Providing Quality Summer Experiences that Youth Want and Parents Value

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BEST PRACTICES IN YOUTH PROGRAMMING 2023 SYMPOSIUM
YOUTH PROTECTION AND PROGRAM SUPPORT
MARCH 9, 2023
1) National Youth Impact Study
2) Parents, Kids, and Summer
3) Youth and Camp Program Quality

https://www.acacamps.org/resources/national-camp-impact-study
**Exploratory Phase**
**Method:**
- Interviews with 18-25 year old camp alumni

**Focus:**
- Identify distinct & transferable outcomes of summer camp experience

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**Mapping Phase**
**Method:**
- Surveys with 18-25 year old camp alumni (2 samples)

**Focus:**
- Identify which outcomes are uniquely attributable to summer camp
- Understand how camp fits into the larger learning landscape
- Identify aspects of the camp experience that contribute to positive outcomes

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**Longitudinal Phase**
**Method:**
- Surveys & interviews with camper + parent dyads over 5 years
- Surveys & interviews with 2018 camp staff over 5 years

**Focus:**
- Assess longitudinal benefits of camp participation / employment for socioemotional outcomes
- Test which aspects of the camp experience drive developmental benefits
- Learn how people make decisions regarding summer camp participation / employment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Church</th>
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<td>Affinity for Nature</td>
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<td>Self-Identity</td>
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</table>
Experiential Learning

Camp Staff

Complement to School

Accelerant

Interest & Fun

Separate Time and Space

Meaningful Interactions

How?
Camp experiences complement school and other developmental experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Other OST</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Vacation</th>
<th>Home</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Learning &amp; Reflection</td>
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<td>Belonging</td>
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<td>Supportive Relationships with Non Familial Adults</td>
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<td>Infrequent</td>
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</table>
KEY CONCLUSION ECOSYSTEM

Camp → School

Outcomes:
- Affinity for Nature
- Independence
- Social awareness
- Friendships
- Willingness to Try New Things
- Grit/Perseverance
Decision making is complex and depends on needs, values, and constraints.
# Goals for a High Quality Summer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 5 parents goals for child’s summer</th>
<th>Top 5 child hopes for summer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To have fun</td>
<td>1. To have fun</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. To be physically active</td>
<td>2. To spend time outside</td>
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<td>3. To spend time outside</td>
<td>3. To be able to do what they want</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. To spend time away from tech</td>
<td>4. To relax and take it easy</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. To experience new things</td>
<td>5. To develop friendships</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Activities like camp may provide an avenue for fulfilling both parents’ and youths’ goals for summer.
KEY CONCLUSION PARENTS ARE THE STEWARDS OF SUMMER

Whether to send kid to camp
Which camp is the best fit
How long kid will spend at camp
How camp fits into summertime
KEY CONCLUSION PARENTS ARE THE STEWARDS OF SUMMER

Goals for Camp
- Interactive learning
- Intrapersonal development
- Fun and belonging

Camp Fit
- Logistics/costs
- Program quality
- Child fit
- Institutional ties
- Social connections
KEY CONCLUSION PARENTS ARE THE STEWARDS OF SUMMER

**Summer Camp and Structured Activities**
- Child Care and Supervision
- Structured Learning and Development
- Technology Break
- Parental Respite
- Non-familial Youth-Adult Connections

**Unstructured/Unprogrammed Activities**
- Freedom and Autonomy

**Family Vacations/Outings**
- Connections with Family

Whether to send kid to camp
Which camp is the best fit
How camp fits into summertime
How long kid will spend at camp

Connections with peers
Independence from family
Fun
Outside
Interest Driven
Complements school-year
Novelty Perspective

Fun
Outside
Interest Driven
Complements school-year
Novelty Perspective
High quality camp experiences are linked to youth development.
KEY CONCLUSION QUALITY

Quality Camp Experiences

- Engagement
- Sense of Belonging
- Youth-Adult Relationships
- Experiential Learning
- Active Reflection

Short-Term Outcomes

- Affinity for Nature
- Independence
- Social awareness
- Friendships
- Willingness to try new things
- Grit/Perseverance

Long-Term Outcomes

Some of these Quality/Outcome relationships endured over time, across years
Pyramid of Youth Program Quality

Why Quality?
Focus in on the immediate context and point of service

Program Quality
- What we can influence

Engagement
- Plan
- Make choices
- Reflect
- Lead and mentor
- Be in small groups
- Partner with adults
- Experience belonging

Interaction
- Encouragement
- Skill building
- Active engagement
- Reframing conflict
- Session flow
- Welcoming atmosphere

Supportive Environment
- Psychological and emotional safety
- Program space and furniture
- Healthy food and drinks
- Emergency procedures
- Physically safe environment

Safe Environment
- Youth Voice and Governance
- Professional Learning Community
CAMP PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

Social Emotional Learning

the forum for youth investment

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (I) The emotional climate of the session is predominantly negative (e.g., disrespectful, tense, exclusive, even angry or hostile); negative behaviors, such as rudeness, bragging, insults, “trash talking,” negative gestures or other such actions are not mediated by either campers or staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. (I) Staff use negative or disrespectful words, tone of voice, or body language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The emotional climate of the session is predominantly positive. Negative behaviors are mediated (e.g., countered, curtailed, defused) by staff or campers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Staff use neutral or respectful words, tone of voice, and body language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The emotional climate is always positive (e.g., mutually respectful, relaxed, equitable; characterized by teamwork, camaraderie, inclusiveness); campers and staff are observed offering encouragement, affirmations, or support to others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Staff use positive and warm words, tone of voice, and body language that convey enthusiastic welcome, sincere affection, or genuine interest in campers’ well-being (e.g., “Wow! It is so good to see you back at the program!” “Awww…I am so sorry your pet died!” Staff smile frequently; staff make appropriate and culturally relevant gestures that are responded to positively by campers—high fives, fist bumps, handshakes, bows, pats on the back, etc.)</td>
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</tbody>
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SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOOTES

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Camp Program Quality Assessment Short Form Checklist

C-PQA Staff Best Practices

Staff friendliness and Circulation
☐ Staff mainly use a warm tone of voice and respectful language
☐ Staff generally smile, use friendly gestures, and make eye contact
☐ When campers approach them, staff are attentive and responsive to campers
☐ Staff circulate (and spread out if multiple staff) to interact with every camper (in groups or individually) at some point during every activity.
☐ Staff interact one-on-one at least once with every (or almost every) camper during every activity.
☐ Staff are actively involved with campers (e.g., they provide directions, answer questions, work as partners or team members, check in with individuals or small groups).

Emotional Safety
☐ Staff show respect for all campers and insists that campers show respect for each other (e.g., use kind words, take turns, help each other).
☐ Staff address any incidents in which a camper or campers are made fun of.
☐ Campers seem like they feel free to be themselves.
☐ When there is a conflict or an incident involving strong feelings, staff ask about and/or acknowledge the feelings of the campers involved. Adults ask campers what happened.
Camp Program Quality Short Form and Staff Checklist are free to download

https://www.acacamps.org/resources/camp-program-quality-assessment-c-pqa