



## Level Up Semester Data Report: Year 2, Semester 1

September 2023- December 2023

The 2023-24 School Year marks the second year of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta’s Level Up Program. In this school year, the three original pilot schools grew in the number of youth served, while the Program added two more schools to the Program, beginning with their 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The current list of schools in BBBSMA’s Level Up Program is as follows:

- H.J. Russell West End Academy, serving grades 6, 7, and 8 (original pilot school)
- Jean Child’s Young Middle School, serving grades 7 and 8 (original pilot school)
- Luther J. Price Middle School, serving grades 6, 7, and 8 (original pilot school)
- Ralph J. Bunche Middle School, serving grade 6 (year 2 pilot school)
- Lithonia Middle School, serving grade 6 (year 2 pilot school)

The addition of Lithonia Middle School marked not only a growth in youth with access to in-school mentorship, but also growth outside of Atlanta Public Schools to DeKalb Conty Schools as well. An additional 23 BBBSMA staff members joined the team to support the growth of the Level Up program.

### Youth Served:

The Fall Semester of Level Up’s Year 2 pilot was the first time that all middle school grade levels were served at one time, as the three initial pilot schools added mentors to serve their 6<sup>th</sup> grade students while looping the previous mentors up to the next grade level, and two more schools were added to the mix. A total of 810 youth were served in the level Up Program from its 2023-24 School Year launch in September of 2023 through December of 2023. Of those 810, 435 are 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, 259 are 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, and 116 are 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

### Attendance:

Total absences by month show fluctuations across different grades and schools, though an overall decline in days absent is shown throughout the semester. The total number of days absent from month 1 of the semester (September) decreases by an average of 31% across all schools by the last month of the semester (December). October has the highest total absences (1275), while November has the lowest (815). This data indicates a stronger sense of school belonging, and can have an indirect positive effect on grades, as the more a student attends school, the more instruction they have access to.

**Total Absences by Month- Fall 2023**

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Bunche (6th grade)</b>	234	260	90	201
<b>Lithonia (6th Grade)</b>	72	117	53	118
<b>Young (6th Grade)</b>	205	160	135	115

<b>Young (7th Grade)</b>	228	244	131	109
<b>Price (6th Grade)</b>	25	34	33	32
<b>Price (7th Grade)</b>	48	57	59	39
<b>Price (8th Grade)</b>	3	2	2	1
<b>Russell (6th Grade)</b>	120	163	125	138
<b>Russell (7th Grade)</b>	224	158	109	68
<b>Russell (8th Grade)</b>	87	80	78	35
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1246</b>	<b>1275</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>856</b>

### Discipline Events:

Total discipline events also exhibit fluctuations, with October having the highest (95), which interestingly, correlates to the month with the highest number of days absent. The total number of events leading to suspension or alternative to suspension from month 1 of the semester (September) decreases by an average of 57% across all schools by the last month of the semester (December) from a total of 77 to a total of 43 discipline incidents. Russell (6th Grade) consistently reports higher discipline events compared to other grades. Discipline referrals, which can indicate Littles' choices to avoid risky behaviors show that 93% of 7th graders at Russell maintained or decreased their number of discipline referrals in the fall semester.

<b>Total Discipline Events by Month- Fall 2023</b>				
	<b>Sept</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
<b>Bunche (6th grade)</b>	8	4	6	2
<b>Lithonia (6th Grade)</b>	14	14	9	2
<b>Young (6th Grade)</b>	10	17	9	6
<b>Young (7th Grade)</b>	10	8	8	7
<b>Price (6th Grade)</b>	2	6	4	2
<b>Price (7th Grade)</b>	2	6	2	0
<b>Price (8th Grade)</b>	3	2	2	1
<b>Russell (6th Grade)</b>	17	10	29	7
<b>Russell (7th Grade)</b>	8	8	7	10
<b>Russell (8th Grade)</b>	3	2	19	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>43</b>

### Session Feedback towards Program Outcomes:

Our Level Up Program strives to have a direct impact on our Littles' Social Emotional wellbeing, their sense of belonging in their school and larger community, their ability to envision a choice-filled future, and their decision making so that they avoid risky behaviors. In order to measure this impact we strive to meet the following outcomes:

- ✓ 75% of Littles will have decreased or no depressive symptoms
- ✓ 75% of Littles will have consistent or improved emotional regulation
- ✓ 80% of Littles will have consistent or increased feelings of school connectedness
- ✓ 85% of Littles will have a trusted adult in their life
- ✓ 90% of Littles will complete a Future Planning Guide
- ✓ 75% of Littles will have consistent or improved educational expectations

- ✓ 95% of Littles will avoid the Juvenile Justice System
- ✓ 90% of Littles will have reduced or no school discipline events

A key part of our program model is frequent progress monitoring towards these outcomes and consistently gathering youth voice so that our program stays responsive to the needs of our Littles in real time. To do this, our Lead Mentors close each mentoring session by asking Littles to provide their feedback aligned to our program outcomes via a Session Snapshot. The session snapshot asks Littles to rate how they feel on a 5-star scale with 5 being the highest rating. Each statement is aligned to our Program Outcomes per the chart below:

The aggregate averages of Session Snapshot feedback data across all Level Up schools for the Fall 2023 Semester indicate positive responses across each element of targeted youth outcomes. "I felt connected to my Mentor after today's session" consistently receives high scores. Students express high confidence in making good behavior choices and feeling in control of their emotions.

Session Snapshot statement for rating	Average Rating (out of 5) from Fall 2023 Semester	Aligned Program Outcome
I feel happy after today's session.	4.77	75% of Littles will have decreased or no depressive symptoms
I felt connected to my Mentor in today's session.	4.67	85% of Littles will have a trusted adult in their life
I feel in control of my emotions after today's session.	4.57	75% of Littles will have consistent or improved emotional regulation
I feel connected to my peers after today's session.	4.52	80% of Littles will have consistent or increased feelings of school connectedness
I learned something today that will help me prepare for the future.	4.59	90% of Littles will complete a Future Planning Guide by the end of the year
Today's session helped me think about how to make good decisions.	4.65	95% of Littles will avoid the Juvenile Justice System
I learned something today that will help me do my best academically this week.	4.51	75% of Littles will have consistent or improved educational expectations
After today's session, I feel confident that I will make good behavior choices this week.	4.63	90% of Littles will have reduced or no school discipline events

In addition to utilizing youth voice through data in the weekly ratings, Littles also have the opportunity to share a note with their Mentor in their weekly snapshot. Some of the highlights from this semester include:

- "NO [I don't have anything else to share] BUT WE LOVE YOU GIRL," -**Little Sister Kariana at Bunche MS**
- "That he is the best mentor with helping me with my solutions and problems. Also i been very good with my anger by taking deep breathes. I had a hard problem with controlling that but now im starting to get better. Also its fun because i have someone to talk too." - **Little Brother Jayson at Lithonia MS**
- "I love how she gets us ready for the future. And helps us improve in school." - **Little Sister TyNique at HJ Russell West End Academy**

## Session Curriculum:

6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Level Up program focused their mentoring sessions on weekly lessons tied directly to Level Up's outcomes of improved social emotional learning, a greater sense of belonging, a vision for their future, and their avoidance of risky behaviors. Through these lessons, they were able to build foundational relationships with their Mentors and their peers. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Level Up students also engaged in curriculum centered on the four aforementioned outcomes, however, in an elevated structure that allowed them to build upon their lessons week-by-week with their mentor relationships begin more stabilized. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum followed triad structure, first introducing the topic at hand in week 1, then diving deeper to understand the topic in week 2, and finally creating instances and supports to implement the skill by week 3.

In addition to the specially- designed Level Up Curriculum, Wells Fargo provided a financial literacy course for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Level Up program. The Wells Fargo Financial Health Sponsorship included a curriculum that was implemented by our Level Up Lead Mentors of 7th grade Littles at Jean Childs Young Middle School, H.J. Russell West End Academy, and Luther J. Price Middle School over the course of 3 weeks. There were 250 Littles who were able to participate. Little Sister Zykeyvian commented, "Thank you for helping me better understand how to better manage and save my money and not spend it on irrelevant things like things I don't need, like snacks. It is good to have, but I need to try to invest my money on important things like clothes, shoes, and important essentials like bills and food and water when I grow up."

## Session Observation:

In order to promote the consistent improvement and growth of session facilitation, Mentoring Coordinators and Supervisors observe Mentors throughout the school year, providing feedback based on a uniform rubric across the sites. This provides a way for sessions to operate uniformly across Sites, upholding a consistent standard of high-quality delivery.

The session rubric calls out the following elements to be consistently modeled in session:

- ✓ Session materials prepared in advance and readily available for use in session (including any tech set up/prep).
- ✓ LM had internalized the session as evidenced by time stamps and comfortability with the session flow and material
- ✓ An opening ritual was used (circle up, connect)
- ✓ Youth voice was centered as evidenced by more youth talk than LM talk
- ✓ Open ended questions, warm and cold calling were used to invite youth into the discussion and activities
- ✓ LM led session with energy and enthusiasm
- ✓ LM displays an asset-based mindset and framing to all discussion, interaction, and activity
- ✓ An activity or project-based work occurred
- ✓ Feedback was solicited from Littles by, at a minimum, use of the Session Snapshot
- ✓ A closing ritual was used to wrap up/end the session
- ✓ If any disruptions caused by a Little occurred, the LM used de-escalation techniques
- ✓ LM facilitated discussion and engagement with Littles' contributions

In addition to these indicators of success, there is also a free-response section for observers to note areas of particular success and ideas to try next time for improvement.

Themes across sites indicate a high level of consistent **success** in:

- Including youth voice in session activities
- Connecting the crucial concepts of mentorship in the lesson to age-appropriate games and activities to keep youth engaged in the content
- Lead Mentors assessing the mood of their Littles each session and adapting the session to meet that mood to best support their absorbency of the message

Areas for mentors to continue **improving** on include:

- Limiting distractions (such as phones and side conversations) and redirecting the Littles back into session
- Bringing Littles into the lessons to facilitate more conversation than teaching/facilitation-style sessions

### **Analysis:**

Despite potential challenges in attendance and discipline, the positive session feedback suggests a positive impact on students' emotional well-being and academic preparation. The average session feedback scores for all sites suggest a high level of satisfaction and engagement among students, fostering a positive learning environment.

Bunche (6th grade) consistently has the highest total absences across all months. When the data is compared to the program experience for Littles at that site, the low effect on attendance makes sense; the Lead Mentor for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade boys at Bunche resigned in November, creating a sense of disconnect for those Littles.

Littles both newly introduced to the Level Up program and those returning demonstrated continued engagement in the program. Many youth sought out BBBSMA staff members at school to enroll in the program after hearing of their peers joining last school year. School administrators continue to support and promote the implementation of the program at their schools by providing space for the mentorship sessions, engaging in data-sharing for tracking student outcomes, and treating the BBBSMA staff as part of their own community.

The second semester of the second year of the Program's implementation will include each little completing their Future Planning Guides, preparing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to bring the lessons they've learned with them to high school, and preparing to hire more Lead Mentors and Program Coordinators to support the continued program growth in the 2024-25 school year.