

# Up Spring summer 360

## REPORT OF FINDINGS

Summer 2022

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# Executive Summary

UpSpring Summer 360° is a long-standing summer program that supports the needs of children faced with homelessness. In 2022, UpSpring facilitated their 25th year of this program. The emphasis is on combining fun-filled activities with socio-emotional and academic enrichment. Strong leadership and skilled staff work seamlessly together to provide a caring surrounding. 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 with resources and 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, the teachers, and the staff.

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*Photo credit: Angie Lipscomb Photography*





“Children clearly enjoyed the camp.”



## Overview

As was done in the years past, 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 five days a week over the course of 6 weeks. In total, the camp served over 120 children between the ages of 5 and 12 years. Attendance was stable, speaking to the strength of the program. Our own observations were exceedingly positive as well: Children were excited to be at the camp, connecting well with teachers and staff, and actively participating in the numerous activities that were carried out.

## Data-Informed approach

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

- an assessment of reading skills,
- an assessment of math skills, and
- a survey on perceived wellbeing.

Pre-test and post-test data were available from 59 children who attended the Northern Kentucky location and 56 children who attended the Cincinnati location.

# Findings from the reading assessment

Children completed a package of reading assessments at the beginning and the end of the summer camp. The assessment focused on various aspects of reading competence, including exposure to books and printed materials. Exposure to printed materials is a known predictor of reading fluency, which, in turn, is a predictor of school success. Findings showed that children differed greatly in their reading skills, even children at the same grade level. This information made it possible to offer an individualized reading enrichment and accommodate children’s unique reading skills.

Comparisons of children’s reading skills before and after the summer camp revealed that over half of the children either retained their reading skills or saw them improve (59%). This trend was seen at both camp locations, and it was most pronounced for children who scored below their grade level at the beginning of the camp.



## IMPROVING IN READING SKILLS

LOCATION	OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED BELOW THEIR GRADE LEVEL AT THE BEGINNING OF CAMP	OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED AT OR ABOVE THEIR GRADE LEVEL AT THE BEGINNING OF CAMP
Northern Kentucky	75%	55%
Greater Cincinnati	61%	44%

# Findings from the math assessment

Children completed a package of math assessments at the beginning and the end of the summer camp. The assessments were geared towards estimating children’s computational skills and math fluency – two skills that are central to math proficiency. Incidentally, these skills are difficult to acquire for many children, especially those who experience poverty. Indeed, many children scored below grade level (64% in computational skills; 65% in math fluency). Findings also showed that children differed greatly in their math skills, some children performing several grades below their actual grade level (23%), and some children performing above their actual grade level (15%). The camp’s math enrichment was specifically designed to accommodate such individual difference.

As was found with reading skills, comparison of children’s math skills before and after the summer camp revealed positive results: A majority of children either retained their math skills or saw them improve (70%). This trend applied, whether the math skill pertained to computational skills or to fluency, and it applied in both camp locations. National trends show a pronounced decrease in math skills over the summer for children who live in poverty (known as summer learning loss). Thus, it is noteworthy that many Upspring Summer 360° children could retain their math skills.

LOCATION	CHANGE IN COMPUTATIONAL SKILLS	CHANGE IN MATH FLUENCY
	RETAINED OR IMPROVED	RETAINED OR IMPROVED
Northern Kentucky	75%	72%
Greater Cincinnati	71%	61%



## Findings from the survey on perceived well-being:

Children completed a survey on various aspects about their wellbeing, administered at the beginning and the end of the summer camp. The survey covered children's perceived ability to control negative feelings, their willingness to engage in pro-social behavior, and their willingness to stay focused and learn.

Results paint a complex picture of children's strengths and challenges. For example, many children reported to struggle with staying focused in school (71%), and some children reported to lack the confidence to succeed (35%). Some children also expressed difficulty with getting past negative feelings (66%), and many worried about something bad happening to them (81%).

Comparisons of children's emotional well-being before and after the summer camp revealed some promising trends, notably in their attitudes towards learning. For example, there were improvements in children's math anxiety (32%), and more

children came to believe that they could learn from mistakes (16%). There were also improvements in children's willingness to engage in pro-social behavior, for example in their willingness to do the right thing when asked to do so (20%) or in their willingness to keep promises made to others (14%).

## Conclusion

We found numerous ways in which UpSpring Summer 360° contributed positively to children's lives. Beyond providing goods and a safe surrounding, this included a large assortment of activities to target students' academic and emotional-readiness skills. In fact, Upspring Summer 360° was all around a success, whether in strengthening children's academic skills or in improving their perceived well-being. Staff created a climate of care and support that is likely to leave a lasting impact, beyond preparing children for the school year.



# UpSpring Summer 360° Parent Testimonials 2022

“¡Muchas gracias , fue estupendo!”



“Best camp experience my child and I have ever experienced”



“My kids have been going for several years and they love it. They don't ever want it to end.”

“They love the camp leaders”

“My son talks about the friends he makes and has been better at independent activities as well.”

“My kids will 100% be back next year.”

“You all gave my children nothing short of a miracle this summer. And you really are changing lives.”





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