



REPORT OF FINDINGS

Summer 2021

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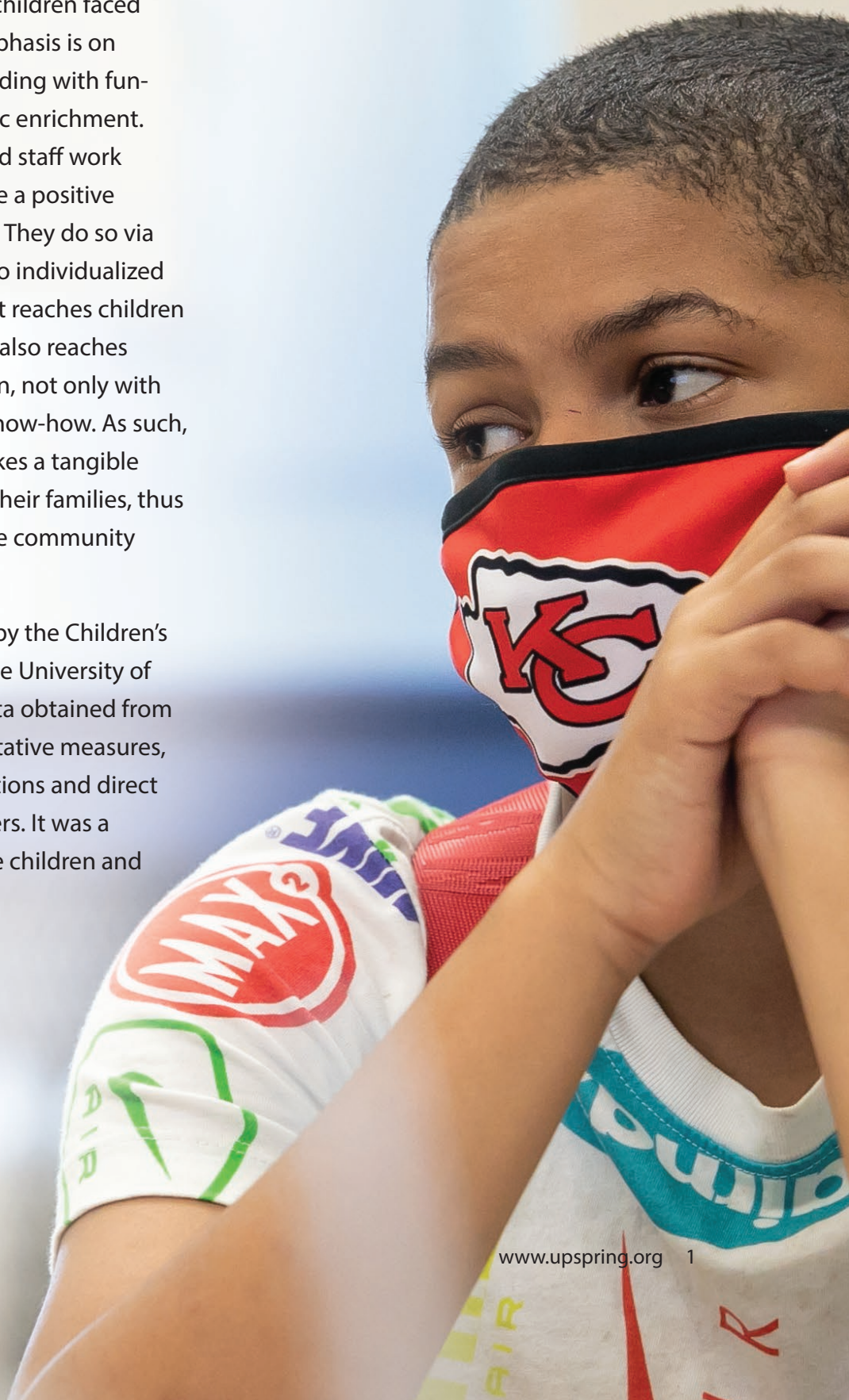


Executive Summary

UpSpring Summer 360° is a summer program that supports the needs of children faced with homelessness. The emphasis is on combining a caring surrounding with fun-filled activities and academic enrichment. Strong leadership and skilled staff work seamlessly together to make a positive difference in children's lives. They do so via a data-informed approach to individualized care. Their real-world impact reaches children who are most vulnerable. It also reaches the families of these children, not only with resources but with caring know-how. As such, UpSpring Summer 360° makes a tangible difference for children and their families, thus being a positive force for the community at large.


This report was carried out by the Children's Cognitive Research lab at the University of Cincinnati. It is based on data obtained from both quantitative and qualitative measures, including frequent observations and direct interactions with the campers. It was a pleasure to interact with the children and the staff.

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Overview

In the summer of 2021, the summer camp UpSpring Summer 360° was carried out at two locations, namely to serve children from the Northern Kentucky region and children from the Greater Cincinnati region. The camp took place several days a week over the course of 6 weeks. In total, the camp served 117 children between the ages of 5 and 14 years. Attendance was stable, speaking to the strength of the program. Our own observations were exceedingly positive as well: Children clearly enjoyed the camp.



“Children clearly enjoyed the camp.”



Data-Informed approach

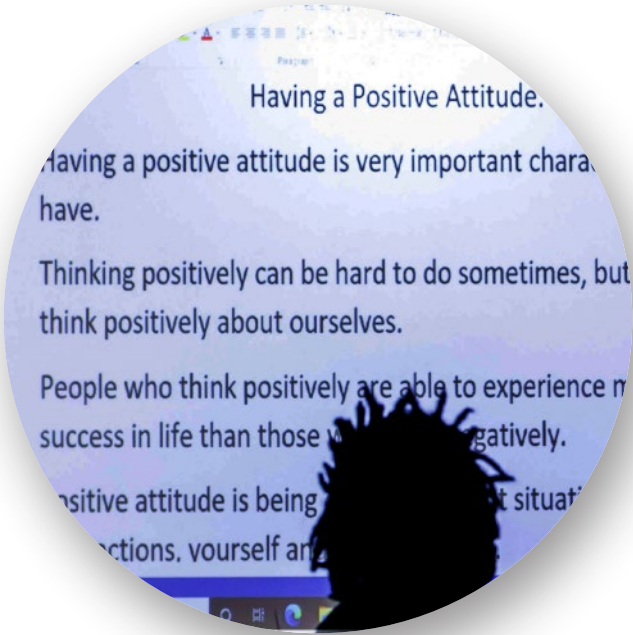
Several data points were collected to best serve children. This includes:

- an intake survey filled out by parents and caregivers,
- an online assessment of reading skills,
- two paper-and-pencil assessments of math skills (computational skills, fluency),
- a survey on socio-emotional readiness, filled out by children (with one-to-one adult support, as needed).

Data were available from 75 children.

Findings from the intake survey

Parents had the option to comment on what aspects of their child’s behavior they would like the UpSpring staff to focus on or help with. Several specific issues were identified that allows the UpSpring staff to best support their campers. Parents also had the option to establish regular check-in points with the UpSpring staff, namely to provide additional information about how to support children’s learning and well-being. This made it possible to build a family-based support system.



LOCATION	INITIAL READING FLUENCY	
	AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL	BELOW GRADE LEVEL
Northern Kentucky	65%	35%
Greater Cincinnati	83%	17%

Values show the proportion of children

Findings from the reading assessment

Students completed an online reading assessment that focused on reading fluency (i.e., the pace at which children can read novel text). Reading fluency is a known predictor of school success and, thus, needs to be considered to reach all children. Findings showed that a majority of children (61%) were reading at a pace appropriate for their grade level. In contrast, approximately a third of the children (35%) read at a pace that was below their grade level. This information made it possible to offer an individualized reading enrichment and accommodate children’s unique reading skills.





Findings from the math assessments

Students completed two math assessments, one geared towards estimating their computational skills, and one geared towards math fluency. Both of these skills are often difficult to acquire. Indeed, many children scored below grade level. The math enrichment was specifically designed to accommodate such individual difference.

LOCATION	INITIAL COMPUTATIONAL SKILLS		INITIAL MATH FLUENCY	
	AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL	BELOW GRADE LEVEL	AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL	BELOW GRADE LEVEL
Northern Kentucky	51%	49%	49%	51%
Greater Cincinnati	22%	78%	22%	78%

Values show the proportion of children



Findings from the survey on social-emotional readiness



Emotional skills are an important facet of learning success and well-being. For this reason, children’s socio-emotional readiness was assessed at the onset of the program. Results paint a complex picture of children’s challenges and their strengths. For example, many children admitted to getting mad or angry (69%), and some confessed to struggling with controlling these negative

feelings (41%). Some children also expressed difficulty with school (66%) and many worried about something bad happening to them (86%). At the same time, there were some notable strengths. For example, many children expressed an interest in learning new things (79%) and the showed a pronounced willingness to get along with others (79%).

Real-world impact

UpSpring Summer 360° sought to positively contribute to children’s lives in many ways, going far beyond providing goods and a safe surrounding. Activities designed to target students’ academic and emotional-readiness skills made a tangible positive impact.

Over 70% of children improved in their math skills (see table). The same pattern of benefits was visible on the other aspects of learning.

Research shows that a one-year decline in academic competence is to be expected among children from high-poverty neighborhoods (known as the summer slide). When incorporating the expected summer-learning loss, findings show that all children who participated in UpSpring Summer 360° benefited from the enrichment.

Children also improved in socio-emotional competence. Data from the end of the summer revealed improvements in virtually all aspects, notably in children’s ability to control their negative feelings (degree of improvement: 34%). We also saw improvement in children’s interest in learning (degree of improvement: 14%)

and higher willingness to get along with others (degree of improvement: 7%). These findings further speak to the camp’s comprehensive approach and trauma-informed care.

Due to the lingering impact of COVID-19, we had constraints in our hybrid camp model (time, technology, and volunteer personnel) which prevented us from completing post-camp reading assessments. However, we were able to deliver over 60 hours of individualized reading interventions to all of our campers. Anecdotally, we know our students made improvements in their literacy skills. For example, first-time camper Jeremy’s confidence with reading grew tremendously because of this program, and 8-year-old Brianna’s reading fluency improved immensely through the six week program.

UpSpring Summer 360° was an all-around success. Particularly remarkable in light of the pandemic, staff created a climate of cooperation and good-will that spread to children and helped them feel ‘at home’ and prepared for the school year ahead.



LOCATION	CHANGE IN COMPUTATIONAL SKILLS		CHANGE IN MATH FLUENCY	
	RETAINED OR IMPROVED	DECLINED	RETAINED OR IMPROVED	DECLINED
Northern Kentucky	73%	27%	68%	32%
Greater Cincinnati	72%	28%	83%	17%

Values show the proportion of children

UpSpring Summer 360° Parent Testimonials 2021



“My children love this camp, they come home happy. Thanks.”

“They did an excellent job. My kids had a blast!”



“Best camp around”

“We love UpSpring! My children would not get a summer camp experience or many other things that they do with the kids! Providing meals for the kids is so helpful as well.”

“You guys are the best! Hands down!! (Child) loves you!! I love you guys myself! UpSpring 360 is the best”

“The counselors and staff were extremely attentive and kind with both of my kids as well as helpful to me as a single working mom.”

“This was a great program and my child loves being in the program.”



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