

# 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

A comparison of 2005 and 2006 Studies

## Executive Summary

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## ***Executive Summary***

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

### **Summer 2006**

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, then 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 was to determine the effectiveness of the camp programs—individually and collectively, in developing one particular life skill in each of the four areas identified. Those life skills are identified as Learning to Learn, Social Skills, Teamwork, and Self-Responsibility.<sup>1</sup> The study was initially conducted in 2005<sup>2</sup> and replicated in 2006 with slight modification with the leadership and support of Dr. Ina Linville, Interim Director, University of Missouri 4-H Center for Youth Development.

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 the life skills listed above.

Both the youth and parent 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 Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree. 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 qualitative themes were identified for each set of life skills.

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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>

<sup>2</sup>Klem, M., Nicholson, D., & Jacobs, J. Ph.D. (2007, May/June). *Head, Heart, Hands, and Health Developed at Summer Camp* Camping Magazine, pp. 12-13.

The following is a brief summary of findings, organized by life skill areas. The tables in this report show a side by side comparison of youth and parent responses to the quantitative section of the survey for both the 2005 and 2006 evaluations.

### **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. The mean response score for each area changed very little from 2005 to 2006. Youth and parents agreed at approximately the same levels as one another on several areas in this section. Respecting other people and being accepting of others' and ones own differences received even higher marks overall from youth and parents as being a benefit of attending camp. The ability to make friends received the highest level of positive responses for youth and parents alike.

Youth Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference	Parent Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference
<b>Social Skills</b>							
At Camp, I met people I'd like to stay in touch with.	3.41	3.40	0.01	After attending camp, my child has talked about the people (s)he met.	3.55	3.45	0.10
At Camp, I learned new ways to make friends.	2.91	2.95	-0.04	After attending camp, my child is better at meeting new people.	3.09	3.05	0.04
Camp helped me to show my emotions in good ways.	2.82	2.85	-0.03*	After attending camp, my child has better control of negative emotions.	2.75	2.82	-0.07
Camp helped me to respect other people.	3.15	3.15	0	After attending camp, my child has more respect for other people.	2.98	3.02	-0.04
At camp, I learned that being different is all right.	3.14	3.20	-0.06	After attending camp, my child is more comfortable around people who are not like him/her.	3.15	3.04	0.11*
<b>Mean Social Skills Response</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>3.11</b>		<b>Mean Social Skills Response</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>3.08</b>	

\*Significant difference between 05 and 06 responses<sup>3</sup>

Youth and parents made many comments regarding Social Skill development in the qualitative section of the surveys. Youth seemed to note a new confidence in themselves through learning of their ability to make new friends and maintain older friendships. 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. Overwhelmingly, youth voiced their desire for

<sup>3</sup> Some differences between 05 and 06 data were measured as significant in a statistical sense in the first four tables of this report, but those differences--where they do occur, may be negligible.

more harmonious relationships in the real world. At the same time, many youth remarked about ways they more greatly valued themselves as a result of camp as they discovered newfound talents, interests, and confidence in themselves.

### ***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. The overall change from 2005 to 2006 among both parents and youth in this area was negligible. For youth, the area with the highest level of positive responses in this life skill section pertained to learning the importance of paying attention and learning more about activities experienced at camp, while parents rated most highly the areas of willingness to try new things and to ask questions to learn.

Youth Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference	Parent Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference
<b><i>Learning To Learn</i></b>							
At Camp, I learned the importance of paying attention	3.03	3.01	0.02	After attending camp, my child is better at paying attention	2.77	2.83	-0.06
Because of Camp, I'm better at following directions	2.69	2.74	-0.05	After attending camp, my child is better at following directions	2.73	2.79	-0.06
Because of Camp, I feel better able to learn and share what I know	2.97	3.01	-0.04	After attending camp, my child can share information more easily	3.06	3.06	0
Because of Camp, it is easier to ask questions to learn new things	2.90	2.84	0.06	After attending camp, my child knows it is alright to ask questions to learn	3.12	3.07	0.05*
I learned something new at camp that I plan to learn more about	2.96	2.99	-0.03	After attending camp, my child is more willing to try new things	3.18	2.89	0.29
<b>Mean Learning To Learn Response</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>2.92</b>		<b>Mean Learning to Learn Response</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>2.93</b>	

\*Significant difference between 05 and 06 responses

In the qualitative section of both the youth and parent surveys, issues around the Learning to Learn skill development received many positive comments. Youth and parents both named a number of specific new skills learned at camp. Youth in particular mentioned acquiring strategies for learning such as having confidence in their abilities to learn new things, finding a way to achieve their goals, getting organized, asking questions, and exhibiting perseverance. Youth and parents both noted an increased ability to pay attention and follow directions as well as the opportunity 4-H camp gave them for trying new activities.

### ***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. While youth generally tended to agree at a higher mean level that they had gained skills in this area than parents did, youth and parents showed the same mean score that indicated the camper had learned to work out disagreements when working with others. The area rated most highly by youth was doing their share when working with other campers, followed by working with other campers to finish a job they had started together, although parents indicated at a lower level that since camp, their child was more likely to do their part.

Youth Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference	Parent Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference
<b>Teamwork Skills</b>							
Camp helped me develop skills I can use to work out my differences	2.87	2.94	-0.07	After attending camp, my child is better at working out their differences with others.	2.87	N/A	N/A
At Camp, I learned that my way is not the only way to be successful	3.17	3.29	-0.12*	After attending camp, my child talks more when in a small group	3.02	3.02	0
Camp has made it easier for me to talk to others when in a small group	3.11	3.15	-0.04	After attending camp, my child is better at considering other people's opinions	2.94	N/A	N/A
At Camp, I worked with other campers to finish a job we had started together	3.24	3.30	-0.06	After attending camp, my child is better at finishing projects	2.96	2.96	0
When working with other campers I did my share	3.41	3.42	-0.01	After attending camp, my child is more likely to do his/her part	3.02	3.07	-0.05
<b>Mean Teamwork Skills Response</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>3.22</b>		<b>Mean Teamwork Skills Response</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>3.02</b>	

\*Significant difference between 05 and 06 responses

In the qualitative section of both the youth and parent surveys, respondents frequently commented on campers' improved ability to work and communicate with others, including family members, since attending camp. Campers often commented that they had learned to help others and to do their share of the work. Particular Teamwork Skills noted by parents were improved responsibility, flexibility, better attitude, helping out, and tenacity as a result of attending 4-H Camp.

### **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, with scores showing very little change from the 2005 survey. Youth most enthusiastically agreed with two statements, noting that camp helped them to be on time and to better complete projects for which they were responsible. Youth agreed more often than parents that they were better at completing projects for which they were responsible. Youth also agreed more often that they were better at being on time and making decisions. Finally, youth agreed at a

higher rate than parents that 4-H Camp had helped them learn to better take care of themselves.

Youth Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference	Parent Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference
<i>Self-Responsibility</i>							
Because of Camp, I'm better at taking care of myself	3.05	3.02	0.03	After attending camp, my child takes more responsibility of caring for self	3.03	2.900	0.13
At Camp, I learned to complete jobs I was responsible for	3.22	3.27	-0.05	After attending camp, my child is more willing to complete assignments	2.90	2.92	-0.02
Because of Camp, I'm better at making decisions for myself	3.02	3.11	-0.09*	After attending camp, my child is better at making their own decisions	2.96	N/A	N/A
At Camp, I learned the importance of being on time	3.24	3.27	-0.03	After attending camp, my child understands a schedule's importance	2.95	2.99	-0.04
<b>Mean Self-Responsibility Response</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>3.17</b>		<b>Mean Responsibility Response</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>2.94</b>	

\*Significant difference between 05 and 06 responses

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. Youth respondents identified several self-responsibility skills they developed, including taking care of themselves and their belongings, being on time for activities, making their own decisions, and completing tasks. Comments from parents focused on their child learning to be on time and to care for themselves and their personal belongings as a result of their 4-H Camp experience.

### ***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, and overall mean satisfaction scores were higher than for the 2005 evaluation. Parents noted that their campers showed more confidence since attending camp. Campers stated overwhelmingly that they want to return to camp next year.

Parents felt strongly that the benefits of their child's attendance at 4-H Camp outweighed the cost. Finally, parents overwhelmingly stated that they were glad they had sent their child to 4-H Camp. In fact, this single statement by parents showed the most positive response of all questions asked in the parent survey, with approximately 19% agreeing and over 79% in strong agreement.

Youth Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference	Parent Statement	Mean 2006	Mean 2005	Difference
<i>Overall Satisfaction</i>							
I want to come back to camp next year.	3.68	3.27	0.41	To me, the benefit of camp, to my child, outweighs the cost.	3.53	3.49	0.04
				I am glad that I sent my child to camp.	3.76	3.66	0.1
<b>Mean Satisfaction Response</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>3.27</b>		<b>Mean Satisfaction Response</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>3.58</b>	
<i>Confidence</i>							
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	After attending camp, my child is more confident.	3.17	3.18	-0.01
				<b>Mean Social Skills Response</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>3.18</b>	

\*Significant difference between 05 and 06 responses

### **Valued Aspects of 4-H Camp**

The purpose of the question “What kind of things happened at 4-H Camp that you wish happened in the real world?” was to elicit responses regarding aspects of 4-H camp that youth found particularly meaningful. Youth comments reflected an overarching theme of the appreciation youth had for the opportunity for the relationships they experienced. These included the opportunity and environment conducive to making friendships and working with others as a team, as well as the feeling of respect and general tolerance for everyone that they experienced while at Camp. Youth appreciated the positive learning atmosphere that provided a wealth of new learning opportunities. Other comments included their appreciation of the feeling of safety and being cared for while at 4-H Camp.

Youth in particular mentioned the value they placed in the relationships made at camp. Several comments reflected the desire for increased opportunities for team-building such as more teamwork and get-acquainted experiences.

Youth and parents also completed statements about how 4-H Camp could be better. These comments were rather random and pertained primarily to specific camp facilities or schedules.

### **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 feel that the 4-H Camp experience provides a wealth of fun and learning experiences for campers. Not surprisingly, on the youth surveys, the number of years a youth has attended 4-H Camp was positively correlated with wanting to come back to camp next year, indicating that

the more experience a youth has with camp, the more likely they are to want to attend again. The 4-H Camp experience clearly does develop life skills. Qualitative data gives us especially rich detail for learning how youth and parents perceive the value of Camp and provides a valuable source of insight for how to continue to improve and provide the great benefits of the 4-H Camping Programs.

## **Camp Participation**

The following is a list of 4-H Camp sessions that participated in the 2006 evaluation project.

- **Heartland 4-H Camp**
- **NEMO Camp Committee**
- **Camp Sunnen**
- **NE MO Camp-Franklin**
- **St. Charles County**
- **Peaceful Valley 4-H Camp**
- **Lafayette, Cass, Johnson, Ray, Henry, Clay Counties**
- **Camp Clover Point**
- **NE Missouri Camp**
- **SW Camping Assoc. Member Camp #2**
- **SW Camping Assoc. Member Camp #1**
- **NW Missouri Camp Crowder 4-H Camp**
- **Heits Point Camp**
- **Monroe County**
- **Cape Girardeau 4-H Camp**

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

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