

The Alternative Classroom Experience (ACE)

Research and evaluation for 2014-2015

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Background

History of the Camp

Joseph Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp has a long history of helping disadvantaged and at-risk youth. Since 1929 the camp, located on 82 acres near Ferndale, has provided a free summer residential camping program for 8 to 14 year olds. As societal problems affecting youth became more apparent, the camp added other programs to meet those needs. One such program is the comprehensive Alternative Classroom Experience, which has operated since 1988 for at-risk 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders in the Little Rock and Pulaski County School Districts. Pfeifer Camp also offers parenting workshops, teacher training workshops, an annual Honor Camp program, and a Counselor-In-Training program for 14 to 17 year olds.

Programs and Partners

Programs

ACE Program: The Alternative Classroom Experience (ACE), which operates from September through May each year, is a residential, educational, and wilderness experience targeting 150 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders who are not achieving their full potential in the regular classroom setting. Students live at the camp from Sunday through Friday for five weeks (four weeks for 3rd graders). The prevention program provides a highly structured classroom with certified teachers. Besides academics, campers learn problem solving skills, crisis management skills, and acceptance of personal and group responsibility through a variety of outdoor, environmental, and team-building activities. Other components of the program are mandatory weekly parenting workshops; social issue awareness programming focusing on AIDS and Violence Prevention; a transition period where students are visited daily upon their return to the regular school to monitor progress and ensure that the skills learned at the camp are applied in the regular school; and a long-term follow-up component lasting through the student's completion of the 8th grade which includes visits at the school as well as prevention and intervention strategies aimed at reducing student suspensions after their completion of the program. In addition, the staff collaborates with other local youth agencies to provide continued service

during the student's teen years. As an incentive, campers who continue to do well in school are eligible for a free scholarship for summer camp. ACE graduates are expected to show academic, behavioral, and/or self-esteem improvements. ***For 2014-15 there were a total of 153 students served during ACE and approximately 300 students served in the follow up component.***

Summer Camp: The free residential summer camping program serves youth between the ages of 8 and 14. Campers arrive on Monday mornings at 9 a.m. to register for the week and stay at the camp until Friday morning at 11 a.m. During the week campers are assigned to cabin groups divided by age and gender. Cabin groups function as a family, and campers are actively supervised 24 hours a day. Activities that occur during the week are the following: group campout and cookout; daily recreational and instructional swimming; canoeing; team building initiatives; flag ceremony; camp chores; arts and crafts; hiking; sports and games; and environmental awareness. These activities are designed to improve self-esteem and social living awareness, develop problem-solving skills, and to learn how to have fun. The older campers participate in a leadership program which frequently involves field trips planned by the students. Areas of focus include proper hygiene, social competence, problem solving skills, goal development, and independence. There are five weeks of summer camp with over 60 campers attending each week. The free summer camping program has operated since 1929. ***During the summer of 2015, there were a total of 321 campers served. Through 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, we added a biking program and guitar lessons for campers.***

Honor Camp: The last week of the summer season is called Honor Camp. Those campers who have proven themselves to be honorable, responsible, and respectful during the regular summer sessions are invited to return for Honor Camp. In all, 60 campers and up to 16 CITs are selected to participate in this coveted program that usually involves a 3-5 day out-of-camp trip. Campers are responsible for setting up campsites for the week and cooking their own meals. The Honor Camp destination is always kept secret until registration day. Out of state Honor Camp destinations have included Atlanta, GA; Galveston, TX; San Antonio, TX; Durango, CO; Orlando, FL; St. Louis, MO; Kansas City, MO; Memphis, TN; and Washington, DC. Within Arkansas, Honor Campers have visited Devil's Den State Park, Petit Jean State Park, Lake Ouachita State Park, Magic Springs, and Mountain View, AR. Honor Camp has been in existence for over 20 years and serves as a feeder system for the counselor-in-training (CIT) program. ***Honor Camp 2015 involved an out-of-state trip to St. Louis, MO, for 90 people, including 58 campers, 13 CITs, and 18 AmeriCorps members.***

Counselor-in-training (CIT) and College and Career Readiness programs: The CIT program is for campers aged 14 or older who are ready to move into a leadership role. These youth are allowed to serve alongside the staff and AmeriCorps members to provide activities for younger campers. CITs participate in a two-day training before the summer sessions begin. This training includes the following activities: Reality Therapy discipline model; trust activities; group initiatives; group and individual goal setting; evaluation techniques; communication strategies; canoeing; swimming; pool safety and swim instruction; outdoor living skills; and appropriate handling of food. Through grants from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, the TK Foundation and the Charles A. Frueauff Foundation, we were able to build on the foundation of the CIT program to expand offerings for high school aged students. Meetings were held approximately monthly throughout the school year and focused on preparing students for life after high school with skills such as resume writing, interviewing, professionalism, budgeting, understanding college applications, and ACT preparation. Leadership development, gardening, team building, entrepreneurial skills and communication skills were also a focus for this program. ***Over the course of the 2014-15 school year and summer of 2015, a total of 35 students participated in CIT and College and Career programming and contributed a total of 3,697 volunteer hours.***

AmeriCorps National Service: Since 1999 Pfeifer Camp has served as an AmeriCorps National Service site by hosting up to 14 full-time AmeriCorps volunteers each year. The camp's involvement with national service really dates back to the 1930's when the Civilian Conservation Corps built many of the current camp structures. The camp also hosted many Delta Service Corps members, a precursor to the AmeriCorps program. Current AmeriCorps members must each serve 1700 hours of service to youth

through ACE, summer camp, and other Pfeifer Camp programs. In exchange AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance, an educational award and free room and board. Our AmeriCorps members also conduct a community outreach program called Character Building through Organized Play (CBOP). *The 20 AmeriCorps members for 2014-15 came from Indiana, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin, Nebraska, California, and Arkansas. These volunteers served a total of 23,766 hours for the year. They also help recruit other volunteers for the camp programs. Last year they recruited 540 volunteers who served a total of 3,961 hours.*

Character Building through Organized Play (CBOP): As an outreach of our AmeriCorps program, AmeriCorps members schedule programs with area schools and youth agencies to provide service in the form of teambuilding and cooperative play. Activities include trust activities, group initiatives, relay games, and group goal setting. *In 2014-15 our AmeriCorps team and staff conducted over 30 CBOP events and served over 1,000 youth.*

Title I, Part A Neglected: Title I, Part A Neglected funds support before and after school programming for students involved in ACE. These funds help disadvantaged children reach high academic standards through tutoring services, parenting workshops, counseling and peer mediation, and transition and follow up services. *A total of 84 Title I funded students from LRSD participated in 2014-2015. 68% of these students improved at least ½ grade level as measured by the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) IV in five weeks or less. Average attendance at parent meetings for Title I funded LRSD participants was 97%. Parents completed pre- and post-testing of material covered in parent meetings. The average pre-test score for 2014-2015 was 44%, while the average post-test score was 81%, indicating an improvement of 37%.*

Partners

Downtown Kiwanis Club of Little Rock: provides funding for summer camp; provides facilities for ACE, summer camp, and other programs; provides in-kind support

Little Rock and Pulaski County School Districts: provide program funds for ACE each year; provide meeting space for follow up and CBOP; and provide human resources to make camp referrals and provide necessary paperwork

Arkansas Service Commission: provides AmeriCorps funding that includes living allowances and educational awards for 14 full-time volunteers who are required to perform 1700 hours of service each through ACE, summer camp, and other camp programs

Arkansas Department of Education—21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) and Title I, Part A Neglected: provides funding for after-school tutoring and recreation and summer recreation programs

Charles A. Frueauff Foundation: provides funding for college and career readiness program

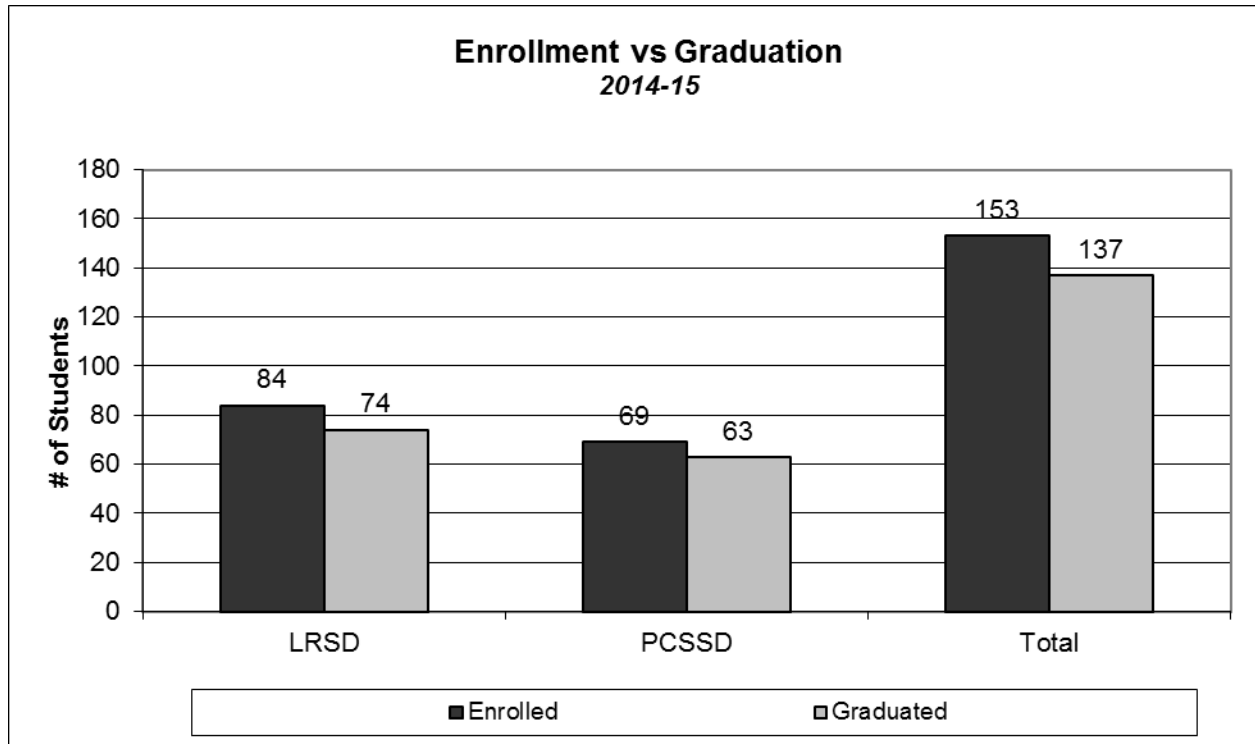
City of Little Rock: provides recreation funds for Summer Camp, including Honor Camp, CIT program, and CBOP program through a contract with the city

TK Foundation: provides funding for college and career readiness program

ACE 2014-15

2014-15 Enrollment

Our goal was to serve at least 150 students. ACE slots are allotted to the Little Rock and Pulaski County School Districts based on district size and funding. Due to the residential nature of the program, there is a historical expectation of an attrition rate of approximately 10-15%. The following are highlights from the 2014-15 ACE enrollment data.



- 153 students were enrolled in ACE during the 2014-15 school year: 84 were LRSD students and 69 were PCSSD students.
- The LRSD and PCSSD districts filled 153 out of 160 allotted slots or 96% of their allocated slots for the 14-15 school year. The LRSD filled 84 out of 88 slots or 95% of their allocated slots. The PCSSD filled 66 out of 72 slots or 96% of their allocated slots.
- Of the 153 enrolled students, 137 graduated from ACE: 74 LRSD ACE graduates and 63 PCSSD ACE graduates. The overall graduation rate for the 14-15 school year was 90%. By district, the graduation rates were 88% for LRSD and 91% for PCSSD.
- LRSD had 10 camper dismissals and PCSSD had 6 camper dismissals during the 2014-15 school year for a total of 16 dismissals. Of the 16 students dismissed from ACE, 10 were by parent decision, and 6 were dismissed due to inappropriate behavior, emotional instability and/or lack of progress.
- A breakdown of dismissals by session is as follows: Session I – 5; Session II – 4; Session III – 4; and Session IV – 3.

Parenting Component

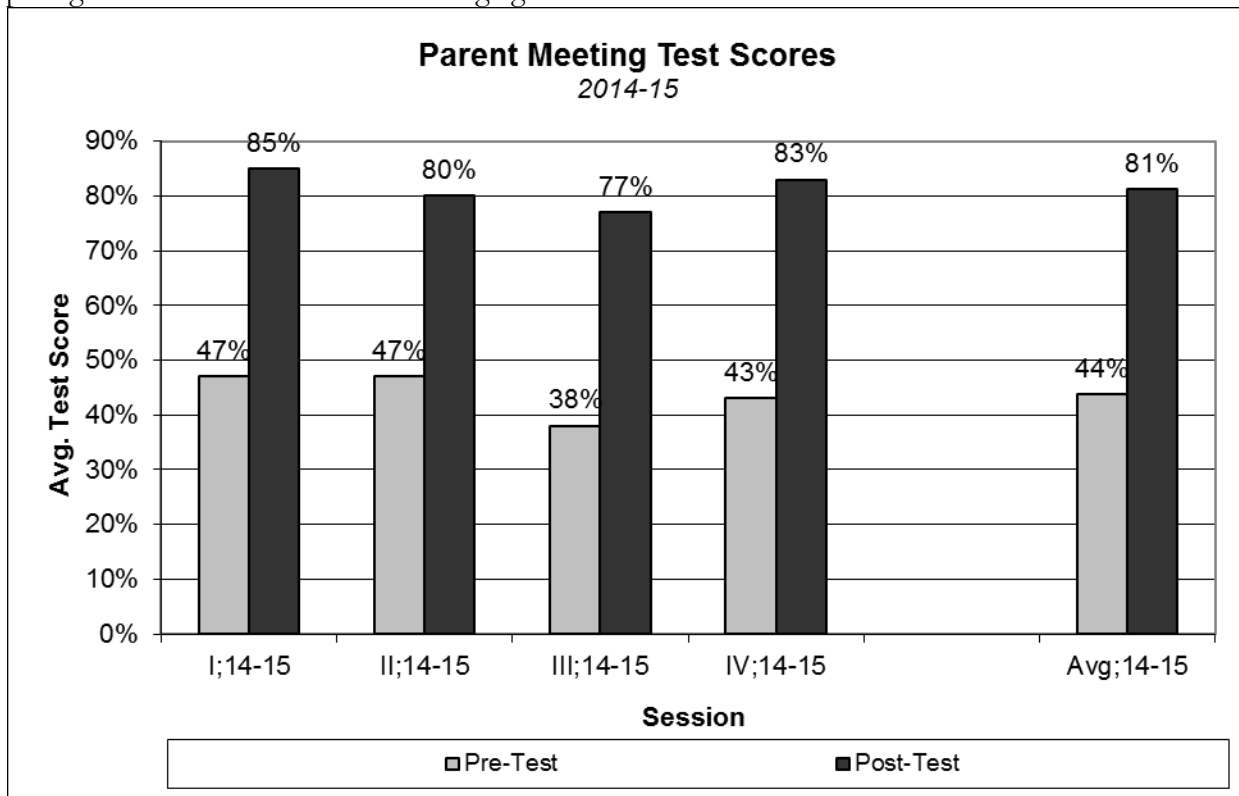
Parents are required to attend weekly parenting workshops each Sunday that their children return to the camp. There are five parent meetings for sessions I, II, and III, and four parent meetings for session IV, which is a third grade session. These meetings focus on enhancing the parents' communication skills and parenting techniques through role-play situations and interactive group activities. Parents also learn and discuss the camp's discipline model which is based on a book written by Dr. William Glasser entitled Reality Therapy. Through this discipline model, the parents are encouraged to use natural and logical consequences at home.

A breakdown of the parent meeting attendance is outlined below.

Session	Average Parent Meeting Attendance
I;14-15	96%
II;14-15	99%
III;14-15	90%
IV;14-15	95%
Avg;14-15	95%

The average attendance at each parent meeting for the entire year was 95%. This indicates that at the average parent meeting for the ACE program, 95% of the parents were in attendance.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the parent meeting workshops each session, each parent is asked to complete pre- and post- tests covering the topics covered in the parent meetings. The pre-test is administered during the first parent meeting when campers register, and the post-test is administered during the final parent meeting. The average pre-test score for the year was 44% while the average post-test score was 81%. Comparing the two tests indicates an average growth of 37%.

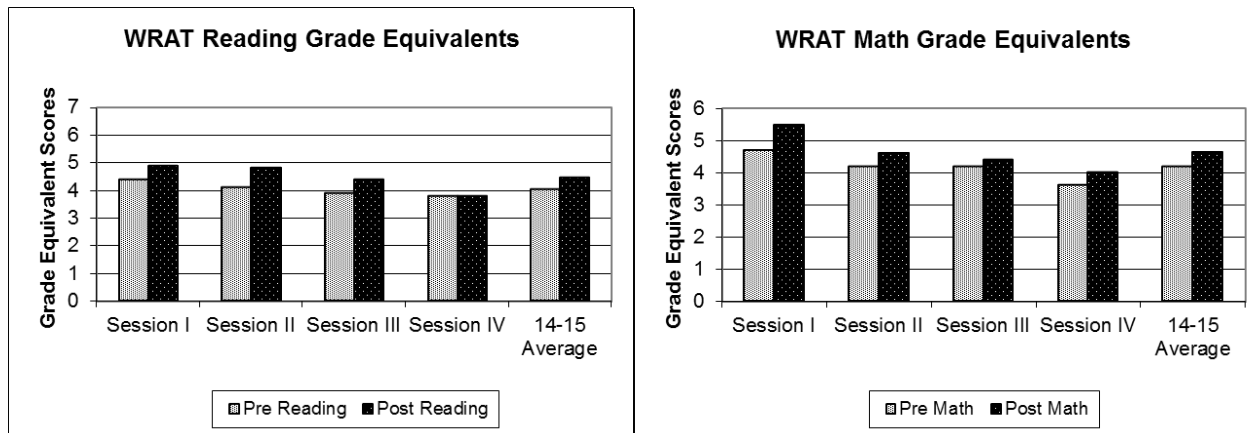


Academic Evaluation through Wide Range Achievement Test

The Wide Range Achievement Test is a nationally recognized standardized test that is used to assess the academic growth of the students during their five weeks (four weeks for 3rd graders) at the camp. On the first day of each session, ACE students take the WRAT to help the camp teacher determine ability levels in reading, spelling, and math. The same test is given during the last week of each session to assess what growth has taken place. WRAT scores are converted to grade level equivalents. The average pre and post grade level equivalents are then assessed for each ACE session and combined to show an overall pre and post grade level equivalent score for the year. The average pre-test grade level of the ACE students was 4.1 in Reading and 4.2 in Math while the average post-test grade level was 4.5 in Reading and 4.6 in Math. This indicates that on average a student showed academic growth in reading of 4/10 of a grade level (.4) in less than five weeks of academic instruction time. Similarly, the academic growth in math of 4/10 of a grade level (.4) in less than five weeks of academic instruction time. This is lower growth than in previous years where growth is typically at .6. Contributing factors were the weather which shortened academic time for some sessions and testing issues which significantly shortened the academic time for Session IV students.

	Pre Reading	Post Reading	Pre Math	Post Math
Session I	4.4	4.9	4.7	5.5
Session II	4.1	4.8	4.2	4.6
Session III	3.9	4.4	4.2	4.4
Session IV	3.8	3.8	3.6	4.0
14-15 Average	4.1	4.5	4.2	4.6

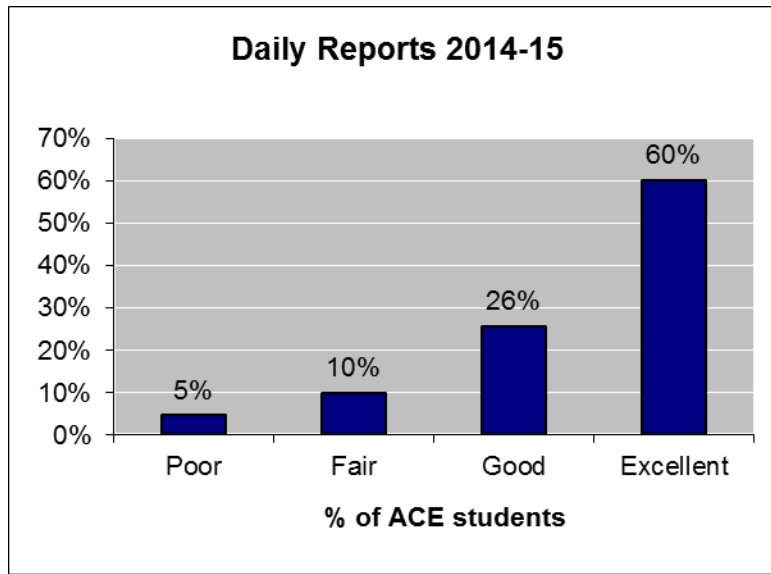
The table above illustrates the average pre and post grade equivalent scores for each session. Sessions IV is a 3rd grade session and is only four weeks long as compared to the five week sessions (I, II, and III) for 4th and 5th graders. These figures are charted below.



The camp’s goal for academic improvement as measured by the pre and post Wide Range Achievement Tests conducted during the ACE program is a 0.5 grade level growth in the subject areas of Math or Reading. The 2014-15 ACE graduates demonstrated an average growth of 0.4 grade levels across these subjects (.4 growth in reading + .4 growth in math/2 = .4). Again this lower than usual growth can be attributed to the weather and testing situations that shortened two sessions significantly.

Daily Report Forms from the Transition Periods

During the week immediately following the students' completion of the ACE program, all of the ACE students return to their regular classrooms in their regular schools. With students going to school from home, the staff were able to monitor the students' transition back into the regular school setting by visiting with each student along with his/her teacher during every day of this transition week. During this week teachers are asked to complete a Daily Report Form for each student. On this form, the teacher is asked to rate the child's behavior in the classroom for that day using a four-point scale ranging from poor to excellent. The results from the 2014-15 daily report forms are illustrated below.



The camp's goal in the area of improved behavioral performance based on Daily Report Forms is at least 80% of the daily report forms indicating "Good" or "Excellent" behavior for the day. Based on the daily report forms for the 2014-15 ACE graduates, 86% of the daily reports completed indicated "Good" or "Excellent" daily behavior. Counselors also made phone calls to the students and their parents each night during the transition period to ensure that the camp was aware of all problems that might be occurring.

Social Issue Awareness Programs

Every session, the ACE students experience programming on several social issues including AIDS Awareness, Violence Prevention, and College and Career Readiness. These awareness programs last from three to five hours and include videos, discussion, workbooks, interactive activities, and pre and post testing.

The camp's goal for the social issue programs is for 75% of the students to demonstrate improved knowledge in each of the areas. In 2014-15, 93% of the students demonstrated improved knowledge of Violence Prevention, AIDS Awareness, and College and Career Readiness through pre and post testing.

Significant Events

Graduation speakers: Session I— Tammie Cloyes, 21CCLC Program Manager for the Arkansas Department of Education; Session II— James Faulkner, Kiwanis Club Member and Vice President of Crews and Associates; Session III— Sanford Tollette, Executive Director of Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp; Session IV— Craig O'Neal, anchor for KTHV-11 news and local celebrity.

Special activities at camp: Woodmen of the World Holiday party; three overnight re-entry programs for former ACE graduates; CIT training and programming; a Kiwanis and Hat Club work day; UALR Chancellors Leadership Corps work day; conducted programs for Pulaski County Special School District Multi-Age Classroom students; Donor Dinner for approximately 100 donors; Kiwanis Breakfasts during the summer; Camp Accreditation site visit through the American Camp Association.

Special activities away from camp: Field trips to the Central High National Historic Site Visitor's Center, Pinnacle Mountain State Park, the Little Rock River Market, and the Pulaski County Courthouse where our third graders participated in a mock trial for Law Day; Sanford Tollette spoke at several events including Kiwanis Club meetings and an AmeriCorps luncheon; AmeriCorps members read to LRSD students as part of the September 11 Together We Read Day and the Jane Mendel VIPs Reading Day; Honor Camp activities for over 90 campers, CITs, staff and AmeriCorps took place in St. Louis.

Conferences: Sanford Tollette, Binky Martin-Tollette, Mike Machella, and Adrienne Hagen attended a 21CCLC training at Lake DeGray State Park. Mike, Adrienne, Eric DeVries and the AmeriCorps team attended the 21st CCLC conference in Hot Springs and attended an all-day training with Michele Cummings of Training Wheels. AmeriCorps members and staff attended the national American Camp Association conference in New Orleans and a regional Conference of the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) in Illinois that focused on outdoor recreation. Tammy Roberson participated in the Mid South Summer School on Alcohol and Other Drug problems and the state Arkansas Association of Alternative Educators. Binky Martin-Tollette and Mike Machella participated in several trainings and webinars about the Youth Program Quality Assessment. Eric DeVries provided training at a STEM conference. Sanford and Binky attended the Tri State American Camp Association conference and met Presidential Candidate and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Mandatory meetings: Camp staff attended required meetings for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), AmeriCorps, and the Child Nutrition Program. Camp staff hosted site visits from Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and Commodities Distribution.

Awards, certifications, and recognitions: Residential staff and AmeriCorps members were certified by the Crisis Prevention Institute in restraint techniques and de-escalation training and were certified in American Red Cross First Aid and CPR, disaster relief, and lifeguard training. AmeriCorps members were recognized by Mayor Mark Stodola at the Mayor's Day of Recognition at the Downtown Kiwanis Club of Little Rock meeting. Mayor Stodola also proclaimed April 7, 2015, as Sanford Tollette day. Sanford served on the Child Welfare Agency Review Board, the Central High Museum Board, Marginalized Males Workforce and Education Consortium (MMWEC), and the Arkansas Civil Rights Working Group through the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Observations from Campers

Each week students complete an evaluation on the program, the staff, and themselves. During the summer program, students write letters to camp donors telling them about the program. We have included some of the comments below.

This week at camp, I really liked:

- When we had the best Christmas party ever and got presents
- Everything because this is my first camp experience
- Ms. Adrienne teaching me how to ride a bike
- Learning about life from Mr. Mike
- Every day because I was treated right

This week at camp, I learned:

- To be polite to others
- How to sleep in a tent
- That no one is perfect
- How to properly cook a hotdog
- That we can work all together
- To be grateful for what you get even if you don't like it
- That there is nothing wrong with making new friends
- How to spell the word bicentennial
- About all types of pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, conjunction and stuff like that and that is what I learned
- You don't need electronics to have fun
- That you have to keep trying and never give up if you want to achieve something
- How to work together as a team
- That I can't give up and go home if I feel bad
- I learned to play the guitar
- How to respect nature and all the animals that live throughout the woods
- How to respect your friends and eat healthy food
- To be thankful about what you get
- To do my best
- What leadership is about
- To be kind and the states
- Don't get mad over stuff that doesn't matter
- Do not kill a bug
- How to compromise
- Be yourself, no one is perfect
- How to tread water
- How to make the best of a day now
- How to catch fireflies
- That nature is a very cool thing

Do you want to come back to camp next week?

- Yes, because camp is fun.

- Yes, because this camp is the best
- Yes, because camp is fun and making me a better person
- Yes, I am learning a lot and still having fun
- I do because Ms. Jana and Ms. Roberson taught us how to become a better person
- Absolutely, this camp helps me

Next week at camp, I really need to improve on:

- Myself and others
- Not talking so much
- Staying on task and not telling people to Shh.
- Not having an attitude

Other Comments:

- Thank you Mr. Sanford, have a good day
- I don't like this place a little, I like it 99%, also I know that you spent money on us so I hope you forgive my attitude