

# BASE Camp 2017 Preliminary Report

## View/Find Evaluation September 2017

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to analyze the Oak Park Education Foundation's effectiveness at delivering summer hands-on enrichment to traditionally underserved children in District 97 via BASE Camp. This increased equity focus began in 2016 with an ambitious expansion of OPEF's scholarship program serving low-income students, and was further expanded in 2017 to include academically needy 3rd-8th grade students (based on low test scores) via the D97 Summer Launch program. As a result, Summer 2017 BASE Camp served more campers, offered more camps, and engaged its most ethnically and economically diverse population of campers ever.

Drawing upon interviews, observations, camper self-report data, BASE Camp instructor data, and parent surveys conducted between October 2016 and July 2017, this report presents preliminary results of an evaluation to answer six clusters of research questions for three recruitment groups: Launch, Scholarship, and Family Pay.

### Demographics and attendance patterns

*What are the demographics and attendance patterns of BASE Campers?*

The expansion of the scholarships and addition of Summer Launch greatly increased the ethnic and economic diversity of the BASE Camp population to more closely mirror the District 97 population overall. BASE Camp achieved stronger attendance rates vs. Prep for Success, though Launch campers did not attend at the same high rate as Scholarship or Family Pay campers.

- More than 20% of campers came to BASE Camp with scholarship assistance (8%) and Summer Launch/District 97 funding (14%).
- Summer Launch campers signed up for all four weeks of camp and more than 80% of them attended at least 75% of camp. Scholarship and Family Pay campers attended at even higher rates, though typically signed up for an average of 3 camps.

### Camper assessments

*How did campers rate camps overall, and would they want to return next year? What are their assessments of their BASE Camp peers, teachers, and projects? What did they like most and least about BASE Camp?*

With one exception (middle school Scholarship campers), each age/recruitment type subgroup rated their camps, overall, between “I like it” and “I love it,” and when asked if they would return next year, at least 85% of campers said “yes.” Middle school students were generally less enthusiastic about their experiences than their elementary school peers.

- Camper responses to questions about belonging, peers, teachers, and projects were positive across groups and averaged between 3 (*Agree*) and 4 (*Strongly Agree*). In particular, campers felt their teachers were respectful and, at the same time, that peers could be more social and helpful.
- Summer Launch campers reported more positive experiences the longer they were in camp.

- The biggest drop between elementary and middle school campers was the feeling they had “fun learning.”

### **Teacher assessments of campers**

*What are teachers’ assessments of campers’ engagement in learning, disruption of other campers, and campers’ sociability and support of their peers?*

Teachers had broadly positive observations about their campers, with some variation.

- Teachers rated campers’ level of engagement as 4.3 on a 5-point scale. Middle school students, Scholarship campers and Launch campers were below this average. Teacher assessments of camper levels of (non)disruption followed a similar pattern for these groups, with slightly more positive ratings (4.4 equivalent average) than for engagement. Assessments of peer support had similar patterns among subgroups and the lowest overall average (3.8).
- Scholarship elementary school campers had among the most positive ratings across each of these three teacher assessments.
- The experiences of 6<sup>th</sup> graders look more like “elementary school” campers than other “middle school” campers.

### **Camp emotional climate**

*To what extent are BASE Camps providing a positive emotional climate between teachers and students and among students?*

Using an established observation protocol and certified observer, BASE Camps overall have positive emotional climates. Emotional climate for middle school camps was in the “mid” range, while emotional climate in the elementary camps were between the “mid” and “high” ranges.

- These overall averages are dragged down by a few camps rated at the low end of the “mid” range, but the most common rating by far was a “6” on a 7-point scale, firmly within the “high” range.

### **Parent experiences**

*From the perspective of parents, what are the contributions and limitations of BASE Camp for them and their children?*

Parent views of BASE Camp remain overwhelmingly positive among the roughly one-third of parents who provided feedback, and these views were often consistent with those of campers, teachers and BASE Camp staff.

- Parents’ overall likelihood to recommend BASE Camp remained very high in absolute terms, but dropped for the first time in the last several years.
- Parents identified some concerns about mismatches between content and their children and some interest in having their children create more new friends. Importantly, Launch and Scholarship parents reported greater levels of their children making friends and developing new interests than Family Pay parents.

### **Teacher, staff and administrator feedback**

*What observations and suggestions do teachers and staff have about BASE Camp and how it might be improved?*

Teachers reported new levels and kinds of disruptions this year, versus earlier years, and a need for more concrete training and support if working with campers with higher levels of disengagement and disruption.

- Teachers at BASE Camp do not currently have effective ways to innovate in the summer in a way that can be transferred back to the school year.
- The inclusion of the new diversity of campers might be improved with changes to support a stronger and more uniform “camp” culture across teachers, camps, and lunchtime.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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This preliminary report is rooted in conversations that started in summer 2016 between View/Find and the Oak Park Educational Foundation (OPEF) about options for assessing the impact of BASE Camp.

BASE Camp (Build a Summer Education Camp) started in 2010 as an extension of the afterschool programs OPEF offered during the school year. BASE Camp fees were set at a rate affordable to middle-class families and served as an additional revenue source for offsetting OPEF program costs during the academic year. To increase affordability to lower-income families, beginning in 2010 OPEF started providing a small number of camp scholarships to District 97 students.

The social purpose of BASE Camp began to expand as well. It explicitly recognized the “activity gap” that existed among Oak Park youth, the consequences of these gaps for youth development, and a commitment to help ameliorate it. In the spring of 2016, OPEF received a donation that allowed them to further expand the number of families receiving scholarship support. With this increased support came an expectation to evaluate BASE Camp effectiveness for this population.

Beginning in December 2016, the Oak Park Elementary School District began exploring ways to modify their summer offerings for students with low test scores in math and language arts. By the end of January 2017, OPEF and the school district had signed an agreement for BASE Camp to provide slots for 115 students rising into grades 3-8 whose test scores put them in the bottom 5% of performance. (Students rising into 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade would continue to be served directly by the school district.) This pilot effort, Summer Launch, was intended to help students/campers in three ways:

- Improve student attendance
- Improve student participation (engagement)
- Aid the success of participating students

This report is a preview of the effects of Summer Launch and expanded Scholarship programs as they operated in BASE Camp. It is intended to reflect upon what happened in 2017 and inform options for summer 2018. The report lists specific evaluation questions that guide this work, previews initial findings, and provides a short discussion and set of questions going forward. The purpose of this report is to offer initial observations about the success of BASE Camp overall and for important camper subgroups and key stakeholders to the program.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND ELEMENTS

### *Core evaluation questions:*

1. Who enrolled in and attended BASE Camp?
2. What were campers' experiences?
3. What did BASE Camp teachers report about their campers?
4. How positive was the emotional climate in observed camps?
5. What did teachers and BASE Camp staff report about their BASE Camp experience?
6. What did parents report about their BASE Camp experiences?

This evaluation began in the fall of 2016 as an exploration of the impact of the BASE Camp Scholarship program and was expanded and redirected to include the population of Summer Launch students. It also incorporates campers whose families pay the “market price” for BASE Camp. In this document, we refer to these three recruitment groups as Scholarship, Summer Launch, and Family Pay or Paid campers.

The first evaluation question concerns who enrolled in BASE Camp, including the ethnicity and ages of campers, and their attendance patterns.

The second evaluation question concerns what *campers* reported about their experiences with BASE Camp. Camper reports draw upon weekly camper surveys about specific aspects of their experiences (e.g., their sense of belonging, their relationship with their teacher); their overall rating of each camp; their interest in returning to BASE Camp in the future; and brief comments on what they liked and did not like about their camp.

The third evaluation question concerns what *teachers* observed about individual campers. Each teacher completed a brief assessment of each camper in each camp (N=1680), rating campers for their level of engagement, the extent to which they were disruptive, and the extent to which they provided support to their peers.

The fourth evaluation question concerns the emotional climate in BASE Camp. Positive emotional climate is an important predictor of student engagement and learning and can help children with behavioral challenges maintain closer and less conflictual relationships with teachers (Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme, & Maes, 2008).

The fifth evaluation question explored the operation, successes and challenges of BASE Camp from the perspective of teachers and staff. The sixth question concerns what parents see as their needs (and those of their children) and the degree to which BASE Camp was able to meet them.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

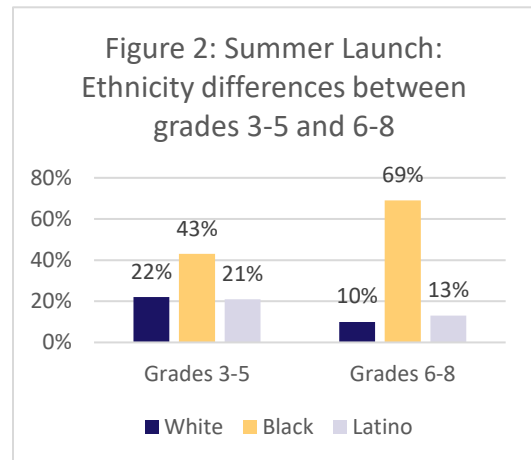
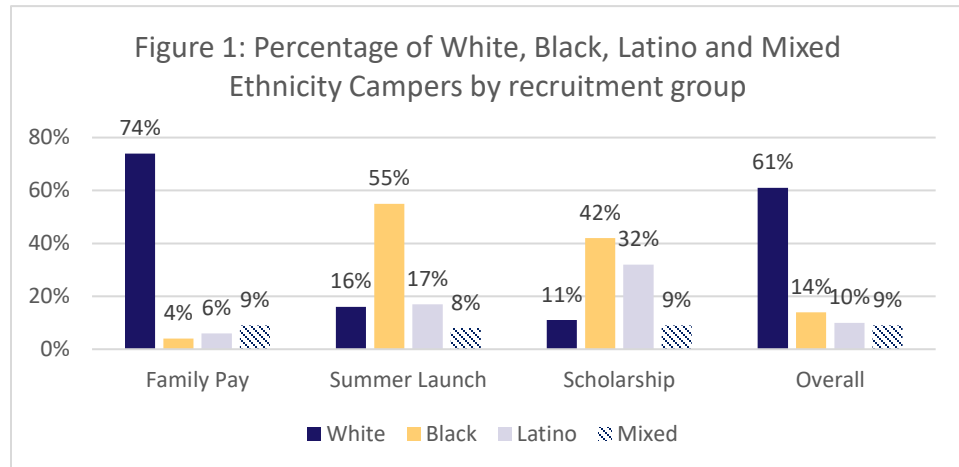
### 1 Who enrolled in and participated in BASE Camp?

A total of 891 campers between grades 1 and 8 participated in BASE Camp during the summer of 2017. Self-reported ethnic status was reported for 807 campers. Family Pay campers constituted the large majority of campers, representing 78% of all campers. The Summer Launch program (which did not include campers in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) made up 14% of campers. Scholarship campers represented the remaining 8% of campers.

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As indicated in Figure 1, the ethnic makeup of campers across recruitment types varied across the most populated ethnic categories: White, Black and Latino. Black campers formed the majority or plurality of participants within the Summer Launch (55%) and Scholarship (42%) groups, compared to 4% of Family Pay participants. Latino campers were the second largest group in Summer Launch (17%) and Scholarship (32%) compared to 6% of Family Pay campers.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the expansion of the Scholarship program and addition of the Summer Launch program created substantially new levels of ethnic diversity within the BASE Camp population as a whole.

Importantly, within the Summer Launch population, ethnicity and age grouping were intertwined. Black campers (see Figure 2) were



<sup>1</sup> All three recruitment status groups were similar in their percentage of mixed-race (between 8 and 9 percent) or Asian (between 3 and 5 percent) or “other” (between 1 and 2%). Full tables with all categories are included in Appendix B.

much *more* likely to be enrolled in middle school camps than in elementary school camps. Latino campers were *less* likely to be enrolled in middle school camps. In our analysis that follows, these differences should be considered when we describe differences across “age groups” in our data. At this initial level of analysis, these age differences are not disaggregated from ethnic and other potential differences (e.g., income).

A prerequisite to engaging students and supporting their engagement and learning is ensuring they attend summer activities. Because BASE Camp was offered on 19 days, campers who attended 14 of 19 days (74%) were considered to meet a “high attendance” threshold.<sup>2</sup> Campers who attended fewer than four weeks were rated as high attendance if they missed three or fewer days overall.<sup>3</sup> Using these calculations, 82 Summer Launch campers met the high attendance threshold.

As indicated in Table 1, looking across the recruitment status groups, attendance rates are in the range typically recorded at schools during the academic year (94% and higher) for campers in the Family Pay and Scholarship categories. Attendance rates for Launch campers are lower.

Attendance rates for Family Pay and Scholarship campers are very similar for elementary and middle school campers. Summer Launch campers show more variability. Eighty-one percent of Summer Launch campers were in the high attendance category overall, with a ten percentage point difference between campers in elementary campers (86%) and middle school (76%).

**Table 1: Rates of “high attendance” by camper recruitment and age groups**

<b>Camper Category</b>	<b>Overall “High Attendance” percentage</b>	<b>Elementary school “High Attendance” percentage</b>	<b>Middle school “High attendance” percentage</b>
<b>Family Pay</b>	98%	98%	98%
<b>Launch</b>	81%	86%	76%
<b>Scholarship</b>	94%	92%	96%
<b>TOTAL</b>	96%	96%	97%

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<sup>2</sup> A 75% threshold was adopted from Prep for Success, which used it in their internal assessment. By their estimates 68% of PFS enrollees met the 75% attendance criteria.

<sup>3</sup> This is an estimate based upon group averages rather than individual campers.



## 2 What were campers' experiences?

Campers were asked at the end of each camp to complete a survey on their experiences. This survey had four parts.

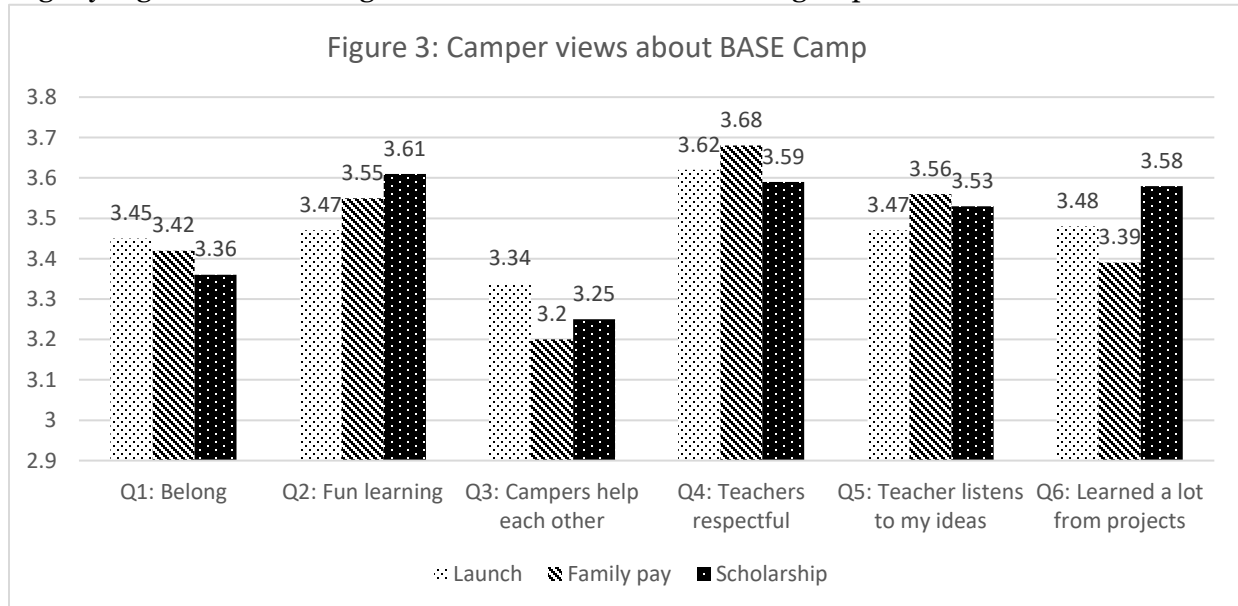
**Specific questions about BASE Camp attributes**  
The survey included five statements culled from a set of existing school district measures and a sixth question about how much campers learned from their projects.

Campers were asked how much they agreed with these statements, using a Likert-type response scale (Strongly agree=4; Agree=3; Disagree=2; Strongly Disagree=1)

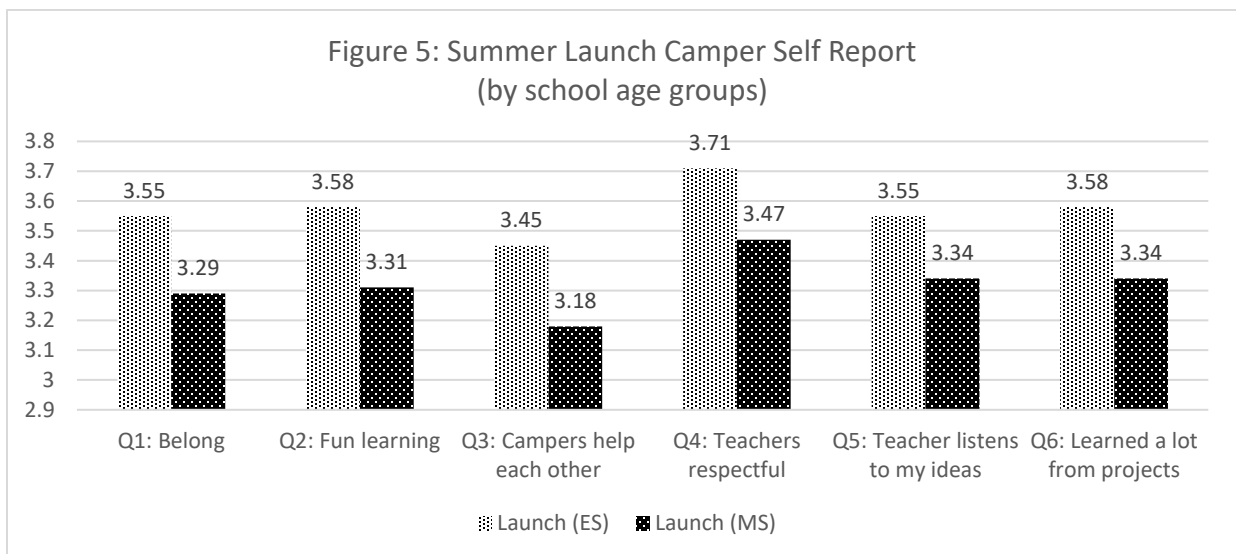
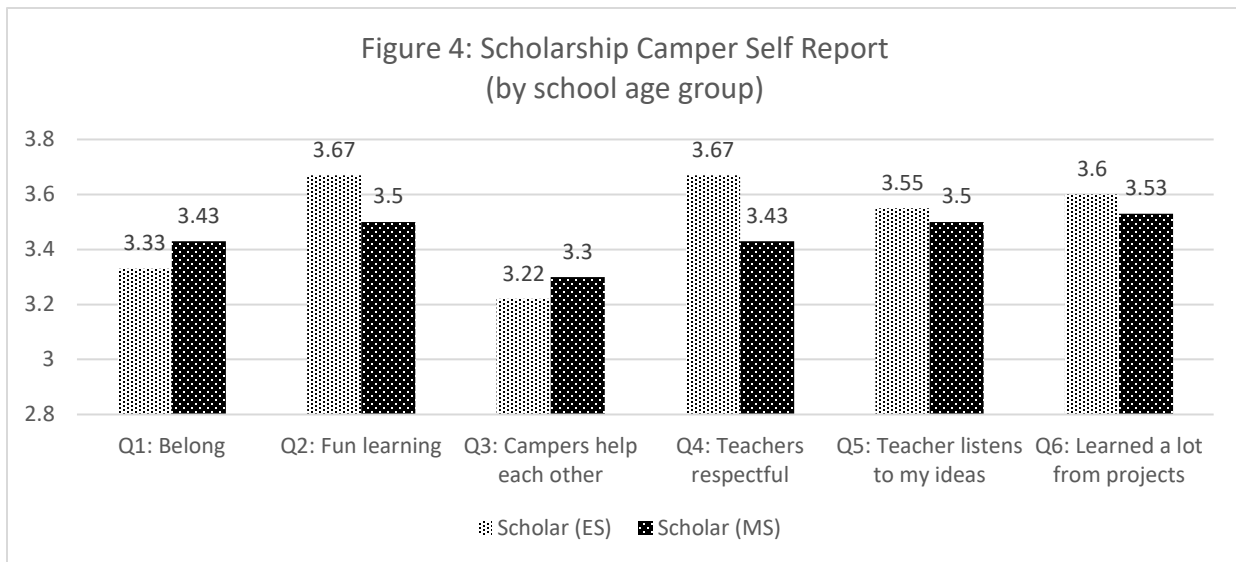
- Q1: At BASE Camp I feel I belong.
- Q2: At BASE Camp I have fun learning.
- Q3: At BASE Camp the campers help each other.
- Q4: At BASE Camp my teachers treat me with respect.
- Q5: At BASE Camp my teacher listens to my ideas.
- Q6: At BASE Camp I learned a lot from the projects I did.

As indicated in Figure 3, camper responses to each of these questions averaged between 3 (*Agree*) and 4 (*Strongly Agree*). Responses were on their face similar across the three camper recruitment categories (Launch, Family Pay, Scholarship). Notably, though a camper's recruitment category was related to attendance (consistent with analysis of other program measures), no single recruitment category had average responses that were consistently higher or lower across these six questions.

Overall, the statement that "campers help each other" (Q3) had slightly lower averages than the other five questions. The statement "my teachers treat me with respect" (Q4) had consistently slightly higher overall ratings across each of the recruitment groups and in total.



As shown in Figures 4 and 5, we were also interested in differences across school-age groupings, expecting that elementary school campers (rising grades 3-5) would report higher levels of agreement with these statements than middle school campers (rising grades 6-8). This is true in all but two instances, both among Scholarship campers. Counter to the general trend, as indicated in Figure 4 middle school respondents on two questions are more positive than their elementary school peers. By comparison, Summer Launch campers demonstrate in Figure 5 a remarkably consistent gap between the responses of younger and older campers. Across the three recruitment types, the biggest gap between elementary and middle school campers is .3 (i.e., approximately one-third of the distance between *agree* and *strongly agree*) in response to the question about whether the camper had “fun learning.”

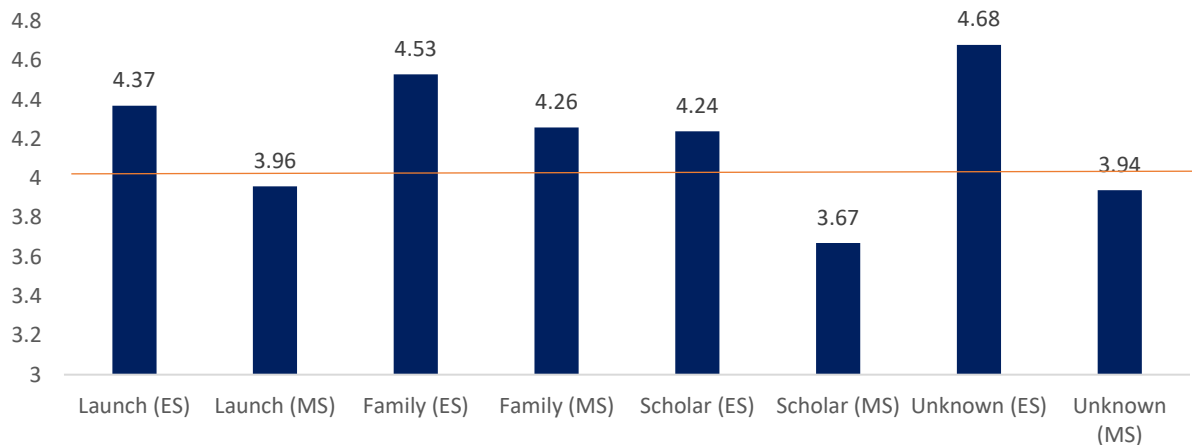


### Overall ratings of camps

At the end of each camp, campers were asked “Overall, how do you feel about this camp?” with five options (*I love it=5; I like it=4; It’s just OK=3; I don’t like it=2; I hate it=1*). Averages broken down by age group within recruitment status show that all but one subgroup has a rating essentially equivalent to “I like it” or better. That subgroup with lower ratings was middle school campers in the Scholarship category. (The horizontal red line in Figure 6 indicates the threshold for an “I like it” rating.)

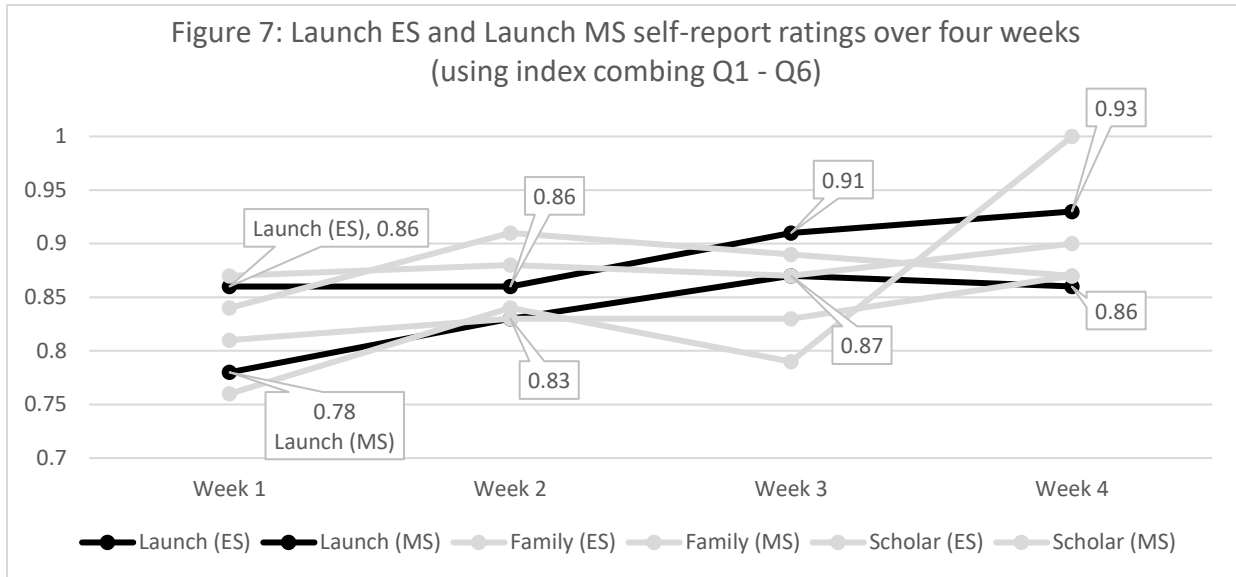
Notably, while the frequent pattern in this study is that Family Pay campers appear as the top-rated group, followed by Scholarship campers and then Summer Launch campers, that pattern is different here. Launch elementary and middle school campers have higher average overall ratings than their respective Scholarship peers.

Figure 6: Camper overall (“love/hate”) ratings  
(by recruitment status and age grouping)



We were also interested in whether camper experiences changed over the course of BASE Camp implementation. Camp administrators and teachers had reported, perhaps not surprisingly, that some of the program operations and responses to challenges improved over time.

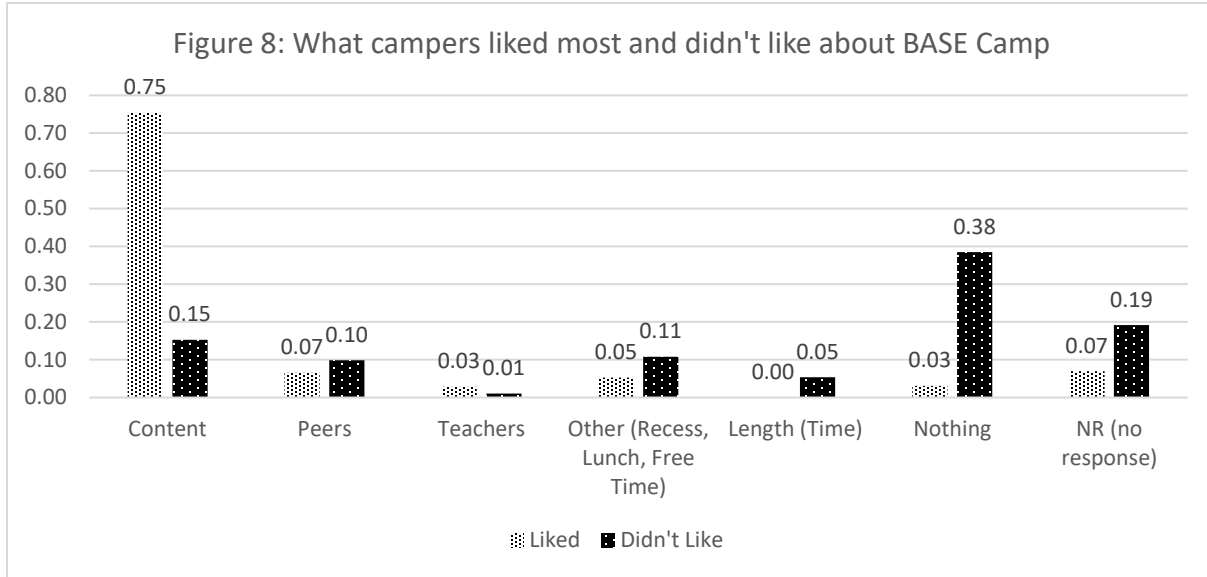
Summer Launch campers are the only group enrolled for all four weeks of BASE Camp. Figure 7 below provides a simplified measure, an index made up of the sum of the six questions, tracked over the four weeks of BASE Camp. For trend context, the scores for other groups are included but de-emphasized. Overall, these ratings suggest a modest upward trend over the four weeks of camp. By Summer Launch campers’ reports, they have more positive experiences the longer they are in camp.



### What campers liked most and least about BASE Camp

Campers were asked to briefly describe what they “liked most about BASE Camp” and what they didn’t like about BASE Camp. These open-ended responses were coded into six categories: camp content, other time in camp day (e.g., recess, lunch, free time), peers, length of time, teachers, and “nothing.”

As indicated in Figure 8, campers overwhelmingly (75% of responses) identified camp content as the kind of thing they liked most about BASE Camp. Much further behind was their peers (7%), other (5%) and teachers (3%). Regarding what they didn’t like about BASE Camp, the leading response was “nothing” (38%), followed by no response to the question (19%). We assume that many of the “no responses” here are actually “nothing” answers. The next most disliked part of BASE Camp was content (15%), Other (e.g., recess and non-content time) (11%) and Peers (10%). Table 2 includes some examples of responses in each of these categories.



**Table 2: Examples of what campers liked and didn't like about BASE Camp**

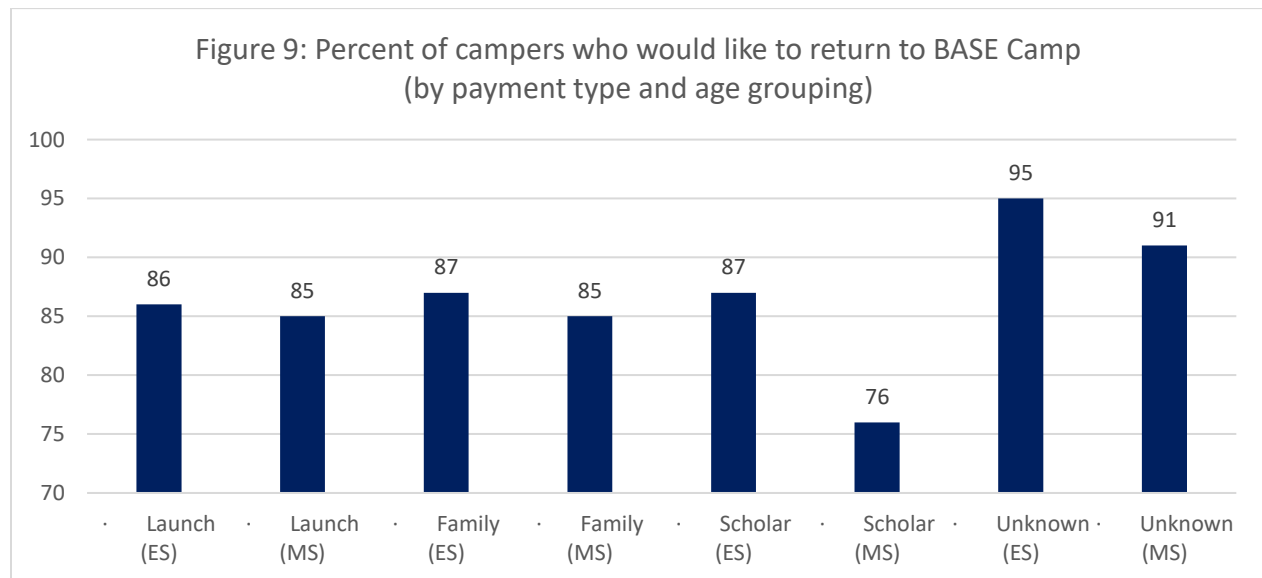
	<b>Liked</b>	<b>Didn't Like</b>
<b>Content</b>	"That we all got to be as happy and fun as we want" "I like making films" "Taking the robot apart" "The cool experiments we got to do"	"We didn't do enough writing" "Boring after a while" "I hate my project" "The clay was too hard" "Sometimes the projects are too tough"
<b>Other time in camp</b>	"I did like recess" "Playing tag" "I loved lunch"	"The lunch routine" "Lunch time is noisy" "Short recess"
<b>Peers</b>	"I got to be with my best friends" "Making new friends"	"Kids did not listen 75% of the time" "Yelling"
<b>Length of time</b>	N/A	"It's so short" "How long it is" "It was too short" "It's too long"
<b>Teachers</b>	"I like my teachers" "Nice teachers"	"When the teacher yells" "Loud teachers, too much like school."

## Camper interest in returning next year

Finally, campers were asked “would you like to come back to BASE Camp activities next summer?” Approximately 85% of campers across several age groups and recruitment statuses say they would return. Consistent with the lower overall rating, this number is lower for middle school Scholarship campers than for the other two groups.

We note here three attributes of this data. One is that campers were provided a “yes” or “no” option, though many campers chose to write in a response (e.g., “don’t know”) or checked both boxes (“y/n”). The data provided in Figure 9 includes only responses that were clearly marked “yes” or “no.” A second is that that survey respondents who did not write their name (or write it clearly enough to be legible) were included in the data but marked as having an “unknown” recruitment status. In most other data, the averages among this “unknown” category track closely to the overall rates. Here, respondents in the unknown category have perceptibly higher averages. We have not estimated how many of these “unknown” responses should be in the Scholarship middle school data (and would nudge up its average) but we do know that the number of Scholarship survey responses is much lower than we expected.

Finally, an unknown proportion of the middle school data (across all recruitment categories) may be downwardly biased because 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are not able to “come back to BASE Camp” next year – and some 8<sup>th</sup> grade respondents noted that this is why they were marking the answer “no” on the survey. (We decided to still include this as a “no” response.) The question would need to be modified if used again.



3

*What did teachers report about their campers?*

Teachers assessed each of their campers at the end of each week along three dimensions: their level of engagement, their level of disruption, and their level of peer sociability and support. In general, campers were rated highest in their levels of non-disruption, second-highest in their level of engagement, and third-highest in their level of peer support and sociability. Specifically, these three concepts were identified as:

- **Engaged** means the extent to which the camper was actively participating in learning.
- **Disruptive** means the extent to which the camper’s behavior negatively affected one or more other campers.
- **Peer support** means the extent to which the camper was a social and helpful peer to other campers.

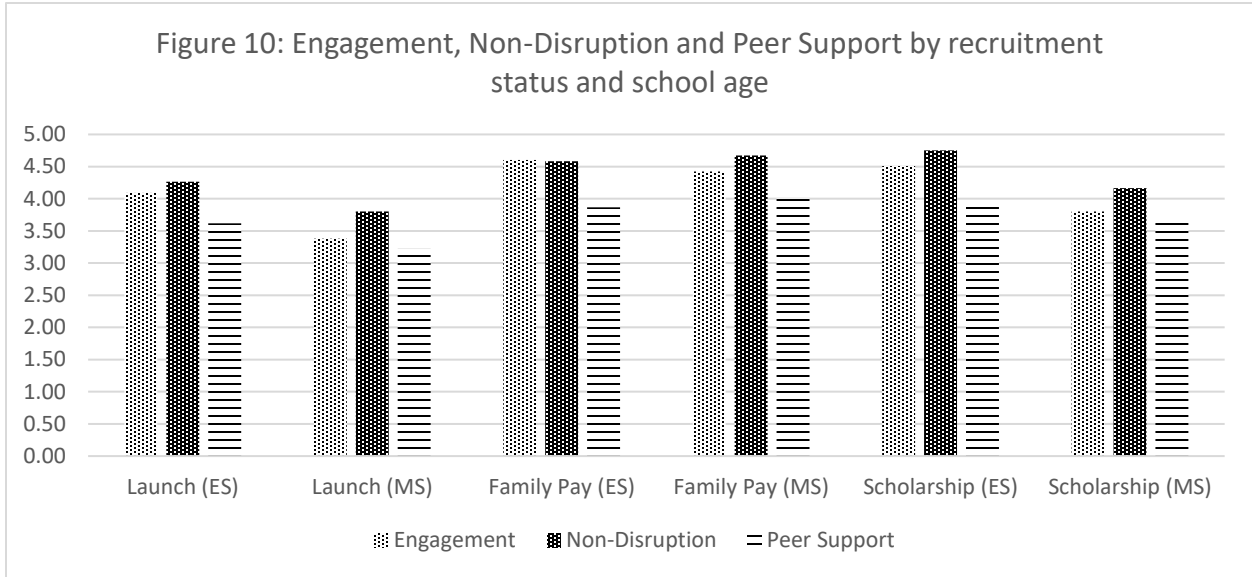
Teachers used a survey instrument that included three concepts to be rated on a scale of 1-5, where 1 was “very little” and 5 was “a lot.”<sup>4</sup> Note that for “engaged” and “peer support” ratings, higher numbers are better. For the “disruptive” ratings, higher numbers are worse. To allow for a single index in which all scores are added together, we reversed the coding on the disruptive ratings (e.g., 5--> 1, 4 -->2). Accordingly, we label the “disruptive” findings as “non-disruptive” as a reminder that these scores have been numerically flipped.

At the greatest levels of aggregation – overall averages for these three assessments for all types of campers– teachers rated campers’ level of engagement at 4.3 on the 5-point scale. Scholarship campers (4.2) and Launch campers (3.8) were below the overall average. Teacher assessments of camper levels of (non)disruption followed a similar pattern for these groups, with slightly more positive ratings (4.4 equivalent average) than for engagement. Assessments of peer support (the extent to which campers were identified as “social and helpful” to others) had similar patterns and the lowest overall average (3.8).

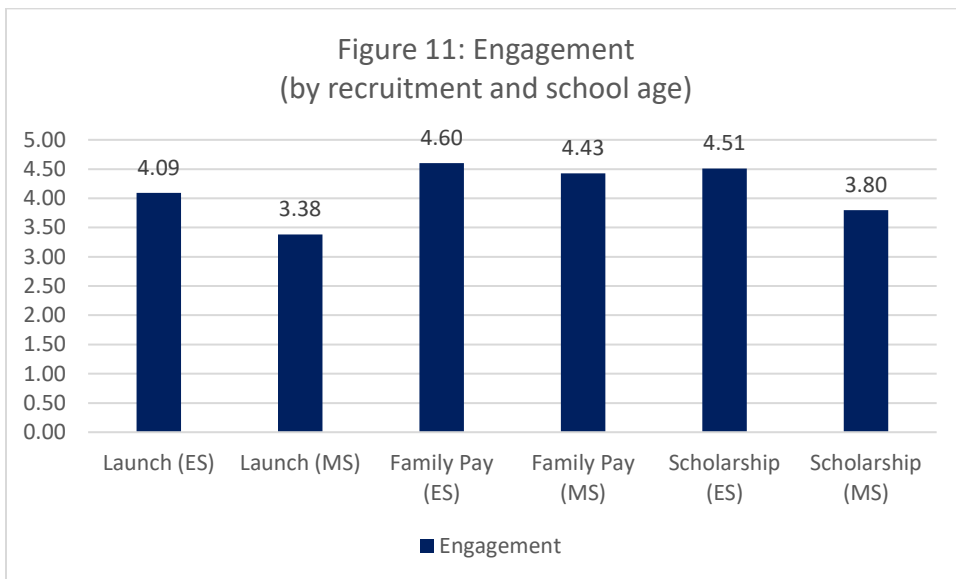
Within recruitment status, the overall patterns for each of these three assessment items when broken out by age group is evident in Figure 10. Following typical patterns observed in other data, campers recruited through Family Pay are rated high on these items. Scholarship campers in elementary school have similarly high ratings.

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<sup>4</sup> Some teachers “extended” the scale in their responses by rating students a “0.” For consistency, we recoded these as “1,” but this suggests a greater range for some teachers than is captured.



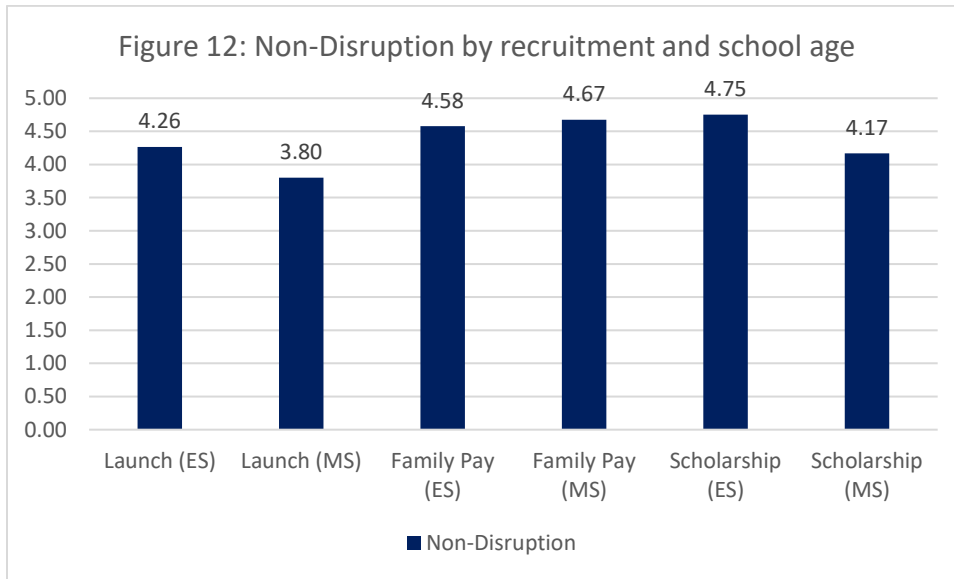
Looking more closely at each of the three assessments, Figure 11 provides ratings of camper engagement. In four of the six recruitment/age groupings, campers were assessed on average as 4 and above. Scholarship middle school campers (3.8) and Launch middle school campers (3.38) have lower scores. Within recruitment groups, the gap between the elementary and middle school age groups is about .7 points for both Launch and Scholarship campers, indicating greater challenges in engagement for these groups.



As expected, teacher assessments of (non) disruption indicate even higher average rates. As indicated in Figure 12, five of the six groupings are over 4.0, and many by a large margin. Launch middle school campers are rated on average 3.8. As with engagement, a similar gap

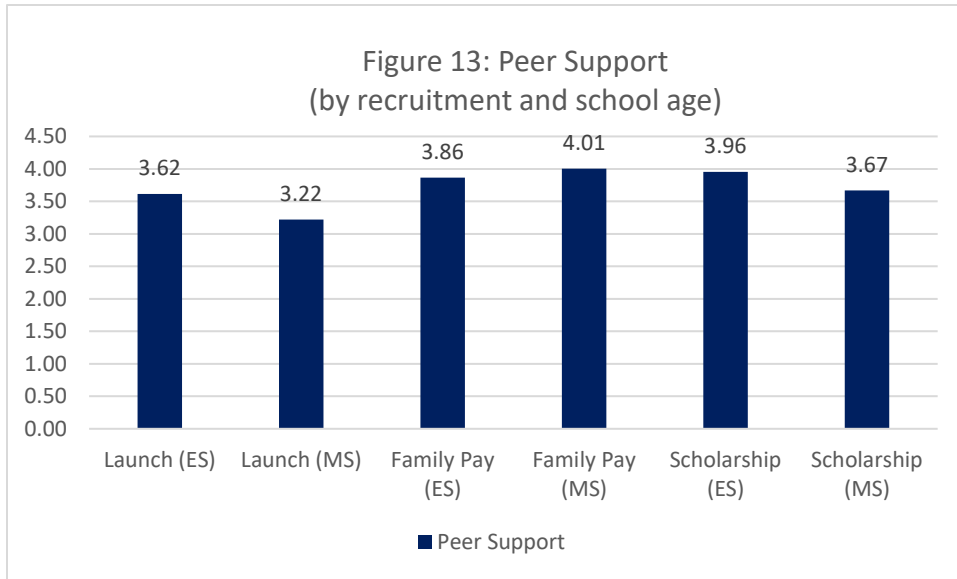


exists between elementary and middle school campers in the Launch and Scholarship groups (here about .5) that is not evident in the Family Pay category.

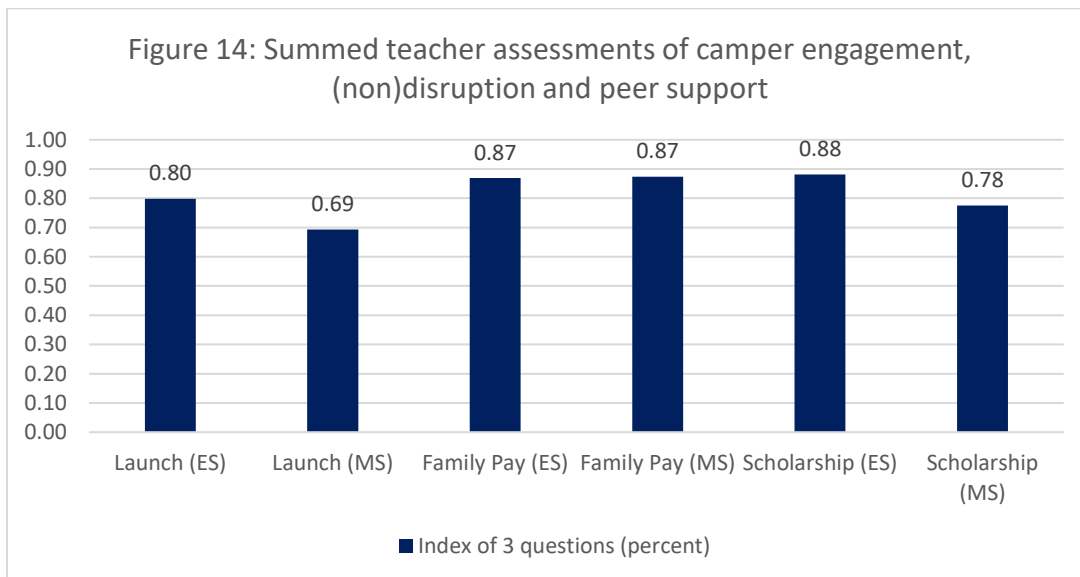


As indicated in Figure 13, overall ratings for peer support are relatively lower than the other two items. Interestingly, the gaps between elementary school campers and middle school campers may be a bit lower on this measure than in the other two. Thus, this data suggest that peer support looks a bit more similar across age groups than do engagement and disruption. Following typical patterns, Launch and Scholarship middle school campers garnered the lower ratings among these groups. For this item (and non-disruption) the middle school Family Pay campers move in the opposite direction and are actually rated higher than the elementary school campers.

We heard from a few teachers that this concept was a bit harder to assess than others, partly because of its conceptual breadth and because intentional peer support and interaction was a more intentional part of some camp structures than others. When we looked at average ratings over the four weeks (not presented here), peer support ratings were the most variable over the four weeks. This may be some evidence of such variation in camps.

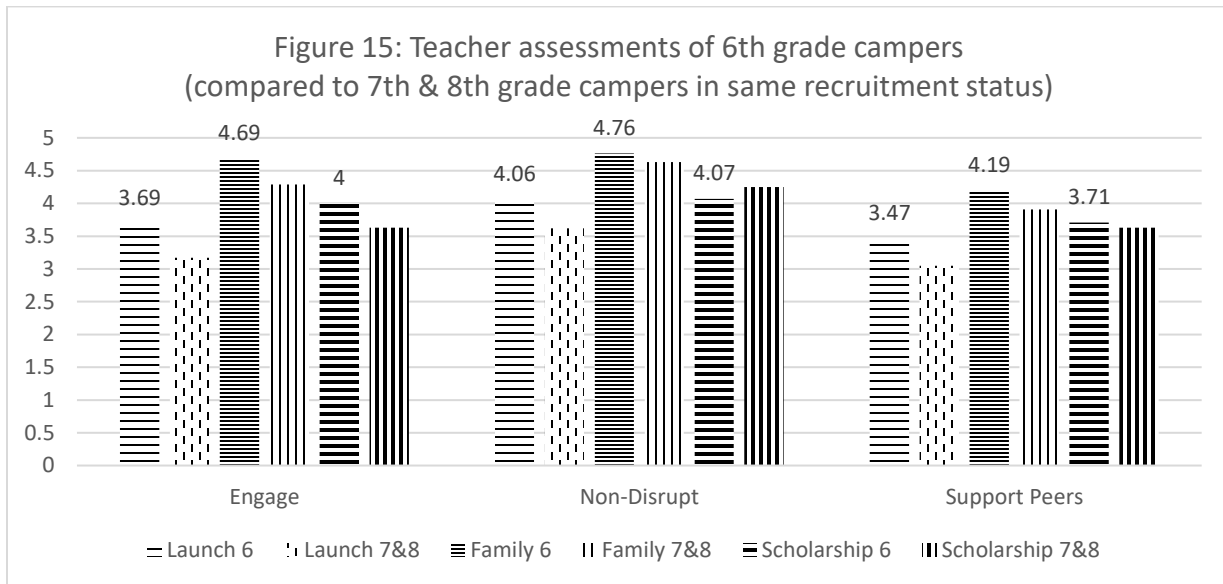


Finally, as with camper’s self-assessments, we combined the separate scores given to each camper (and more correctly to each camper in each week) to create a single number representing teacher assessments. We converted this to a “percent of maximum possible score” to simplify the number and anchor it to a more easily understood reference. As indicated in Figure 14, these results have the expected additive effect of patterns observed in the individual items. Launch middle school campers have lower overall ratings than other groups. Scholarship elementary school campers have a very high overall rating.



\*This is an index score converted to a percentage of the maximum possible score

BASE Camp administrators wondered whether campers rising into 6<sup>th</sup> grade were different from campers in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Teacher assessments of campers suggests this is true. As indicated in Figure 15, in each of the recruitment categories for each of the three assessments – with one exception – 6<sup>th</sup> graders have higher assessment averages than the group of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. (We have not looked at each of the middle school grades individually to see whether there are equally large distinctions between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade campers.)



#### 4

#### *How positive was the emotional climate in observed camps?*

For 40 of the camps, View/Find was able to observe individual classrooms for between 20 and 25 minutes, record a description of what was happening, and use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to make a brief assessment of the social and emotional climate.

An additional three camps were observed but not rated because the structure of the camp was sufficiently different to make it difficult to compare at the time of the

scheduled visit. These include VEX robotics at both middle schools and the Mosaic Mural Project.

Many teachers taught multiple camps over multiple weeks, but teachers were observed only once.<sup>5</sup> Other camps were not observed because they were unavailable during the observation

<sup>5</sup> The one exception was a teacher who was in a room that she believed was too hot and had a noticeable negative effect on her campers. She was also observed a second time in her (air conditioned) room.

slot (most typically on a field trip). These 40 observations (which sometimes included two teachers in one classroom) represent about 90% of BASE Camp teachers.

The Positive Climate domain of the CLASS directs the observer to 15 actions, organized within four sub-domains. Table 4 includes specific examples and their relationship to a seven-point scoring system. In this system, classrooms are rated low (1-2), mid (3-5) and high (6-7).

**Table 3: Key aspects of a positive climate within the CLASS rating system**

<b>Sub-domain</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Relationships	Physical proximity Shared activities Peer assistance Matched affect Social conversation
Positive affect	Smiling Laughter Enthusiasm
Positive communication	Verbal affection Physical affection Positive expectations
Respect	Eye contact Warm, calm voice Respectful language Cooperation and/or sharing

**Table 4: CLASS characteristics of “low” “mid” and “high” positive climate rooms**

<b>“Low” indicators (1, 2)</b>	<b>“Mid” indicators (3,4,5)</b>	<b>“High” indicators (6,7)</b>
Teachers/students have no meaningful connections	Positive regard for others, but "constrained" at times	Clear enjoyment and emotional connection
Lacking warmth, genuineness, distant	Teacher sometimes close, other times not	Teacher often close and joining activities
Lack of concern or smiles, warmth, social conversation	Teacher not equally engaged in different learning settings	Active interest in interacting, helping
No engagement of personal lives	Some peers connected, others distant	High levels of student comfort
Affect is flat; going through motions, little enthusiasm	Affect matches only sometimes	Teacher laughs when kids laugh; matched affect
No praise	Teacher/students have "mild" interest in others	Physical contact is enjoyed and even reciprocated
No physical interaction, or students recoil	Positive affect sometimes, not other times	Genuine interest & engagement in social conversations

Interactions are perfunctory, no eye contact	Mix of going through the motions and enthusiasm	Classroom feels like warm, pleasant place
Not a warm, calm voice	Occasional verbal/physical display, but not typical	Students give impression they are in pleasant environment
No "thank you" or "please"	Encouraging statements infrequent	Teacher freely and spontaneously responds with praise, attention
Students reluctant to share, cooperate	Calm and not calm; not always sincere respect	Teacher expresses positive expectations

Overall, BASE Camps demonstrated mid- to high levels of emotional support, with an overall mean score of 5.3. Scores were somewhat lower for middle school camps. These scores are similar to national norms in academic year classrooms. They suggest that many camps have high levels of positive emotional climate while others would benefit from guidance if high positive climate in particular becomes an explicit goal of BASE Camp.

**Table 5: Mean positive climate ratings overall and by school grades**

Overall	Grades 1-2	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8
5.4	5.8	5.5	4.6

**Table 6: Distribution of CLASS positive climate scores**

	Score: 3	Score: 4	Score: 5	Score: 6	Score: 7
Number of camps	3	6	9	18	4

## Case study: Inside a BASE Camp rated highest in positive climate

There are about 24 kids in the camp, which begins with kids sitting in circle. They start a clapping and response pattern. The teacher is smiling and laughing with kids. Lots of eye contact with campers. A student has an idea about how to introduce themselves. The campers can give their name and then what they like to eat. The teacher validates this idea and starts with "fried pickles." As campers hear other campers' foods, they say "yes!" (sushi! yes!).

They are passing around the "talking ball" to take turns. The teacher gently reminds a child who talks without the ball. Students continue to list what they like to eat. "Pasta" "I like to eat everything but peanut butter." They finish up with this icebreaker.

Teacher: "[Student name] brought something to share with us, pretty cool. I'm excited." A student shares something with the teacher -- "Awesome."

Teacher: "Raise your hand if you know how to say hello. Where did we go yesterday?" (Campers are responsive and enthusiastic: Japan!) "How do you say hello?" (Konichi-wa!). "Where did we go the first day?" (Haiti!). "What is the first rule of BASE Camp?" (Have fun!) "To do that, be respectful, safe. Yesterday we had a little trouble with that. So just make sure when [the camper] is talking, we are respectful.

It's the camper's turn to share an art artifact from another country. Camper holds up something her grandfather carved, a cane. Student: "He died. So I have this presentation." (Teacher turns on light to help show the cane. Noticing that the camper needs help, she moves to hold the cane as camper presents it.)

Camper: "When English and Spanish tried to enslave people, the Maroons fought and got freedom for people of Jamaica." The camper shows the warriors on the cane – and animals -- snake, lion. The other campers are watching quietly, intently.

The camper points to another part of the cane. "Here is a garden [my grandfather] carved; not sure why. Perhaps just the design." Pointing to another part of the cane: "This is a drum -- he played a lot of drumming. This is a sunflower. I don't know what these are."

Teacher: that's incredible, awesome. Any questions or comments? Do you want to call on someone? Camper: "That's cool!" Camper 2: "maybe a mind like a lion" Teacher: "nice interpretation, we can interpret art. Thanks for sharing before we board our flight!"

Teacher, explaining the process for students to try to identify the country of the day: "First, we were using post-it notes to guess where country was. That wasn't sticking so much." Teacher is enthusiastic, gesturing, looking at each child. Kids go to check out artifact table, "then meet me for our flight."

## Highest rated - continued

Teacher: "I love how you are looking and not touching -- thank you!" (Positive expectations.) "We have 7 people already... as we wait for the last people to board, I heard some guesses about where we are doing. Drum roll..... Greece! Here is the map of the world, start guessing where it is.

Teacher selects kids to start guessing which country they will be "visiting" today by whether or not they happen to have words on their shirt. "If you have words on your shirt...If you have words on your shirt, come up. Place your guess. If you don't have words on your shirt, stay seated."

Kids are crowded around, excited. Teacher "I see [camper] put his tape up and stepped away -- fantastic." Kids are working quietly. Teacher points out another camper doing a helpful thing, by name: "I see [camper] moving out of the way, she stepped out. Good." If you are up there, I am giving you 5, 4.... I see people making way for other travelers. Anyone who has not placed their guess? "Alright, awesome!"

The teacher points out what good behavior looks like: "[Camper] looks ready; [camper] sounds ready." She updates the projection on the whiteboard – it now has circle around Greece. "Here is your passport stamp -- welcome." Teacher: "Let's guess how long it takes to fly there. Brainstorm. When we pass the globe to you, you will make your guess." Campers are enthusiastic guessers: "3 hours." "14-15 hours." "14." "13."

Kids return to table. They have learned how to say "hello" in Greek. They have Greek flags. They are adding things to their passport -- drawing the Greek flag. Teacher plays Greek music -- "Alright, some local music!" "Let's say about 4 minutes. If you don't finish in 4 minutes, no big deal. You can always add color later."

Kids working at tables, showing each other things, showing what they have drawn. Talking at level 2. "Mine is horrible" "This is so hard to draw their flag." Teacher is walking around, smiling, looking at what kids are doing. Kids approach to ask about going to bathroom. "OK, awesome, thanks!" to child who comes up to tell her something.

5

*What did teachers and staff report about BASE Camp?*

Twenty-nine teachers completed a survey at the end of BASE Camp that asked about the physical setting of camp, the training ahead of camp, their interactions with BASE Camp administrators, their Youth Counselors, other challenges, and their likelihood of returning to teach next year. Twenty-four teachers also participated in focus groups held during BASE Camp or the week after it finished.

**Many teachers would prefer more information about incoming campers, though with some reservations, in order to improve camp implementation.** Teachers identified three ways in which some campers struggled to fit into the existing BASE Camp structure: 1) they lacked reading or writing skills that were assumed for the class (e.g., writing a journal, recording observations); 2) they had difficulty working independently on the camp curriculum; 3) they had problems with self-regulation that disrupted others in the camp.

Teachers described different ways they sought to accommodate these gaps. They lowered their standards for what was expected (instead of expecting students to write in more detail they might say instead “just put down a few words”), they assigned a Youth Counselor to sit with a camper, and they called the office for support from the Social Worker or other adults.

*I had some kids who were sweet as pie but really, really struggled to do anything independently. If they weren't working with one of teachers or youth counselor, nothing was getting done. I felt bad walking away from them, but then other kids needed help, too. So I definitely felt like I needed more.*

At the same time, though some information on campers was available, many teachers deliberately did not look at whether the camper was part of the Summer Launch or Scholarship group, motivated by a desire not to stigmatize and introduce bias in their interactions.

**Teachers from District 97 appreciate and enjoy the more relaxed teaching and learning atmosphere at BASE Camp, but do not identify effective ways to bring their BASE Camp experience to the school year.** BASE Camp administrators have hoped that BASE Camp would provide an opportunity for teachers to innovate during the summer and apply those innovations during the regular academic year. Teachers do not report this happening, and some report that when they tried to do this in the past – for example, bringing a more experiential structure to their classrooms -- they quickly fell behind meeting their learning goals, or could never make them fit their scripted lesson plans.

Teachers do report satisfaction, however, in being free in BASE Camp from these tightly controlled expectations. They report enjoying the option of letting some things “slide” both behaviorally and in meeting high learning standards. These are not students they will need to work with all school year, they will not need to build a relationship with parents, they will not need to be tested for specific learning accomplishment, and this is camp rather than school. Part of what makes BASE Camp “camp” is in relaxing some of the expectations that are common



at school, and teachers are often more focused on how to create some distance between BASE Camp and school than looking for ways to make them similar.

At the same time, some of the practices available to teachers during the school year that would be helpful for supporting good behavior and good classroom dynamics are not available to teachers. Camps cannot be balanced for gender or student behavioral needs. The brief time together and the absence of a relationship with parents means teachers lack some of the tools (e.g., time and relationships) that help groups of children and their instructor cohere. Teachers do not have a structure for good “handoffs” of their campers from other adults who know the campers well.

**Teachers reported new levels of disruption in camp this year, compared to earlier years.** Many teachers reported feeling unprepared for disruptive campers this year and new kinds of challenges they have not previously encountered. BASE Camp has included campers in the past who required some accommodations to more fully participate (e.g., being moved into a classroom where the teacher already knew the child and his needs). What teachers reported as new this year were students who presented safety concerns or were qualitatively more disruptive to other campers.

Some teachers identified the more disruptive kids as part of the Summer Launch group (which is consistent with teacher ratings of individual campers). Others said their most disruptive kids were Family Pay campers. One teacher described the difference this year:

*The climate was very much like school and less like camp due the behavior issues and trying to keep kids engaged for the whole day, and some... for a few minutes at a time.*

*I have always felt that these camps have a wonderful atmosphere and sense of scope and adventure. This year felt a little different however, just because I had more difficulty controlling the group and maintaining their interest. Many of the activities which really engaged campers in years past fell flat with this group. And I felt that this wasn't just the case for the handful of disruptive students that we had, but for everyone. I am still reeling a little bit from the experience.*

**Teachers appreciate the efforts, attitudes and responsiveness of BASE Camp staff.**

Among teacher survey responses, the most positive ratings were for resources, supports and interactions with BASE Camp staff. Teachers agreed most strongly with the statement: “Communication with BASE Camp staff was prompt and effective” (3.6, where 3 is *agree* and 4 is *strongly agree*). Though teachers in focus groups identified idiosyncratic hiccups in the availability and functioning of specific materials and technology, teacher survey responses also expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction (3.3) with the technology supports.

While on-site staff were appreciated for what they do (managers, TA, social workers), teachers (and BASE Camp staff) identified a need for more help to make sure things run smoothly, especially with the new and larger camper population and number of camps.

Overwhelmingly, teachers expressed gratitude and high levels of satisfaction with their Youth Counselors. This was consistent across both surveys (where ratings of all four positive

statements about Youth Counselors were all closer to *strongly agree* than any other measure) and focus groups.

**Many teachers would like additional help in their camps.** For campers who need additional help staying focused on camp activities, some (though not all) instructors favored additional Youth Counselors or TAs or college volunteers. (Some teachers do not want the responsibility of training and supervising additional youth counselors.) For campers who are more disruptive, teachers want additional clinical supports. (“I thought there would be more opportunities for the social worker to stop by.”)

Some teachers wanted District 97 administrators to be more actively present during camp.

**Training ahead of camp covered some important issues, but could be more practical and focused upon solutions and logistics.** Teachers who attended a pre-camp orientation and training that included content on student equity were asked to rate four statements about the training on an agree/disagree Likert scale. Two of the statements were rated slightly below *agree* (between *disagree* and *agree*): “It was worth my time to attend” (2.9) and “It made me feel more prepared to lead my camps” (2.9). Two statements were slightly above *agree* (between *agree* and *strongly agree*): “It helped me feel more connected to other BASE Camp teachers and staff” (3.2) and “It helped me think about the BASE Camp population in a new way” (3.0).

Focus groups with teachers provided some additional detail to these ratings. Teachers recognized that equity, one of the topics at the training, is relevant but the conversations felt redundant to many, and the training did not move sufficiently from the recognition of the fact of inequity to concrete ways to respond to it in camp. The time, according to teachers, could be better spent on practical logistics and classroom management techniques than reflections on inequity. Some teachers did not find peace circles to be a useful tool, though a few teachers did value and use this process.

**The social aspects of camp are very important, but there is a tension between taking time to establish and reinforce group aspects of camp and getting through material.** Teachers varied in how much time they spent trying to create a coherent group during their five (or four) days of camp, the methods they used, and the extent to which their efforts were drawn from similar language used in schools.

“Icebreakers” were used by some teachers, with mixed results (e.g., taking longer than expected). Several teachers used the “respect, responsibility, safety” language that most schools promote. One added that “fun” was the goal of camp and that respect, responsibility and safety were the ways that campers would achieve that fun. One BASE Camp (Story Quilts) builds social interactions and sharing into the camp by asking campers to interview other students about their “story” and then reporting on that.

Overall, teachers wished that students moving from camp to camp had clearer common expectations about what to expect in the culture in general. This may be especially important if more campers are staying for multiple camps.

**The physical setting is important. Being able to take kids outside is valuable for campers and teachers and camp might be improved with more attention to**

**physical space.** Not all teachers understood that recess was an option (and wondered if they had missed something during teacher orientation). But teachers valued being able to take campers outside on recess and also to take them outside as part of their learning experiences. Teachers noted the impact of physical space on the mood and energy of campers. Most were satisfied with the spaces, but reported impactful variations in sense of emotional warmth, air conditioning, light, and space. In addition, teachers and BASE Camp staff were interested in ways in which BASE Camp could convey an even more “camp-like” feel, beginning with the physical setting.

6

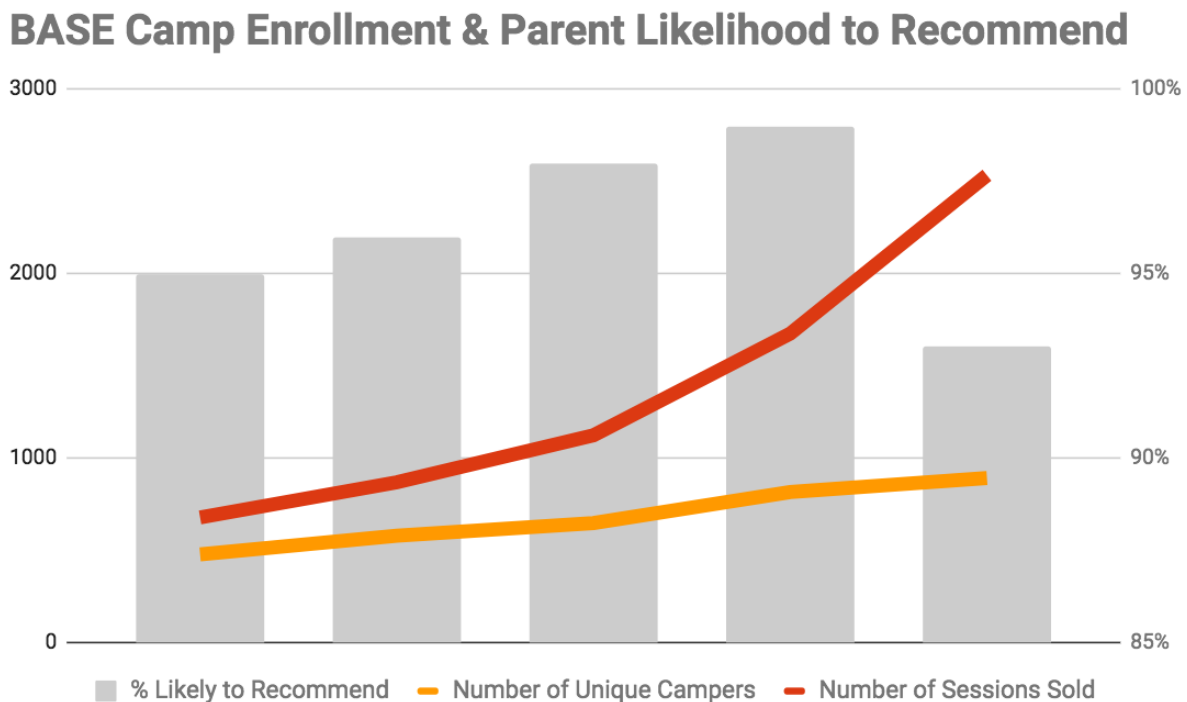
What did parents report about their BASE Camp experiences?

OPEF emailed an online survey to all parents/guardians of participating 2017 BASE Camp families (incoming 1st-8th graders) following the four-week program, with multiple email reminders. In total, 241 individuals responded, with a comparable response rate to previous years. There were 182 Family Pay, 22 Launch (3rd-8th grades only), 31 Scholarship, and 6 Both Launch/Scholarship (participated in Launch and received scholarship free lunch, early drop-off, and/or extended camp) responses.

**Overall Satisfaction:**

For the past five years, overall camp satisfaction has been measured by the question: “How likely would you be to recommend BASE Camp to a friend?”

**Figure 16: BASE Camp Enrollment and Parent Likelihood to Recommend**



BASE Camp grew significantly over the past five years, serving 86% more campers and increasing the number of camp sessions almost 375%. Despite this growth, parent/guardian satisfaction as measured by their likeliness to recommend BASE Camp to others (parents who said they were either *likely* or *very likely*) also steadily grew, until 2017, when it declined from 99% to 93%. Given these very high overall numbers, there is only modest variation within the recruitment groups: Launch (91%) and Family Pay (92%) are at the lower end and Scholarship (97%) and Both (100%) on the higher end.

When grouped by individual grades there is a noticeable dip among parents of 6<sup>th</sup> graders, of whom 80% say they would recommend BASE Camp to a friend.

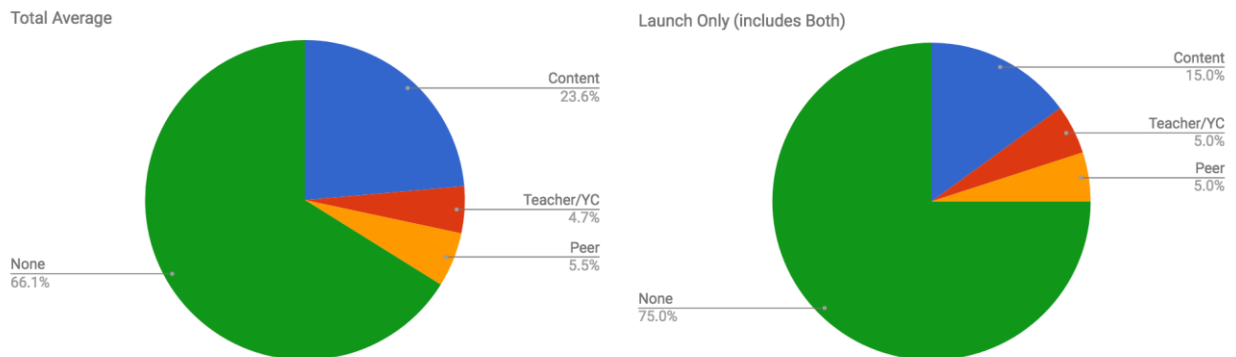
**Table 7: Parent likelihood to recommend by individual student grade**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
<i>Likely or Very likely to recommend</i>	97%	96%	92%	95%	93%	80%	90%	96%

**Camp Highlights:**

While camp-by-camp ratings were covered in the student surveys, we also specifically asked about camps that didn't meet expectations and categorized responses according to cause.

**Figure 17: Parent-identified reasons a camp did not meet their expectations**



Overall, 34% of parents identified camps that didn't meet their expectations and 25% of Launch/Both parents. The most frequently cited reason for dissatisfaction was content (24% and 15% respectively), which included things like a mismatch between child and camp or concern about what was actually covered (or not) in camp.

The remaining 10% of reasons both on average and among Launch/Both families was split between issues with the teacher or peers, mostly around classroom management of unruly behavior. Staff were not a key concern and, in fact, parents (in a separate part of the survey) rated staff very highly across the board.

**Social/Emotional Observations:**

We asked parents/guardians to rate their agreement with some statements about their child’s social and emotional engagement with BASE Camp. Parents/guardians across recruitment groups reported that their children were excited to go to camp and shared with them what they were doing at camp. Overall, fewer respondents agreed that their child developed new interests and friends, though both Launch and Scholarship families were relatively more likely than Paid families to agree with these statements. These findings are consistent with some of the observations identified by teachers and campers about peer relationship and social connections.

**Table 8: Parent perceptions of child interest, excitement, and development at BASE Camp**

	<b>Average</b>	<b>Paid</b>	<b>Launch</b>	<b>Scholarship</b>	<b>Both</b>
My child was excited to go to BASE Camp	4.5	4.4	4.6	4.7	4.7
My child shared with me what they were doing at BASE Camp	4.5	4.4	4.6	4.7	4.7
My child developed one or more new interests as a result of BASE Camp	4.0	3.9	4.3	4.5	4.3
My child made one or more new friends as a result of BASE Camp	3.8	3.7	4.3	4.4	4.0

**Launch Compared to Summer School:**

Of the 28 Launch/Both respondents, 54% participated in D97 summer school in previous years. When asked to how their child’s experience at BASE Camp compared to his or her previous summer school experience, all 13 respondents had positive comments about BASE Camp, though five had some reservations, primarily about measurable academic impact for their child, including on test scores (bolded below):

Positive examples:

- *“So much better! In the past - the summer program was something my child dreaded and I dreaded, too. My son is a different type of learner - he excels at project based work that allows him to build, be creative and work with others. Base Camp offers a different kind of learning environment that is perfect for kids like my son. This was a gift! Our entire family appreciates the opportunity for our son to have this experience. He loved every camp and learned a lot. He is now busy building a circuit board with battery packs and lights and also wants to have some friends over for a Minecraft playdate to repeat what he did at camp.”*
- *“She had more fun and was willing to get up and go. She loved that each week she was doing something different and with a different teacher.”*

Examples with reservations (in bold):

- “My child saw major increases in early school assessments in previous years. Not sure if that will happen this year since base camp was at the beginning of the summer and is project based. I love experiential learning but **I know my child was accepted based on test scores so I don't understand how this will meet district goals.** Regardless I think base camp is amazing and I know my child has learned so much about project planning, and problem solving...real skills that will follow them in life. Thank you for this program! My child has continued to create animations since your camp!”
- “I appreciate BASE camp is project based learning which I strongly support. **I am puzzled how the district expects it to increase the standardized test scores that made my child eligible to participate in the first place? All previous years saw dramatic increases in my child's early school year assessments I'm curious to see if this partnership will meet that goal...**I don't think we'll see measurable improvements in my child's scores but I do know that participation in the program improved my child's eagerness to explore and problem solve. Thank you for this amazing program!”
- “She enjoyed her time a great deal more but **I am uncertain how this prepared her for 3rd grade.**”
- “She had always done ESY (Extended School Year, never Prep For Success). She enjoyed BASE camp quite a bit. She never disliked ESY, but it was nice to be with the Gen Ed population as well as Special Ed. As a parent, **my only feedback would be the lack of information from teachers about how my daughter did (considering this was an alternative to ESY).**

## DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS GOING FORWARD

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This preliminary report identifies some of the successes and challenges of the BASE Camp program at a point when it made important expansions in the total number of campers served, widened the recruiting pipeline to include more students eligible for scholarships, and introduced a new group of campers who arrived with specific needs to develop math and language skills.

Among the key findings of this report are those that help sort out the experiences of campers recruited through different processes (Family Pay, Scholarship, and Summer Launch) and campers in different age groups (elementary school and middle school). Using these categories helps us refine our understanding, inform possible changes, and confirm existing successes.

Key findings:

- The Summer Launch and Scholarship programs have markedly increased the ethnic and economic diversity of BASE Campers and there is evidence from families that BASE Camp is supporting interest in learning and positive peer relationships.
- A little more than 80% of Summer Launch campers attended 75% of camp days, providing a solid three (and more) weeks of enrichment and content learning.
- Campers agree, on average, with six positive statements about BASE Camp in regards to peers, teachers and their projects. Three quarters of those identifying what they like most about camp cite the content in which they are engaged.
- There are frequent, but not consistent, gaps between the experiences of elementary school and middle school campers. “Having fun” is easier for elementary school campers to identify as a strength of BASE Camp than middle school campers. Middle school Launch campers were unusual among the six recruitment type and age group to have an overall rating of BASE Camp below the numerical equivalent of “I like it.”
- When asked if they would return next year, approximately 85% of campers in several age groups and recruitment statuses say they would return. Consistent with the lower overall rating, this number is lower for middle school Scholarship campers than for the other two groups.
- Teachers rated campers, overall, as engaged (4.3 on a 5.0 scale), non-disruptive (4.4) and social and helpful to peers (3.8), suggesting that BASE Camp offers high levels of engagement, low levels of disruption (on the whole), and less emphasis or success with peer relationships. Scholarship elementary school campers had among the most positive ratings from teachers across each of three teacher assessment areas (engagement, non-disruption, and peer support).
- Looking at the experiences of 6<sup>th</sup> graders separate from 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders suggests that 6<sup>th</sup> graders look more like “elementary school” campers than “middle school” campers.
- BASE Camps overall have positive emotional climates, with room for improvement. Emotional climate for middle school camps was in the “mid” range, while emotional climate in the elementary camps were between the “mid” and “high” ranges.



- Among parents responding to survey requests, parent views of BASE Camp remain overwhelmingly positive.
- Parents' overall likelihood to recommend BASE Camp remained very high in absolute terms in 2017, but dropped for the first time in the last several years. Parents identified some concerns about mismatches between content and their children and some interest in having their children create more new friends as a part of the BASE Camp experience. Very importantly, and consistent with BASE Camp goals, Launch and Scholarship parents reported greater benefits in their children making friends and developing new interests than Family Pay parents.
- Teachers reported new levels and kinds of disruptions this year, compared to earlier years.
- Teachers and staff identify a need for more concrete training and support if working with campers with higher levels of disengagement and disruption.

In the course of analyzing data, writing up results, and identifying themes we have also identified additional questions that our data might answer. This study benefits from a rich array of data sources, including observations, interviews, surveys of multiple stakeholders (campers, teachers, parents), focus groups, document review, and in-person strategic meetings. We will continue to think about how these data sources can help solidify or challenge our current thinking about BASE Camp 2017 and help prepare for BASE Camp in 2018.

## QUESTIONS GOING FORWARD

This section consists of key observations drawn from the findings in this document and, in the spirit of generating discussion, list questions (sometimes many) about what could come next. Some of these observations and questions are rooted deeply in the data and analysis already presented. Others are inspired by less systematic observations and unexpected comments or questions raised by a small number of stakeholders.

- **BASE Camp and Summer Launch.** Perhaps the most striking single observation from reviewing BASE Camp operations in 2017 is that BASE Camp was challenged, in its current form, to work as effectively with campers recruited through the Summer Launch program as it has with other camping populations in the past. Family Pay campers and to a large extent Scholarship campers presented new and modest kinds of challenges, largely because of the increased size of BASE Camp operations. But many stakeholders – teachers, parents, BASE Camp front-line and administrative staff – expressed frustration that BASE Camp was not fully meeting various behavioral, emotional, and academic needs of some Summer Launch campers.

Several elements of BASE Camp operations, School District operations, and the relationships between BASE Camp and District 97 likely contribute to this mismatch. The student recruitment process and BASE Camp sign-up process does not create an intentional link between individual academic needs of Summer Launch participants (math and/or language deficits) and BASE Camp selection. Some BASE Camps gently embrace academic areas (e.g., a camp in which students analyze “profit and loss and supply and demand” or

create a magazine with “original writing”), but there is no expectation that Summer Launch children would attend these particular camps. In any case, even the most math- or language-rich BASE Camps are unlikely to be sequenced, focused and explicit enough to change math or language performance indicators. It is also popular to say that students benefit from social and emotional support, but providing a program that intentionally produces social and emotional learning is different from simply providing a more forgiving and cheerful social setting. Teachers who run BASE Camp have a history of generating their own camps to meet existing BASE Camp priorities (e.g., emphasize Oak Park as a place) and to provide novel opportunities to families. By design, BASE Camp content is highly variable so there has been little value in creating a professional development process that would emphasize uniform practices or camp qualities. Without oversimplifying too much, BASE Camp has relied upon self-motivated, competent and (in most cases) certified teachers to bring their skills to BASE Camp and BASE Camp staff to push changes in programming in response to other non-profit competitors and the feedback they hear from parents. None of this is likely to be sufficient to effectively serve the particular needs of the Summer Launch program and in many ways the challenges evident in the summer of 2017 point those out.

It is possible to imagine a different kind of BASE Camp that married the genuine needs of Oak Park students to be engaged in learning, the value of helping teachers innovate and practice teaching content in more engaging ways, and the needs of parents and students to balance different needs and interests. This imagined BASE Camp could incorporate more intentionally social and emotional practices of the kind promulgated by the Second Step curriculum used in District 97 schools. It could incorporate more deliberate attention to relationships between teachers and campers and the specific skills and actions that contribute to a positive climate. It could incorporate more accurate and timely sharing of information on Summer Launch students between District 97 and BASE Camp. It could ensure greater additional social and behavioral supports.

Perhaps none of these are likely or even desired. But an honest review of last year’s effort suggests some encouraging successes (especially with elementary school Summer Launch campers) and some clear-cut challenges that probably should not be repeated. Framed as a series of questions:

*What could be added to the BASE Camp repertoire that moved at least some camp offerings more in the direction of math and language instruction while retaining a “camp” and “enrichment” atmosphere?*

*What might BASE Camp look like if it was more truly a place for teacher innovation – not providing enrichment as a substitute for teaching content but piloting new forms of teaching that deliver academic content? Specifically, what if BASE Camp could serve as a local incubator of innovative teaching practices with “promise” students? What would such a partnership look like?*

*Where are opportunities for innovation during the summer that could realistically be brought back to the academic school year and formal school setting?<sup>6</sup>*

*Similarly, what might BASE Camp look like if it were more intentionally structured to use and build upon the social and emotional learning that is taught and reinforced by the Second Step curriculum?*

There are other more modest – definitely less “moonshot”—lessons from BASE Camp implementation in 2017.

- **Creating a more “camp-like” experience.** According to many teachers and some staff, BASE Camp is a day camp that might benefit by introducing more “camp” – including “overnight camp”—feelings. One of the challenges for the middle school program was that students who had left their junior high only a short time before returned to that same building to participate in a “camp.” Several teachers noted this as a problem, and especially for students with existing negative feelings about school. BASE Camp did not look or feel much different than school, with some modest exceptions – students able to sit more casually on desks, work on counters, or drag desks into new formations. In the elementary school setting, lunchtime was a much larger event this year with many more students staying for lunch. But lunchtime was seen by staff, in retrospect, as a missed opportunity to build relationships among campers and between campers and adults. The concern this year was primarily in making sure that the lunch process worked effectively and efficiently. Framed as a series of questions:

*What physical and routine changes could be made to create a more consistent and more “overnight camp” feeling or tradition in BASE Camp? How might campers themselves help shape the culture and look of their camp rooms?*

*How might additional traditions help set cultural and behavioral expectations that could improve both individual camps and campers’ transitions among multiple camps?*

*Are there ways to more intentionally incorporate and communicate to campers what it means to be at BASE Camp? If so, to what extent should these draw upon language already known to campers from schools (e.g., “respect, responsibility, safety” or elements from the Second Step social and emotional learning program that is now implemented in all Oak Park elementary schools)?*

*Are there ways to take advantage of lunch or recess or classroom decoration (or t-shirts) to convey the message that is its own experience, and not school or simply the product of individual teachers? What are best practices at overnight camps that might help create an additional layer of culture and structure to help all campers participate with less friction?*

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<sup>6</sup> BASE Camp is described by OPEF as providing innovation opportunities for teachers, but this does not happen, or happen much. Fundamentally different expectations in the two teaching settings make transference difficult.

- **Building upon BASE Camp strengths.** Whatever adjustments BASE Camp makes in the coming year, it is essential that these build upon and extend the natural strengths of OPEF and the BASE Camp program. The evolution and expansion of the Scholarship program is a good example of how to do this incrementally and thoughtfully. Interviews with BASE Camp stakeholders in various roles provided a long list of such strengths. Management guru Peter Drucker has been quoted as saying that “the task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make a system’s weaknesses irrelevant.” What are the strengths that can be aligned in BASE Camp? Framed as a series of questions:

*How can BASE Camp....*

- *build upon its curated and evolving catalog of engaging activities, in which campers discover, maintain, and extend their interest in a content area?*
- *amplify peer support in learning and shared learning activities?*
- *ensure it offers activities that are very low rungs on the “ladder” of learning, so that campers can come to a content area with very little or no experience and still be able to engage and make progress?*
- *sustain opportunities for immersion in a topic and deeper thinking, including iterations of learning during a single camp?*
- *create more supportive environments in which campers feel comfortable taking risks as they learn, moving outside of their prior comfort zone in some ways (e.g., trying new foods, taking on new topics, being in new social settings)?*
- *engender in campers a new sense of “place” in Oak Park and their attachment to it and positive role within it and their own futures?*

We look forward to discussing all of these findings and possibilities.

## APPENDIX A: METHODS, AUTHOR BIO AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This preliminary report on BASE Camp is based upon data collected between October 2016 and July 2017. Prior to BASE Camp operations (between October 2016 and May 2017) we conducted interviews with parents of BASE Camp participants, BASE Camp teachers, and Oak Park Educational Foundation (OPEF) staff and board members. We also conducted focus groups with several campers in elementary school. During BASE Camp operations in June and July 2017, five focus groups were conducted with 24 BASE Camp teachers. Camps during each of the four weeks operation were observed with a total of 48 different camps rated on their emotional climate using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System. A “wrap-up” focus group was conducted with six BASE Camp and OPEF staff.

This report includes simplified graphs that concentrate on key data differences across age groups, pay status (i.e., Summer Launch, Scholarship, Family Pay) and key concepts (e.g., belonging, respect from teachers). Tables with the full data from which these figures are based are included in Appendix B. In this preliminary analysis we have not run tests of statistical significance.

Interviews, focus groups, observations, survey instrument development and data analysis were conducted by Stephen Baker, PhD.

**AUTHOR BIO:** Stephen Baker has conducted research for more than twenty-five years with individual organizations, neighborhood-level efforts, city-wide service efforts and multi-state programs. As a researcher at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago since 1991, he has led social and public policy research projects funded by the Department of Education, the Chicago Community Trust, the Wallace Foundation, and other national philanthropies. He is sole proprietor of View/Find Evaluation, where he has provided evaluation support and technical assistance to Chicago-area programs and organizations funded through federal, state, and private sources.

His work concentrates on systemic and programmatic service supports of youth development across school and out-of-school settings. At Chapin Hall he is currently the principal investigator of a Department of Education developmental study of 30 schools in Chicago using mindfulness and other self-regulation approaches to improve academic performance and is finishing a multi-year study of the developmental needs of youth transitioning to high school in five Chicago neighborhoods. At the University of Chicago he serves as the coordinator and facilitator of a cross-disciplinary doctoral student fellowship, field instructor to master’s students, and has been instructor of undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Chicago on the history of social welfare, data for management and analysis, research, and program and policy evaluation. Dr. Baker worked as Director of the Habitat for Homeless Humanity Division, and Research Director at Habitat for Humanity International. He earned his B.A. from Cornell University, and holds an M.A. and Ph.D. from the School of Social Services Administration at the University of Chicago.

Additional data and analysis was provided by OPEF. Libbey Paul completed the parent survey data analysis. Lindsay Bruce completed the attendance analysis.

We thank all the individuals who facilitated this work at the Oak Park Educational Foundation, in particular Lindsay Bruce, Libbey Paul and Tracy Dell'Angela Barber. We are grateful for the data consultation support from Emily Fenske at Oak Park Elementary District 97. Finally, we thank the Good Heart Work Smart Foundation for funding this work.

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## APPENDIX B: FULL TABLES

### Camper responses grouped by recruitment status and age group

	Q1: Belong	Q2: Fun learning	Q3: Campers help each other	Q4: Teachers respectful	Q5: Teacher listens to my ideas	Q6: Learned a lot from projects
Launch (ES)	3.55	3.58	3.45	3.71	3.55	3.58
Launch (MS)	3.29	3.31	3.18	3.47	3.34	3.34
Family (ES)	3.44	3.66	3.24	3.74	3.60	3.46
Family (MS)	3.38	3.36	3.13	3.59	3.50	3.27
Schol (ES)	3.33	3.67	3.22	3.67	3.55	3.60
Schol (MS)	3.43	3.50	3.30	3.43	3.50	3.53

(Strongly agree=4; Agree=3; Disagree=2; Strongly Disagree=1)

### Camper responses grouped by recruitment status

	Q1: Belong	Q2: Fun learning	Q3: Campers help each other	Q4: Teachers respectful	Q5: Teacher listens to my ideas	Q6: Learned a lot from projects
Launch	3.45	3.47	3.34	3.62	3.47	3.48
Family pay	3.42	3.55	3.20	3.68	3.56	3.39
Scholarship	3.36	3.61	3.25	3.59	3.53	3.58
Unknown *	3.48	3.40	3.28	3.53	3.4	3.45
TOTAL	3.43	3.52	3.25	3.65	3.52	3.43

(Strongly agree=4; Agree=3; Disagree=2; Strongly Disagree=1)

\* These responses could not be linked to their recruitment status and are presented here to indicate similarity to other responses. "Unknown" indicates that the recruitment category information is not available. Records that had any missing response data were removed from analysis on a case-wise basis.

### Camper overall ratings of Base Camps

	L/H Mean	Percent of Max	L/H Median	Index Mean	Percent of Max	Index Median
L (ES)	4.37	0.87	5.00	21.42	0.89	23
L (MS)	3.96	0.79	4.00	19.92	0.83	20
P (ES)	4.53	0.91	5.00	21.14	0.88	22
P (MS)	4.26	0.85	4.00	20.23	0.84	20
S (ES)	4.24	0.85	5.00	21.05	0.88	22
S (MS)	3.67	0.73	4.00	19.22	0.80	18

<b>Missing (ES)</b>	<b>4.68</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>20.73</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>21.5</b>
<b>Missing (MS)</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>20.03</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>21</b>

	Mean	Median
Launch (ES)	4.37	5.00
Launch (MS)	3.96	4.00
Family (ES)	4.53	5.00
Family (MS)	4.26	4.00
Scholarship (ES)	4.24	5.00
Scholarship (MS)	3.67	4.00
Unknown (ES)	4.68	5.00
Unknown (MS)	3.94	4.00

*(I love it=5; I like it=4; It's just OK=3; I don't like it=2; I hate it=1)*

**Index of all scores from all six questions, expressed as a percentage of total possible points**

	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>
Launch (ES)	0.86	0.86	0.91	0.93
Launch (MS)	0.78	0.83	0.87	0.86
Family (ES)	0.87	0.88	0.87	0.90
Family (MS)	0.81	0.83	0.83	0.87
Scholarship (ES)	0.84	0.91	0.89	0.87
Scholarship (MS)	0.76	0.84	0.79	1.00
Unknown (ES)	0.80	0.89	0.84	0.90
Unknown (MS)	0.81	0.72	0.64	0.96

**Percent of campers who say they would like to come back to BASE Camp**

Category	Percent saying "yes"
Launch overall	86
• Launch (ES)	86
• Launch (MS)	85
Family overall	86
• Family (ES)	87
• Family (MS)	85
Scholar overall	84
• Scholarship (ES)	87
• Scholarship (MS)	76



Unknown overall	94
• Unknown (ES)	95
• Unknown (MS)	91

<b>Teacher average ratings of campers, grouped by school age, recruitment status, and week</b>				
	Mean Engagement			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	4.16	4.28	3.88	3.99
Launch (MS)	3.41	3.37	3.49	3.35
Family (ES)	4.65	4.72	4.54	4.45
Family (MS)	4.25	4.35	4.77	4.59
Scholarship (ES)	4.53	4.5	4.45	4.64
Scholarship (MS)	4.1	3.43	3	4.4
	Mean Engagement as Percentage			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	0.83	0.86	0.78	0.8
Launch (MS)	0.68	0.67	0.7	0.67
Family (ES)	0.93	0.94	0.91	0.89
Family (MS)	0.85	0.87	0.95	0.92
Scholarship (ES)	0.91	0.9	0.89	0.93
Scholarship (MS)	0.82	0.69	0.6	0.88
	Mean Disruption			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	4.14	4.44	4.21	4.24
Launch (MS)	3.78	3.64	3.96	3.94
Family (ES)	4.61	4.69	4.47	4.51
Family (MS)	4.57	4.66	4.91	4.72
Scholarship (ES)	4.65	4.81	5	4.71
Scholarship (MS)	4.2	3.86	4	4.8
	Mean Disruption as Percentage			

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	0.83	0.89	0.84	0.85
Launch (MS)	0.76	0.73	0.79	0.79
Family (ES)	0.92	0.94	0.89	0.9
Family (MS)	0.91	0.93	0.98	0.94
Scholarship (ES)	0.93	0.96	1	0.94
Scholarship (MS)	0.84	0.77	0.8	0.96
<b>Mean Supported Peers</b>				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	3.7	3.85	3.29	3.6
Launch (MS)	3.06	3.08	3.47	3.35
Family (ES)	4	4.07	3.55	3.76
Family (MS)	3.6	3.91	4.49	4.38
Scholarship (ES)	4.06	4.08	3.55	4.07
Scholarship (MS)	3.5	3.36	4	4.4
<b>Mean Supported Peers as Percentage</b>				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	0.74	0.77	0.66	0.72
Launch (MS)	0.61	0.62	0.69	0.67
Family (ES)	0.8	0.81	0.71	0.75
Family (MS)	0.72	0.78	0.9	0.88
Scholarship (ES)	0.81	0.82	0.71	0.81
Scholarship (MS)	0.7	0.67	0.8	0.88
<b>Mean Index</b>				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	12.01	12.57	11.38	11.83
Launch (MS)	10.24	10.1	10.93	10.63
Family (ES)	13.27	13.45	12.56	12.72
Family (MS)	12.42	12.91	14.16	13.69
Scholarship (ES)	13.24	13.38	13	13.43
Scholarship (MS)	11.8	10.64	11	13.6

<b>Mean Index as Percent of Maximum Score</b>				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Launch (ES)	0.8	0.84	0.76	0.79
Launch (MS)	0.68	0.67	0.73	0.71
Family (ES)	0.88	0.9	0.84	0.85
Family (MS)	0.83	0.86	0.94	0.91
Scholarship (ES)	0.88	0.89	0.87	0.9
Scholarship (MS)	0.79	0.71	0.73	0.91
	Comparison by Grade within PSL			
	<b>Engage</b>	<b>Non-Disrupt</b>	<b>Support Peers</b>	<b>Index</b>
Launch 6	3.69	4.06	3.47	11.22
Launch 7&8	3.17	3.62	3.05	9.84
Family 6	4.69	4.76	4.19	13.64
Family 7&8	4.29	4.63	3.91	12.83
Scholarship 6	4	4.07	3.71	11.79
Scholarship 7&8	3.63	4.25	3.63	11.5

## APPENDIX C: THE POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE MEASURE FROM THE CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM

<b>“Low” indicators (1, 2)</b>	<b>“Mid” indicators (3,4,5)</b>	<b>“High” indicators (6,7)</b>
Teachers/students no meaningful connections	Positive regard for others, but "constrained" at times	Clear enjoyment and emotional connection
Lacking warmth, genuineness, distant	Sometimes close, other times not	Often close and joining activities
Lack of concern or smiles, warmth, social conversation	Teacher not equally engaged in different learning settings	Active interest in interacting, helping
No engagement of personal lives	Some peers connected, others distant	High levels of student comfort
Affect is flat; going through motions, little enthusiasm	Affect matches only sometimes	Teacher laughs when kids laugh; matched affect
No praise	Teacher/students have "mild" interest in others	Physical contact is enjoyed and even reciprocated
No physical interaction, or students recoil	Positive affect sometimes, not other times	Genuine interest & engagement in social conversations
Interactions are perfunctory, no eye contact	Mix of going through the motions and enthusiasm	Classroom feels like warm, pleasant place
Not a warm, calm voice	Occasional verbal/physical display, but not typical	Students give impression they are in pleasant environment
No "thank you" or "please"	Encouraging statements infrequent	Teacher freely and spontaneously responds with praise, attention
Students reluctant to share, cooperate	Calm and not calm; not always sincere respect	Teacher expresses positive expectations