



Summer Camp Program 2012 Evaluation Report

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CYITC	DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation
DOH	Department of Health for Washington, DC
DPR	Department of Parks and Recreation
FCB	Hillcrest Friends of Carter Baron
PAAS	Program Assessment and Assistance System

Executive Summary

The Summer Camp Program was created by the District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to develop and improve educational performance, social attitudes, conflict resolution skills, and mental and physical health of DC youth. Approximately 5,000 youth, ages three to 14 years participate in the traditional Summer Camp Program each year at various community facilities and recreation centers within all eight Wards of DC.

DPR maintains DC parks, recreation and community centers, and swimming pools while ensuring that DC residents and individuals from surrounding areas have appropriate access to recreational activities. The Summer Camp Program was created by DPR to develop and improve educational performance, social attitudes, conflict resolution skills, and mental and physical health of DC youth.¹

The Summer Camp Program offered a variety of activities that are geared towards the demographics of each of the eight DC Wards. The activities offered aligned with the DC One City Summer Initiative and were geared towards four of the five citywide summer goals (workforce, academic achievement, healthy lifestyles, and safety and structure).² Program activities include team sports, swimming, arts and crafts, theater, and outdoor exploration. The camps are offered throughout the summer for varying lengths of time ranging from one to two weeks. Additionally, DPR offered financial assistance for the program so that all eligible youth are able to participate regardless of their families' financial status (DPR, 2012).

To ensure the Summer Camp Program is meeting its goal of enhancing DC youth development, a pilot evaluation was implemented for the 2012 Summer Camp Program utilizing the Program Assessment and Assistance System (PAAS) tool as well as data collected as part of the 2012 One City Summer Initiative. The purpose of the overall evaluation was to collect baseline information for subsequent evaluations as well as identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the program. The PAAS was developed by the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (CYITC), to serve as a resource for expanding and improving services and opportunities for youth in the DC area. Specifically, the PAAS was chosen for its ability to evaluate and help develop youth programs because it involves not only observing the activities but also interviewing the participants in order to obtain their feedback.

The results of the PAAS surveys, completed from each of the program sites, concluded the DPR Summer Camp Program successfully addresses youth development outcomes. Of the program sites, the three that reported the most successes were Hardy Recreation Center, Ferebee Home Center, and Fort Davis Community Center. These three sites scored especially high in positive staff relations and engagement and atmosphere of inclusion among the PAAS objectives. The program sites with the lowest overall ratings were Volta Park Recreation Center, Hillcrest Friends and Carter Baron, and Landon Park Community Center. With regards to the PAAS

¹ For more information on DPR visit <http://dpr.dc.gov/DC/DPR>

² For more information on the One City Summer Initiative visit:

<http://www.cyitc.org/elements/file/2012%20One%20City%20Summer-FINAL10.31.12.pdf>

scores at the sites within each of the eight Wards in DC, Ward 2 had the lowest average score, however it should be noted that but this was mainly due to one facility that scored extremely low in comparison to the other sites. Ward 8 had the highest average score; however this Ward reported a limited amount of data.

Participant satisfaction with the Summer Camp Program was also measured using the One City Summer Initiative Surveys. Overall, the participants reported that they were satisfied with the specific program they participated in (60%) and were likely to recommend the Summer Camp Program to others (68%). Participants were also surveyed regarding their individual experiences, skills, and lessons learned from each activity as it related to the One City Summer Initiative goals. While 30 to 50% of participants reported that they enjoyed learning something new and making new friends, the same amount of participants reported that there insufficient opportunities to talk with an adult about life, school, and personal issues. However, 75% felt safe within the program environment.

While each of the programs and facilities has individual areas that require improvement, the main recommendation determined from the evaluation was regarding the evaluation process itself. First, it is recommended DPR clearly communicate citywide objectives to all instructors. In addition, better data collection methods are needed. In order to make the evaluation process more streamlined, it is also recommended that all surveys be sent to one person or office for data management. Additionally, there should be a centralized data coordinator who examines each of the surveys for accuracy and completeness.

Although the majority of the individual summer programs appear to be fulfilling their mission, it is recommended to continue further improving the overall program while honing in on the activities that require adjustments. Citywide, the Summer Camp Program needs to focus on promoting participants voice and choice and intentional instruction and clear steps to learning skills. Amongst the Wards, Ward 2 needs attention from DPR staff to identify and resolve issues in their programming. At the center level, Volta Park and Friends of Carter Barton both had some of the lowest scores, which indicate additional training or attention needed. If time and staffing allows, Langdon Park should also receive additional training because they had scores slightly above 3 out of 4, the third lowest scores in the city. Additionally, all programs should train instructors in methods to allow participants an active voice during instructional time.

DC Department of Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation agencies have the potential to impact youth behavior and health outcomes through youth recreation programs (Mowen, Payne, Orsega-Smith & Godbey, 2009). Recreation programs can positively influence youth behavior and health outcomes including: increasing self-confidence; increasing educational performance; reducing youth delinquency; and reducing exposure to violence (National Park and Recreation Association (NPRA), 2010). In addition, government provided (or “public”) recreation programs are an accessible resource to youth participants and their parents due to minimal costs and convenient location (Mowen et al., 2009). This helps parents of youth participants to balance work and family life, resulting in reduced stress and missed workdays which cost organizations approximately \$50 to \$300 billion in health care and lost job productivity annually (NPRA, 2010). Therefore, minimal or no cost youth

recreation programs can play an important role in lowering economic costs at the societal level, in addition to improving individual behavioral and health outcomes.

Youth in the District of Columbia

In Washington, DC, youth are at higher risk for certain negative outcomes in comparison to their counterparts at the national level. For example, DC high school students have a higher prevalence of negative health outcomes and behaviors in comparison to U.S. high school students including: having been in a physical fight, attempted suicide, tried marijuana before age 13, sexual debut before age 13, missed physical education classes, are overweight, and have been diagnosed with asthma (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2011). For example, DC children aged 10 to 17 years old have an overweight rate of over 35%, which is higher than the national average of 31% (CYITC, 2011). In addition, the percentage of children found to have one or more mental, emotional or developmental conditions such as: anxiety, depression, developmental delay or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder was higher at 16.9% than the national average of 14% (CYITC, 2011). Furthermore, over half of DC children are from single parent households and over 20% live in poverty.

It should be noted that there is variability with regard to demographic and socioeconomic factors between the Wards. This variability illustrates where within DC the need for youth recreation programs, which have the potential to improve youth behavioral and health outcomes, are greatest. For example, Ward 8, the least affluent Ward where 48% of children live in poverty, has the highest percentage of African American residents (94%) and children (30%). Ward 3, the most affluent Ward, has the highest number of White residents (78%) and lowest number of Black residents (5.6%) and around three percent of children live in poverty (CYITC, 2011).

Overview of District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation

DPR was established to provide DC residents and visitors with accessibility to excellent recreation and leisure services. DPR oversees and preserves DC parks, community facilities, swimming pools, recreation centers, and also organizes recreation programs. Such programs include sports leagues, youth development, therapeutic recreation, aquatic programming, outdoor adventure, camping, and senior citizen activities. Further, DPR offers various programs and facilities that are available for individuals with disabilities (DPR, 2012).

Part of DPR's mission is to "enhance the quality of life and wellness of DC residents and visitors by providing equal access to affordable and quality recreational services." DPR works to fulfill this mission is through year round and summer programs (DPR, 2012). Camps are offered at over 80 recreation centers across the District (DPR, 2012). Unlike the variation across Wards of access to parks and grocery stores, access to recreation centers is fairly equal across Wards. This makes the Summer Camp Program an ideal tool for improving DC youth behavioral and health outcomes like educational performance, positive social attitudes, conflict resolution skills, mental health, and obesity rates (CYITC, 2011).

With a goal of engaging the minds and bodies of DC youth, it is critical that the Summer Camp Program is periodically evaluated to identify areas for enhancement and to ensure the Program's goal is met and is in line with DPR's mission. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess if the DPR Summer Camp Program is being implemented properly and to aid DPR in developing "Best Practices" for implementing the Summer Camp Program. Additionally, DPR is interested in evaluating whether Summer Camp Programs are meeting their youth outcomes (CYITC, 2012).

Description of the Programs

Each year, approximately 3,000 youth, aged 3 to 13 years, participate in the Summer Camp Program through DC Department of Parks and Recreation. The Summer Camp Program, offered in recreation centers across all eight DC Wards, provides children and adolescents from DC and the surrounding areas with a wide variety of activities that are geared toward engaging participants' minds and bodies throughout the summer months. The activities that are offered include but are not limited to swimming, basketball, soccer, crafts, and environmental exploration. For example, the "Little Explorers" camp offers crafts, games, field trips, and swimming. Additionally, the "Aqua Day Camp" offers basic swimming and water safety skill lessons (DPR, 2012).

The recreation and community centers in each Ward generally offer different activities based on the demographics and need in that Ward. In addition, DPR collaborates with community groups and organizations to further enhance the diversity of the camp programs. For example, the "Achieve Camp" is offered in Ward 8, where the obesity rate is over 40% and 48% of youth live in poverty. The Achieve Camp is a triathlon camp that teaches fitness, nutrition skills, and promotes discipline and self-confidence. The Achieve Camp also provides free breakfast and lunch through the DC Free Summer Meals Program (DPR, 2012).

There are six and nine-week camps offered from June through August, each with three and five sessions. Each session is two weeks in duration with the exception of the first session (five-day session) of the nine week camp. DPR offers a resident reduced rate to ensure all DC youth are able to participate in the program regardless of their family's income (DPR, 2012). During the Summer of 2012, DPR offered 106 camps, up from 93 in 2011. This is a 10% increase in the number of camps offered from 2011. DPR aimed to increase the variety of the types of camps offered with programs like Zumba, yoga, arts and craft, music and gardening (DPR testimony, 2012). All of the camps evaluated in this report are listed in Table 1 (see Appendix A).

Evaluation Scope

A component of DPR's objective of "providing equal access programs that are high quality outcome-based and focused on the user" is to develop, "a systematic evaluation process to measure the quality of each DPR program by focusing on performance, satisfaction, compliance and utilization" (DPR Performance Plan, 2012). Therefore, this pilot evaluation seeks to provide benchmarks for process and outcome measures.

The DPR Summer Camp Program utilized the Program Assessment and Assistance System (PAAS) to measure program quality in its 106 summer camp sessions across all eight DC Wards. The PAAS tool was developed by CYITC, which serves as a resource for expanding and improving services and opportunities for youth in the DC area, particularly during the summer months, when school is not in session. Additionally, the Trust provides grants, technical assistance, youth staff training, educational opportunities, and policy support.³ As defined by the Trust, the PAAS tool is "a comprehensive set of instruments and procedures, created with input from program providers, which evaluates and helps develop the work of youth and family serving programs."⁸ The goals included in the PAAS tool include:

- Create a standard definition for quality program;
- Give an external opinion on the strengths and challenges of a program;
- Establish professional development and technical assistance;
- Identify programs that can be used as a model to other programs;
- Provide a uniform method for assembling programs and program staff;
- Ensure the employment of the principles of positive youth development;
- Play the role of the granter and the developer with balance;
- Contribute to achieving specific program goals; and,
- Identify safety concerns that need to be addressed immediately.

The 2012 DPR Summer Camp Program evaluation team was comprised of community services providers, program managers, and specialists who collaborated with the Trust to administer the PAAS tool. The goal of administering the PAAS tool was to assess the quality of the program as well as participant engagement. Upon collecting the evaluation results from each session, the results were summarized and compiled into one document. In addition to the compiled evaluation data, the site visit report provides information on how to strengthen the program, enhance compliance, and raise participant satisfaction.

Of the ten program areas focused on by PAAS for successful programming and organizational strength, the Summer Camp Program evaluation focused on eight to ensure that they are addressed appropriately in the overall structure of the program as well as in the individual activities. The eight program areas include environment of physical and emotional safety, staff engagement with participants, staff professional conduct, atmosphere of inclusion, organization

³ For more information on CYITC visit <http://www.cyitc.org>

and planning of program day, environment of intentional instruction, staff promotion of participant voice and choice, and physical environment and materials (CYITC, 2012).

Methodology

Observations were completed through the PAAS tool that evaluators used to give a numerical score based on the questions given in the form. Participant surveys had scaled questions to determine their level of response to the questions, and the information was then quantified.

Information on participants' age, education, race/ethnicity, and Ward in which they reside, were also provided by in order to provide a scope of the population being represented in these programs. Demographics of the participants were collected through the data management system and compiled into a spreadsheet for analysis. Lastly, youth were given the One City Youth Surveys which were used to assess youth outcomes.

The PAAS tool was chosen by DPR administrator's for its ability to evaluate and help develop youth programs. The advantages of PAAS are its comprehensive, multifaceted structure that incorporates both observational tools and interviews. By collecting various programming, organization, and participation information, the PAAS can identify sections that excel and those that require improvement.

The PAAS contains

sections for each of the eight program areas and is divided into four grade levels of observable characteristics of program quality, with a page to note strengths and challenges for each area. Indicators that characterize poor program quality for that area are found in the first level, adequate program quality in the second, generally strong program quality in the third, and outstanding program quality in the fourth. Each activity is then given a grade level. A work plan at the end of the tool outlines the desired outcome, program activity, activity observed, and whether progress towards the outcomes are being made. Strengths, challenges, and recommendations of the program are then recorded.

Observations of the environment of physical and emotional safety include the staff to youth ratio, staff supervision, staff conflict resolution, staff and participant interaction, staff application of rules, participant interaction, confidentiality, and staff communication with participants. Observations of staff engagement with participants include behavioral control, staff engagement, staff facilitation, staff tone, and participation recognition. Observations of staff professional conduct include staff attitude towards work, participation management, and average of observed indicators. Observations of inclusion include participant engagement, activities, and average of observed indicators. Observations of organization and planning of program day include activities and programming, staff preparedness, role of youth and staff in program atmosphere, and average of observed indicators. Observations of environmental of intentional instruction include learning goals, staff communication of instructions, staff check-in with participants, and participant guidance. Observations of staff promotion of voice and choice include participant leadership opportunities and staff responsiveness. Observations of the physical environment and materials include temperature, acoustics, seating, accessibility and staff and participant comfort with materials.

The interview tools included in PAAS were designed for Younger Youth (Ages 5-13) and Older Youth (14 to 24 years). The interview tool is divided in two nearly identical sections, one for program use and one for facilitator use. Program contacts do not have access to the facilitator youth interview to protect the confidentiality of the youth. Facilitators are requested to follow several instructions. They must coordinate interview times with the program contact to find the most convenient and least disruptive time to conduct the interview that should last no more than 30 minutes. The observers, not the program contact, must choose the interviewees to minimize bias. Interviews are preferably conducted in groups of 3 to 5 youth (with a maximum 7), in a separate space without distractions or presence of any program staff. Program officers must explain who they are, what they're trying to do, and why input is important. They must stress the confidentiality of everything they say. If questions are not understood, even after rewording, officers are to skip to the next question. Finally, they are to attribute only praise directly to the youth, and include any concerns or criticisms as part of their own observations to avoid any potential punishment.

Interviews ask questions about youth engagement, voice and choice, structure, safety, and youth motivation. With the exception of notes on the facilitator's interview regarding staff willingness to grant access to participants for interview and participants grasp of the questions and ability to respond, the program and facilitator interviews are the same.

Confidentiality has been controlled for throughout implementation of the PAAS tool. Participant names were not recorded, and the use of group interviews, not attributing negatives to youth and not attributing any comments to specific youth all utilized to maintain confidentiality.

The monitoring and observation timeline varied between the six- and nine-week camps. Evaluations began for the six-week camps between June 25th and 29th and ended between July 30th and August 3rd. For the nine-week camps evaluation began between June 18th and 22nd and ended between August 13th and 17th. During the first two weeks of the program, a cycle of monitoring, structured observations, the reception of observation feedback, and continued monitoring took place. Administrators provided a copy of the PAAS tool to site managers or leads at the beginning of the evaluation. To ensure consistency and objectivity, administrators were encouraged to observe for the same attributes detailed in the PAAS tool and to record structured observations on the same day. Following the structured observation, a meeting was set up for the following week to provide feedback to the camp facilitator and site lead. The youth survey was provided to the youth the last week of camps.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included evaluations from observations and participant surveys to summarize information about the Summer Camp Programs. All information was provided by DPR in an Excel spreadsheet to analyze the data through averages and displayed in figures to determine any significant patterns in the data for DPR summer programs. The evaluation team reviewed data entry for consistency and missing data.

By gathering the observational evaluations from each site, data was computed based on the evaluator's score in the PAAS tool and the numbers were gathered on an Excel spreadsheet. Scores range from grade levels one through four, with four being the highest, and averages were computed based on the values given. Average scores were analyzed and separated by Ward, each individual campsite, and by the areas of programming and organization. In addition, areas of interest with the highest and lowest average scores were identified to determine where programs consisted of positive and negative results based on the evaluations. Along with the quantitative data, the qualitative data was also compiled by the areas of programming and organization through the comments given by the observers.

Analysis from the PAAS observations provides DPR a standard and consistent method of scoring each program by an external observer. Numbers were recalculated to ensure minimal error, and methods of analysis were not subject to information bias or misclassification because scores were already identified by their programs and Wards. Based on the methods of analysis, the evaluation shows an appropriate representation of the overall goals and objectives of PAAS to ensure that each recreational center has identified the strengths and weaknesses and determine the quality of their program. Potential weaknesses of the analysis include missing data from some programs, indicating a less overall summary of the programs when broken down to specific categories. For example, data on Ward 8 consisted of only two of the nine evaluation forms. Therefore, the data can only provide limited results to conclude only findings based on the information that was provided. In addition, there was potential observational bias that could affect the results of the analysis since scores were completed and calculated by different evaluators for different programs. As such, the results of the data could have been influenced and not truly represent the evaluation of each program and the overall strengths and weaknesses of DPR.

One City Youth Surveys were conducted and analyzed to determine the overall experience of each participant in the program. Results of the data were analyzed by compiling the quantitative answers from completed surveys in their satisfaction, likelihood of recommendation, opportunities to participate, and how much they learned during their camp program. Data was then projected into charts to summarize results that included only responses that were recordable. This analysis process was not subject to information bias or misclassification because the data was already identified in the survey allowing minimal error in computing the values. Analyzing these surveys provided the user's perspective on how they evaluated their personal experience in these summer programs on a quantitative scale that allows an appropriate data analysis.

The youth surveys offer an appropriate method to analyze the overall experience for the program from an internal point of view. The quantitative data from these surveys of scaled answers allows the evaluation to analyze areas where the programs succeeded or needs improvement. The One City Youth Survey captured 522 out of 5591 campers, indicating the lack of data that might not fully represent the population of campers in the DPR summer programs. However, data provided from the surveys still manages to represent 21 recreational centers to a certain degree, making it still valuable information for the evaluation.

Findings

Demographics

DPR served 5,591 participants through their traditional summer programs. Over 70% (n=5,591) of the DPR Summer Camp Program participants are between the ages of 5 and 9 years (See Figure 1). About one third of participants are Black or African American and over 80% have completed at least elementary school education (See Figures 1 and 2). Ward 4 had the most participants with (n=1,106 or 19.8%), followed by Ward 7 and 5, which had 890 and 814 participants respectively. However, there were at least 350 participants from each Ward overall.

Figure 1. Age Distribution of Youth Camp Participants broken down by age ranges.

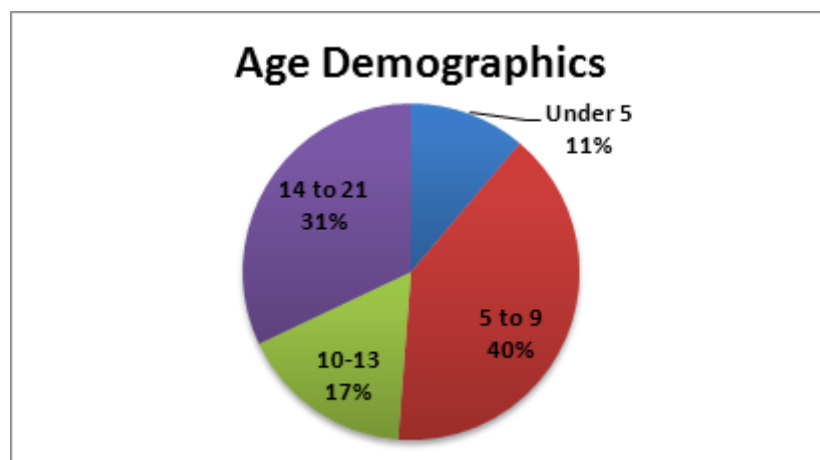


Figure 2. Race Distribution of Youth Camp Participants.

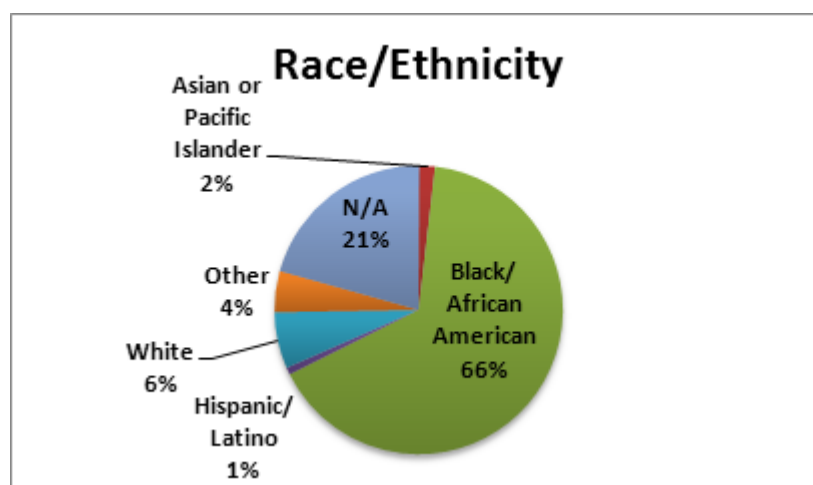


Figure 3. Completed Education Levels of Youth Camp Participants.

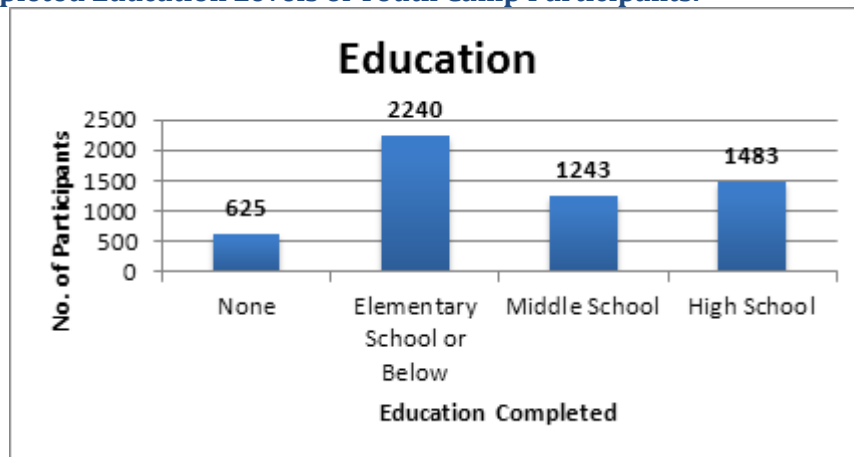
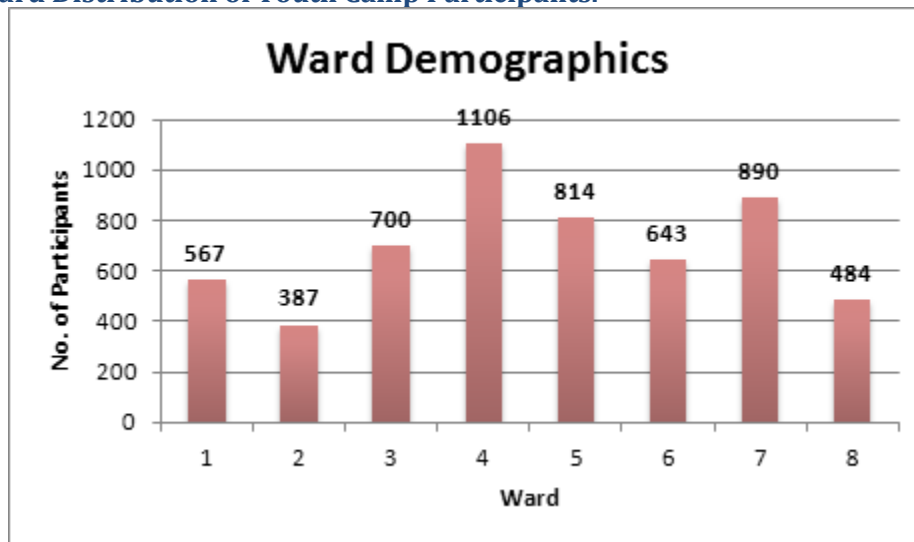


Figure 4. Ward Distribution of Youth Camp Participants.



Program Quality

Data from the PAAS Surveys were completed and analyzed for 30 recreational centers in the Summer Camp Programs. Overall compiled results from the PAAS are shown in Figure 5. As seen, DPR Summer Camps were successful in all the areas that PAAS considered to be important according to the evaluator.

Camps scoring the highest in programming and organizational areas were the Hardy Rec Center (Soccer and Flag Football, Ward 3), Ferebee Home Center (Youth Visions, Ward 8), and Fort Davis Community Center (Soccer, Ward 7). These centers had high ratings in the staff relations and the inclusion atmosphere. Lowest scores were found in Volta Park Rec Center (Kickball, Ward 2), Hillcrest Friends and Carter Baron (Friends of Carter Baron, Ward 7), and Langdon

Park Community Center (Ward 5) (**Figure 6**). These locations were found throughout the Wards, so there was no pattern in the location of these campsites.

By Ward, the lowest score was found in Ward 2, but the remaining Wards scored above 3.0 and Ward 8 had the highest scoring overall. However, these are based on the raw data given. Some sites did not provide results of evaluation; therefore full evaluation based on the Ward cannot be completed due to missing data.

Figure 5. Average Scores from Evaluator Observations by Program Areas.

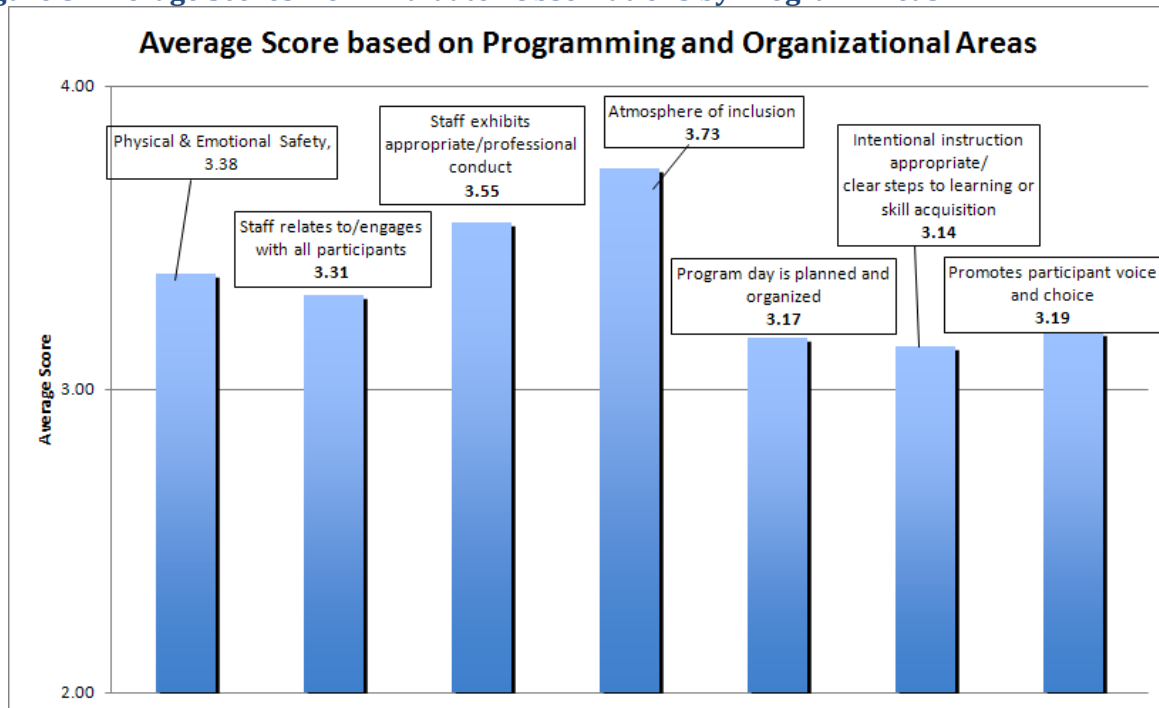
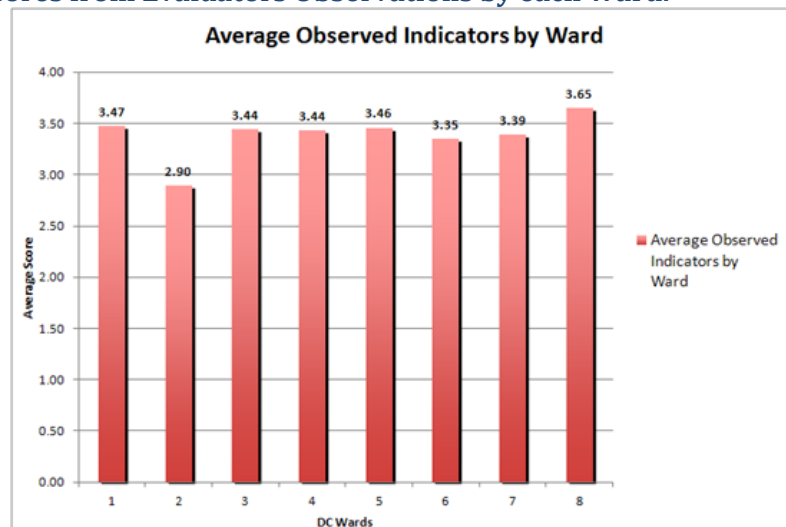


Table 1. Top and Bottom Averaged Scores According to Programming and Organizational Areas.

Campsite	Program Provides Physical & Emotional Safety	Staff relates to/engages with all participants in a positive way	Staff exhibits appropriate/professional conduct at all times	There is an atmosphere of inclusion	Program day is planned and organized	Intentional instruction appropriate/clear steps to learning or skill acquisition	Promotes participant voice and choice
Top							
Hardy Rec Center	3.86	3.87	4	4	3.17	3.5	3.5
Ferebee Hope Center	3.85	3.67	4	4	3.33	3.09	3.6
Fort Davis Community Center	3.71	3.78	4	4	3.17	3.45	3.4
AVERAGE	3.81	3.77	4	4	3.22	3.35	3.5
Bottom							
Volta Park Rec Center	3	1.86	2.75	3	2.86	1.17	1.75
Hillcrest FCB	2.86	3.11	1.67	3.5	2.86	3.15	3.22
Langdon Park Community Center	3.43	3	3.33	3.67	2.86	2.43	2.4
AVERAGE	2.95	2.66	2.7	3.17	2.96	2.51	2.62

Figure 6. Average Scores from Evaluators Observations by each Ward.



Youth Satisfaction

Based on the information gathered from the participants, the following section summarizes their responses on the Youth Camp Surveys. Overall, over 60% of campers were satisfied with their program, about 68% are always likely to recommend the camps to others (See Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7. Youth Camp Participants Satisfaction Survey.

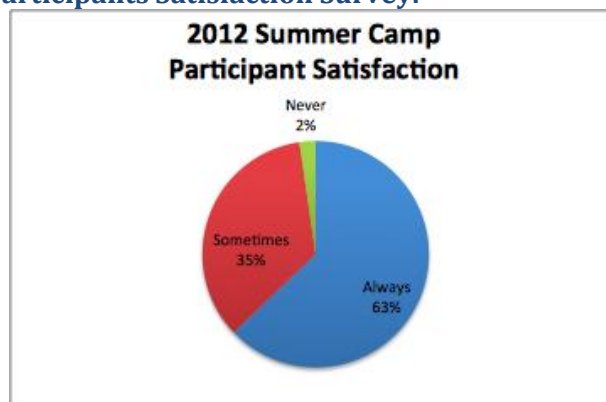
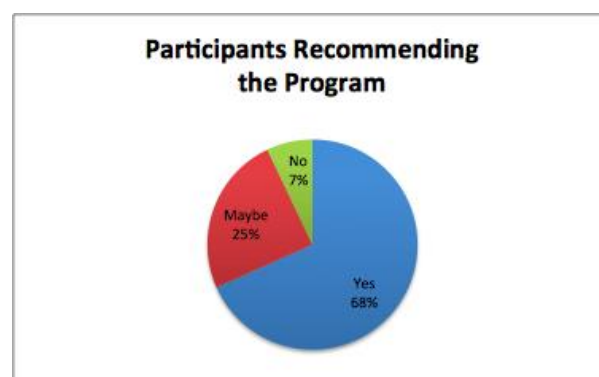


Figure 8. Youth Camp Participants Likelihood of Recommendation.



PAAS Qualitative Data

Comments were given by the evaluators for each programming and organizational area. Each area had comments from the recreational centers that the evaluators added when they conducted their observations. Common themes were summarized from the evaluators' comments and identified to determine the overall strengths and weaknesses in each area that were seen in a majority of the camp sites.

Program Provides Physical and Emotional Safety

- *Strengths:* Appropriate staff to camper ratio; Staff provided safe environment; Programs were inclusive and provided openness
- *Weaknesses:* Acoustics were not conducive to hearing/listening to instructions; lack of appropriate spacing for activities

Staff Relates to/Engages With All Participants

- *Strengths:* Energetic staff that was engaging; Use of proper examples as teaching lessons; Staff communicated effectively
- *Weaknesses:* Behavior control; Staff not assuring if campers re-entering the site were active

Staff Exhibits Appropriate/Professional Conduct at All Times

- *Strengths:* Staff demonstrated professionalism and understanding of policies to campers
- *Weaknesses:* Participant management; Reported use of cell phones during activities

Atmosphere of Inclusion

- *Strengths:* Staff engaged all campers in the activities regardless of language or capabilities; Staff was able to create roles in activities to include everyone
- *Weaknesses:* Need for more equipment and materials for participation in beginning of activities

Program Day is Planned and Organized

- *Strengths:* Staff member was organized in giving clear instructions of their plan; Lessons prepared for the day and clearly posted
- *Weaknesses:* Need more preparation completed before day begins; Lacking materials; Need better transition between activities

Intentional Instruction Appropriate/Clear Steps to Learning or Skill Acquisition

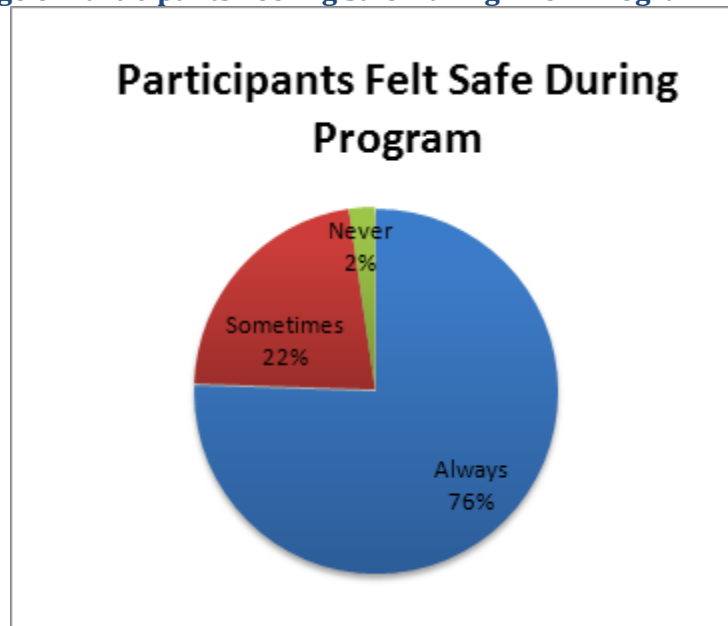
- *Strengths:* Campers were given chances to lead activities and be creative; Staff was able to provide guidance
- *Weaknesses:* Behavioral and participation issues

Promotes Participant Voice and Choice

- *Strengths:* Good use of bulletin boards; Staff was able to adjust when campers voiced their concerns
- *Weaknesses:* Facility too loud for clear communication

Youth Outcomes

Figure 9. Percentage of Participants Feeling Safe During Their Program.



Using the One City Youth Survey, campers were asked about their opinion of their opportunities in participation, what lessons they learned during camp, and the life skills they learned from the camp program. Overall, 30 to 50% of participants always found opportunities to do something new, go to new places, and make friends. However, 30 to 50% never found opportunities to talk with an adult about life, school, and personal issues (See Figure 10). Well over 80% of participants believe that they either learned a lot or a little about lessons from the camp such as respect for others, being responsible, working with others, etc. (See Figure 11). Results from the survey question about life lessons had varied responses based on the program these campers attended. For instance, there was a low level of learning in art/music abilities and computer knowledge, which are not concepts covered in all of the programs. However, areas covering lessons relating to all programs (time management, making healthy decisions, solving life problems, saying “no” to drugs and alcohol, and reaching goals) campers responded with over 30% positive results (See Figure 12).

Figure 10. Participants Personal View of Their Opportunities in Participating.

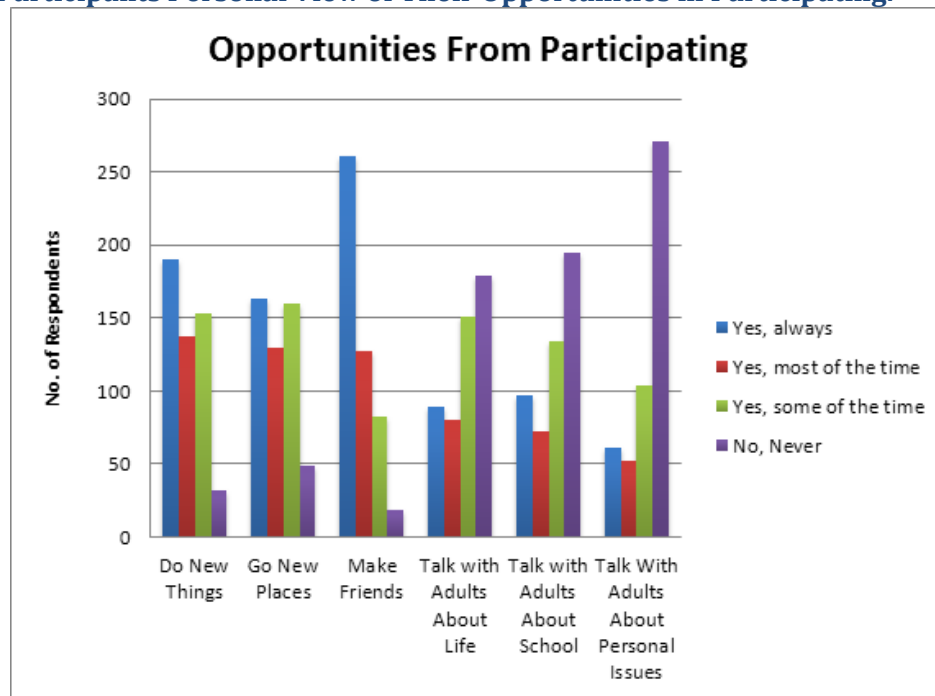


Figure 11. Personal Evaluation of Lessons Learned After Attending the Camp.

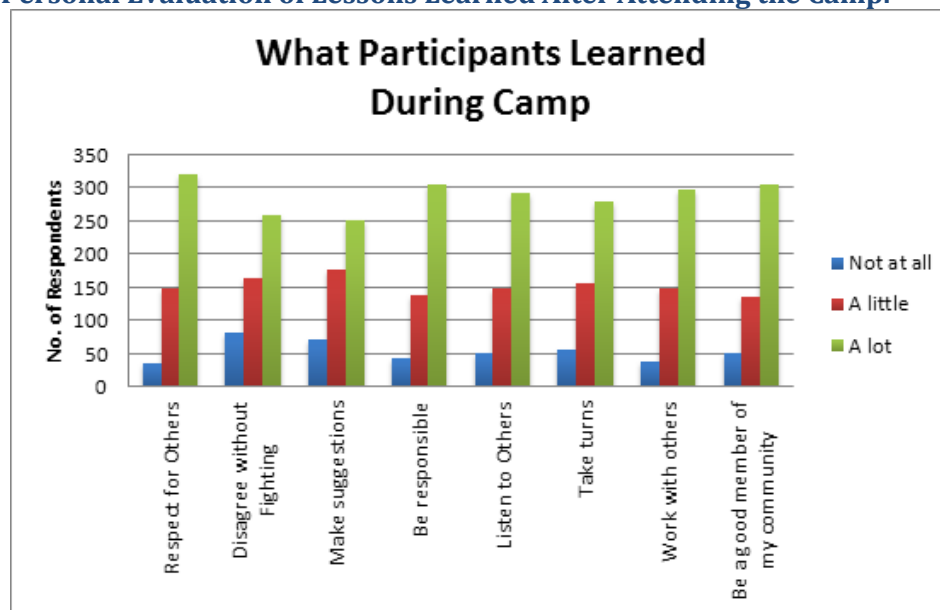
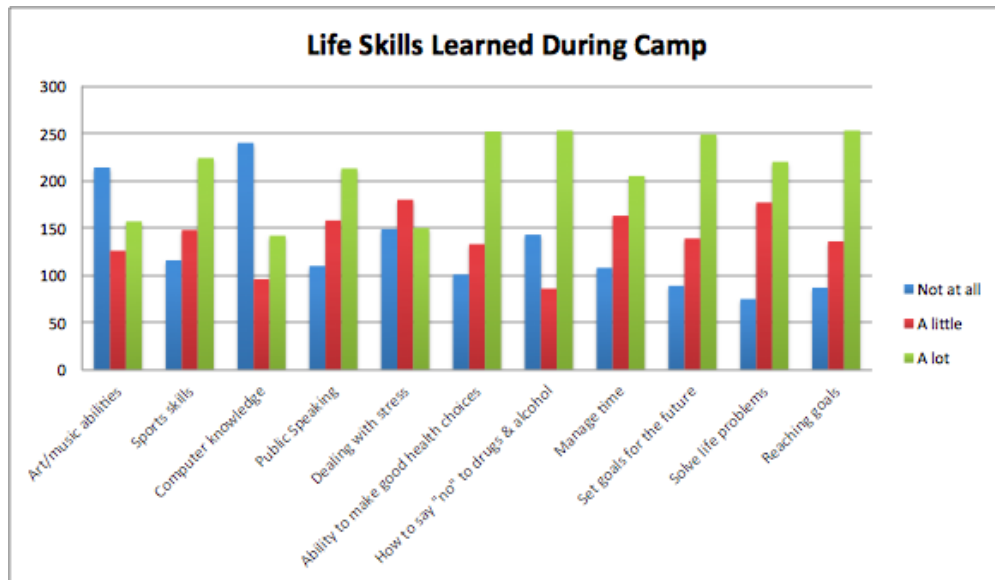


Figure 12. Life Skills Learned According to Participants After Attending the Camp.



Discussion and Recommendations

The DPR Summer Camp Programs scored well in their objectives as they relate to the PAAS tool. The diversity of programs offered to a wide range of children during the summer does not easily lend itself for evaluation. The commonality of all the programs was the PAAS tool, so programs were evaluated on those objectives. Once the programs were evaluated, several process and outcome recommendations emerged. These findings will be discussed and recommendation given for progressing the DPR's summer camp evaluations in the future.

Process Discussion and Recommendations

The PAAS tool provided DPR with common objectives across programs, ages, instructors, and recreation centers. Given the wide range of programs focused on providing Washington, DC children a safe and educational experience during the summer, an evaluation instrument like PAAS is helpful. The downside of using an instrument across all of these programs is that instructors may focus more on their stated camp goals than on meeting the PAAS objectives. Certainly, all instructors can aspire to the PAAS objectives, including providing students a voice, professional instruction, and an atmosphere of inclusion. But these might look different in a judo class than a creative writing class, which are just two examples of the variety of activities offered across the different camps. DPR should communicate citywide objectives early to all instructors, whether based on the PAAS tool or not, so all teachers can work towards those objectives. If classes are clustered into similar categories, then an evaluation of those categories could provide more in-depth knowledge insight into how the program functioned.

Since the Ward managers are trained on the PAAS tool, DPR should consider using the PAAS 2.0 tool released in 2010. This tool has a streamlined design with fewer questions and easier scoring. Adoption of this tool may also resolve issues in data collection where an interviewer entered an invalid score for a given section, or mistakes in data entry because the opportunity for errors is lower. Training Ward managers on PAAS 2.0 tool should not require much additional time or money, and the tool saves time on observations and data entry. Continued use of the PAAS tool is highly recommended as this survey is validated to ensure the questions measure what they intend to measure. Continued use of the PAAS tool will also allow DPR to track programmatic trends over time at the recreation centers. The data will show how the Summer Camp Program is meeting its goals and provide a clear picture of where issues need to be addressed within the program. Valid survey instruments, like PAAS, provide helpful feedback to instructors and city officials, ensuring issues are resolved and resources are properly allocated to the areas most in need.

Nearly all of the centers met the PAAS objectives. As Table 1 shows the top three recreation centers all scored 4 out of 4 on staff professionalism and an atmosphere of inclusion. Scoring well on these two categories is important to the overall camper experience, as they feed into the other categories. The top centers should focus on planning and organization of each day. At Ferebee Hope Center they need to focus on providing campers intentional instructions and clear steps for learning.

Also seen in Table 1, the lower ranked centers did well on providing an atmosphere of inclusion, but there were discrepancies between related indicators. For example, Volta Park scored a 3 out of 4 on atmosphere of inclusion, but they scored a 1.75 out of 4 on promoting participant voice and choice. Likewise at Hillcrest staff received a 1.67 out of 4 on professional conduct, but they scored a 3.15 out of 4 on providing clear instructions to the participants. These indicators on the tool are related, but the scores were quite distinct from one another. Interestingly, Walker Jones held a youth motivation and self-empowerment camp program, but they only scored 2.88 out of 4 in having participants encouraged to voice their opinions. While the low score may be due to unique circumstances at the time of the observation, it is concerning that a camp specifically designed to empower youth did not appear to provide participants a clear voice.

The PAAS survey observations had a protocol provided to all observers. Unfortunately, due to extenuating circumstances of severe weather and power outages, only one of two planned structured observations were completed at each site. To ensure comparability across summer evaluations in forthcoming years, we recommend completing the plan of action to the best of DPR's ability. If unforeseen circumstances occur, evaluations should be rescheduled for accuracy and a more complete evaluation of the programs in question. Since instructor actions and participant behavior naturally fluctuates on any given day, conducting two observations for each class during the summer will mitigate these changes. With only one observation, the possibility of interviewer bias is likely.

Since there was variability in the recreation center scores, the likelihood of interviewer bias seems small. However, in order to reduce possible bias by the Ward manager observing their own programs, we recommend DPR staff from the main office conduct assessments of programs. The uniformity will also ensure the questions are similarly interpreted and answered. For example, concepts like "intentional instruction" can be interpreted numerous ways, having one or two well-trained people with clear definitions doing the observations would reduce interviewer bias.

With the majority of recreation centers meeting or exceeding performance objectives, the summer programs appear to be fulfilling their mission. We recommend continuing on the current path to further improve summer programming for children throughout the city, while honing in on the programs that need adjustments. Citywide the Summer Camp Program needs to focus on promoting participants voice and choice and intentional instruction and clear steps to learning skills. Amongst the Wards, Ward 2 needs attention from DPR staff to identify and resolve issues in their programming. At the center level, Volta Park and Friends of Carter Barton both had some of the lowest scores, which indicate additional training or attention needed. If time and staffing allows, Langdon Park should also receive additional training because they had scores slightly above 3 out of 4, the third lowest scores in the city. For the upcoming summer, all programs should train instructors in methods to allow participants an active voice during instructional time.

Outcome Discussion and Recommendations

Along with the Ward manager-completed observation, DPR conducted participant surveys to see how the children learned, what they experienced, and how the program helped them. Based on the survey responses, the DPR Summer Camp met their objectives of providing a positive,

educational experience to DC youth. The summer camp program received high praise from over 500 participants who completed the One City Youth Survey. As Figure 7 shows, 90% of the youth who responded said they were always or sometimes satisfied with their experience. The Summer Camps also received positive feedback from 85.4 % of participants (see Figure 8) who would definitely or maybe recommend the program to their friends. These findings should encourage DPR to continue with and build upon their programming.

Looking ahead to Summer 2013, DPR should continue with the same One City Youth Survey instrument with focus on reaching a representative sample of the total youth participant population. Continuing with the same survey will allow DPR to track trends across programs, ages, wards, and programmatic years.

DPR's Summer Camp Program aims to provide a safe learning environment for participants, at which the findings show they succeeded. As seen in Figure 10, when participants were asked what types of opportunities the summer program gave them, over half of respondents said it allowed them to make new friends, do new things, and see new places. The three responses with the lowest scores were for participants talking with adults about life, school, or personal issues. Over half of the respondents said this was not part of their summer camp experience at all. If DPR aims to have youth talk more personally about school and life, there may be formal and informal ways to encourage those conversations. Camps can include specific time for youth to talk with their instructors, the youth-instructor ratio may need to be lower, or youth may need explicit instructions about the safety of sharing information with their instructors.

The high marks from the One City Youth Survey come from less than 10% of the total camp participants. This response rate may not have biased the outcome, but there is the possibility the youth who returned the survey are not representative of the total youth population who participated in the Summer Camps. For example, youth dissatisfied with their experience may have opted out causing the numbers to skew higher than reality. Or one Ward may have a higher response rate from fewer participants than another Ward that had more youth participants. Obtaining a representative sample of all of the youth participants will minimize biases based on identifiers like Ward, recreation center, age, and gender. At times stratified surveys are useful where researchers ensure sub-populations within the whole are represented proportional to their presence in the total population. This method was described well by researchers looking at American Camp Association (ACA) camps; they used stratified analysis to ensure the surveyed camps represented the spectrum of all ACA camps (Thurber, 2007). Stratifying the sample provided a clearer picture of the camps and made the results generalizable to all ACA camps. For further information on representative sampling, the Health Resources and Services Administration provides basic information and suggestions on this topic (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2012).

Another lesson pulled from Figure 12 is participants consistently learned some lessons identified in the survey but not others. If DPR wants participants to learn certain skills, such as talking with adults about personal issues or dealing with stress, then we recommend having instructors explicitly repeat those goals to the youth throughout the summer.

General Recommendations

DPR wisely chose evidence-based surveys like PAAS and the One City Youth Survey, and the continued use of those instruments is recommended to minimize future training time and to see participant trends over time. To improve the evaluation process, DPR should centralize the data collection process and develop a data cleaning process. DPR will benefit from designating one person or office to handle all of the data management for the department, which streamlines the process and ensures staff does not waste time looking for surveys in other offices. A data coordinator at DPR who receives all of the surveys would examine them for accuracy and understanding on the part of the respondents. The data coordinator should be well versed in statistics and able to identify important biases within the surveys. For example, ordinal data – such as the Likert Scale used in the One City Youth Survey – makes identifying bias introduced by outliers more difficult to detect, making the data coordinator position more important (Liu, Wu, Zumbo 2010).

Similarly, any anecdotal evidence collected through written comments or comments shared with the data coordinator should play a role only after quantitative measures are examined. Since DPR uses evidence-based surveys, the best data will likely come from those questions, and written responses can reinforce conclusions or indicate that more data analysis may be required.

Finally, DPR should clarify their Summer Camp Program goals and widely train instructors and recreation center managers on these goals, while respecting individual camp's objectives. The PAAS and One City Youth Surveys each have a list of desired outcomes for the camp, and they compare diverse programs with a wide range of goals on overarching objectives that may not have been expressed to instructors or participants. Between the One City Youth Survey and PAAS survey, there are myriad goals for the participants to learn or experience and for the instructors to fulfill. Given the range of programs - from judo to creative writing - explicitly stating four to five city and program-wide objectives to center managers, instructors, and participants would make reaching those objectives more likely. While each instructor, class, and recreation center will still have their goals for their course, training and encouragement on the overarching goals of the Summer Camp will improve the likelihood that they are reached by the instructors and reflected in the participant surveys. This adjustment should not require large programmatic changes, but simply a clear articulation of the standards on which programs will be evaluated during and after the summer.

Overall, the DPR Summer Camp Program was successful in meeting its objectives. DPR is using validated, evidence-based surveys, which provide the more accurate responses. The Summer Program will be solidly positioned for reliable and valid survey results after training adjustments to explicitly state the Summer Camp program objectives, possible reordering of the responses in the One City Youth Survey, and the addition of a data coordinator to ensure surveys are organized and properly evaluated. Of these recommendations, the data coordinator may require hiring a new person or reconfiguring an existing position to handle surveys for the entire department. Creating this position for the department will ensure information is properly evaluated and results are cycled back into the department, making it more efficient.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Table 1: DPR Camps Included in Evaluation by Ward

Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Ward 6	Ward 7	Ward 8
Little Explorers	Little Explorers	Little Explorers	Little Explorers	Little Explorers	Discovery Camp	Little Explorers	Achieve Camp
Hands on the Future	Discovery Camp	Multi-Sports Camp	Discovery Camp	Journalism	REC Camp	Discovery Camp	Youth Visions
REC Camp	Teen Career Camp		Basketball Camp	Tween Camp	Community Life Family Services	Fashion Camp	
Spanish Immersion	Multi-Sports Camp		Teen Career Camp	Discovery Camp	Aqua Day Camp	Soccer Camp	
				Achieve Camp	Visual Arts	IMAGE Camp	
				Cheer Camp	Spanish Immersion	REC Camp	
						Basketball Camp	
						Heritage and Traditions	
						Aqua Day Camp	