

Why Camp is Champ

March 2004

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As a parent, I agonize over the tough questions every day. How do I help my children become productive, happy and responsible adults? How do I teach my son to become resilient? How can I make sure that my daughter develops a wide range of talents and interests? Surprisingly, the answer to these questions proved to be surprisingly simple: send them to a summer camp.

Study after study confirms it. Summer camp helps kids academically, emotionally and behaviorally. It's an important step in their road to becoming a happy, healthy adult. And at the best of camps, kids are learning and growing while believing they're just having a really, really good time.

Academic achievement. Researchers are still arguing if the traditional nine-month school year is the effective method of teaching, and no one's come up with the definitive answer yet. But they all agree on one thing: learning can and should take place all year round. So what if your child isn't in school? It doesn't matter. They still need stimulating and challenging activities like those provided at good summer camps. According to the *Journal of Adolescent Research*, kids who participate in these activities end up doing better on their test scores, finishing their homework more often, and getting better grades. Math and reading scores in particular have been shown to rise after attending camp, because of such activities as journal writing, map reading and orienteering.

Emotional development. Studies have proven that children who attend camp improve in "soft" educational skills as well. By exposing children to a wide variety of activities, they're forced to learn new skills. With new skills comes increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

Social skills. Campers have the opportunity to meet a wide range of people, young and old. Through interaction, games, competitions, and

learning experiences, campers learn how to get along with others, enhancing their social skills and aiding in their development of a strong sense of community.

Personally, I didn't need to read the studies to know all this. I've seen the results firsthand. As Director of a summer camp, I've watched shy kids turn outgoing and followers become leaders. But even if the changes aren't that dramatic, they are just as important. Each year, I watch kids leave my camp with a little more confidence, a few more friends, and a couple of new skills. I call that a summer well spent.