

The Alternative Classroom Experience (ACE)

Research and evaluation for 2018-2019

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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 2018-19 there were a total of 135 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 2019, there were a total of 338 campers served.***

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, up to 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 30 years and serves as a feeder system for the counselor-in-training (CIT) program. ***Honor Camp 2019 involved daily field trips to Crystal Bridges, Museum of Native American History, Fort Smith National Historic Site, Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas Alligator Farm, Mid-America Museum, Museum of Discovery, and a Trail of Tears marker. 96 people, including 59 campers, 12 CITs, and 17 AmeriCorps members participated.***

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 past 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 2018-19 school year and summer of 2019, a total of 31 students participated in CIT and College and Career programming and contributed 4,785 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 25 AmeriCorps members for 2018-19 came from New Jersey, Alabama, North Carolina, Georgia, Illinois, Connecticut, Louisiana, and Arkansas. These National Service Members served over 22,000 hours for this year. They also help recruit other volunteers for the camp programs. For 2018-19 they recruited over 276 volunteers who served over 5,170 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 2018-19 our AmeriCorps team and staff conducted 15 CBOP events and served 950 youth.*

Title I, Part A Neglected: Title I, Part A Negelected 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. *In 2018-19 Title I, Part A Neglected funds supported 135 students during the ACE program.*

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

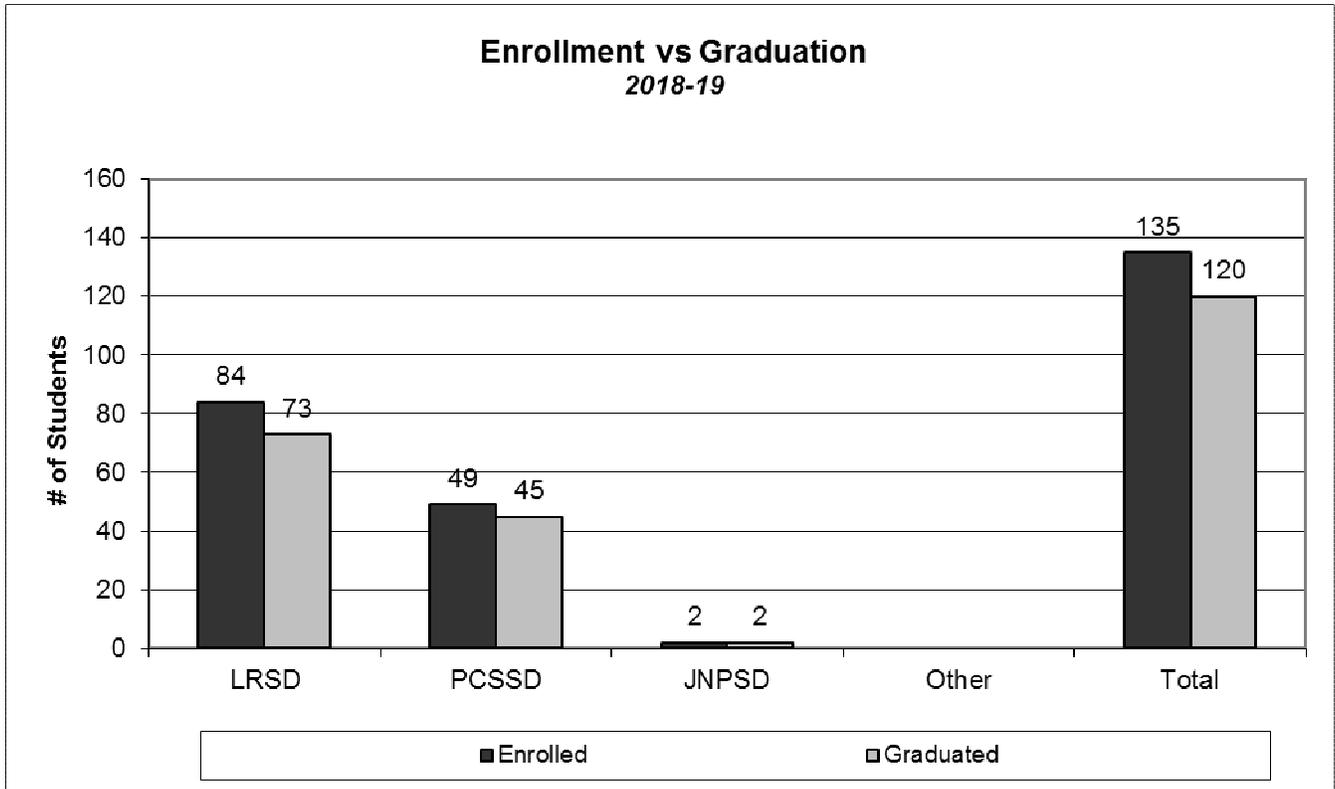
Arkansas Department of Education—21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) and Title I, Part A Neglected: provides funding for after-school tutoring and recreation and summer recreation programs

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

Mitchell Williams Law Firm: provides funding and volunteers throughout the year

2018-19 Enrollment

Our goal was to serve at least 150 students. ACE slots are allotted to the Little Rock, Pulaski County, and Jacksonville North Pulaski school districts based on district size and funding. In Mid-September we were informed that the Jacksonville North Pulaski District would not participate. They agreed to allow two students who had already committed to attend. This significantly affected the enrollment goal as seen below. 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 2018-19 ACE enrollment data.



- 135 students were enrolled in ACE during the 2018-19 school year: 84 were LRSD students, 49 were PCSSD students, and 2 were JNPSD students.
- Without factoring in the two JNPSD students, the districts filled 133 out of 142 allotted slots or 94% of their allocated slots for the 18-19 school year. LRSD filled 84 out of 88 slots or 95% of their allocated slots. PCSSD filled 49 out of 54 slots or 91% of their allocated slots. JNPSD filled 2 slots.
- Of the 135 enrolled students, 120 graduated from ACE: 73 LRSD ACE graduates, 45 PCSSD ACE graduates, and 2 JNPSD ACE graduates. The overall graduation rate for the 18-19 school year was 88%. By district, the graduation rates were 87% for LRSD and 92% for PCSSD.
- LRSD had 11 camper dismissals and PCSSD had 4 camper dismissals during the 2018-19 school year for a total of 15 dismissals. Of the 15 students dismissed from ACE, 6 were by parent decision, 7 were dismissed due to inappropriate behavior, emotional instability and/or lack of progress, and 2 were due to medical or mental health referral.
- A breakdown of dismissals by session is as follows: Session I – 4; Session II – 5; Session III – 3; and Session IV – 3.

Parenting Component

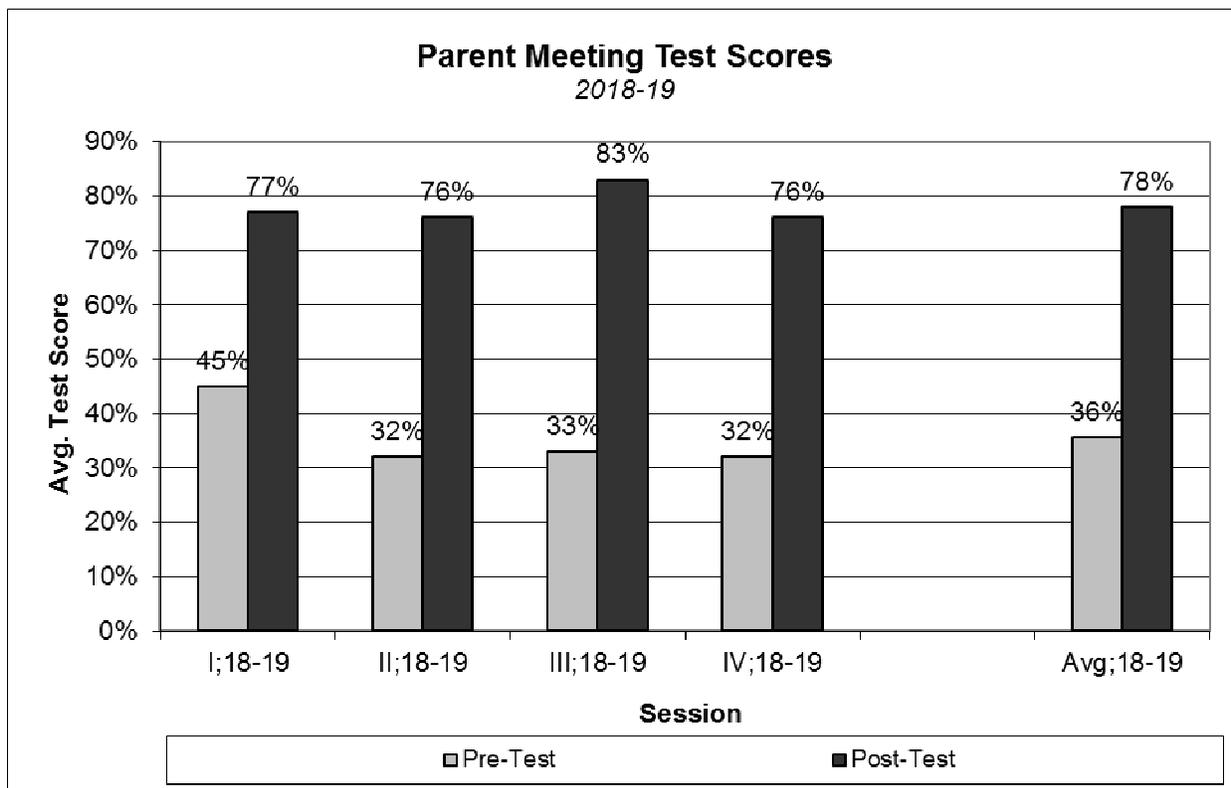
Parents are required to attend weekly parenting workshops each Sunday that their children return to the camp. There are five parent meetings for sessions I, II, and III, and four parent meetings for session IV, which is a third grade session. These meetings focus on enhancing the parents' communication 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;18-19	92%
II;18-19	98%
III;18-19	88%
IV;18-19	96%
Avg;18-19	94%

The average attendance at each parent meeting for the entire year was 94%. This indicates that at the average parent meeting for the ACE program, 94% 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 36% while the average post-test score was 78%. Comparing the two tests indicates an average growth of 42%.

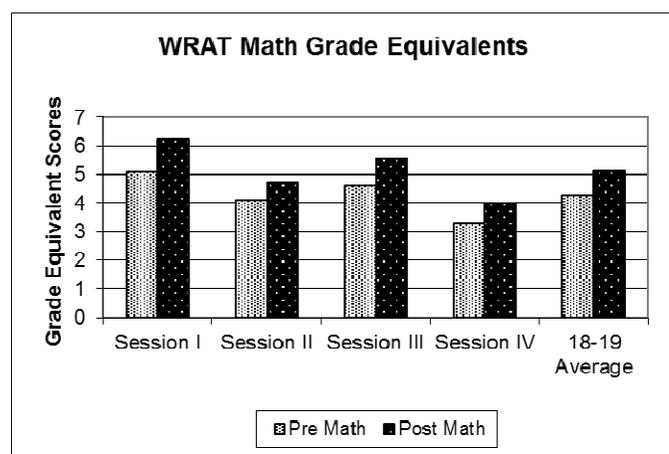
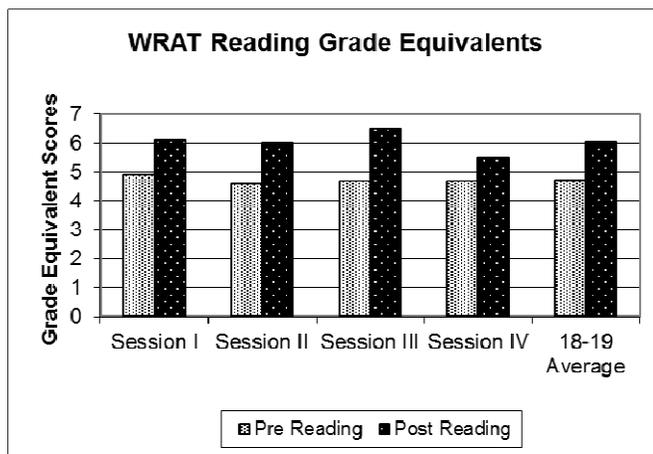


Academic Evaluation through Wide Range Achievement Test

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 4.7 in Reading and 4.3 in Math while the average post-test grade level was 6.0 in Reading and 5.1 in Math. This indicates that on average a student showed academic growth in reading of 1.3 grade levels ($6.0 - 4.7 = 1.3$) in less than five weeks of academic instruction time. Similarly, there was academic growth in math of .8 grade levels ($5.1 - 4.3 = .8$) in less than five weeks of academic instruction time.

	Pre Reading	Post Reading	Pre Math	Post Math
Session I	4.9	6.1	5.1	6.2
Session II	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.7
Session III	4.7	6.5	4.6	5.6
Session IV	4.7	5.5	3.3	4.0
18-19 Average	4.7	6.0	4.3	5.1

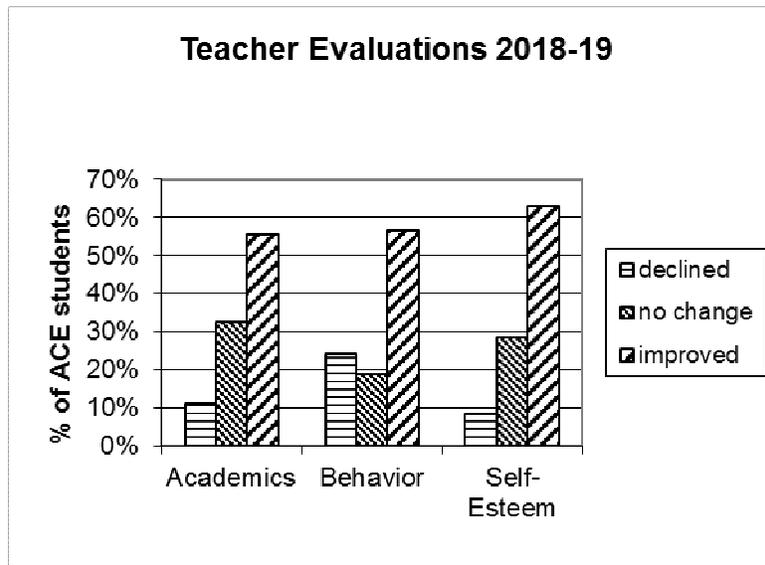
The table above illustrates the average pre and post grade equivalent scores for each session. Session IV is a 3rd grade session and is only four weeks long as compared to the five week sessions (I, II, and III) for 4th and 5th graders. These figures are charted below.



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 2018-19 ACE graduates demonstrated an average growth of 1.0 grade levels across these subjects. This is twice as high as the goal.

Teacher Evaluation of Academics, Behavior, and Self-Esteem

The third method used to evaluate the academic performance of ACE graduates is a teacher rating system. At the end of the school year, teachers are asked to rate the academic growth of the student as compared to the student's academic performance, behavioral performance, and self-esteem before his/her program participation. This assessment is used to evaluate the program's impact on the teacher's perception of the student's academics, behavior, and self-esteem in the regular classroom setting. The following chart illustrates the teachers' ratings of the 2018-19 ACE graduates at the end of the 2018-19 school year.



To assess the long-term impact of the ACE program on ACE graduates, teachers were asked to complete a rating survey for each student who attended during the 2018-19 school year. The teachers rate the students in each of the areas that were rated prior to the student's attendance in the ACE program. Additionally, the teachers are asked to rate the change in the student's academic performance, behavioral performance, and self-esteem. The rating scale utilized is a five-point scale with 1 being much worse after camp, 2-worse after camp, 3-no change, 4-better after camp, and 5-much better after camp.

In the area of academic performance, teachers rated 56% of the students as better or much better after camp.

In the area of behavioral performance, teachers rated 57% of the students as better or much better after camp.

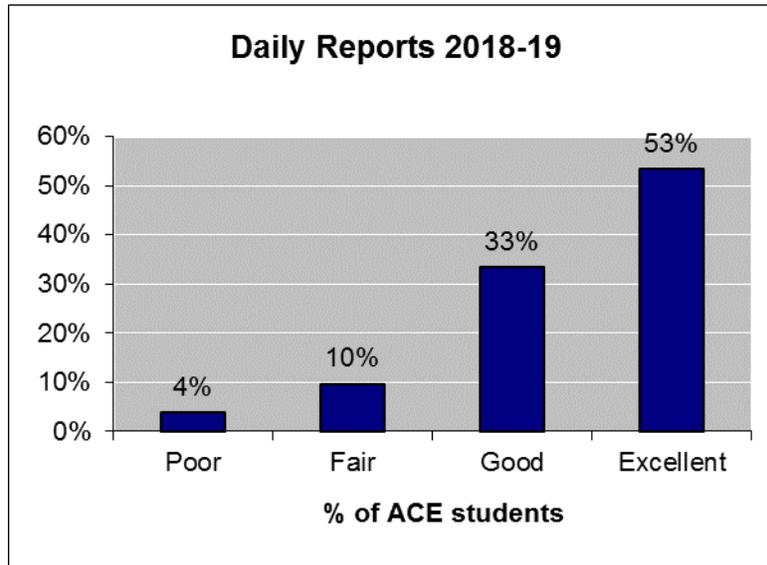
In the area of self-esteem, teachers rated 63% of the students as better or much better after camp.

76% of ACE graduates showed improvement in at least one of the areas—academics, self-esteem, or behavior.

The camp's goal in the area of teacher's perception of academics, behavior, or self-esteem improvement is 50%. Based on the teacher ratings of the 2018-19 ACE graduates, that goal was achieved in academics, behavior, and self-esteem.

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 2018-19 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 2018-19 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 and Violence Prevention. 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 2018-19, 96% of the students demonstrated improved knowledge of Violence Prevention and AIDS Awareness through pre and post testing.

Significant Events

Graduation speakers: Session I— Charlie Coleman, Chairman of the Kiwanis Activities Board and attorney with Wright, Lindsey and Jennings; Session II—Dr. Charles McNulty, Superintendent for Pulaski County Special School District; Session III— James Eric Tinkle, first ACE counselor; Session IV— Bob Nash, former Vice President of the Rockefeller foundation and former White House Director of Presidential Personnel.

Special activities at camp: Woodmen of the World Holiday party; three overnight re-entry programs for former ACE graduates, summer campers, and CITs; CIT training and programming; Mitchell Williams Law Firm visitors; 21st CCLC Advisory Committee meeting; Donor Dinner for approximately 100 donors; Kiwanis Breakfasts during the summer; Hot Springs Village Kiwanis Club built picnic tables; the Hat Club cleaned the camp; CJRW had a photo shoot; and AETN interviewed and filmed the directors.

Special activities away from camp: Field trips to Crystal Bridges, the Witt Stephens Jr Central Arkansas Nature Center, the Little Rock River Market, Pulaski Technical College, Arkansas Arts Center, Clinton Presidential Center, and the Pulaski County Courthouse where our third graders participated in a mock trial for Law Day; the Kiwanis Club held its annual Buddy Coleman Memorial golf tournament and the annual Campin' Out event to raise funds for the camp; Sanford Tollette spoke at several Kiwanis Club events; Summer Camp field trips planned by the campers; Honor Camp activities for over 90 campers, CITs, staff and AmeriCorps took place in areas around Arkansas. AmeriCorps members met with Minnijean Brown Trickey, one of the Little Rock Nine, and her daughter Spirit at National Park Community College. Several staff met with donors for a fundraising dinner at Bonefish Grill. Representatives from Simmons Bank visited the camp. AmeriCorps members purchased and delivered supplies for the homeless twice.

Conferences: Sanford Tollette, Binky Martin-Tollette, and Kelly French attended a 21CCLC training. The AmeriCorps team attended a state AmeriCorps retreat. Binky Martin-Tollette and Tammy Roberson participated in the Arkansas Department of Education Summit. Binky Martin-Tollette attended the 21st CCLC state training in Hot Springs. Tammy Roberson attended the Arkansas Association of Alternative Educators state conference and the Mid-South Prevention Conference. Binky Martin-Tollette, Sanford Tollette, and Tammy Roberson attended an AVID training for the Pulaski County Special School District; Binky Martin-Tollette and other staff participated in several trainings and webinars about the Youth Program Quality Assessment. AmeriCorps members attended the National Service Day of Recognition. Mandy Hodges and NeTesa Small attended the National School Lunch Program training and Commodity training. Staff also met periodically with school district personnel.

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 AmeriCorps, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and National School Lunch Program and USDA.

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 and in lifeguard training. AmeriCorps members were recognized by Rep. French Hill at the AmeriCorps Swearing In Ceremony. Sanford served on the Child Welfare Agency Review Board, the Central High Museum Board, 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:

That I only got one wrong on my spelling test
Playing games and at the same time learning
School because it's fun to learn
The activities, the people and the food
That I came back to camp and play games
School, because we have chalk boards and Ms. Roberson
The food and the respect from the counselors
Making new friends
Cooking out and looking at the stars

This week at camp, our social issue was:

HIV/Aids **It taught me:** Everyone is different and You can be friends with anyone who has HIV
Conflict Resolution **It taught me:** To stand up for bully victims; To stand up for myself; How to solve problems peacefully and respectfully; and Give respect to get respect
Anger Management **It taught me:** How to calm down myself when sad and mad; That the only person that gets mad is me; Anger is normal; How to stay safe and how to calm down my self; Not to get angry over silly things; Not to get mad so fast

This week at camp, I learned:

To stop talking back
That minding your own business is hard
Do my homework and do what I am told, keep your elbows off of the table
That math isn't that hard to do
Mr. Sanford's serious side
How to calm down when stressed
Cars are slower in reverse
About when to play and when not to play
New games and more about my friends
More math than ever in my life
How to stay in my lane/sometimes
How to use breathing techniques
States and capitals and all my facts 0-12
More about myself than I knew
How to multiply with decimals
My 12's, how to clean, be respectful
That making mistakes is ok and just stay cool and carry on
About multicultural holidays
That words cut deeper than knives
To slow down with math
Manners
Never let one little thing ruin your day
How to be a good friend
About respect
That white tailed deer's keep their tails up when they run

Do you want to come back to camp next week?

Yes because I want to prove I can improve
Yes because I like to learn new things and because camp is fun
Yes I do because I met new friends and more manners
Yes because I want to graduate just like my mom and not be a quitter
Yes I learn more here than I do at school
Yes because this place helps me and it is fun
I don't know because my counselors are nice and mean
Yes a thousand times because it's really fun and expressful
Yes, because I want to see my brothers (cabin mates)
Yes because it's really fun and I get to learn how to take care of myself in the wild
Yes I do because I have a lot of fun and I am not in front of a TV all day
Yes because it is fun and fair
Yes I like my counselors, cabin mates and everyone else
Yes because it is awesome
Yes it is fun and is helping me learn more
Yes I want to come back to eat lunch

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

Staying in my lane
Attitude and how I talk to people
Not yelling when I don't know I'm yelling
My disrespect and my tone of voice
Minding my own business
Accepting stuff like if I lose a game or have my elbows on the table
Being a leader and not a follower
My attitude and getting along with all my peers
Handling things better
My attitude and not lollygagging
Staying organized and putting on deodorant
Stay focused and calm
Some math, I'm good at it but I just need a little work

What would you like to say to your counselor before you leave?

Thank you for changing me into a better person
Please don't retire you made a special place in my heart! WE are family!
Until we meet again

Other comments:

It felt fantastic but I can do better [regarding their week in the classroom]
It was fun we learned more than I do at my real school
Very good, like I love school now
The work was too hard they gave us college stuff
We got to learn how to build a fire at camp out. I learned how to cook chicken Alfredo.
Hercules scared them coyotes away at campout
I learned that just because you don't like nature doesn't mean it doesn't like you
I learned how to sing in front of people
We got to talk to trees and we made friends with the trees
I like going into the woods with nature