

Camp MakeBelieve Kids Program Evaluation

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Camp MakeBelieve Kids Program Evaluation

Context

Camp MakeBelieve (CMB) Kids is a program with focus on social and emotional learning with the overall goal to build emotional competence. The emotional competence model is built on 8 different steps, each lasting 1.5 hours, once per week for 8 consecutive weeks. In this program, each 8 week period is identified as a cycle. The data used in this analysis were compiled by the staff of *CMB Kids* in the period between January of 2006 and January of 2009. This analysis is based on parent and counselor ratings at the end of one eight-week cycle (the program is designed to enable participation in more than one cycle).

Parents who signed their children up for the program attend a private psychosocial intake session conducted by the program director. During the intake session, parents receive an overview of the program, explore program expectation, and review the child's history and previous test results. The intake session concludes with determination by parent and program director regarding whether the needs of the child appear appropriate for participation in one of the groups.

All classes are taught by the program director and/or a trained intern who is also a school psychologist. A junior counselor acts as mentor and helper for the group.

A complete description of the eight steps in a cycle is provided in this report as Appendix A.

The primary data source for this evaluation is a program evaluation form completed by the parent at the beginning and end of the eight-week cycle and by the counselor at the end of the cycle. The evaluation form uses a 5-point Likert style format in which the respondents are asked to rate the children in behaviors and skills associated with broad categories of social skills, identifying feelings, empathy, mood management, boundaries, manipulation, and self-regulation for a total of 78 individual ratings. A copy of the instrument is included in this report as Appendix B.

Variables

Information was solicited from parents about progress of their children in eight broad skill areas: social skills, identifying feelings, boundaries, empathy, manipulation, mood management, self regulation, and motivation. The questionnaire in Appendix B identifies the specific skills areas probed within each of the eight categories.

Global Assessment

Parents of 49 of the children provided an overall global assessment at the end of the program in each of the eight broad skill areas. The global assessment was in categories of:

- function improved during the eight-week cycle,
- function remained the same during the eight week cycle, or
- level of function decreased during the eight-week cycle

The results of the global assessment are displayed in Table 1. A perusal of Table 1 indicates that identifying feelings and self-regulation were the areas where parents were most likely to report improved function; manipulation and empathy were the areas that appeared most resistant to change. It is noteworthy that improved function was reported in each area by the majority of parents, and a remarkably small number of children with decreased function were reported.

Table 1
Global Assessment
n = 49

	Improved		Remained the Same		Became Worse	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Social Skills	36	73%	13	27%	0	
Identifying Feelings	39	80%	10	20%	0	
Boundaries	36	73%	12	24%	1	2%
Empathy	33	67%	16	33%	0	
Manipulation	29	59%	19	39%	1	2%
Mood Management	35	71%	13	27%	1	2%
Self Regulation	38	78%	11	22%	0	
Motivation	34	69%	14	29%	1	2%

Parent Pre and Posttest Ratings

Complete datasets with parent pre and posttest ratings were available for 64 children who participated in an eight week cycle. Specific behaviors/skills were identified for each of the eight skill areas and rated on a five point Likert-scale ranging from “never” to “always” in frequency with which the behavior/skill was observed. The specific behavior/skill ratings were weighted proportionally to produce the rating for each of the broad skills areas. The specific behaviors/skills associated with each of the broad areas are evident in the questionnaire attached as an appendix to this report.

Table 2 displays the results of the analysis (dependent samples t-test) of the parent pre and posttest ratings. A perusal of the data in Table 2 indicates that a statistically significant change in the desired direction was evident from pre to posttest on seven of the eight broad skill categories. Table 2 also includes report of the effect size (Cohen’s *d*) change for each of the broad categories.

The relationship between the p value and the d value is that the former indicates the extent to which the results might have occurred by chance and the latter indicates the extent of change. There is not universal agreement on interpretive labels for the d value. Its size must be interpreted in relation to many factors, including what is being measured and the time period between pre and post. A substantial (between medium and large) change was evident in four of the areas, a medium change in two, and a small to medium change was evident in two.

An overall rating score was created for this report, combining the ratings for each of the eight areas, and it is also reported in Table 2. There was a statistically significant positive change between pre and post in this overall or average rating and the extent of change would be categorized as substantial.

Although it could not be confirmed in this secondary data analysis, an artifact of questionnaire design suggests caution in interpretation of the only skill area in which statistically significant positive change was not evident in the parent pre and posttest ratings. Evident in perusal of the questionnaire in Appendix B is that this is the only area in which a higher numerical rating is a less desirable outcome. In the context of parent rating, it is possible that this nuance may not have been missed by some parents while completing the questionnaire.

Table 2
Parent Pre and Posttest Ratings
n = 64

	Pre mean (sd)	Post mean (sd)	t	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Social Skills	3.37 (.675)	3.67 (.803)	4.74	.00001	.40
Identifying Feelings	3.16 (.572)	3.59 (.809)	6.67	.00000	.61
Boundaries	3.17 (.734)	3.39 (.873)	2.98	.00415	.27
Empathy	3.29 (.545)	3.59 (.709)	4.24	.00007	.47
Manipulation	2.92 (.798)	3.05 (.864)	1.34	.18661	.16
Mood Management	2.48 (.603)	2.91 (.854)	5.82	.00000	.58
Self Regulation	2.65 (.559)	3.08 (.746)	6.88	.00000	.65
Motivation	3.10 (.457)	3.46 (.707)	5.40	.00000	.60
OVERALL	3.02 (.339)	3.34 (.581)	6.61	.00000	.67

Counselor and Parent Ratings

Counselors in the Camp MakeBelieve program completed a rating of children at the end of the cycle with the results displayed in Table 3. The data in Table 3 suggest a positive level of function (median counselor rating = 3.73 after adjustment for direction of the manipulation scale). The counselor ratings were somewhat higher than parent ratings gathered at essentially the same time. This most likely explanation, however, is that this is a function of the different perspectives and opportunities for observation of the children.

Table 3
Counselor and Parent Posttest Ratings
n = 64

	Counselor mean (sd)	Parent mean (sd)
Social Skills	3.69 (.973)	3.67 (.803)
Identifying Feelings	3.82 (.963)	3.59 (.809)
Boundaries	3.90 (1.08)	3.39 (.873)
Empathy	3.74 (.994)	3.59 (.709)
Manipulation	2.04 (1.00)	3.05 (.864)
Mood Management	3.35 (.998)	2.91 (.854)
Self Regulation	3.56 (1.03)	3.08 (.746)
Motivation	3.72 (1.07)	3.46 (.707)

Summary

Several caveats are essential in summarizing the data analysis in this report. The report is a secondary data analysis. The evaluators were not present when the questionnaires were distributed and completed by parents and counselors and have no direct knowledge about the conditions of administration. The results are based essentially on parent ratings, and typical for program evaluation data, there were incomplete cells in the data set available for the analysis. Parents were not always consistent in the reported ratings. And, as noted above, there is concern about possible misinterpretation by parents of the rating format in the manipulation skill area.

With those caveats noted, these data are remarkably supportive of the efficacy of the Camp MakeBelieve Kids program. Statistically significant positive change was evident on all scales with exception only of the scale in which misinterpretation by parents could have limited the quality of the data. The extent of change from pre to post ratings in the range between medium and large is remarkable over an eight-week cycle.

There was no pattern evident in the missing data, and it is the judgment of the evaluators that the data analyzed represent an accurate portrayal of the perceptions of the parents whose children participated in the program during this time period. It may be advantageous to conduct a follow-up study with a new group of participants to confirm these general findings and provide special attention to directions on the rating scale for the manipulation factor. The addition of data points between the pre and post test ratings may also warrant consideration in a follow-up study.

APPENDIX A
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Step 1: Peer Connections: children will develop strategies for forming positive relationships within the group – strategies they will apply at home and at school. They explore “the rules” of socially appropriate behavior. Strategies are taught through role playing and activities that encourage the participation of all group members, active listening, non-verbal communication and fairness or equality in the relationship.

Step 2: Feelings: children learn to identify their feelings, respect what their feelings are telling them and express those feelings appropriately and to respect the feelings of others. They expand their feelings vocabulary by starting with the Four Core Feelings then determining the more sophisticated words. They begin to express both positive and negative feelings verbally and non-verbally through visual art and role play. They also discover what their personal “sparks” are to both negative and positive feelings.

Step 3: Boundaries: introduces the concept of boundaries through a “bubble” to define personal space. Physical space is taught as a child rules their own kingdom and determines who has permission to enter and who must stay out. Boundary invasions are role played with discussions of the impact it has on relationships. The CMB Kids Workbook; Buster Bobby Learns Respect is read and Talking Points aid discussion.

Step 4: Empathy: focuses on developing empathy for other people, promoting tolerance for other people, understanding the connection between a lack of empathy and bullying. The CMB Kids Workbook; Tia the Teaser Learns Respect is read and Talking Points aid discussion.

They learn the STOP method as an assertive communication tool in stopping bullying behavior.

Step 5: Managing Moods: children become in tune to their own physical reaction to intense feelings as they are taught the fight or flight reaction to danger. They learn specific mood changer strategies to change negative feelings into more positive and productive ones. They learn to rate feelings on a mood thermometer than choose an appropriate strategy that will decrease the intensity of their negative feelings. The CMB Kids Musical Play and Songs; Mr. Feathers are listened to and Talking Points aid discussion.

Step 6: Manipulation: children are taught what manipulation is and the destructive influence it has on relationships. Through the Trashy Tricks tm concept, they easily identify the methods of manipulation and make the connection between manipulative behaviors and bullying. Through role play, visual art and the CMB Kids Workbook; Madison the Manipulator Learns Fairness, they learn to recognize and stop manipulation in self and others.

Step 7: Self-Regulation: teaches children to recognize and modify their own thoughts, feelings and behavior according to the current situation. Through the Feelings Game, CMB Kids Workbook; Hyper Javier Calms Down and the SMILE concept they gain insight into how impulses drive behavior and cause negative consequences and specific steps to decrease impulsive behavior and change negative thinking.

Step 8: Motivation: uses the CMB Kids Guided Imagery Tools; My Kingdom and My Pot of Gold, to help campers become aware of their own positive qualities and be comfortable in asserting themselves in new, frustrating or challenging situations. They practice stepping out of their “comfort zone” to take on new challenges and make appropriate choices when faced with frustrating or unexpected situations. The importance of accepting constructive criticism and learning from it is paramount to self-motivation. Through role play and visual art they practice becoming a “master of self-confidence” by speaking thoughts, feelings, ideas clearly and positively, using strong posture as well as sharing personal likes and dislikes in a mature manner.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Child's Current Level of Social-Emotional Competence Based on Parental Evaluation

Child's Name: _____ Birthdate: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____

Has child attended the Camp MakeBelieve Program before?

YES _____ NO _____

If yes, how many 8-week series were completed? _____

The following statements represent feelings and experiences counselors observe based on a child's behavior. Please read each statement carefully, and circle the number at the right that most closely reflects your degree of observation. Your answers will give insight into how this particular child generally functions in a variety of settings.

SCALE: 1 2 3 4 5
 Never Rarely Sometimes Most of the Time Always

Social Skills					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uses eye contact in conversation	1	2	3	4	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acknowledges others in a variety of surroundings	1	2	3	4	5
Recognizes feelings of others with cues:					
tone of voice	1	2	3	4	5
facial expressions	1	2	3	4	5
body language	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Is able to understand friendly teasing	1	2	3	4	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Able to make introductions appropriately	1	2	3	4	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shows interest in playing with peers	1	2	3	4	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Able to initiate friendship with age appropriate peers	1	2	3	4	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Able to maintain friends	1	2	3	4	5
 Identifying Feelings					
Understands the four core feelings (happy, sad, mad, scared)	1	2	3	4	5
Is able to verbally express feelings accurately	1	2	3	4	5

Uses creative methods to express feelings	1	2	3	4	5
Recognizes non-verbal expressions of Feelings from others	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Is able to share feelings with others	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Honest and open with personal issues	1	2	3	4	5
Boundaries					
✓ Uses appropriate body boundaries	1	2	3	4	5
Keeps hands and feet to self	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Respects others' personal space	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Respects others' property	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Respects others' privacy	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Uses humor appropriately	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Able to keep confidences of others	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Keeps bodily functions private (coughing, sneezing, burping, scratching, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Empathy					
✓ Recognizes non-verbal cues when people are in need of support	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Listens when peers are talking	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Shows interest in what peers have to say	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Asks appropriate questions to peers	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Shows compassion toward others	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Gives support and/or is helpful to people	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Is sensitive to others' personal issues	1	2	3	4	5
Manipulation					
✓ Difficulty keeping friends due to negative behavior	1	2	3	4	5
✓ Uses negative behavior to get his/her way or to avoid consequences	1	2	3	4	5
Uses these negative behaviors:					
Arguing	1	2	3	4	5
Crying	1	2	3	4	5
Whining	1	2	3	4	5
Pouting	1	2	3	4	5
Lying	1	2	3	4	5
Bragging	1	2	3	4	5
Tantrums	1	2	3	4	5
Stalling	1	2	3	4	5
Bossing/Demanding	1	2	3	4	5
Negotiation	1	2	3	4	5
Promising	1	2	3	4	5
Charming	1	2	3	4	5
Threatening	1	2	3	4	5

	Playing Helpless	1	2	3	4	5
	Sneakiness	1	2	3	4	5
	Exaggerating	1	2	3	4	5
	Begging	1	2	3	4	5
	Putting down self	1	2	3	4	5
	Ignoring	1	2	3	4	5
	Excuses	1	2	3	4	5
	Ignoring	1	2	3	4	5
	Excluding	1	2	3	4	5
	Moodiness	1	2	3	4	5
	Mood Management					
✓	Expresses feelings appropriately	1	2	3	4	5
	Able to identify a wide range of feelings	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Able to manage strong moods	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Ability to control temper	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Often displays a negative or "down" mood	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Often displays "mood swings" or changes moods for no apparent reason	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Uses strategies to prevent negative moods from escalating	1	2	3	4	5
	Understands the effect their negative mood has on others	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Able to identify triggers that cause negative feelings	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Avoids triggers or situations that cause negative feelings	1	2	3	4	5
	Self-Regulation					
	Understands the connection between feelings and negative behavior	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Apologizes when caught breaking a rule	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Understands the connection between negative thinking and neg. behavior	1	2	3	4	5
	Has ability to change negative thoughts	1	2	3	4	5
	Follows through on tasks in a timely manner	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Expresses opinions appropriately	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Waits until appropriate time to talk	1	2	3	4	5
	Thinks about consequences before acting on impulses	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Waits his/her turn quietly	1	2	3	4	5
	Willingly takes turns	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Gives appropriate feedback to peers	1	2	3	4	5
✓	Accepts constructive criticism	1	2	3	4	5