*, a parent meeting guide, *The Surprising Years* book for parents, *Changes and Challenges* workbooks for students, and booster sessions for concept reinforcement when using a three-year implementation format. Lessons are intended to be taught by trained, Lions Quest certified teachers. Curriculum materials are only available to trained teachers. Training consists of a two- or three-day workshop. According to the developer, a large range of targeted staff development in-service workshops and an extensive 10-day training-of-trainers program, intended to prepare schools to conduct their own staff development, are also available.

Cost

Training workshops can be organized locally for \$4,000 for a two-day workshop or \$5,000 for a three-day workshop, with an added cost of \$500 if the reservation is made less than six weeks before the training. The developer also offers workshops at regional locations for \$500 a person (with discounts for four or more registrants and four or more weeks advance registration). With a guarantee of 12 or more participants, the developer will provide this workshop on a by-request basis. Collaboration with a local Lion's Club group can reduce workshop prices.

Curriculum sets are included in the price of the training. Additional sets and upgrades to the newest edition are available for purchase by trained individuals. A curriculum set in English (4th edition) costs \$120; a set in Spanish (3rd edition) costs \$99. *Changes and Challenges* student workbooks are available for \$3.50 a copy for the 3rd edition in English or \$5.00 a copy in Spanish and \$5.95 a copy for the 4th edition in English. *The Surprising Years* parent books cost \$3.95 a copy for both English (4th edition) and Spanish (3rd edition) versions. A set of both books is available for \$7.95, with volume pricing available.

Research Nine studies reviewed by the WWC investigated the effects of *Skills for Adolescence*. One study (Eisen, Zellman, & Murray, 2003) was a randomized controlled trial that met WWC evidence standards. The remaining 8 studies did not meet WWC evidence screens. The Eisen, Zellman, and Murray (2003) study focused on *Skills for Adolescence* implemented as a schoolwide intervention.

Eisen, Zellman, and Murray (2003) investigated program effects on students in seventh grade and again on the same students in eighth grade. The study included 34 middle schools

pair-matched and randomly assigned to study conditions from within pairs. The schools were located in three large metropolitan areas in Los Angeles, California; Detroit, Michigan; and the Washington, DC-Baltimore, Maryland area. This study compared behavioral outcomes for students participating in the *Skills for Adolescence* program with outcomes for students who participated in other drug education and prevention practices (ranging from school assemblies to the Drug Abuse Resistance Education, or DARE, program) common for these grade levels.

Effectiveness Findings

The WWC review of character education addresses student outcomes in three domains: behavior; knowledge, attitudes, and values; and academic achievement.

Behavior. Eisen, Zellman, and Murray (2003) reported statistically significant differences favoring the intervention group on three drug-related outcomes (marijuana—lifetime use, marijuana—use in the last 30 days, and binge drinking during the last 30 days by baseline binge drinkers) about one year after the end of the program. The program’s effect on one of these outcomes (binge drinking) was confirmed to be statistically significant as calculated by the WWC.³ No statistically significant effects were found for the lifetime or recent use of cigarettes and other illicit substances or

binge drinking during the last 30 days by baseline nonbinge drinkers. The average effect size for the domain was neither statistically significant nor substantively important (less than 0.25).⁴

Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates interventions as positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible effects, potentially negative, or negative. The rating of effectiveness takes into account four factors: the quality of the research design, the statistical significance of the findings (as calculated by the WWC³), the size of the difference between participants in the intervention condition and the comparison condition, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#)).

The WWC found *Skills for Adolescence* to have potentially positive effects on behavior

Improvement index

For each outcome domain, the WWC computed an improvement index based on the effect size (see the [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#)). The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition versus the percentile rank of the average student in the comparison condition. Unlike the rating of effectiveness, the improvement

index is entirely based on the size of the effect, regardless of the statistical significance of the effect, the study design, or the analysis. The improvement index can take on values between –50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting favorable results. The average improvement index for eighth-grade students’ behavior is +2 percentile points, with a range of –1 to +11 percentile points.

3. The level of statistical significance was calculated by the WWC and, where necessary, corrects for clustering within classrooms or schools and for multiple comparisons. For an explanation, see the [WWC Tutorial on Mismatch](#). See the [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#) for the formulas the WWC used to calculate the statistical significance. In the case of *Skills for Adolescence*, corrections for multiple comparisons were needed.

4. Short-term findings assessed for seventh grade are presented in the technical appendices and were not used for rating purposes.

The WWC found Skills for Adolescence to have potentially positive effects on behavior (continued)

Summary

The WWC reviewed 9 studies on *Skills for Adolescence*.⁵ One of these studies met WWC evidence standards. This study found potentially positive effects on eighth-grade students' behavior.

Character education, an evolving field, is beginning to establish a research base. The evidence presented in this report is limited and may change as new research emerges.

References

Met WWC evidence standards

Eisen, M., Zellman, G. L., & Murray, D. M. (2003). Evaluating the Lions-Quest "Skills for Adolescence" drug education program: Second-year behavior outcomes. *Addictive Behaviors*, 28, 883–897.

Additional sources:

Eisen, M. (2002). Intermediate outcomes from a life skills education program with a media literacy component. In Crano, W. D., & Burgoon, M. (Eds.) *Mass media and drug prevention: Classic and contemporary theories and research*. (pp. 187–214). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Eisen, M., Zellman, G. L., Massett, H. A., & Murray, D. M. (2002). Evaluating the Lions-Quest "Skills for Adolescence" drug education program: First-year behavior outcomes. *Addictive Behaviors*, 27, 619–632.

Did not meet WWC evidence screens

Gilman, D. A. (1991). A study of the QUEST program for the academic year 1990–91. A report prepared for the analysis of pretest and posttest measures for the North Gibson School Corporation. Princeton, Indiana.⁶

Goldsmith, L. M. (1990). An evaluation of the influence of the Skills for Adolescence program on the self-esteem and attitude towards school of sixth-grade Mexican-American students. Dissertation, Baylor University.⁷

Heinemann, G. H. (1990). The effects of the Lions-Quest "Skills for Adolescence" program on self-esteem development and academic achievement at the middle school level. *Dissertation Abstracts International*. (UMI No. 9033128).⁸

Heuer, L. G. (1996). Behavior, attitudes, and knowledge related to drug and alcohol prevention curricula in North Dakota seventh through twelve grade students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 56(10), 3826.⁹

Laird, M., Syropoulos, M., & Black, S. (1995). An evaluation of Lions-Quest's Skills for Adolescence. Limited circulation report.¹⁰

Buscemi, M. (n.d.). Lions-Quest Skills for Adolescence evaluation. Limited circulation summary report compiled by and for Lions-Quest.

Additional sources:

Keister, S. C. (n.d.). Quest International. Lions-Quest Skills for Adolescence. Limited circulation summary report compiled for and by Lions-Quest.

5. One single-case design study was identified but is not included in this review because the WWC does not yet have standards for reviewing single-case design studies.

6. Does not use a strong causal design: the study did not use a comparison group.

7. Does not use a strong causal design: there was only one intervention and one comparison unit, so the analysis could not separate the effects of the intervention from other factors.

8. Does not use a strong causal design: the study, which used a quasi-experimental design, did not establish that the comparison group was equivalent to the intervention group at the baseline.

9. The sample is not appropriate for this review: data were not disaggregated so that the WWC could not examine the results for the sample that is relevant to this review.

10. Complete data are not reported: the WWC could not compute effect sizes.

11. Incomparable groups: The intervention and comparison groups were not comparable at baseline and that difference was not controlled for in the statistical analysis.

References *(continued)*

Ray, N. G. (1990). The effects of the Lions-Quest “Skills for Adolescence” program on student self-concept at the middle school level. *Dissertation Abstracts International*. (UMI No. 9107327).¹¹

Roberson, R. M. (1991). The effects of the Quest’s Skills for Adolescence training on the self concept and reading achievement of sixth grade students. Dissertation, US International University.¹²

For more information about specific studies and WWC calculations, please see the [WWC Skills for Adolescence Technical Appendices](#).

12. Severe overall attrition: the study, which used a quasi-experimental design, lost a large portion of its sample from the pretest to the posttest.