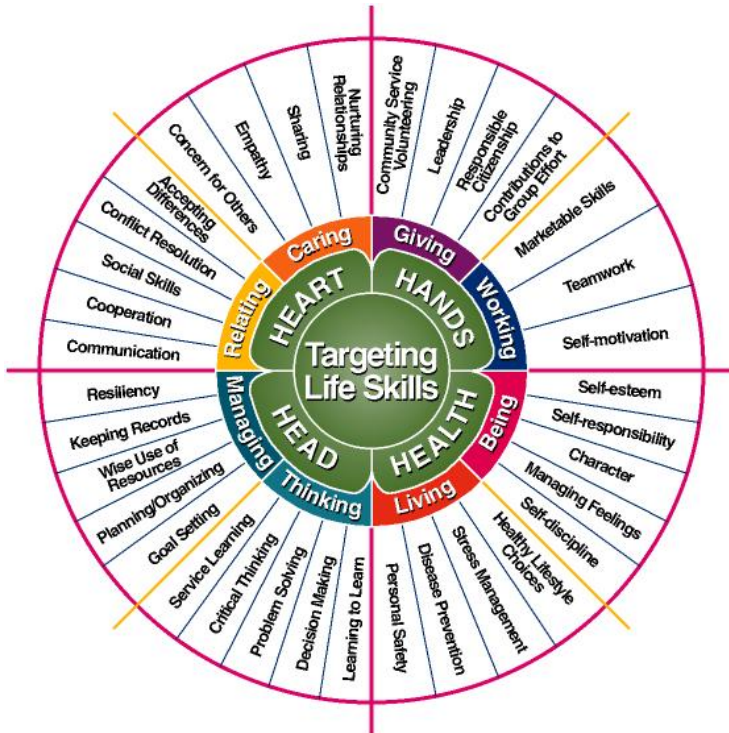


# Missouri 4-H Youth Resident Summer Camps



## An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Life Skill Development in Missouri's 4-H Youth Resident Summer Camps

## A Survey of 4-H Campers and their Parents

### **Executive Summary**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Missouri 4-H Resident Camp Evaluation**

### **Summer 2005**

Each summer, University of Missouri Extension sponsors several 4-H resident camps throughout the state of Missouri. The curriculum for these camps focuses on the development of a spectrum of life skills relating to Head (managing and thinking), Heart (relating and caring), Hands (giving and working), and Health (living and being). In January 2004, Dr. Jo Turner, Director of Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs, invited a representative from each of the 4-H Camping programs in Missouri to attend a 4-H "Camp Summit". From this meeting, several Work Groups were formed, with one of those being charged with a statewide evaluation of 4-H Camp outcomes. The objective of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of this curriculum in developing one particular life skill in each of these four areas. Those life skills are identified as Learning to Learn, Social Skills, Teamwork, and Self-Responsibility. <sup>1</sup>

In order to evaluate the efficacy of these camp programs, resident campers within the 10–13 year age range were surveyed about their camping experience. Parents of this targeted group were also surveyed to gather their perceptions of the impact of 4-H Camp on their children in the development of life skills areas identified above. Both surveys were divided into two sections. Section one collected quantitative data by asking youth and parents to respond to statements with one of the following: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree. Section two collected qualitative information by asking respondents to complete a series of statements in their own words about how they viewed the camp experience. Responses were analyzed and significant themes were identified for each set of life skills. The following is a brief summary of findings, organized by life skill areas. For a side by side comparison of youth and parent responses to the quantitative section of the survey, see Table 1.

**Table 1. Comparison of Mean responses from Youth and Parent Quantitative Surveys**

Youth Statement	Mean* (# responses)	Parent Statement	Mean* (# responses)
<b>Social Skills</b>			
At Camp, I met new people I'd like to stay in touch with	1.60 (426)	After attending camp, my child my child has talked about the people (s)he met at camp	1.55 (119)
At Camp, I learned new ways to make friends	2.05 (422)	After attending camp, my child is better at meeting new people	1.95 (113)
Camp helped me to show my emotions in good ways	2.15 (424)	After attending camp, my child has better control of negative emotions	2.18 (109)
Camp helped me to respect other people	1.85 (424)	After attending camp, my child has more respect for other people	1.98 (113)
At Camp, I learned that being different is all right	1.80 (420)	After attending camp, my child is more comfortable around people that are not like him/her.	1.96 (115)
*Scale: 1=Strongly Agree; 2=Agree; 3=Disagree; 4=Strongly Disagree			

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<sup>1</sup> *Targeting Life Skills Model: Incorporating Developmentally Appropriate Learning Opportunities to Assess Impact of Life Skill Development* (n.d.) Iowa State University. Retrieved December 30, 2005 from: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/lifeskills/homepage.html>

**Table 1. Comparison of Mean responses from Youth and Parent Quantitative Surveys - continued**

<b>Youth Statement</b>	<b>Mean* (# responses)</b>	<b>Parent Statement</b>	<b>Mean* (# responses)</b>
<b><i>Learning to Learn Skills</i></b>			
Because of Camp, I learned the importance of paying attention	1.99 (422)	After attending camp, my child is better at paying attention	2.17 (111)
Because of Camp, I'm better at following directions	2.26 (421)	After attending camp, my child is better at following directions	2.21 (108)
Because of Camp, I feel better able to learn and share what I know	1.99 (422)	After attending camp, my child can share information more easily with others	1.94 (114)
Because of Camp, it is easier to ask questions to learn things	2.16 (421)	After attending camp, my child knows it is alright to ask questions to learn	1.93 (113)
I learned something new at camp that I plan to learn more about	2.01 (424)	After attending camp, my child is more willing to try new things	2.11 (116)

<b>Youth Statement</b>	<b>Mean* (# responses)</b>	<b>Parent Statement</b>	<b>Mean* (# responses)</b>
<b><i>Teamwork Skills</i></b>			
Camp helped me develop skills I can use to work out my differences with others	2.06 (423)	After attending camp, my child can more easily work in small groups	1.95 (109)
At Camp, I learned that my way is not the only way to be successful	1.71 (425)		
Camp has made it easier for me to talk to others when in a small group	1.85 (422)	After attending camp, my child talks more when in a small group	1.98 (111)
At Camp, I worked with other campers to finish a job we started together	1.70 (425)	After attending camp, my child is better at finishing projects	2.04 (111)
When working with others, I did my share	1.58 (425)	After attending camp, my child is more likely to do his/her part when working with peers or siblings	1.93 (113)

<b>Youth Statement</b>	<b>Mean* (# responses)</b>	<b>Parent Statement</b>	<b>Mean* (# responses)</b>
<b><i>Self-Responsibility</i></b>			
Because of Camp, I'm better at taking care of myself	1.98 (425)	After attending camp, my child takes more responsibility for caring for him/herself, such as making bed and brushing teeth	2.10 (115)
At Camp, I learned to complete jobs I was responsible for	1.73 (423)	After attending camp, my child is more willing to complete assignments and chores	2.08 (112)
Because of Camp, I'm better at making decisions for myself	1.89 (423)	After attending camp, my child understands the importance of a schedule and more often arrives on time on his/her own	2.01 (114)
At Camp, I learned the importance of being on time	1.73 (423)		
*Scale: 1=Strongly Agree; 2=Agree; 3=Disagree; 4=Strongly Disagree			

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**Table 1. Comparison of Mean responses from Youth and Parent Quantitative Surveys - continued**

Youth Statement	Mean* (# responses)	Parent Statement	Mean* (# responses)
<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>			
I want to come back to Camp next year	1.73 (423)	After attending camp, my child is more confident	1.82 (115)
		To me, the benefit of camp to my child outweighs the cost	1.51 (117)
		I am glad I sent my child to camp	1.34 (119)
*Scale: 1=Strongly Agree; 2=Agree; 3=Disagree; 4=Strongly Disagree			

**Summary of responses regarding Social Skill development**

In the quantitative section of the surveys, all responses from both youth and parents showed a very high number of positive perceptions about the ability of 4-H Camping programs to develop social skills in campers. Youth and parents agreed at approximately the same level on several areas in this section, including making new friends, which received the highest number of positive responses in both surveys, and showing negative emotions in appropriate ways. Youth agreed at a slightly higher level than parents (Youth mean = 1.85 / Parent mean = 1.98) that they had learned greater respect for other people. Youth also agreed at a higher level than parents (Youth mean = 1.80 / Parent mean = 1.96) that they had learned to accept differences and felt more comfortable around people that were not like them.

In the qualitative section of both the youth and parent surveys, issues around social skill development received more positive comments than any other area of life skill development. The ability to make new friends and maintain older friendships was the highlight of many campers' 4-H experience. In addition, youth and parents alike frequently commented on the impact of 4-H Camp in teaching campers that differences are OK and that others deserve their respect regardless of those differences. While the ability to control negative emotions was mentioned the least in this section, several youth and parents did comment that the 4-H Camp experience helped campers to think about and control their behavior and understand how negative behavior affected others.

**Summary of responses regarding Learning to Learn skill development**

All responses from both youth and parents showed a high level of positive perceptions about the ability of 4-H Camping Programs to develop learning to learn skills in campers. Youth and parents agreed at approximately the same level on two areas in this section, including the improved ability to follow directions and share information with others. Youth agreed at a higher level than parents (Youth mean = 1.99 / Parent mean = 2.17) that they had learned the importance of paying attention. Youth also agreed at a higher level than parents (Youth mean = 2.01 / Parent mean = 2.11) that they had learned new things or were more willing to try new ideas following their camp experience. Parents agreed at a slightly higher level (Youth mean = 2.16 / Parent mean = 1.93) that campers were more willing to ask questions to learn something new.

In the qualitative section of both the youth and parent surveys, issues around learning to learn skill development received many positive comments. Both youth and parents commented on the campers' improved self confidence to try new skills and ideas. There were fewer comments about improved ability to ask and share information, but many respondents from both groups stated that campers were more comfortable talking in groups and sharing what they knew. The lowest number of qualitative responses in this skill section addressed the improved ability to listen and follow directions correctly, although some campers and parents alike commented that campers' skills in this area had improved.

### ***Summary of responses regarding Teamwork skill development***

In the quantitative section of the surveys, all responses from both youth and parents showed a very high level of positive perceptions about the ability of 4-H Camping Programs to develop teamwork skills in campers. There were small discrepancies in the levels of agreement between youth and parents on all areas of this life skill section. Parents agreed at a higher rate that youth that campers were better at successfully working out differences with others in small groups and respecting others opinions (Youth mean = 2.06 and 1.71 respectively / Parent mean = 1.95). Youth agreed at a higher level than parents (Youth mean = 1.85 / Parent mean = 1.98) that it was easier for the camper to talk when in a small group. Youth also agreed at a higher rate (Youth mean = 1.70 / Parent mean = 2.04) that campers were better at completing projects. Youth were also more likely to agree than parents (Youth mean = 1.58 / Parent mean = 1.93) that campers were more likely to do their part when working with others.

In the qualitative section of both the youth and parent surveys, respondents frequently commented on campers' improved ability to work with others, including siblings and parents, and to better communicate while working in groups. Campers frequently commented that they had learned how to better get along with others, even if the others were strangers to them. Campers also commented on their ability to do their share of work, and to share with and help others, particularly younger campers.

### ***Summary of responses regarding Self-Responsibility skill development***

In the quantitative section of the surveys, all responses from both youth and parents showed a very high level of positive perceptions about the ability of 4-H Camping Programs to develop self-responsibility skills in campers. There were small discrepancies in the levels of agreement between youth and parents on all areas of this life skill section. Youth agreed at a higher rate than parents that 4-H Camp had helped them learn to better take care of themselves (Youth mean = 1.98 / Parent mean = 2.10). Youth also agreed more often than parents that they were better at completing projects for which they were responsible (Youth mean = 1.73 / Parent mean = 2.08). Finally, youth also agreed more often that they were better at being on time and making decisions (Youth mean = 1.89 and 1.73 respectively / Parent mean = 2.01).

In the qualitative section of both the youth and parent surveys, respondents frequently commented on campers' improved ability to care for themselves and their belongings while away from home. Several campers commented that they did not realize how much their parents did for them (cleaning, washing, reminders) until they went to camp and were responsible for these duties themselves. Many youth and

parent respondents also commented that campers were more confident and comfortable about making their own decisions. A few youth and parents also said that campers were better at managing their own time because of their 4-H Camp experience.

### **Summary of Overall Satisfaction responses and other comments**

In the quantitative section of the surveys, both youth and parent respondents were highly positive about the overall experience of campers at 4-H Camp. Campers stated overwhelmingly that they want to return to camp next year (Youth mean = 1.73) and Parents felt strongly that their child's self confidence improved (Parent mean = 1.82) and that the benefits their child's attendance at 4-H Camp outweighed the cost (Parent mean = 1.51). Finally, parents overwhelmingly stated that they were glad they had sent their child to 4-H Camp (Parent mean = 1.34). In fact, this single statement by parents showed the most positive response of all questions asked in the parent survey, with approximately 31% agreeing and over 63% in strong agreement.

## **Evaluation Summary**

The overall evaluation of Missouri's 4-H Youth Resident 4-H Camping Programs is incredibly positive. The vast majority of parents and youth alike report that the 4-H Camp experience clearly does develop life skills.

There were less than ten negative comments throughout the entire qualitative section of the parent survey. Some of these negative comments were mitigated by the parents themselves. Three parents stated that they did not see any improvement in the life skills examined in this survey. However, one parent stated that the developmental stage of their child also mitigated their perception of their child's learning experience. In that parent's words, *"this is not necessarily a negative thing – he's a pre-teen!"* Two other parents said that they felt that the camp experience was too short to have any significant affect on the skills mentioned. However, the vast majority of parents believed their children had enjoyed a valuable experience and learned life skills that will serve them well in the future.

The IHD evaluation team suggests that another round of surveying of both youth and parents be completed at approximately six months after the end of 4-H summer camps to better evaluate the long-term outcomes of the life skill development program by both parents and 4-H campers. At that time, evaluators suggest that the surveys be modified. Currently, some of the questions on the youth survey do not directly correlate with a question on the parent survey. It is suggested that these tools be modified so that the same questions are being asked of both the youth campers and their parents. It is also suggested that the rating scale be modified. The current rating scale (1=Strongly Agree...4=Strongly Disagree) is counter intuitive. Low mean scores usually represent more negative responses, but in this survey they represented more positive responses. This scale should be modified to more clearly illustrate the overwhelmingly positive outcomes of this youth development program.

## Camp Participation

The following is a list of 4-H Camp sessions that participated in this evaluation project.

- Cape Girardeau County
- Audrain, Callaway, Crawford, Dent, Phelps Counties
- Camden, Pulaski, Miller, Morgan, Laclede, Gasconade Counties
- Chariton, Carroll, Saline, Howard, Pettis, Benton Counties
- Howell, Oregon, Texas, Douglas, Ozark, Wright, Counties
- Stoddard, Ripley, Butler, Carter, Bollinger, Wayne Counties
- Jackson, Clay, Platte, Counties
- Andrew, Atchison, Buchanan, Caldwell, Clinton, Daviess, DeKalb, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Livingston, Mercer, Nodaway, Worth Counties (NW Region)
- Marion, Ralls, Shelby, Pike, Lewis, Clark Counties
- Adair, Knox, Macon, Putnam, Randolph, Schuyler, Scotland, Sullivan Counties
- Perry, Scott Counties
- St. Charles County
- SW Region - Barry, Barton, Cedar, Christian, Dade, Dallas, Greene, Hickory, Jasper, Lawrence, McDonald, Newton, Polk, Stone, Taney, Webster Counties (3 camp sessions)
- Cass, Ray, Lafayette, Henry, Johnson Counties
- Cole, Osage Counties and Lincoln University
- Jefferson, Washington, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve Counties
- Lincoln, Warren, Montgomery Counties
- Franklin County

A complete report, including evaluation instruments and further statistical analysis can be obtained by contacting the study investigators.



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