

Extreme Kids & Crew 2020 VIRTUAL SUMMER CAMP



Analysis & Report by
SEED Impact



extreme kids
& crew



A SPACE TO BE

BACKGROUND

Founded in 2010, the Extreme Kids & Crew model of providing judgment-free arts and play-based programming for children with disabilities and their families caught on quickly. To meet the growing demand for New York City families living with high rates of income inequality, Extreme Kids tripled its capacity over the past ten years. Extreme Kids expanded into three public schools that receive Title 1 funding, providing an after-school program and a summer camp, weekend programming for the whole family, parent support groups and seminars, and monthly outings to New York City's many cultural centers.

In March 2020, due to COVID-19, the dynamic staff of Extreme Kids faced the extreme challenge of pivoting away from in-person offerings to fully remote programming.

This report presents findings of EXTREME KIDS & CREW VIRTUAL SUMMER CAMP, the organization's first foray into asynchronous and synchronous distance learning, creating and playing.

Informed by this experience, Extreme Kids & Crew is even more prepared to serve children with disabilities during the academic year, after-school, on weekends, and during the summer months.

Let's look at how this EXTRAORDINARILY CHALLENGING VIRTUAL PROGRAM took shape:



“ I'm actually surprised how engaged our son was. He waited patiently for the art class to begin and looked carefully at what was needed for him to do. He especially loved the music class and getting to use his coloring materials in art class. The feathers and googly eyes were a big hit with him. Thank you. ”

~Parent

VIRTUAL SUMMER CAMP OVERVIEW

The camp ran July 6 - August 14, 2020.

A one-time \$25 administrative fee was requested, but not required.

Twenty-seven children, ages 5 to 15, engaged in guided arts and play activities from home.

The menu of activities included a daily, morning Circle Time; classes in music, art and theater; a Friday showcase to share a favorite challenge from the week; small group play sessions; and independent themed projects for children needing extra engagement through hands-on learning. Each child received a box of art, school and sensory supplies in order to fully participate in all camp activities. Families were encouraged to enroll their children based on their needs and schedules, as well as children's interests and abilities.

HOW WE MEASURE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

To assess virtual summer camp outcomes, and capture both quantity and quality of child performance, Extreme Kids staff worked closely with SEED Impact. Three, five-stage, developmental Competency Ladders™ were defined to assess and accelerate growth in SEL, a critical dimension of youth development.

An online survey tool was used to assess SEL gains from start to end of camp. In addition to providing numerical ratings, two senior staff shared narrative impressions of how each child and family responded to the camp experience.

1 BEING



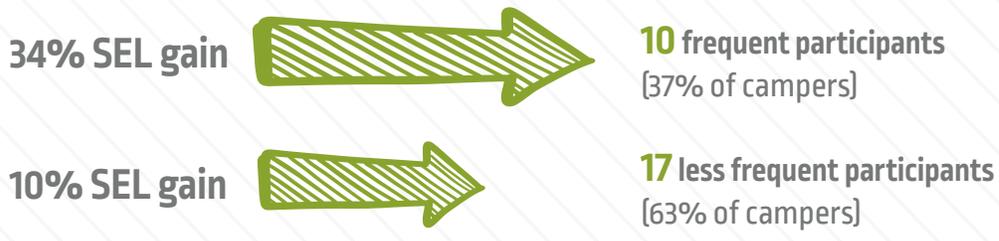
2 DOING



3 RELATING



SIGNIFICANT 6-WEEK GROWTH FOR ALL 27 CHILDREN: 19% SEL GAINS!



THESE STRONG RESULTS AFFIRM:

- 1] The social-emotional skills delivered virtually by Extreme Kids & Crew are taking root in all participants, and
- 2] Social-emotional competencies increase with engagement.

Youth with stronger SEL are more likely to achieve:

*ACADEMIC AND CAREER SUCCESS,
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS,
BETTER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, AND
MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY.*

SEL core competencies tend to be retained and carry over to new tasks and life challenges!

¹ Council of Distinguished Scientists National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development. The Aspen Institute, September 2017.

EXAMPLES: THE EXPERIENCE OF TWO FREQUENT PARTICIPANTS

The following two stories (using fictitious names) are of children who participated frequently throughout the six-week camp. Each child's story casts light on the ways in which children and families adapted to the virtual modality.

MEET JOANNE BEFORE

Joanne is a middle child in a family with four disabled kids. This makes it challenging to have the opportunity to be herself on her own terms.

At the beginning of summer, Joanne had a hard time transitioning into the structure of camp and navigating device usage with her siblings.

Joanne's mother expressed challenges with Joanne becoming frustrated and adversarial when her schedule became unpredictable.

For Joanne's caregivers, the ability to set up each child with engaging and appropriate activities provided them with needed structure and respite to manage all four kids through the socially distant summer.

Staff were in consistent communication with Joanne's mom, supporting her to troubleshoot behavior challenges in their home.



JOANNE AFTER

Joanne came alive in response to lessons on digital media. By end of summer, she was able to find a rhythm and take ownership of her schedule. For example, she advocated for her needs by asking to use her mom's cell phone for her vlog. She also advocated to share after Circle Time, when she would not have to navigate distractions in the background related to her siblings' activities.

Joanne showed a willingness to dive into all thematic activities. She asked good questions and demonstrated what active participation looks like in a virtual classroom.

She showed tremendous interest and successfully incorporated learnings in her final project.

“ Our expectations were more than met! Our daughter found the themes interesting and engaging. The Crew were amazing: so gentle, kind, patient and they knew a lot about the subjects. ”

~Parent

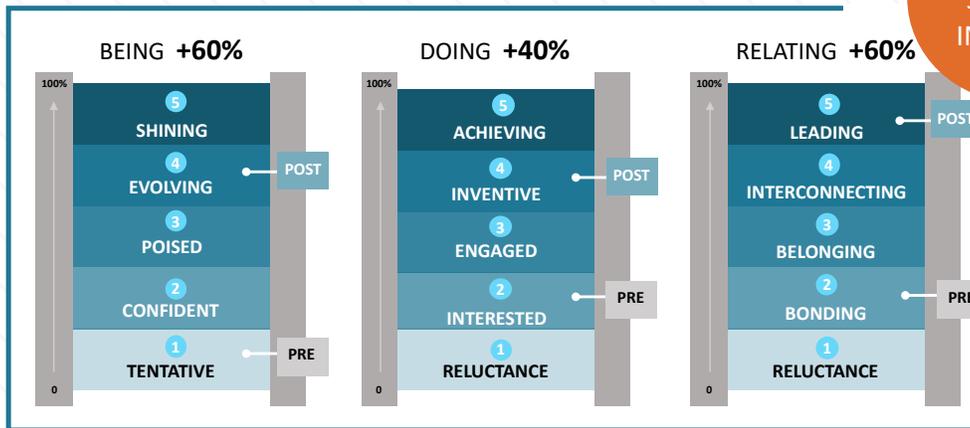
“ Our daughter really looked forward to science group. This experience gave her great opportunities to practice social skills. ”

~Parent

The Extreme Kids virtual experience gave Joanne a voice and a space where she was able to be separate from her three siblings. She responded to the weekly challenges with gusto and was a leader in her Roblox social group, creating cohesion and connection among all the participants.

By the end of camp, Joanne really set the tone in her social group: She asked her friends questions about themselves, joked with them, and built them up with words of affirmation. She was supportive of another child who expressed feeling shy about sharing. She gave genuine positive feedback that calmed the other child’s nerves.

Joanne:
53% SEL
INCREASE



“ It was perfect and a great experience for social distancing. ”

~Parent

Joanne was observed by staff as being tentative at the start of camp (BEING Stage 1) and advancing to evolving (BEING Stage 4) by the end of camp. She was interested (DOING Stage 2) at the start of camp and Inventive (DOING Stage 4) by the end. She was bonding (RELATING Stage 2) at the start of camp and leading (RELATING Stage 5) at the end.



MEET TONY BEFORE

Tony participated along with his younger sister who is neurotypical. In the beginning of camp, Tony would often walk away from the screen, when he could not direct or have control over the activities, or when things did not go his way. He required coaxing from his mother to be brought back to the program. He was disinterested in the activities and would come in and out of the screen and be easily distracted by the things that were happening in his house.



The camp provided a structure and schedule for the family, while parents were working from home. The high interest curriculum and programming inspired play and interactions between parents and kids beyond sessions. Tony's family joined together in weekly themed activities, engaged in challenges, and explored other projects related to the weekly themes. It was important for Tony to see that his teachers were there to help him to find a solution along with his peers.

“ Our son enjoyed the program. He just needed time to adjust to all the new things happening. ”

~Parent

Tony exceeded his parents' expectations in managing his frustration and communicating his needs and interests. Tony asked other campers what they created, and he was able to work on productive interactions in social groups. Camp provided a safe structure for Tony and his sister to interact without competing with one another.

TONY AFTER

Over the course of the summer, Tony's comfort level steadily grew with teachers and peers. He built solid relationships with a couple of peers particularly through facilitated smaller social groups. He became increasingly engaged in the material, and as his relationships with teachers and peers grew, he pushed himself to stay regulated through emotional upsets and find solutions.

Tony and another child in his social group invented a game in which each chose roles. They realized that by listening to each other's ideas and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness to each other's feelings, they could both engage and find it satisfying.

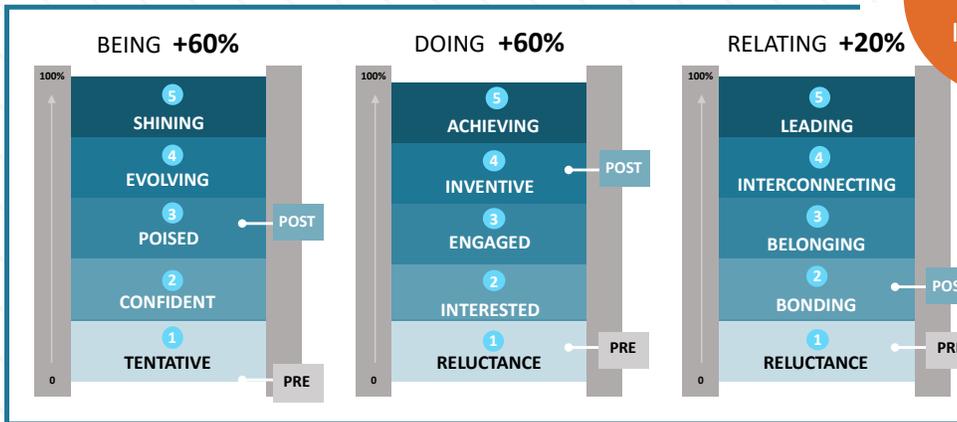
For weekly challenges, Tony came up with creative ways to showcase projects that were genuine expressions of his interests. For example, during transportation week, Tony created a vehicle that was a teleporter, inspired by Dr. Who. He was so excited to share this in the Friday Showcase.

Tony was observed by staff as being distracted at the start of camp (BEING Stage 0) and advancing to poised (BEING Stage 3) by the end of camp. He exhibited reluctance to participate (DOING Stage 1) at the start of camp and leaped to Inventive (DOING Stage 4) by the end. He was also reluctant to engage online with others (RELATING Stage 1) at the start of camp, however he progressed to belonging with the group (RELATING Stage 2) by the end of camp.

“ Our son’s behavior has been amazing [knock on wood]. I thought it would be too much with his school classes and his camp sessions, but he thrived...”

~Parent

Tony:
47% SEL
INCREASE



“ My daughter gained confidence in sharing during sessions. She was more knowledgeable about what she was learning and more willing to share with others what she’s learned.”

~Parent

“ I learned so much more about our son over the summer, partly because of camp, and I’m so grateful for that. It has been so valuable to get to know my son better, and see how much he has grown. His attention span has gotten better and he just seems like a happy kid again.”

~Parent



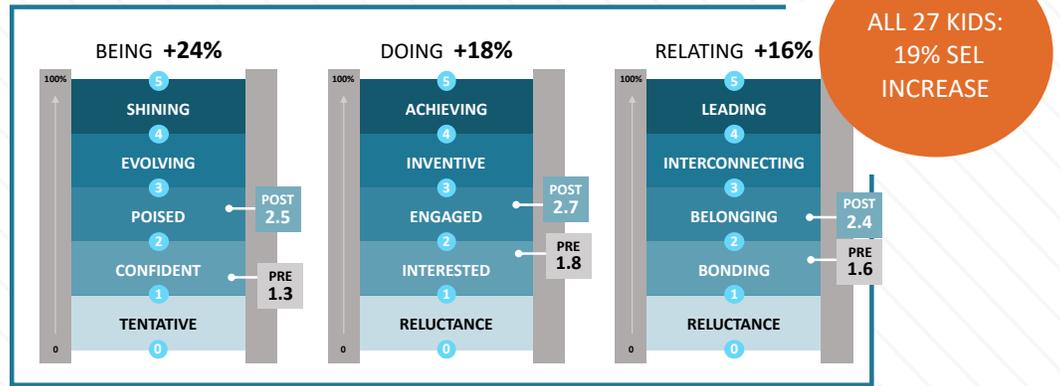
OVERALL GROWTH IN SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For all 27 campers, there was an average gain of 19 percent in SEL development.

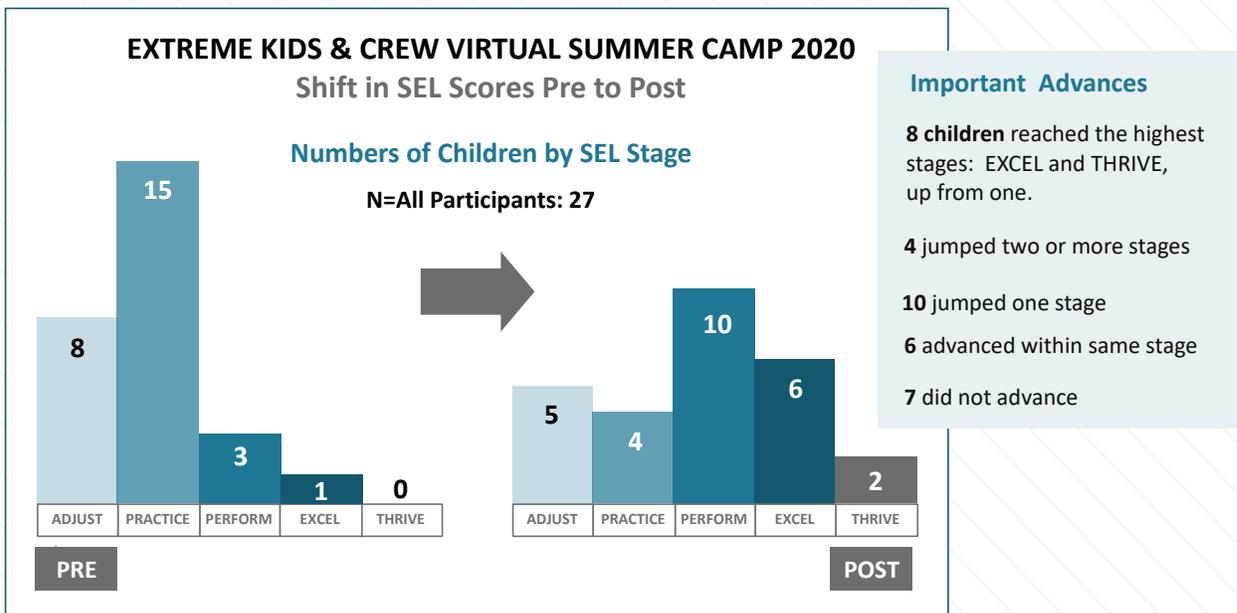
As shown below, the greatest increase was in BEING: The children were observed to begin camp lower in BEING than the other two domains, reflecting an unfamiliarity and awkwardness in presenting themselves via the Internet. By end of camp, they were at relatively the same stage, on average, in all three domains.

“ I liked the Roblox group most of all, but we had fun making cool art too! ”

~Camper, Age 7



There was a marked shift in distribution from start to end of summer camp, in particular a shift from Practice to Perform.



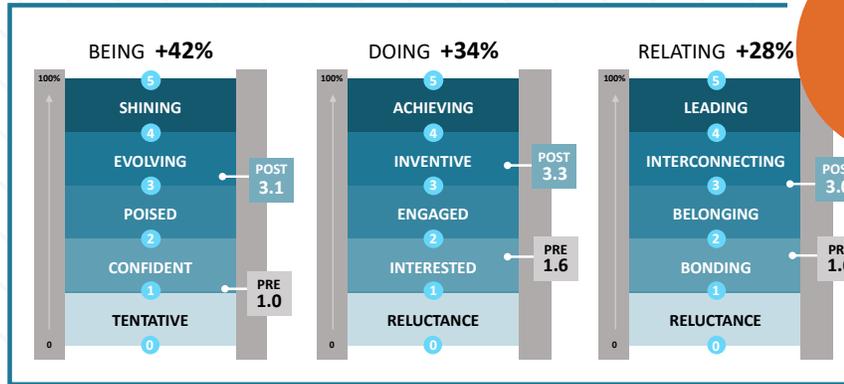
“ My favorite part of summer camp was being able to make new friends even from home and do fun arts and crafts activities with other kids like me. ”

~ Camper, Age 14

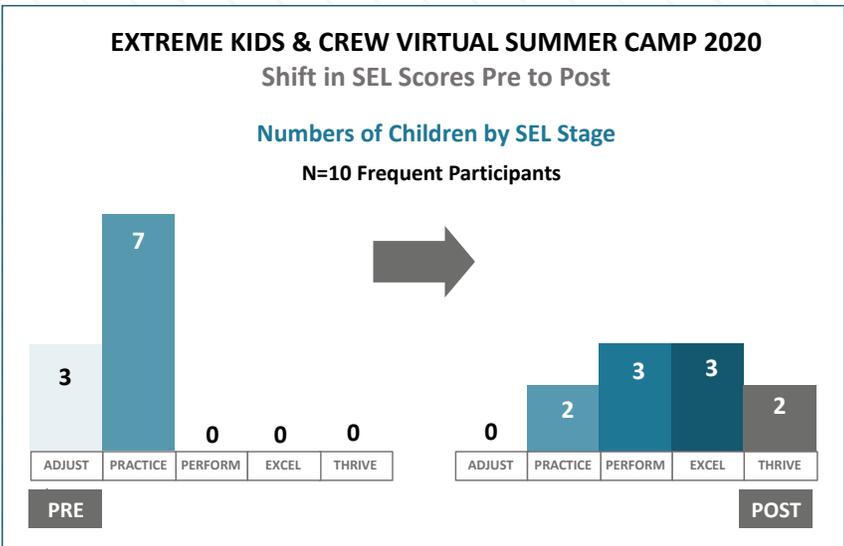
SEL GROWTH OF FREQUENT PARTICIPANTS

The 10 kids attending regularly all six weeks achieved an average gain of 34 percent in SEL development.

The children were observed to begin camp with average scores slightly lower than those of the other campers. However, through continual exposure to the program, their advances in SEL were noticeably higher by the end of camp.



10 KIDS FREQUENT: 34% SEL INCREASE



For the 10 frequent participants, there was a marked shift from Practice to Excel.

Important Advances

- 5 children reached the highest stages: EXCEL and THRIVE, up from none.
- 4 jumped two or more stages
- 5 jumped one stage
- 1 advanced within same stage

REFLECTIONS FROM SEED IMPACT: Since 2010, the life-changing impact of Extreme Kids & Crew has been administered through human interaction in a welcoming space. Everyone has had to adjust, psychologically and behaviorally to the virtual modality; however, analyses, stories and testimonials provided point to the successes of these adjustments. Furthermore, this demonstrates the skill and receptivity of The Crew, who have been able to offer a combination of structured and spontaneous virtual opportunities in which both children and their families thrive.



“ I enjoy singing the hello and goodbye song and being part of the morning circle. I really, really like making cool stuff during art and playing with my friends at Roblox. ”

-Camper, Age 8