



MEET MARY

As the principal of Baker College Prep, Mary was an early witness to the impact of Lion's Pride on students and school culture.

How did the Lion's Pride Mentoring program impact your life?

Lion's Pride started out as the brainchild of our former assistant principal, who used to be a teacher here, and a dean prior to that, in collaboration with Jasmine Gilstrep, who is now the executive director of Lions Pride. As the leader of the school, it's been really transformative to be able to see our students develop their leadership skills. It's also served to increase the performance of both our bigs and littles in some of our really important metrics, and so I'd say it's one of the critical pillars of our school programming and has been since its inception here.

What drives your passion for Lion's Pride?

This is my 10th year at Baker, and I think the program has been transformative so that is where a lot of the passion comes from - the positive impact that it's had on our students and on our school culture more broadly. To know that we are cultivating student leaders, our future leaders, while they're here with us and really building up students' capacity to not only learn critical skills but impact their identities.

What opportunities do students gain from Lion's Pride?

The development of the student leaders is the most important thing. Not only in their roles working together daily in the program, but also the external leadership development that we've been able to provide that Lion's Pride has brought in.

What are your hopes for the future of Lion's Pride?

I hope that it continues to grow. Most important to me is we keep it going here at Baker and every year we get a little bit better, and we learn a little bit more from what's worked well. Also, continue to expand to other schools across Chicago. It would be great to know that future leaders in the city are being shaped by such a wonderful program.

