LifeWise Academy Outcomes Report

October 23, 2023

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Introduction

Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA), a national consulting firm based in Indianapolis, Indiana, has been working with LifeWise Academy to understand the implications of its programming. This study has also been made possible with the support of Ambassador Enterprises, LLC. LifeWise Academy programs are present in multiple states and provide important lessons for school-aged children. This report includes information about where programming takes place and the statistical significance it has on educational factors in schools. Moreover, it includes testimonials from those who have adopted LifeWise Academy.

Defining LifeWise and Its Scope

Established in 2019, LifeWise Academy is a nonprofit organization that offers Bible-based character education to public school students in numerous states. With parents' permission, LifeWise programming for students is conducted during the school day at a location off school campuses. The program strives to complement teachers' efforts inside the classroom, with a goal of improving student behavior and academic achievement. The program is not exclusive to students of the Christian faith and takes any willing student who has permission. LifeWise Academy is adaptable and feasible for Bible education to be available in many communities.[1]

LifeWise Academy has experienced tremendous growth since its creation. LifeWise Academy was present in 5 schools in 2019 and now takes place in over 320 schools in 2023, which is more than double its number of 2022 schools.

SCHOOLS WITH LIFEWISE ACADEMY

School Year	Schools
2019-2020	5
2020-2021	8
2021-2022	36
2022-2023	133
2023-2024	320
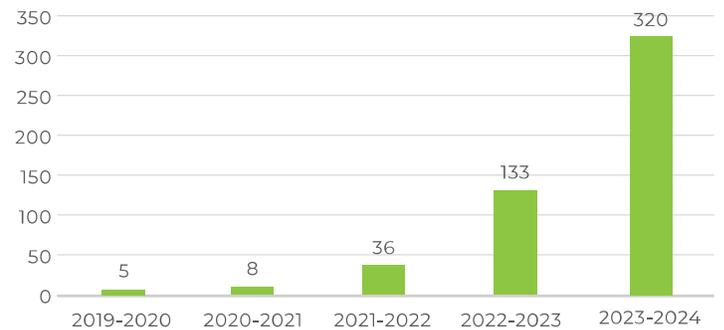
Source: LifeWise Academy.[2]

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1 "About LifeWise Academy—Who We Are." *LifeWise Academy.* https://lifewise.org/about/.
2 The chart indicates schools with LifeWise Academy programming by school years.

Schools in Indiana, Ohio, and Iowa were examined for this report. Of the schools with LifeWise programs examined, Ohio had the largest number of participating schools at 63.[3] These schools were spread across twenty-eight different counties. Indiana had 9 schools in five different counties while Iowa had 4 schools in two counties. The schools with LifeWise programming span a diverse set of counties in Ohio. They vary in population from the most populous county, Franklin, with over 1.3 million residents, to the sixth least populous county, Paulding, with around 19,000 inhabitants.[4] Many of the counties are smaller and rural. However, they also include other urban counties like Montgomery, home to the city of Dayton, and Delaware and Miami, which are ring counties (those counties adjacent to a larger urban county).

The five counties in Indiana and the two counties in Iowa with schools teaching LifeWise Academy had low populations. In Indiana, the counties ranged from 43,000 residents in DeKalb County to 12,000 in Pulaski County.[5] All five counties are in the northern half of Indiana. Iowa's two counties featured 36,000 inhabitants in Sioux County and 25,000 in Plymouth County, which are both located near the northwest corner of the state. All seven counties from both states rely heavily on the Manufacturing industry for jobs.

The schools with LifeWise programs ranged from 66 to 3,227 in total student population. The total number of students participating in LifeWise programming was 13,798. The average participation rate was 35.6% per school.

Methods

To analyze the impact of LifeWise programming, publicly available data was collected from state departments of education where LifeWise programs were offered.[6] Requests were also made to all three departments of education for additional data. No school districts, individual schools, or teachers were contacted regarding quantitative data. The information collected and requested included school-level attendance rates and discipline data. The data was collected for each state starting with the 2017-2018 school year and goes through the 2021-2022 school year.

In both Ohio and Indiana, school-level data used in this analysis was partially publicly available. The remaining data was obtained upon request from each state's department of education. Iowa's Department of Education made their data publicly available by school district and were willing to share school-level attendance data upon request. The department was unable to share school-level discipline data.

3 Data provided by LifeWise Academy.
4 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, Census Bureau Tables.
5 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, Census Bureau Tables.

6 Indiana Department of Education: DOE: Data Center & Reports (in.gov); Iowa Department of Education: Education Statistics - PK-12 | Iowa Department of Education (educateiowa.gov); Ohio Department of Education: reportcard.education.ohio.gov/download.

Data & Analysis

To understand the effects of LifeWise programming, data was collected and analyzed for 6,478 different schools; this represents the total number of schools with available data across all three states. There were slight variations in the attendance and discipline data across the three states that required some adjustments.

LifeWise provided data on schools where its programming had been in place for multiple years before the 2021-2022 school year. This analysis was on those 76 schools, which, as discussed above, were in Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa.

The discipline categories varied by each state. Since LifeWise Academy is open to any grade from K-12, many areas start LifeWise in elementary school and data and analysis was focused on those elementary grade levels. One discipline category was selected for each state which was likely to have the highest number of incidents for that grade range, with data reported in 92% of all schools. The categories for each state were: disobedience/disruptive behavior for Ohio; defiance for Indiana; and defiance/non-compliance in Iowa. While there are slight differences in the definition of each of these discipline categories, they were closely related enough to serve as comparable measures.

Indiana had complete data for each of the examined variables. Iowa and Ohio's discipline data was slightly less comprehensive. As previously mentioned, Iowa did not provide school-level discipline data, and a process, which will be discussed, was used to calculate school-level data. In Ohio, the data was incomplete if the number of incidents or days was under 10. In those cases, the decision was made to count less than 10 as zero to create the most conservative analysis of the data.

To harmonize the data in Iowa with Ohio and Indiana, a ratio was used to determine individual school-level data disaggregated from the school districts. The number of incidents per school was calculated based on each school's percentage of the district's total student population. Using an average generated by the data from Ohio and Indiana, a ratio was obtained for splitting total incidents into in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Using the Ohio and Indiana data, again, an average number of suspension days per incident for each in-school and out-of-school suspension was determined and then was totaled for each school.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the 2020-2021 school year in several ways, and this would likely have a significant impact on any results; therefore, data from that school year was not included in this analysis.

As appropriate, all data has been standardized to account for population size (county) and enrollment (school). Following this standardization process, five usable measures were identified to gauge the impact of LifeWise's programming, consistent with the graphic presented in Figure I. Specifically:

1. **Rate of Attendance** (years 2021/22, 2019/2020, 2018/2019, and 2017/2018): reported at the school level (district level, Iowa), this captures the aggregate number of possible attendance days in the academic year, divided into the number of days students were present during the academic year (Indiana and Iowa).[7] Alternatively, it's the number of students who met a required threshold of hours divided by the total student population (Ohio).[8] Ranging from 0 to 100%, the higher the number, the better a school's attendance rate.
2. **In School Suspensions, Students** (all years, except 2020/2021): a count of students who received In-School Suspension during the academic year, for disruptive/disobedient behavior.
3. **In School Suspensions, Days** (all years, except 2020/2021): a count of aggregate days served by all students in In-School Suspension during an academic year.
4. **Out of School Suspensions, Students** (all years, except 2020/2021): a count of students who received Out-of-School Suspensions during the academic year, for disruptive or disobedient behavior.
5. **Out of School Suspensions, Days** (all years, except 2020/2021): a count of aggregate days served by all students in Out-of-School Suspension during an academic year.

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7 Indiana: Researcher conversation with Indiana Department of Education, Iowa: Explained in the notes on the data for Average Daily Attendance: Average Daily Attendance | Iowa Department of Education (educateiowa.gov).
8 "2021-2022 School Year Attendance Data – Technical Documentation" Ohio Department of Education 2021-2022 Attendance Data Technical Documentation (ohio.gov).

FIGURE I: OVERVIEW OF LIFEWISE IMPACT

Academic Performance

This Final Impact Measure is anticipated to gain statistical significance after Year 3 or 4 of LifeWise Programming

YEAR THREE & FOUR

Lower Discipline Rates

Following 2 to 3 years of LifeWise programming, the number of students receiving first in-school, then out-of-school drop

YEAR TWO & THREE

Improved Attendance

Strong, Statistically Significant, Positive Correlation between the Attendance Rates at LifeWise Academy and Improved School-Wide Attendance

YEAR ONE

A multivariate linear regression was utilized to analyze the impact of LifeWise programming on the incidence of missed days and discipline-related behaviors. Model summaries appear in **Figure II** below, with full regression outputs in the Appendix.

FIGURE II: SIDE-BY-SIDE MODELS

	ATTENDANCE	ISS STUDENTS	ISS INCIDENTS	OSS STUDENTS	OSS INCIDENTS
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
LifeWise Participation Rate	0.0699*	-5.99***	-35.13	-13.16	-13.013
Years Programming Live	0.0076	-11.75***	-8.97*	-3.73*	-3.754*
Intercept	0.9114***	0.897**	-0.193	2.311***	2.49***
Sample Size	6,476	6,477	6,477	6,477	6,477
F Score	2.79*	4.40**	1.41	1.46	1.2
AFTER	1 Year	2 Years	2 Years	3 Years	3 Years

***Significant at .01 Level **Significant at .05 Level *Significant at .10 Level

Focusing solely on the statistically significant factors in each of the models, the following relationships are detected:

Model 1:

During the FIRST year of LifeWise Academy, for each additional increase of 10 percentage points in student participation (ranging from 0 to 100), the attendance rate of the school improves by approximately 6.99 percentage points (ranging from 0 to 100).

Model 2:

During the SECOND year of LifeWise Academy, each additional increase of 10 percentage points in student participation leads to a decrease in the number of students receiving ISS of 5.99. This impact is IN ADDITION to the impact of simply offering LifeWise Academy: for each additional year that programming is offered in a school, 11.75 FEWER students receive ISS during the academic year.

Model 3:

During the SECOND year of LifeWise Academy programming, the number of ISS INCIDENTS during an academic year decreases, on average, by 8.97. Each additional year (up to 4) that programming is offered results in an additional drop of 8.97 incidents.

Model 4:

During the THIRD year of LifeWise Academy, the number of students receiving OSS decreases by 3.73. Each additional year (up to 4) results in an additional drop of 3.73 students suspended.

Model 5:

During the THIRD year of LifeWise Academy, the number of OSS INCIDENTS fell by 3.75. Each additional year of programming (up to 4) results in an additional drop of 3.75 incidents.

From a quantitative perspective, the statistical evidence of LifeWise's positive impact on school attendance and discipline rates is strong.

LifeWise Academy Testimony

In addition to the quantitative data, information from those who have been involved in LifeWise Academy programming provides more evidence about its effects in schools and communities. The following section includes testimonies from educators and parents about how impactful LifeWise Academy was to them.

Educators

"LifeWise has made a positive impact on students' attendance, behavior and social emotional well-being. It provides confidence and a sense of belonging for students. They have learned compassion. Our school's average daily attendance goal is 90% or above each day. Consistently, on the day our students participate in LifeWise, grades 4 and 5 meet and/or surpass our attendance goal. Disciplinary infractions for students who participate in LifeWise have decreased by more than 50%."

Shalonda Likely-Roach, Principal, Urban School District

"My students who attend LifeWise have better attendance overall. While it may be just a coincidence, I do believe it is because they have something to look forward to in their schedules. It's out of their "norm" and it's a positive light in their day. I also see students who attend LifeWise to be more focused during their academic subjects. Not only do the character traits encourage focus and respect, I think it naturally happens. They see LifeWise as a break of downtime in the day, which helps minds to focus later on!

As far as student behavior… I believe we are seeing more respect, honesty, and integrity in students. Students are hearing about how the Bible teaches those characteristics. They have been taught in order to signify you care about another person, it's essential to show them respect. Look them in the eye and listen to their words! Be honest and loyal. Friendships are blooming for my students who are attending LifeWise."

Marjory Snyder, Teacher, Rural School District

"I think there has been a positive impact on student behavior since LifeWise has begun. Many of the students will come back from their LifeWise class and they will share what they have been learning. They are excited about the positive character traits they have been discussing and learning about in their meeting times. I have had LifeWise students make connections to the things they have been learning about in LifeWise to what we are doing in class, specifically related to behavior. In class, we were discussing how being honest was always the best action to take. A student raised their hand and commented on how they had just been learning about that in their LifeWise class. It was neat to see them make that connection."

Teacher, Rural School District

"A young lady who was enrolled in LifeWise is known to be very aggressive and had told everyone on the playground she was going to fight another student. She had advertised it so much that she even shared it with the prayer group at LifeWise. The prayer group leader suggested that she forgive the girl who offended her. But the young girl was adamant that the fight was 'going down.' She went back to recess and something came over her, and she was reminded of the teacher's words. Instead of going through with the fight, she marched up and very 'a matter of factly' stated: I have decided to forgive the girl because my LifeWise teacher told me to forgive. And boldly walked away."

Teacher, Urban School District

Parents

"Our daughter's favorite day of the week is Tuesday because she loves going to LifeWise! Since starting this program we have found that she thinks a little longer about how she reacts to situations and she proactively helps her friends to consider their choices and potential ramifications before they make them. She is choosing to walk the path Jesus would want her to be on when it comes to making choices, how she interacts with and treats her friends and has an overall feeling of joy in her heart! "

Jennifer Gault, Parent, Suburban School District

"During my son's time at LifeWise I've seen him grow in the very character qualities he learns about each week like Courage and Boldness. He's more confident and also willing to share with friends about his experience at LifeWise telling them that there is a God that loves them and they can come and learn more about him! This year my daughter started LifeWise Academy. Both of my kids have a hard time sometimes leaving for school in the morning because they don't like to be separated from me. On their LifeWise day, it's never a problem! They love going to LifeWise and are excited to attend. My daughter is shy in groups especially at school with so many children in her class - she often hesitates to participate. At LifeWise, the groups are smaller and it's a safe place for her to open up and she willingly and excitedly participated in class!"
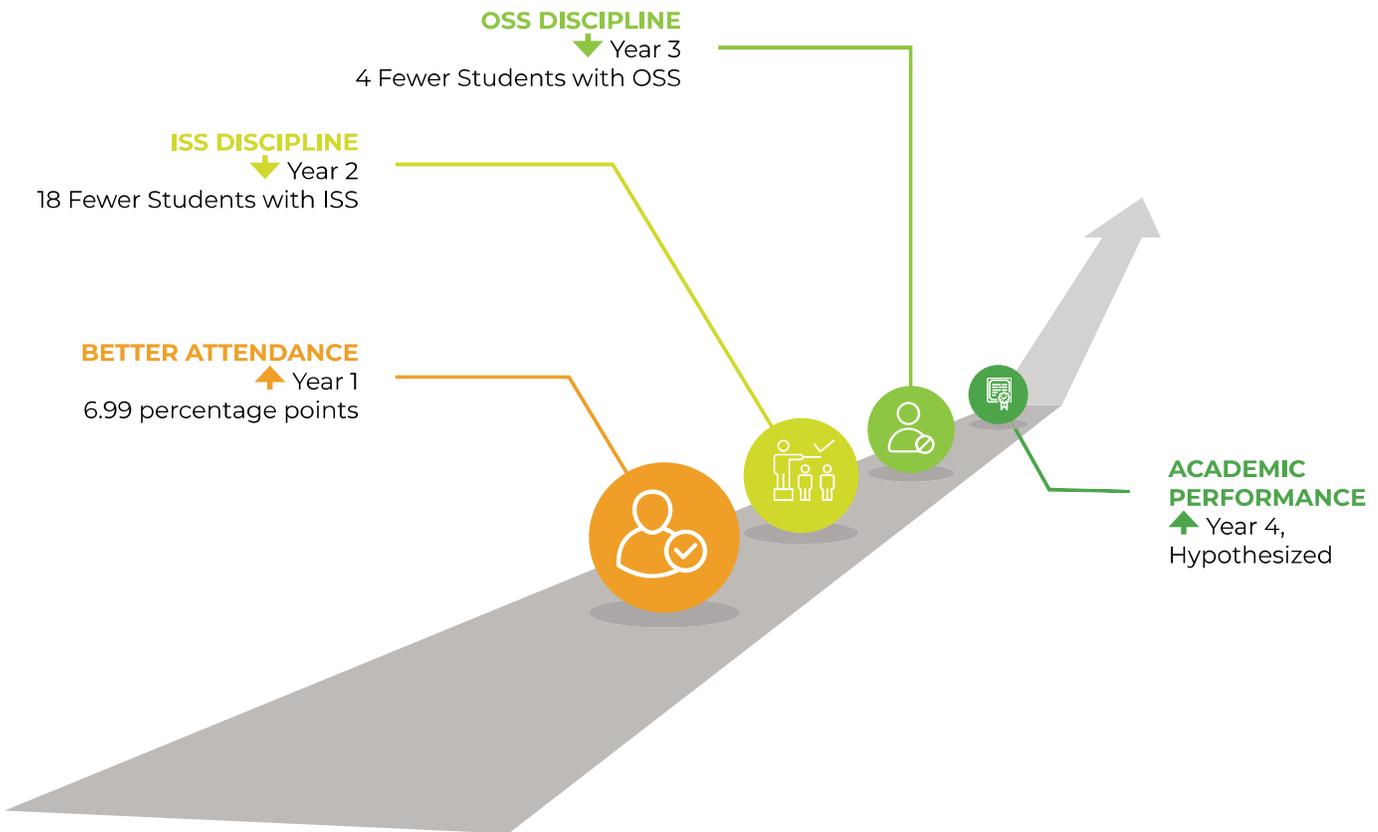
Parent, Suburban School District

Future Trajectory of LifeWise

As shown in **Figure III**, the data indicates that in the first year of LifeWise programming, a school's attendance rate increases. From the second year on, schools with LifeWise programming see improvements in discipline. These results lead to an increased number of students in school every day. Classrooms should experience less disruptions, which should improve the learning environment for all students, whether they were in the program or not.

The natural progression of the improvements realized by schools may be on academics. While individual student grades may be difficult to obtain, third grade testing could serve as a surrogate measure for academic improvement. Though beyond the scope of this initial review of LifeWise programming, a future analysis recommendation would be to investigate LifeWise's programming on academic performance.

FIGURE III: STEPWISE IMPACT, LIFEWISE ACADEMY'S PRESENCE IN A SCHOOL

OSS DISCIPLINE
Year 3
4 Fewer Students with OSS

ISS DISCIPLINE
Year 2
18 Fewer Students with ISS

BETTER ATTENDANCE
Year 1
6.99 percentage points

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
Year 4,
Hypothesized

Conclusion

The information provided in this report serves as an important steppingstone in the history of LifeWise Academy. The data and testimonies collected quantify and support LifeWise Academy's influence on students. LifeWise Academy was found to have effects when it comes to academic attendance and discipline in school districts in multiple states. LifeWise Academy plans to continue the relevancy and significance of Bible education through its programming in more states and schools to come.

Appendix
Appendix A: Full Regression Models

Model I: Attendance Impact, Year One

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	0.024251	0.012126	2.788561	0.061583556
Residual	6474	28.15146	0.004348		
Total	6476	28.17571			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	0.9114392	0.000823817	1106.361	0***
Participation Rate	0.0698883	0.038126379	1.833069	0.066838*
Years Live	0.0075936	0.007313391	1.038314	0.299163

Model II: ISS Students Impact, Year 2

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	11587.55	5793.777	4.403092	0.01227611
Residual	6475	8520082	1315.843		
Total	6477	8531670			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	0.896780537	0.45314248	1.979026	0.047855**
Participation Rate	-5.989783066	2.973138712	2.431195	0.015076***
Years Live	-11.75141689	4.023060753	-2.92101	0.003501**

Model III: ISS Incidents, Year 2

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	7439.285	3719.642	1.406866	0.244984522
Residual	6475	17119389	2643.921		
Total	6477	17126828			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	-0.19296555	0.642328237	-0.30042	0.76387
Participation Rate	-35.1333839823967	29.72936728	1.181774	0.237339
Years Live	-8.96711115	5.702677715	-1.57244	0.115898*

Model IV: OSS Students Impact, Year 3

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	1474.023	737.0116	1.456383	0.233154038
Residual	6475	3276713	506.056		
Total	6477	3278187			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	2.310588817	0.28101666	8.222249	2.39E-16
Participation Rate	-13.1565666127714	13.00650822	-1.01153717766107	0.311797
Years Live	-3.730591898	2.494904242	-1.49528	0.134889

Model V: OSS Incidents Impact, Year 3

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	1527.589	763.7947	1.200666	0.301060766
Residual	6475	4119024	636.1427		
Total	6477	4120551			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	2.49046054	0.31507216	7.904413	3.14E-15
Participation Rate	-13.0138713164019	14.58272487	-0.892416982156395	0.372203
Years Live	-3.753704719	2.797253615	-1.34193	0.179667