

Summer Camp Outcomes Evaluation Report 2014



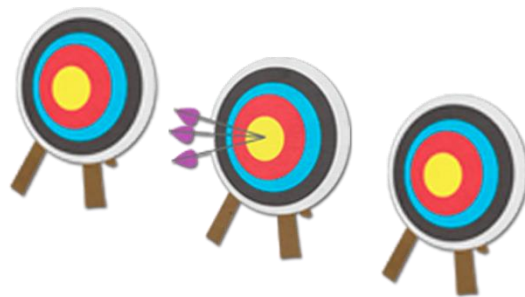
a seriousfun camp

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OVERVIEW

As part of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's ongoing efforts to document the impact of our work and to learn from systematically-collected evidence what areas to target for program improvement and camper support, we engaged in a formal evaluation of the summer camp program in 2014. This summer, we focused on evaluating two of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's core values: appreciation and possibility. A new outcome explored in 2014 was "friendship skills," and we explored "program fun" in both 2013 and 2014. Six hundred and forty-two campers, 225 volunteers, and 220 parents/caregivers completed anonymous surveys.

Appreciation: 89% of campers agreed or strongly agreed they felt appreciation at Camp, and 95% of parents/caregivers and 93% of volunteers said that their campers' sense of appreciation increased.

Possibility: 77% of campers agreed or strongly agreed they felt possibility at Camp and 97% of parents/caregivers and 95% of volunteers said their campers' sense of possibility increased.

Friendship skills: 97% of campers 10 and older reported their friendship skills increased and 89% of parents/caregivers and 95% of volunteers reported their campers' friendship skills increased.

Program fun: 88% of campers had some or a lot of program fun, with the most favorite program activities being pool, tower, horses, Carnivarty, and stage night. Over half of campers would change nothing about Camp.

Gender and age very slightly predicted the outcomes of appreciation and possibility (and program fun for age), with girls and older campers having very slightly higher outcomes in all outcomes except that older campers reported slightly less fun in programs. Program fun made a moderate amount of difference in appreciation, possibility and friendship skills, with higher outcome scores for campers who had more fun.

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp operates a strong and consistent summer camp program for campers that supports the positive outcomes of appreciation, possibility and friendship skills. These outcomes come along with high levels of fun, meaning that the more fun kids have, the higher their outcomes. Parents/caregivers and volunteers aligned with campers in their perceptions that Camp offers strong opportunities for campers to experience appreciation, possibility, friendship skills and program fun.

While there are a few minor areas to explore for further Camp program improvement, overall the findings in this report are cause for celebration. Among the successes to celebrate is the fact that most campers experienced two of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's core values: appreciation and possibility. And, nearly all campers reported that their friendship skills increased while at Camp. Finally, campers enjoyed the programs at Camp a great deal.

BACKGROUND

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp was founded by Paul Newman with one simple premise in mind – that every child, no matter their illness, could experience the transformation spirit and friendships that go hand-in-hand with camp. Through nine week-long residential summer camp sessions, the Camp seeks to provide these experiences to children coping with cancer, blood disorders, hemophilia, sickle cell, metabolic disease and other rare and serious diseases, as well as their healthy siblings.

In the strategic plan of 2013, the Board of Directors set a goal that from 2013 through 2017 we would develop a greater understanding of the impact of Camp programs in terms of camper and parent satisfaction as well as programmatic outcomes. Research and evaluation efforts aim to find out more about the “different kind of healing” that can occur in the Camp experience.

As part of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp’s ongoing efforts to document the impact of our work and to learn from systematically-collected evidence what areas to target for program improvement and camper support, we engaged in a formal evaluation of the summer camp program in 2014.

Research and evaluation at Camp supports continuous innovation, promotes program quality and ensures the safety, well-being and positive development of campers and families.

PURPOSE

This summer, we continued our focus on evaluating Camp’s four core values, focusing on two of them: appreciation and possibility. Last summer we explored the other two values: safety and camaraderie, and will revisit those in 2015. A new outcome explored in 2014 was “friendship skills,” and we explored “program fun” in both 2013 and 2014.

Appreciation is defined by THITWGC as “We recognize the generosity and gratitude of others and intend to exemplify that in all our decisions and actions.” Appreciation is important to consider because at camp, campers living with serious illness can gain a bigger perspective on their lives and the lives of others.

Possibility is defined as “All aspects of our community are designed to allow every individual inspired by Camp to believe that the impossible can be possible.” Possibility is important because a driving philosophy of THITWGC is that at Camp, youth can do that which they have been told they cannot do because of their illnesses.

Friendship skills is defined as “making friends and maintaining relationships.” Friendship skills are important to youth with serious illness because they typically lack many opportunities to develop these skills due to hospitalizations, bullying and delays in meeting developmental milestones.

Program fun is defined as the amount of fun in day and evening programs. Many other words could be used to describe feelings about programs, but in our experience, when asked what kids like about an activity, they typically reply “It’s fun!” Fun is important to youth with serious illness because typically, campers live lives characterized by fear, uncertainty, pain and isolation. To combat these negative experiences, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp aims to provide youth with programs that are fun and medically-supported.

The purpose of the evaluation was to understand the outcomes of “appreciation,” “possibility,” “friendship skills” and “program fun.” The evaluation questions were:

1. To what extent did participants agree with statements about experiencing *appreciation*?
2. To what extent did participants agree with statements about experiencing *possibility*?
3. Did participants report any changes in *friendship skills*?
4. How much *fun* were the program activities?
5. Did gender, age, session, unit, cabin, or amount of fun predict the above outcomes?
6. What recommendations did campers make for summer camp?

METHODS

Parents and caregivers gave their children permission to participate in the evaluation. Evaluation participants completed the questionnaires on their last afternoon at Camp, using iPads with the iSurvey app. A collaborative approach toward scale creation included conversations and review with key program staff.



All participants completed appreciation and possibility questions. Participants aged 10 and older also completed the 14-item friendship skills scale (American Camp Association Camp Youth Outcomes Battery, 2011). Parents/caregivers and volunteers completed online surveys after each session. Parents/caregivers answered one question each about their perceived changes in their children’s appreciation and possibility, and answered four questions about their children’s friendship skills. Volunteers answered one question each about their perceived changes in their campers’ appreciation, possibility and friendship skills, and questions about their campers’ fun in programs.



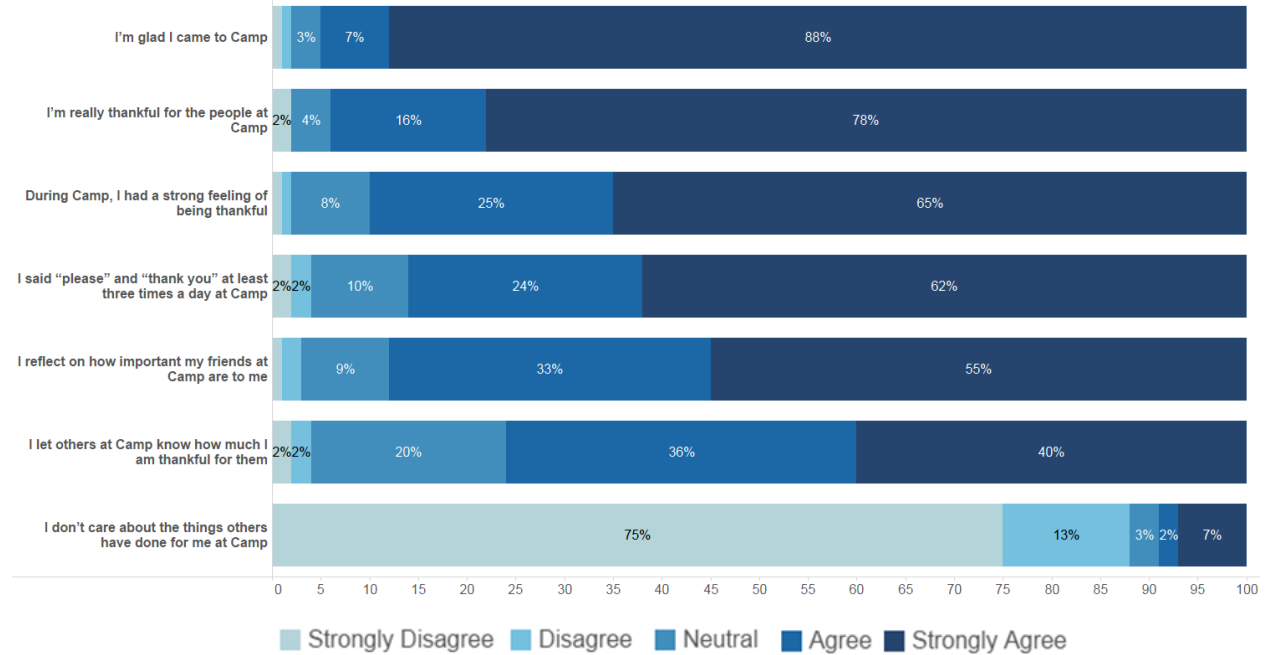
RESULTS

See Table 1: Camper Scale Performance and Items in the Appendix for more information.

APPRECIATION

Campers

89% of campers agreed or strongly agreed they felt appreciation at Camp.

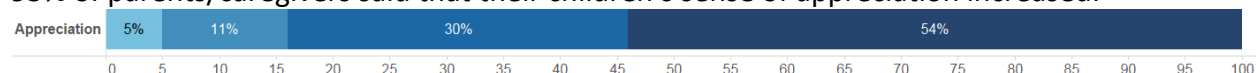


Appreciation average: 4.48 out of 5 (5 = strongly agree).



Parents/Caregivers

95% of parents/caregivers said that their children's sense of appreciation increased.



20 positive comments:

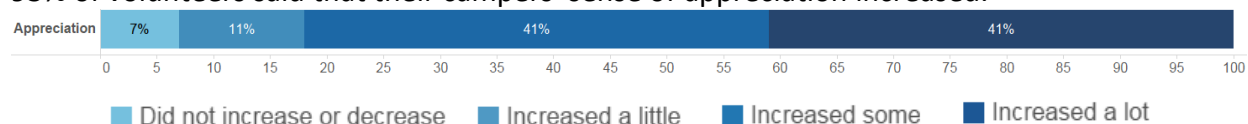
"He has always been thoughtful, but I see a greater sense of maturity in the way he expresses it."

"She appreciated that she had opportunities to do so much. She took chances, she loved the special programs that were offered like pottery and she loved going back to her old favorites. She doesn't get these opportunities often and if it is outside a Camp setting-there is always so much judgment attached. She appreciated that she got to be a kid and not the girl who has to go to the nurse's office."

"She has always been a compassionate child but even more so when she can relate to other people who share a common bond."

Volunteers

93% of volunteers said that their campers' sense of appreciation increased.



26 mixed reactions:

"We had a wonderful mix of old and new campers and I think this really made a difference. The new campers found this new appreciation for Camp and for finding friends like them and the older campers left with a renewed sense of appreciation for Camp!"

"Campers often expressed their appreciation in the evening chat time."

"I don't think any camper is encouraged to be appreciative. Some of them were. Camp did not teach them appreciation. They did appreciate being at Camp and each other."

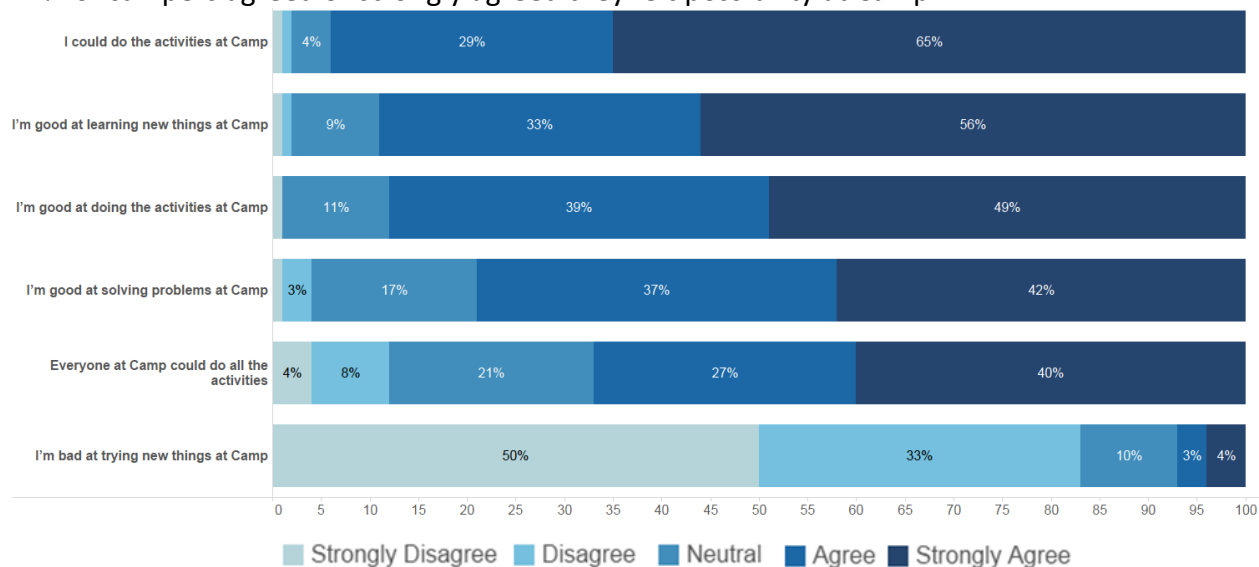
"This was apparent for a few of the kids more than others, especially when it comes to meeting kids of all abilities."



POSSIBILITY

Campers

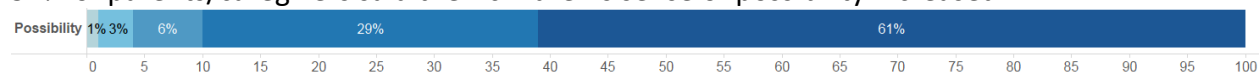
77% of campers agreed or strongly agreed they felt possibility at Camp.



Possibility average: 4.26 out of 5 (5 = strongly agree).

Parents/Caregivers

97% of parents/caregivers said their children's sense of possibility increased.



44 positive comments:

"My children arrived home with interests in new activities, which they had never attempted."

"My child came home from Camp with such positive outlook on things he would like to do and be."

"She said the week was life changing...taught her how to be happy again."

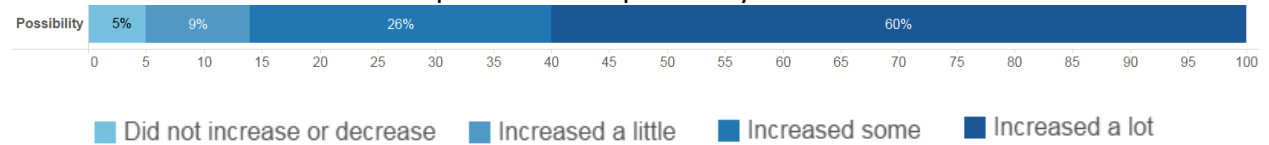
"We still work on breaking down the 'I can't' barriers."

"I heard, at pick up, how he really opened up and also was eager to infuse himself because his friends were doing it too."

"From my son: 'It felt impossible that we could all be facing difficulties and still we were all still here - at Camp. And having an awesome time.'"

Volunteers

95% of volunteers said their campers' sense of possibility increased.



26 mostly positive comments:

“I think my campers were supported by counselors and one another. There was a definite positive energy taking place.”

“Girls tried new things like wood shop and were surprised they could "build" things. I saw a sense of wonder at their own capabilities come alive.”

“One camper told me: ‘At home I feel like I can't do things. Here I feel I like can do everything.’”

“Campers were encouraged in a non-threatening way to try new things. They were allowed to participate to their maximum tolerance level and when they wanted to scale things back, it happened immediately for them. All their accomplishments, no matter how small, were applauded.”

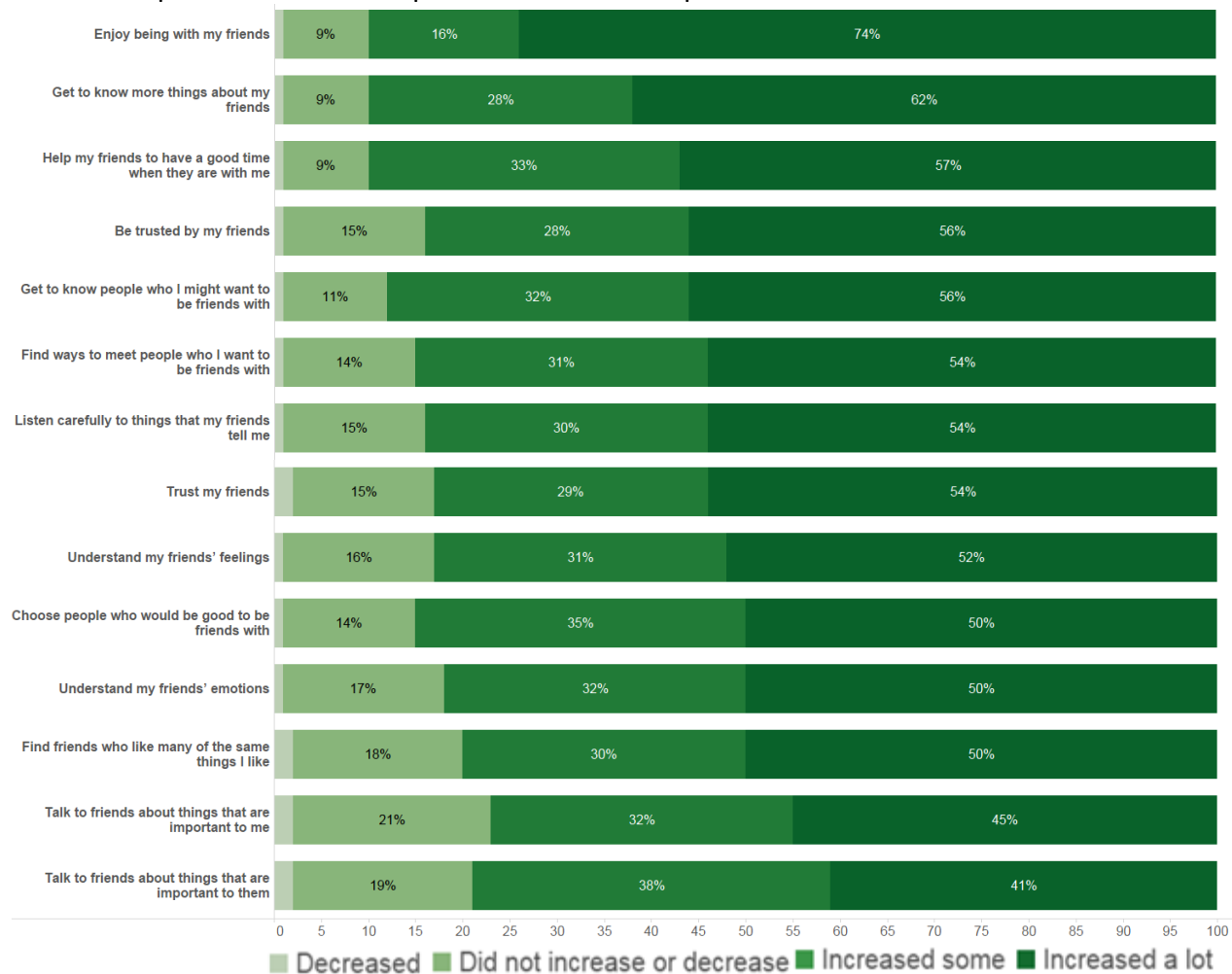
“Frankly, this is hard to evaluate. Put another way, however, I'd say we did our best, and the campers took advantage to the best of their abilities.”



FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

Campers

97% of campers 10 and older reported their friendship skills increased.

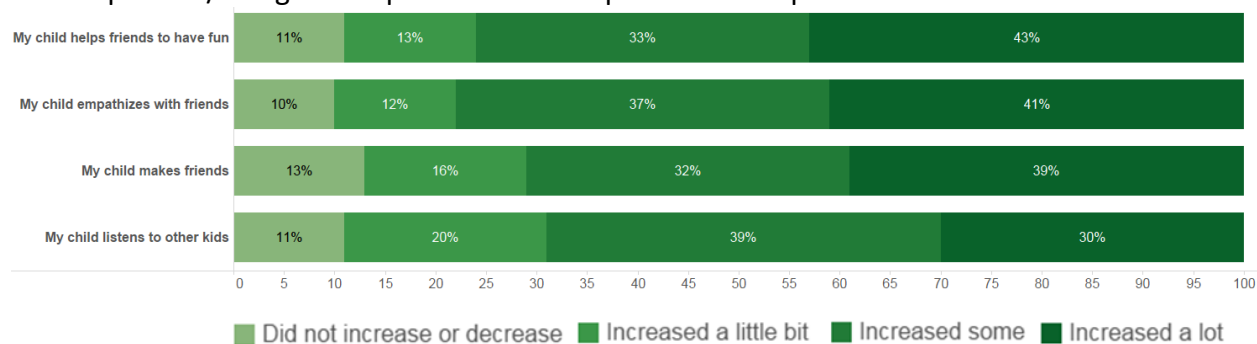


The average increase in friendship skills was 1.38 out of 2 (-1 = decreased, 0 = did not increase or decrease, 1 = increased some, 2 = increased a lot), meaning that campers increased some in friendship skills.



Parents/Caregivers

89% of parents/caregivers reported their campers' friendship skills increased.



36 positive comments:

“Seeing other children facing different challenges than they face on a daily basis, has increased my sons' ability to empathize with other children. They have mentioned several times the concern and understanding they have for other children, both from camp and at home.”

“I love that he gets to make friends with kids, and he just doesn't 'care' why they are at Camp. Not that he doesn't care about them or their struggles, but that he doesn't let their condition define them. They are just who they are, not my friend with cancer, or my deaf friend, or my friend with sickle cell.”

Volunteers

95% of volunteers reported their campers' friendship skills increased.



24 positive comments:

“It took a lot of work but by the end of the week most of the campers were starting to grasp that sharing and being supportive is an important step in maintaining friendships. For most of them, it was their first camp experience so they have a lot to learn!!”

“We had a camper who was clearly a bully at home and at school who articulated how at Camp he can be himself and he likes himself more at Camp. This allowed him to develop authentic connections with his cabin mates. It was his first time at Camp.”

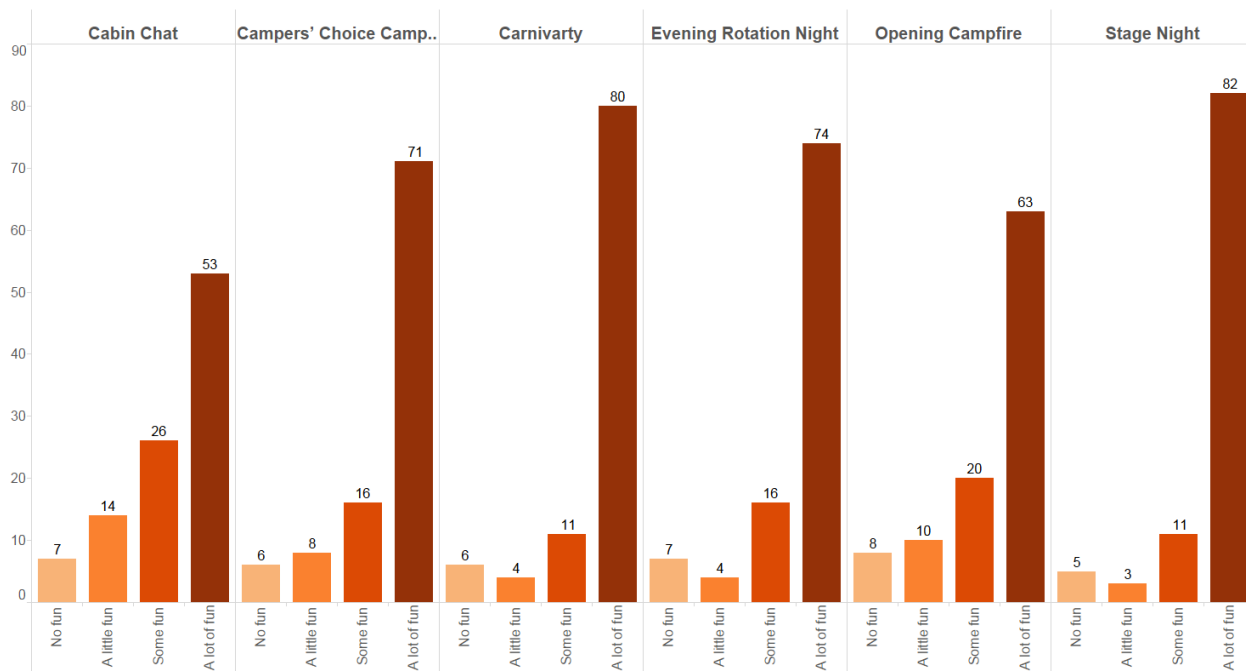
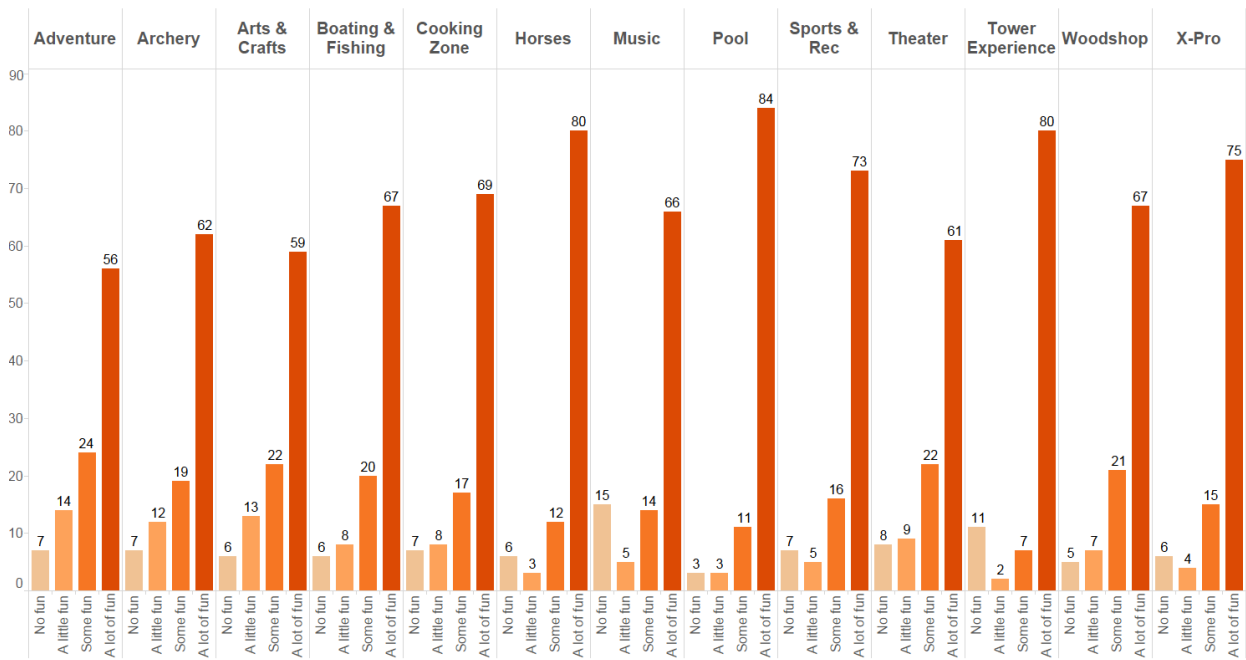
“All of my campers were very open, friendly and caring towards one and very understanding of other campers differences. I was very impressed by the end of the week to see many of my campers going out of their way to make Camp a special and welcoming place for other campers not in their cabin.”

“A few campers who sheltered themselves and seemed withdrawn in the beginning, ended up pairing with others and initiating communication and activities without staff prompting.”

PROGRAM FUN

Campers

88% of campers had some or a lot of program fun.



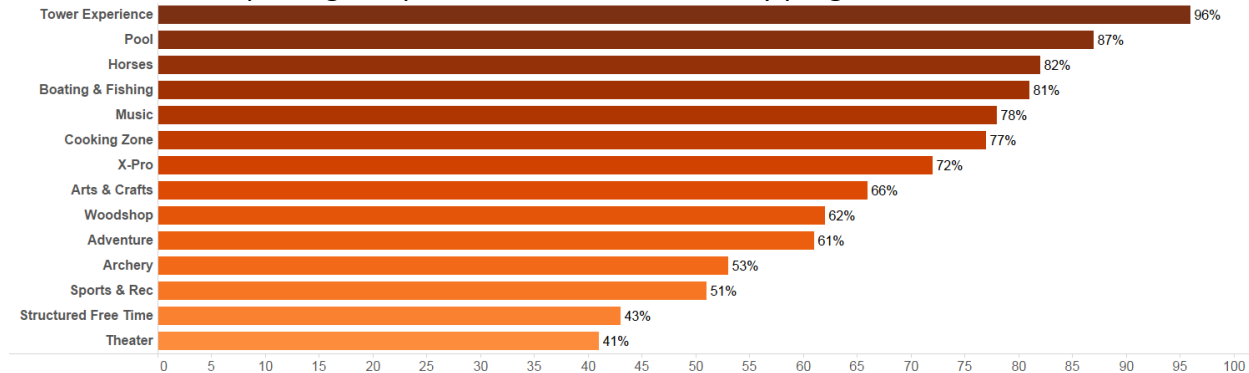
Program fun average: 2.5 out of 3 (0 = no fun, 1 = a little fun, 2 = some fun, 3 = a lot of fun), meaning that campers had some or a lot of fun in the programs.

Volunteers

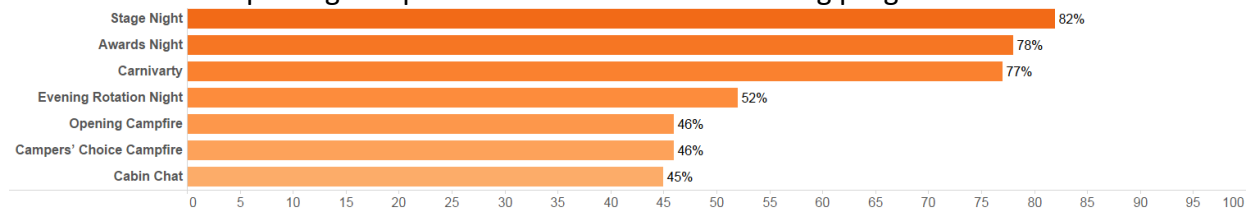
94% of volunteers said campers had some or a lot of fun in day programs.

91% of volunteers said campers had some or a lot of fun in evening programs.

% of volunteers reporting campers had “a lot of fun” in day programs.



% of volunteers reporting campers had “a lot of fun” in evening programs.



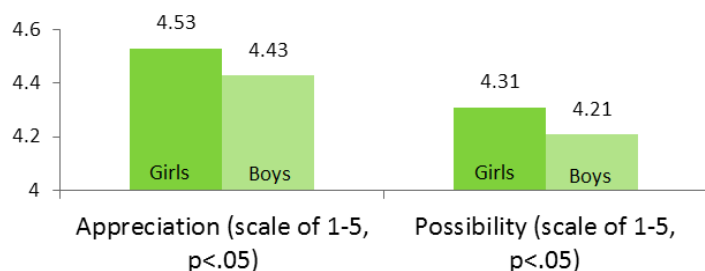
PREDICTIONS

Q: Did **session, unit** and **cabin** predict appreciation, possibility, friendship skills or program fun?

A: Nope. There were no differences in responses based on campers' sessions, units or cabins.

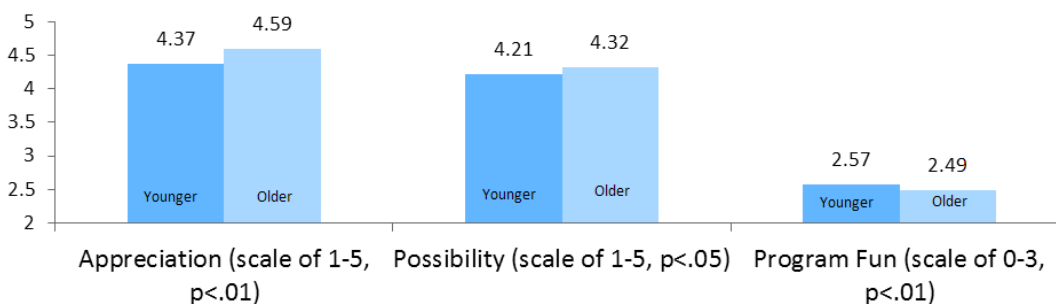
Q: Did **Gender** predict appreciation, possibility, friendship skills or program fun?

A: Gender did not predict friendship skills or program fun, but girls were slightly higher than boys in their feelings of appreciation and possibility.



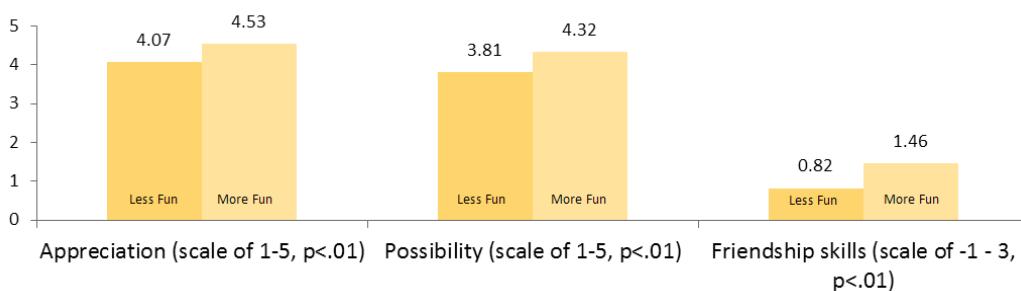
Q: Did **Age** predict appreciation, possibility, friendship skills or program fun?

A: Age did not predict friendship skills, but older campers were slightly higher in their feelings of appreciation and possibility, and had slightly less program fun.



Q: Did amount of **program fun** predict appreciation, possibility or friendship skills?

A: Program fun predicted appreciation, possibility and friendship skills.



See Table 2: Regression Analyses in the Appendix for more information.

Bottom line

1. *Gender* and *age* very slightly predicted *appreciation* and *possibility* (and *program fun* for age), with girls and older campers having very slightly higher outcomes in all outcomes except that older campers reported slightly less fun in programs.
2. *Program fun* made a small amount of difference in *appreciation*, *possibility* and *friendship skills*, with higher outcome scores for campers who had more fun.
3. According to data from parents/caregivers, *session*, *child age* and *amount of summers* of Camp didn't make a difference to their reports of their children's increases in appreciation, possibility or friendship skills.
4. When thinking about how to increase campers' senses of appreciation and possibility and friendship skills, we should consider how much fun they are having in the program activities and ensure that all campers have fun.



What were volunteers' favorite moments with campers?

"My favorite moments were seeing campers open up and really feel comfortable with themselves... and seeing them step out of their comfort zone to try new things! Camp really fosters a feeling that these kids can do ANYTHING... as long as they never stop climbing :)"

"It was extra cool this year to watch kids leave Camp with more energy and less sick looking than when they arrived."

"Having the girls open up during quiet activities and sharing about their challenges at school or with their illness. I was so surprised and happy that they felt comfortable in such a short time to share their most vulnerable challenges."

"Hearing a camper, after initially not wanting to get on Oreo [the horse], say that he loved horses. I asked what about the fear and he said, "Oh, I conquered that!""

"I was sitting next to a camper at campfire. Right around the point that [the program director] says "a place where people could be themselves," the camper leans over and whispers conspiratorially to me, "I love this story.""

"Seeing one of my girls on stage singing and involving the crowd during her song. It was unexpected and very cool to see her so happy onstage."

"I think what struck me the most was in the dining hall watching everyone singing and dancing. The faces on both the campers and staff said it all. It was pure joy."

"Last night together, giving out cabin awards. We got to bed so late, all the girls were laughing their faces off. Everyone had bonded so closely at that point, cabin chat was incredible and everyone accepted their cabin award with laughter and pride. It was amazing to see the growth from day one."

"Joking with a teenage camper and his counselors while he was waiting for his infusion. The puns, creative spirit and humor and laughs just kept on rolling."



What would campers change about Camp? (out of 577 responses)

1. Nothing – 289
2. Make Camp longer – 59
3. Less rest time/later bedtimes – 48
4. Food-related – 21
5. Less counselor supervision – 18
6. Age-related (i.e., younger kids staying for longer at evening activities and going to adventure and tower) – 14
7. More technology – 13
8. More activities – 13
9. More comfortable cabins – 10

RESTTIME MORESPORTS TECHNOLOGY **LONGER** FOOD SUPERVISION
AGE
NOTHING



CONCLUSIONS

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp operates a strong summer camp program for campers that supports the positive outcomes of appreciation, possibility and friendship skills. These outcomes come along with high levels of fun, meaning that the more fun kids have, the higher their outcomes. Parents/caregivers and volunteers aligned with campers in their perceptions that Camp offers strong opportunities for campers to experience appreciation, possibility, friendship skills, and program fun.

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp should continue to offer opportunities to build outcomes through beloved programs such as pool, horses, tower, stage night and Carnivarty.

Areas for further consideration:

Increasing opportunities for campers to reflect on and share their friendships at Camp.

Helping campers talk to each other about things that are important to them.

Addressing camper perceptions that not all campers could do every activity. Camper ratings of their sense of possibility were slightly lower than their ratings for their sense of appreciation, mostly because they believed that some campers could not do every activity.

Further exploration of how staff and volunteers can intentionally program for campers' feelings of appreciation and possibility.

Thinking about girls continuing to have slightly stronger outcomes than boys. In 2013, we found a similar pattern of girls having slightly overall higher outcomes than boys. How can programs and interactions be intentionally planned to promote high levels of positive youth outcomes for both boys and girls?

Increasing program fun for the ~6% of campers who reported lower levels of fun because fun is a predictor of positive outcomes.



APPENDIX

Table 1. Camper Scale Performance and Items.

| Scale | Item | Mean |
|--|---|------|
| Appreciation (range: 1-5) M = 4.48; SD = .56 $\alpha = .695$ Inter-item range -.02 to .53 rfun = .34 (p<.001) | During Camp, I had a strong feeling of being thankful. | 4.52 |
| | I'm really thankful for the people at Camp. | 4.69 |
| | I said "please" and "thank you" at least three times a day at Camp. | 4.45 |
| | I don't care about the things others have done for me at Camp.* | 4.59 |
| | I let others at Camp know how much I am thankful for them. | 4.09 |
| | I reflect on how important my friends at Camp are to me. | 4.37 |
| | I'm glad I came to Camp. | 4.8 |
| Possibility (range: 1-5) M = 4.26; SD = .6 $\alpha = .686$ Inter-item range .06 to .58 rfun = .34 (p<.001) | I'm good at doing the activities at Camp. | 4.34 |
| | I'm good at learning new things at Camp. | 4.42 |
| | I'm good at solving problems at Camp. | 4.16 |
| | I'm bad at trying new things at Camp.* | 4.28 |
| | I could do the activities at Camp. | 4.55 |
| | Everyone at Camp could do all the activities. | 3.92 |
| Friendship skills (range: -1 – 2) M = 1.38; SD = .58 $\alpha = .943$ Inter-item range .41 to .84 rfun = .44 (p<.001) | Choose people who would be good to be friends with. | 1.34 |
| | Talk to friends about things that are important to them. | 1.19 |
| | Listen carefully to things that my friends tell me. | 1.38 |
| | Talk to friends about things that are important to me. | 1.19 |
| | Get to know more things about my friends. | 1.52 |
| | Understand my friends' feelings. | 1.33 |
| | Understand my friends' emotions. | 1.32 |
| | Trust my friends. | 1.36 |
| | Be trusted by my friends. | 1.38 |
| | Enjoy being with my friends. | 1.63 |
| | Help my friends to have a good time when they are with me. | 1.45 |
| | Find ways to meet people who I want to be friends with. | 1.37 |
| | Get to know people who I might want to be friends with. | 1.43 |
| Find friends who like many of the same things I like. | 1.29 | |
| Fun (range: 0-3) M = 2.49; SD = .59 | 19 day and evening programs (e.g., cabin chat, pool, horses, arts & crafts, Carnivarty) | |

* Item reverse-scored

Table 2. Regression Analyses.

| Predictor | Outcome | Relationship | R ² |
|-------------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| Gender | Appreciation | $b = -.09$ ($p < .05$), $F(1, 638) = 4.68$ | .01 |
| | Possibility | $b = -.08$ ($p < .05$), $F(1, 635) = 4.52$ | .01 |
| Age | Appreciation | $b = .19$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 628) = 23.11$ | .04 |
| | Possibility | $b = .09$ ($p < .05$), $F(1, 628) = 4.56$ | .01 |
| | Program Fun | $b = -.08$ ($p = .05$), $F(1, 629) = 3.77$ | .01 |
| Program Fun | Appreciation | $b = .34$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 638) = 83.53$ | .12 |
| | Possibility | $b = .34$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 635) = 82.97$ | .12 |
| | Friendship Skills | $b = .44$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 408) = 99.11$ | .2 |

