



a seriousfun camp

2016 Summer Camp Outcomes Report

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BACKGROUND

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp (THITWGC) was founded by Paul Newman with one simple premise in mind – that every child, no matter their illness, could experience the transformational spirit and friendships that go hand-in-hand with camp. Through eight 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.

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 formal evaluations of the summer camp program in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. This report reflects the 2016 evaluation, and there are comparisons to previous years’ results as well.

Research and evaluation at Camp supports continuous innovation, promotes program quality and ensures the safety, well-being and positive development of campers and families. Far from being a burden, campers shared much enthusiasm and gratitude for participating in the evaluation, often expressing the sentiment, “My voice gets to be heard by Camp.”



2016 Campers

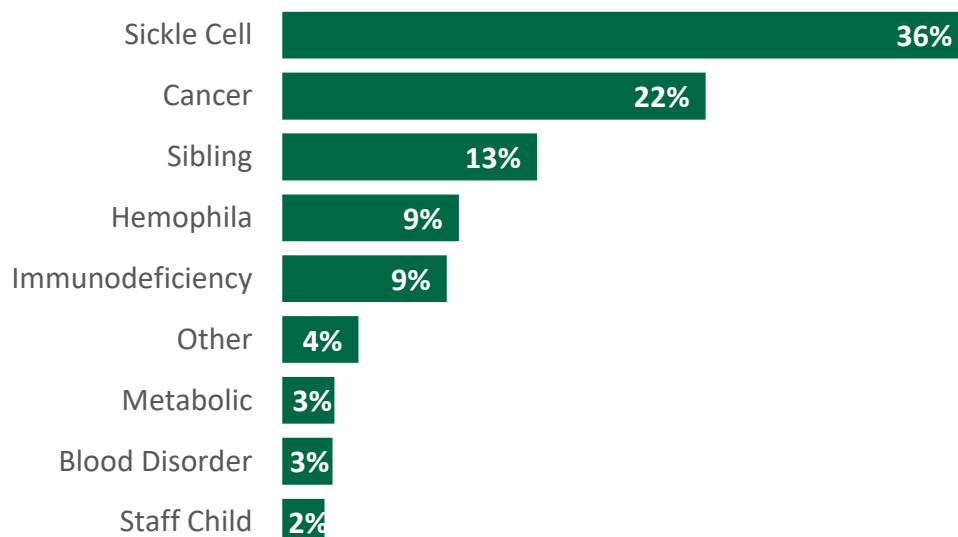


Chart adds to 101% due to rounding error.

Purpose

This summer, we continued evaluating Camp's four core values, focusing on two of them: appreciation and possibility, which we also evaluated in 2014. Last summer, we explored the other two values: safety and camaraderie. Another outcome explored in 2014, 2015, and 2016 was "friendship skills," and we explored "program fun" in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016.

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" from the perspectives of campers and parents/caregivers. The evaluation questions were:

1. To what extent did participants agree with statements about experiencing *appreciation*? (p. 5)
2. To what extent did participants agree with statements about experiencing *possibility*? (p. 6)
3. Did participants report any changes in *friendship skills*? (pp. 7-8)
4. How did parents/caregivers feel about their children's *medical care*? (p. 9)
5. How much *fun* were the program activities? (pp. 9-10)
6. Did age, session, unit, or number of previous Camp sessions predict the above outcomes? (pp. 11-12)
7. Were there any differences in outcomes this year compared to other years? (pp. 12-14)
8. What were campers' favorite moments at Camp? (p. 14-15)
9. What recommendations did campers make for summer Camp? (p. 15)
10. How did parents/caregivers describe Camp? (p. 16)

Discussion and recommendations can be found on pages 17-18, and detailed statistical analyses are found in the Appendix on pages 19-20.

A report on the operations of Camp and recommendations for specific improvements in the areas of program, residential life, medical, admissions, and other functions of Camp will be ready in November.

Methods

98% of 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.

862 campers completed appreciation, possibility and program fun questions. Participants aged 10 and older also completed the 14-item friendship skills scale (American Camp Association Camp Youth Outcomes Battery, 2011). **329** parents/caregivers and volunteers also completed 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. Both campers and parents/caregivers answered open-ended questions about their experiences.



329 Parents/Caregivers



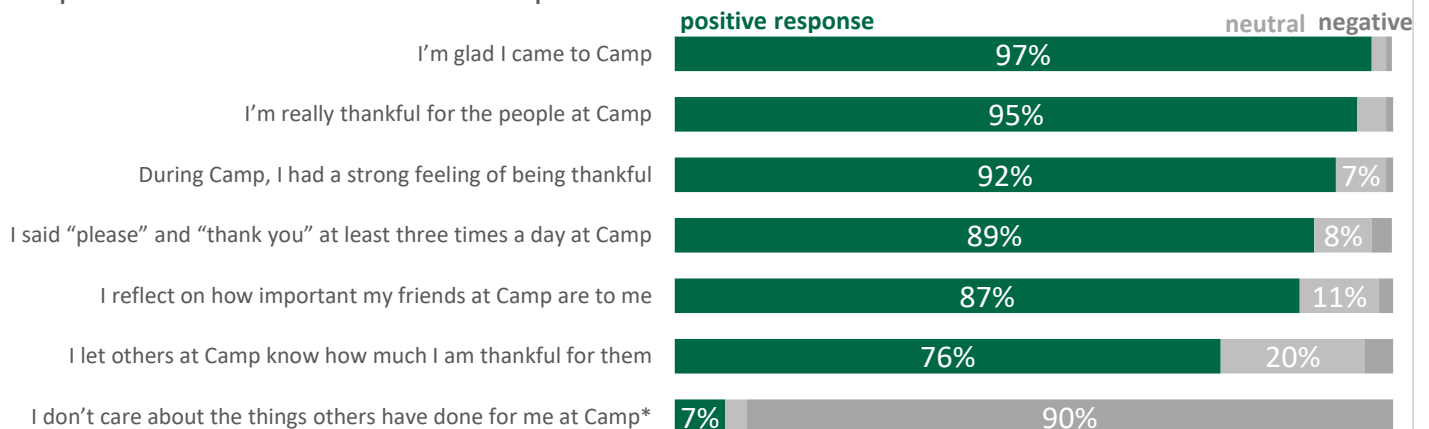
862 Campers

*Special thanks to **Anna Boling** (Research and Evaluation Intern) for her incredible help with data collection and analysis for this evaluation.*



RESULTS

Campers felt **APPRECIATION** at Camp.



* Item reverse-coded for this chart.

Appreciation average: 4.51 (SD: .53) out of 5, with 5 meaning "strongly agree."

93% of parents/caregivers reported their child's sense of **appreciation** increased.



Selected parent/caregiver comments about appreciation:

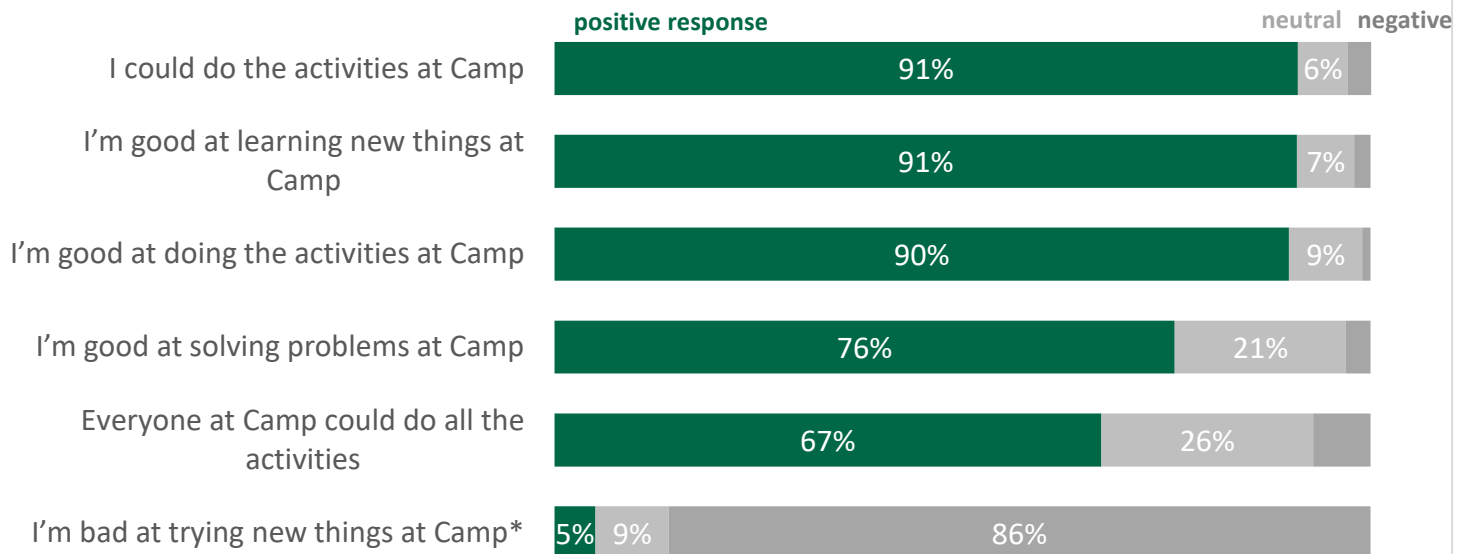
My child came home with more empathy for others and also understanding that others have medical needs too. Though their needs aren't the same as his, other children have to cope with chronic medical issues also. This made him feel less alone.

My child has always been a very appreciative and empathetic individual. She is non-judgmental and sees everyone as a friend. However, in the real world, she does not connect with typical peers and form bonds and friendships, probably because though wise beyond her years and great with adults, she is still socially immature...a very young 15! Camp was a wonderful opportunity for her to be with a group of peers and share a magical experience!

She's always been very compassionate and grateful. Camp has been a wonderful place to grow even more in these areas.

My son has learned to be grateful and appreciate all that has been put in front of him each and every day. To be at camp re-emphasizes all values he has learned and he talks endlessly about the friendships he has made at camp!

Campers felt **POSSIBILITY** at Camp.



* Item reverse-coded for this chart.

Possibility average: 4.29 (SD: .56) out of 5, with 5 meaning "strongly agree."

95% of parents/caregivers reported their child's sense of **possibility** increased.



Selected parent/caregiver quotes about possibility:

One thing I loved witnessing was hearing on drop off day "Oh I feel so bad for that person... she only has one (leg, a different arm, etc.)" and by the end hearing "I am so proud of my friend, he/she climbed the tower/swam/danced (whatever!) with one leg/one arm/whatever! I love camp, we're all here because we're SPECIAL!" Camp helps them overcome their differences and see themselves and others for what they CAN do, not what they can't!

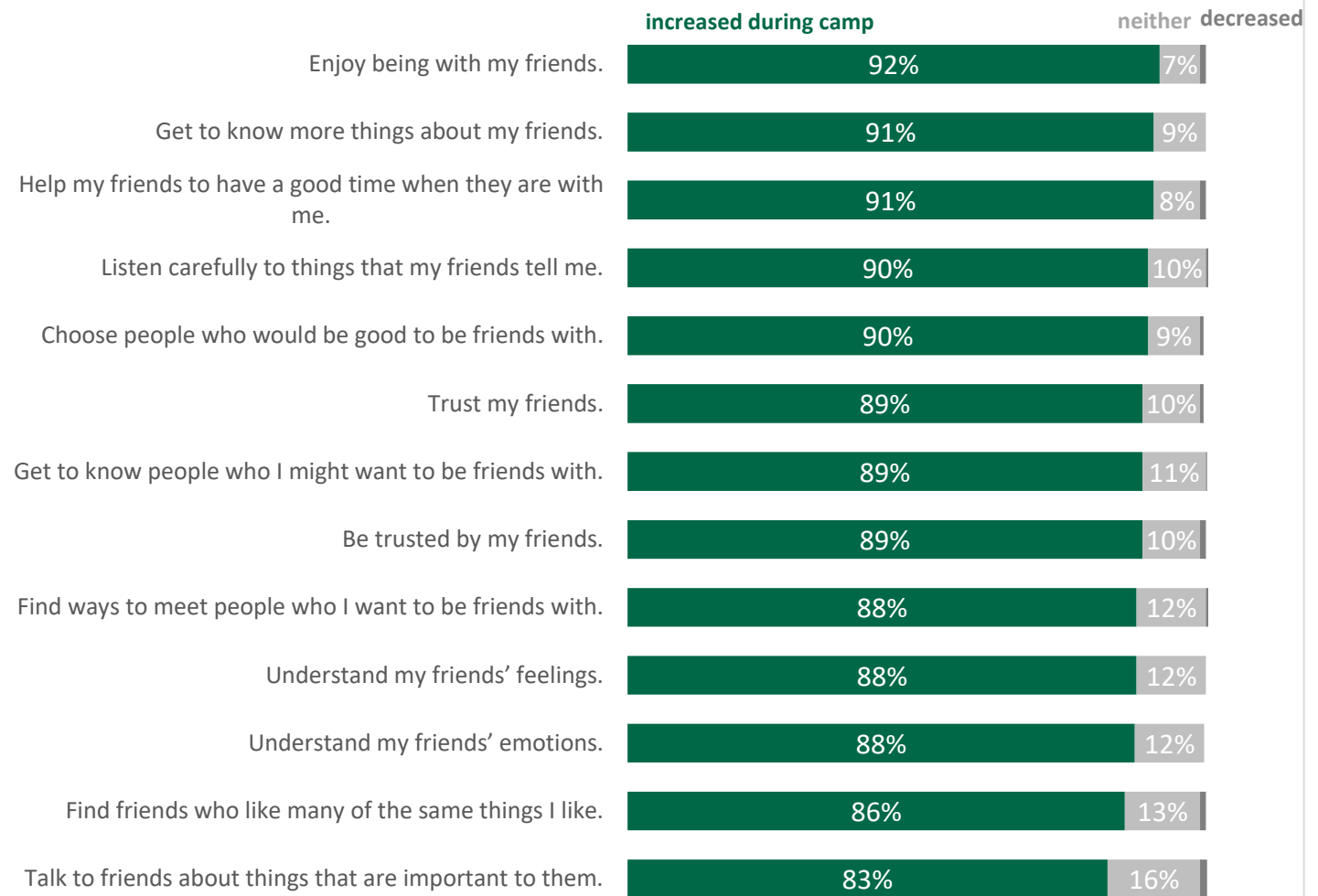
She believed in herself there's nothing she can't do - so long as she puts her mind to it, she can accomplish anything.

As for possibility, there's no place like camp to feel that all things are possible.

My child sang in front of an audience. Possibilities = endless.

Campers' friendship skills increased significantly during Camp in all areas.

Top responses involved strengthening ties with existing friends.



Friendship skills average: 2.21 (*SD*: .82) on a scale of -1: decreased, 0: did not increase or decrease, 1: increased a little, 2: increased some, and 3: increased a lot.



Over 80% of parents/caregivers reported their child's **friendship skills** increased.



Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

Parent/Caregiver quotes about friendships:

My daughter is very shy and usually keeps to herself. This session she came home so excited because she was able to make a close friend who had similar interests and her and her cabin mates took part in the lift that helped this girl be able to get to the top of the tower and take the zip line down. My daughter felt empowered by this experience.

She is so social, caring and empathetic already that I think Camp really allowed her to practice what she already demonstrates versus acquiring those skills.

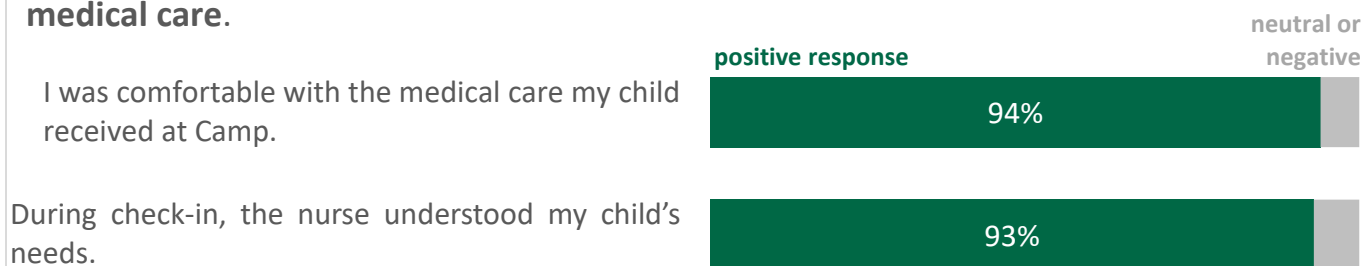
First time at overnight camp! She had a great time and we heard from many counselors what fun she was to have. Since she doesn't usually have 'play dates' or hang out with other children, this was a huge event for her! Being with so many kids with differing backgrounds definitely gave her an appreciation for others.

He made some unexpected friends - he was very focused on their incredible abilities and their ability to be happy regardless of the situation. He gained some fear of what the disease might do to him but at the same time saw that it did not deny you of happiness. Very tough lessons.

He continues to talk to the friends he made at Camp and refers to one of his friends as his "best friend." They speak on the phone and/or text several times a week. He also seems much more aware of kids in school making negative comments about others and this bothers him more than it used to.

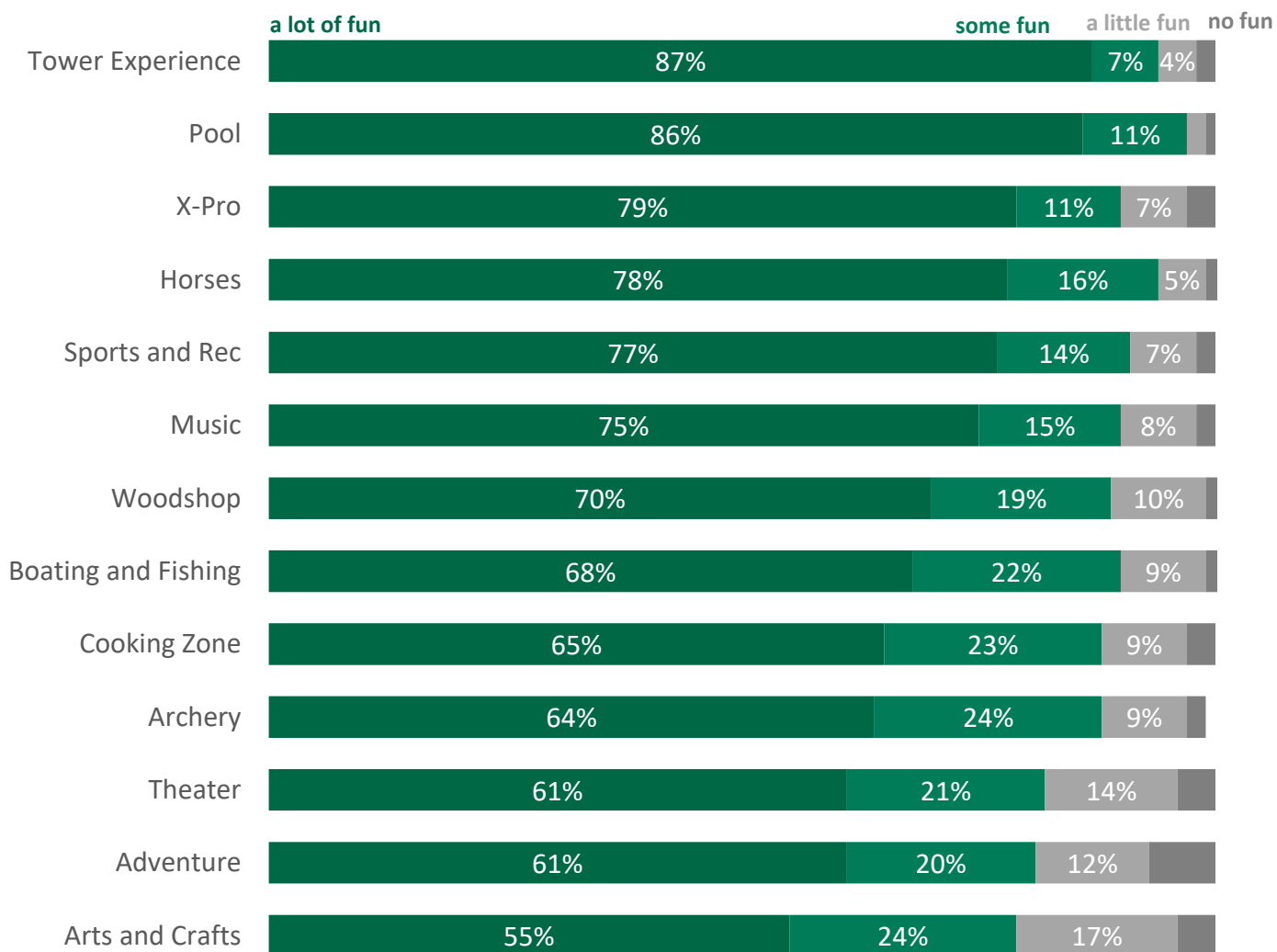
Finding and making friends at school is very challenging for her. But, at camp she is able to make friends easily, let go, be free to be herself and just enjoy the experience. We are so grateful that she has been able to have this much needed experience. We wish she could have the camp experience year round. At camp she is known as [her name]...not her diagnosis. Words really can't describe how meaningful that is to her and our family! Thank you so much for the gift of camp!

Parents/Caregivers were comfortable with Camp's medical care.



Campers had lots of fun during Day Programs.

Favorites were Tower and Pool.



Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

Campers had lots of fun in **Evening Programs**.

Favorites were Stage Night and Carnivarty.



Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

The overall average for Program Fun was 2.6 (*SD*: .41) on a scale of 0: no fun, 1: a little fun, 2: some fun, and 3: a lot of fun.



DIGGING DEEPER

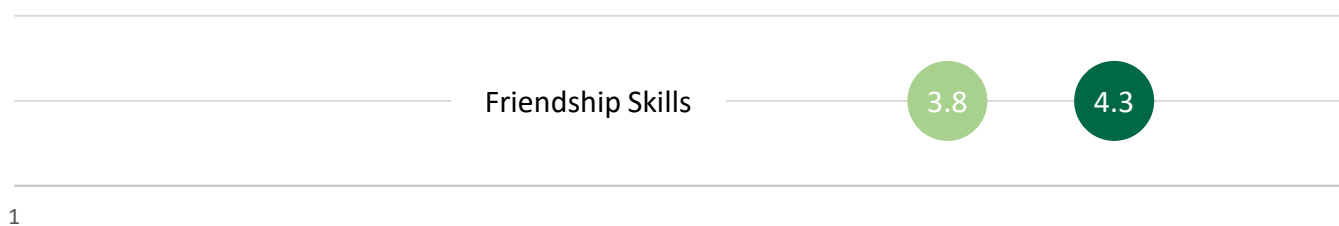
Did # of SUMMERS at Camp make a difference to camper outcomes?

There was NO difference between first-time campers and experienced campers for possibility, friendship skills, and fun. However, first-time campers ($m = 4.38$) were lowest in appreciation compared to campers who had one or more years of experience at camp ($m = 4.53$ - 4.62), and appreciation seemed to grow a bit with more numbers of summers at HITW.

Appreciation: First-Time ($m = 4.38$, $SD: .58$), Experienced ($m = 4.53$, $SD: .51$) ($p < .001$, $d = .27$)

In the parent/caregiver data, an interesting trend emerged. Parents/caregivers of campers who attended Camp for the **third time** ($m = 4.26$, $SD: .75$) reported higher friendship skills than campers who were at Camp for the first ($m = 3.79$, $SD: .94$; $d = .55$) or second time ($m = 3.78$, $SD: .90$; $d = .58$). With the effect sizes d being in the .5 range, the differences between the number of times at Camp were of medium magnitude. There were no statistically significant differences between third-time campers and fourth- or fifth-time campers. **This finding is important because it shows that according to parents/caregivers, the effects of Camp on campers' friendship skills are highest after campers' third time at Camp and remain high after their fourth or fifth time.**

Third-time campers' parents/caregivers reported more increases in camper friendship skills than **first- and second-time** campers.



Did AGE make a difference to camper outcomes?

There was NO difference between older (ages 12-16) and younger (ages 6-11) campers for possibility and friendship skills. However, younger campers ($m = 4.4$) reported a little less appreciation than older campers ($m = 4.6$). And, younger campers ($m = 2.6$) reported more fun than older campers ($m = 2.5$). The sizes of the differences were small.

Did UNIT make a difference to camper outcomes?

Nope! There were no statistically significant differences between units.

Did SESSION make a difference to camper outcomes?

Campers reported NO difference between sessions for appreciation, possibility and friendship skills. However, there was a statistically significant difference for fun, with Session 3 campers reporting the least fun (2.36) and Session 4 campers reporting the most fun (2.63). Overall, Sessions 1, 2, and 3 reported the least fun (2.36-

2.46) and Sessions 4 and 8 reported the most fun (2.61-2.63). However, the differences were VERY small and emerged mostly due to the large number of campers who provided data. When there are large numbers of people in a study, differences are likely to emerge within statistics, but the differences might not be practically useful.

Parents/caregivers reported NO difference between sessions for any of the camper outcomes.

It's important to keep in mind that ALL scores were quite high, indicating positive experiences for nearly all campers. While these differences were *statistically* significant, they are not necessarily *practically* significant. Digging deeper into some of the results allows us to make small tweaks to staff training and programming for future summers.

Please see the Appendix for more detailed information about differences in responses to questions among units, sessions, ages, and number of summers at Camp.

Outcome Comparisons

Appreciation	2014 4.48
	2016 4.51
Possibility	2014 4.26
	2016 4.29

There were no statistical differences in Appreciation or Possibility between 2014 and 2016, so the slight variation is due to chance.

The set of questions for both outcomes was only moderately reliable in both 2014 and 2016, meaning that campers' answers did not always relate to each other. This means that the outcomes of "appreciation" and "possibility" might be conceptually unclear to campers and the scale items should be revisited.

Program Fun	2013 2.54
	2014 2.49
	2015 2.62
	2016 2.6

There was no statistically significant difference between the average of fun in 2015 and 2016.

The questions asked about fun in both years were the same, and the set of questions was statistically reliable.

Similar to past years, the amount of fun a camper had moderately predicted their feelings of appreciation, possibility, and friendship skills. See the Appendix for more information.

What about Friendship Skills?

In 2015, we added a 45-minute training in staff orientation about how to cultivate friendship skills in campers. We compared campers' friendship skills scores to 2014 when we did not have a friendship skills-specific training and found that ***intentional staff training made a difference to camper friendship skills!***

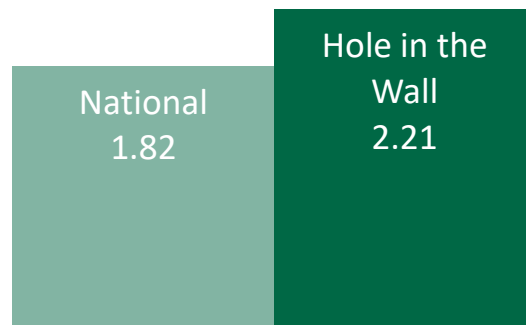
In 2016, we increased the training to 90 minutes, added more information about social-emotional skills, and conducted a booster session half-way through the summer

Did the extra training make a difference? Actually, no! There were no differences in camper friendship skills when staff had a 45-minute training compared to when they had a 90-minute training or after the booster session.

This 3-year study provided evidence that each length of intentional training affected camper outcomes and informs us that the same goal for camper outcomes can be reached using varying lengths of intentional training. This helps Camp make decisions about how to structure staff training to support campers.

How do Friendship Skills at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp compare to campers from a national sample of resident camps?

After adjusting the national average to reflect the scale used at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, we found that The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's campers' Friendship Skills ($M = 2.21$, $SD = .79$) were statistically significantly and moderately more than the national sample ($M = 1.82$, $SD = .9$), with a Cohen's d effect size of .46, meaning that the difference was of medium magnitude.



What were campers' favorite moments?

Campers shared their favorite moments, which are organized below according to size, with the most frequently mentioned being the largest.



Selected camper responses to the question “What was your favorite moment at Camp?”

My favorite moment was when I got off the bus and I stood outside the bus just smelling the air and just rejoicing of how I came back to the place I love.

My favorite moment at camp is when I came in and everyone asked me my name and I told them my name and they played with me.

My favorite moment at camp was when I sang during stage night for the first time even if I was scared.

The most fun part was when I conquered my fear of heights and did the tower and rocked it.

When I helped a friend get through a time when they needed someone to lean on.

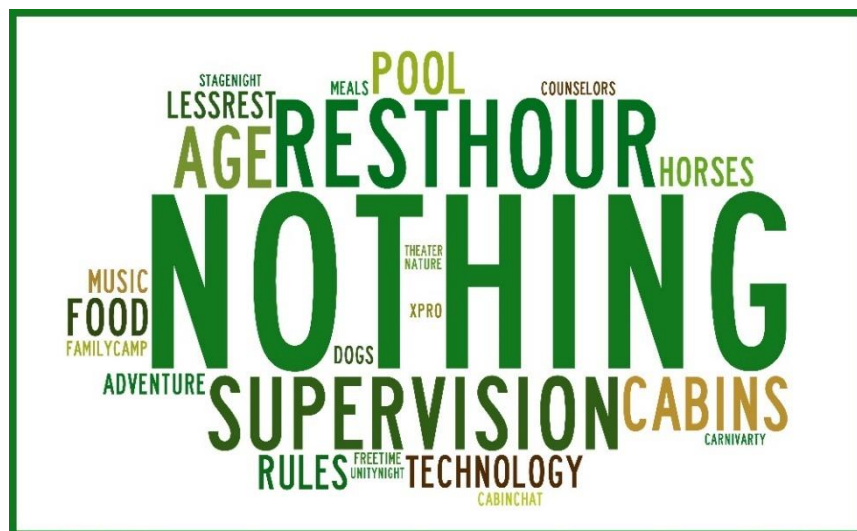
My favorite moment at camp was meeting new people and becoming good friends who also became family to me because I know I will miss them all.

Meeting the coolest counselors in my cabin that understand me when I was going through my emotions.

My favorite moment was when I realized that I could truly be me without judgement and criticism. I love this camp.

EVERY MOMENT WAS MY FAVORITE MOMENT.

What would campers change about Camp?



Most campers would change NOTHING about Camp. Many campers wished Camp was longer. Some campers wanted later bed times and little or no rest hour. Some campers wanted less close supervision from counselors. Several campers wished that younger campers could do Tower, XPro, and stay up later. Several campers had specific suggestions for program areas. A few campers had specific suggestions for Camp facilities, such as less walking and cabin improvements. A few campers wanted to use their phones or tablets. A few campers wanted more interactions with other cabins.

What were the top 100 words parents/caregivers use to describe Camp?



DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



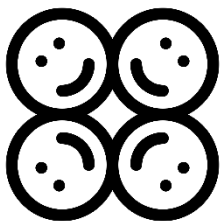
After four summers of examining campers' experiences of safety, camaraderie, appreciation and possibility, a few themes emerged:

1. The averages of safety, camaraderie, appreciation, and possibility range from 4.3 to 4.6 out of 5, indicating campers have strong experiences of Camp's core values while at Camp.
2. While the questions that make up the safety and camaraderie outcomes are statistically solid, appreciation and possibility are outcomes that are less solid and seem conceptually muddy to campers.
3. The outcome of possibility consistently remains the lowest, indicating room for improvement within the culture of Camp to promote possibility. How can Camp do more to encourage all campers to believe that "the impossible is possible"?



After four summers of examining campers' fun reports of day and evening programs, it has become clear that:

1. Pool and Tower, Stage Night and Carnivarty are always the most fun activities.
2. Arts & Crafts and Adventure are always the least fun activities.
3. The amount of fun predicts other outcomes. More fun = better outcomes.
4. Fun has been consistent through four summers, with the average fun score ranging from 2.5 to 2.6 out of 3, indicating campers think programs are some or a lot of fun.
5. "Friends" is always campers' top favorite moment.
6. More information is needed about what makes each program area more or less fun.



Compared to the national average, campers' friendship skills increased more during their camp sessions. Examining friendship skills over three summers, we found that a 45-minute staff training on building campers' friendship skills increased campers' friendship skills compared to no staff training, and that additional training had no additional effect on campers' friendship skills. This study strongly suggests that **intentional training matters to camper outcomes**. This study should be replicated with another camper outcome, such as independence.



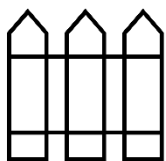
While there are a handful of statistically significant differences in camper outcomes based on camper-level demographic data such as session, unit, age, or number of summers at Camp, these differences are small and not very meaningful. This means that HITW provides a very consistent program to all campers. However, an important finding emerged that parents/caregivers of campers who had been to Camp three times reported their children's friendship skills increased the most compared to campers who had been to Camp once or twice. This finding suggests that Camp should consider encouraging campers to attend Camp 3 times.



Recommendations seem to shift each year. While most campers would change nothing or would make Camp longer, trends emerge in specific cabins, such as wanting a dog, wanting less rest time, younger campers wanting to do what the older campers do, and minor complaints about the cabins or interactions in the cabins.



Parents/caregivers aligned with campers in their perceptions that Camp offers strong opportunities for campers to experience appreciation, possibility, friendship skills and program fun.



Certainly, some limitations exist for this evaluation. First, campers reported about themselves, which can sometimes be unreliable and inaccurate. Second, because campers did the surveys at the end of their camp sessions, they might have been experiencing an elation that inflated their answers. Third, parents/caregivers might have inflated their answers because they wanted to believe that their investment of time and effort to get their children to Camp was worthwhile.

**Even with these limitations, the positive direction of camper outcomes is clear.
The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp makes a difference to campers.**

Areas for further consideration

- ☀ The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp should continue to offer opportunities to build positive camper outcomes through beloved programs such as pool, tower, Stage Night and Carnivarty. Consider what elements of programs might lead to campers having more or less "fun."
- ☀ Promote possibility for all campers, especially demonstrating to campers that all kids can do anything they want at Camp. While campers reported that they themselves could do anything at Camp, they were less certain that *all* campers could do anything.
- ☀ Help campers learn how to talk with their friends about important things.
- ☀ Explore how staff and volunteers can intentionally program for campers' feelings of appreciation and possibility.

APPENDIX

Camper Scale Performance and Items

Scale	Item	Mean
Appreciation (range: 1-5) M = 4.51; SD = .53 $\alpha = .692$ Inter-item range .08 to .47 rfun = .34 (p<.001)	During Camp, I had a strong feeling of being thankful.	4.51
	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.	4.51
	I don't care about the things others have done for me at Camp.*	4.56
	I let others at Camp know how much I am thankful for them.	4.12
	I reflect on how important my friends at Camp are to me.	4.4
	I'm glad I came to Camp.	4.85
Possibility (range: 1-5) M = 4.29; SD = .56 $\alpha = .663$ Inter-item range .07 to .53 rfun = .36 (p<.001)	I'm good at doing the activities at Camp.	4.37
	I'm good at learning new things at Camp.	4.46
	I'm good at solving problems at Camp.	4.14
	I'm bad at trying new things at Camp.*	4.31
	I could do the activities at Camp.	4.53
	Everyone at Camp could do all the activities.	3.96
Friendship skills (range: -1 – 3) M = 2.21; SD = .82 $\alpha = .949$ Inter-item r range .51 to .854 rFun = .50 (p<.001)	Choose people who would be good to be friends with.	2.14
	Talk to friends about things that are important to them.	1.97
	Listen carefully to things that my friends tell me.	2.21
	Talk to friends about things that are important to me.	1.91
	Get to know more things about my friends.	2.38
	Understand my friends' feelings.	2.12
	Understand my friends' emotions.	2.09
	Trust my friends.	2.19
	Be trusted by my friends.	2.24
	Enjoy being with my friends.	2.52
	Help my friends to have a good time when they are with me.	2.3
	Find ways to meet people who I want to be friends with.	2.14
	Get to know people who I might want to be friends with.	2.17
	Find friends who like many of the same things I like.	2.10
Fun (range: 0-3) M = 2.52; SD = .54	19 day and evening programs (e.g., cabin chat, pool, horses, arts & crafts, Carnivarty).	

* Item reverse-scored

Regression Analyses

Only statistically significant results are reported.

Predictor	Outcome	Relationship	R ²
Age	Appreciation	$b = .12$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 855) = 12.3$.01
	Program Fun	$b = -.14$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 854) = 16.82$.02
Program Fun	Appreciation	$b = .34$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 859) = 108.91$.11
	Possibility	$b = .36$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 858) = 129.05$.13
	Friendship Skills	$b = .50$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 567) = 192.81$.25
Camp Experience	Appreciation	$b = .13$ ($p < .001$), $F(1, 687) = 12.25$.02
	Possibility	$b = .09$ ($p < .05$), $F(1, 686) = 5.17$.01