

# EVALUATION FINAL REPORT

## Thinc Camp 2017

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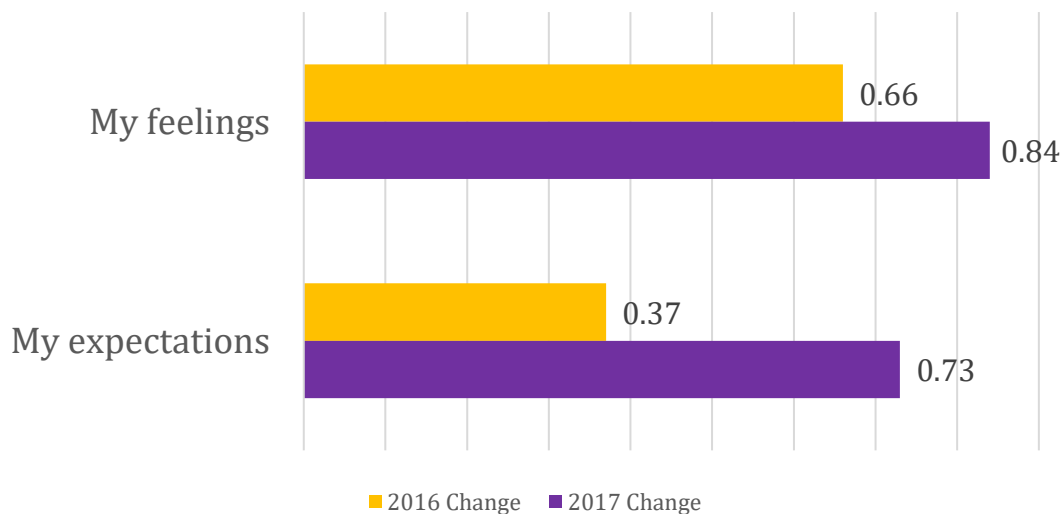
## INTRODUCTION

During late July 2017, 43 students from Philadelphia, Harrisburg, a few more communities assembled at a Pennsylvania college campus, some for their first experience of Thinc Camp, and others who were returning, including four junior counselors. One of the final action items for these students was to sit down for a post-Thinc camp survey of student attitudes including a retrospective line of questioning that asked the students to consider change during the weeklong immersion. **Nearly all, 36 of the 37, students present on the final day of camp responded to the post-camp questionnaire.**

## STUDENT CAMPER INDEX RATINGS

The student survey was organized to allow for general index scores in two areas: “My feelings” and “My expectations.” The “My Feelings” index investigated student perceptions of themselves as learners, while the “My Expectations” index focused on student perceptions of their academic and professional future. Following data aggregation we compared the mean student response for change on an item on each of the scales. As shown in Figure 1, student camper ratings for both “My Feelings” and “My Expectations” increased following participation in the Thinc camp and its activities. Now a consistent finding across many years, growth was largest in the "my feelings" section. **Growth was also stronger in 2017 than in 2016.**

*Figure 1. Mean per-item change reported by the average camper on each index*



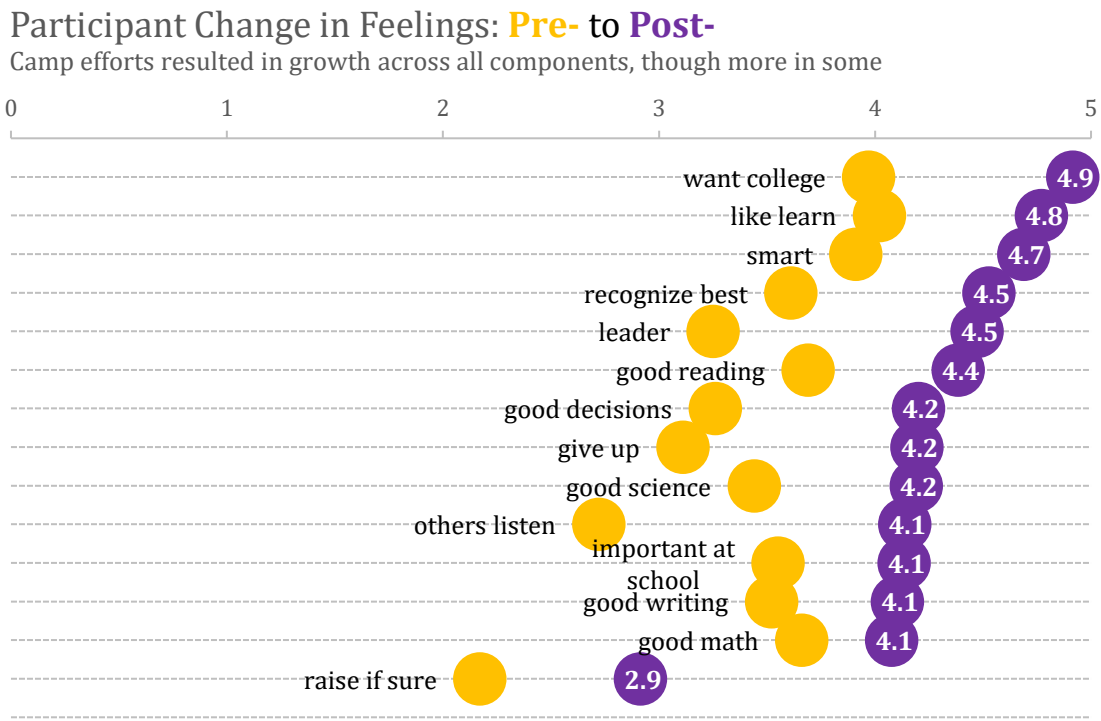
## CAMPER RESPONSES: MY FEELINGS

The “My feelings” section was comprised of 14 statements for which a camper provided a numeric response indicating their agreement. A higher number indicated more agreement. As shown in Figure 2, survey participants reported an immediate positive change as a result of the Think camp for all statements. At this year's camp, "I see myself as a leader", "I give up when school work is difficult" (reverse coded), and "Others listen to my ideas" were the three areas that saw the most growth.

In 2016, "Others listen to my ideas", and "I see myself as a leader", were also in the top-3 as far as growth is concerned. And, *as was the case in 2016, campers rated "Others listen" as among the lowest coming into the camp.* As a result, it could again be argued that the *camp made a differential impact for these participants in that area.* Other areas that students rated themselves lower in entering camp included statements about being "good at writing" or "good at reading."

Unfortunately, and for the second year in a row, "I am important at my school", and "I am good at math" showed relatively smaller percentages of growth according to campers. "I am good at writing" also ranked in the bottom three statements as far as growth is concerned.

Figure 2. Camper reported change in agreement for “My Feelings” statements



## CAMPER RESPONSES: MY EXPECTATIONS

The "My expectations" section consisted of 11 statements for which a camper rated their level of agreement. As shown in Figure 3, the survey participants reported positive growth for each of the statements, though in slightly less magnitude than reported for the "My feelings" section.

The reported growth was highest for the following statements of "I expect": "to have my friends and peers ask me for help in class", "to attend the college that I want" and "that I will be able to choose between a number of different jobs someday." Notably, the statement that campers reported entering Thinc with the least agreement to, ended up being one of outstanding growth. This was for the statement, "that I can help friends and peers finish high school." **This was the second consecutive year that there was above average growth for this statement**, after campers entered Thinc with low expectations in this area.

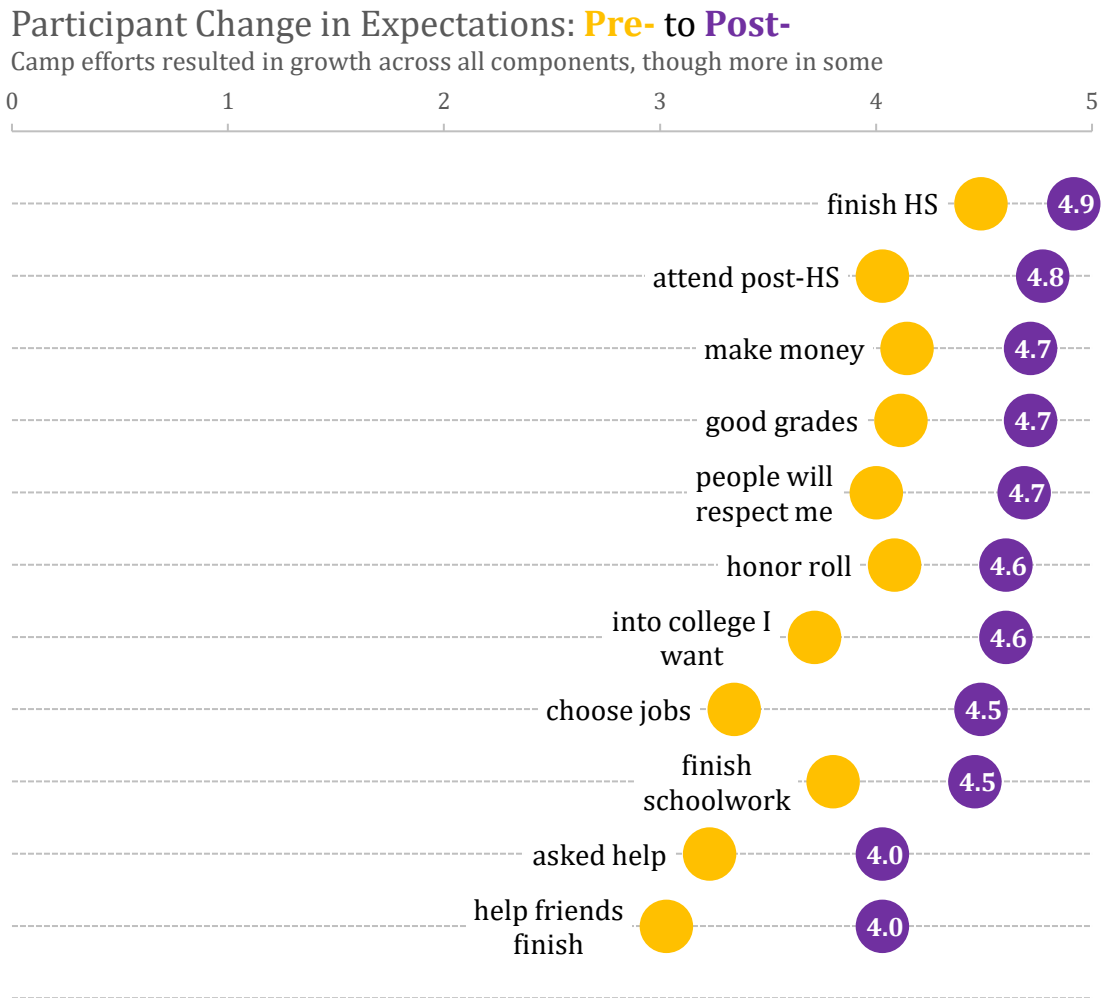
Following the 2016 camp, the strongest reported growth was for the statements of "I expect": "that people will respect me for the job I do", "to attend school after I finish high school" and "get good grades in all my classes." **It is interesting how positive change for attending college has shifted to the even more positive statement of having a choice of where one attends college.**

We also calculated z-scores for each of the scales so that we could judge the specific statements for which campers made the most progress. A z-score considers both the mean, and the range of responses for each scale and then rescores the average for each item. The top two growth statements across both scales as a result of the 2017 camp were: "Others listen to my ideas," and "I expect that I will be able to choose between a number of different jobs someday."

The statement about making enough money to buy my own car someday showed no positive gains. It is possible that car ownership, especially among urban youth, is a waning aspiration.

Showing less growth were "I expect": "to make enough money to buy a car," and "I expect to finish high school." Campers began Thinc with high expectations in each area. **However, growth was also lower for "I expect to make the honor roll"** which was one of the median statements for pre-camp expectations.

Figure 3. Camper reported change in agreement for “My Expectations” statements



## INDEX SCORE SUB GROUP ANALYSES

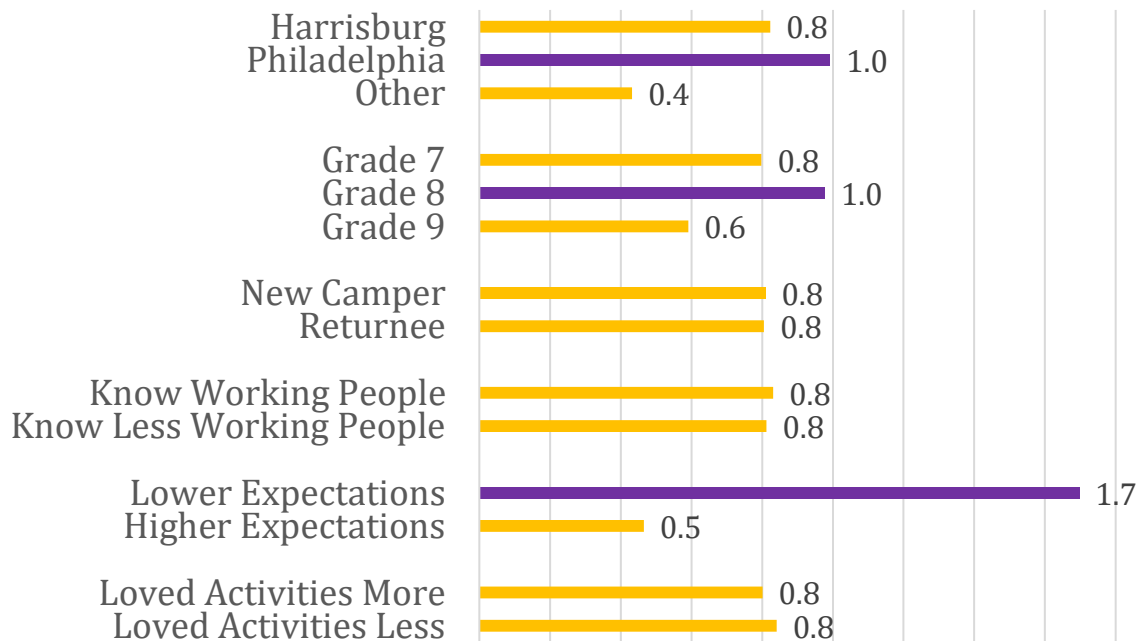
Students were ranked into two groups of nearly identical size by their index scores on the pre-Thinc survey. As shown in Figure 4, student campers that entered their Thinc camp experience with lower index scores on the “My expectations” section showed the greatest gains in post-camp “My Feelings” survey responses. This change was proven statistically significant in 2016. This is an established trend as it is also consistent with findings from 2013, 2014, and 2015. Put another way, the program disproportionately affects those that come in with lowest feelings and expectations about school and their future.

At the same time, there was no longer a difference in the reported positive change in agreement with "My feelings" statements for students who were attending the camp for the first time, as compared to those who were attending the camp as a returnee. In 2016, this had been statistically significant in favor of the new campers.

Though not significant, mean positive change scores that were slightly higher in magnitude were seen for students who were in grade 8, and students from Philadelphia.

On the other hand, **there did not appear to be much of a disproportional impact of camp activities based on variables like the "people I know" scale.** This scale can be used to disaggregate students into those who know more people actively employed in different industries. Also, for the first time, we placed students into two groups based on their stated love of the camp activities. However, we also saw virtually no difference in feelings change between these groups.

*Figure 4. Disaggregation of camper "My Feelings" change scores by key variables*



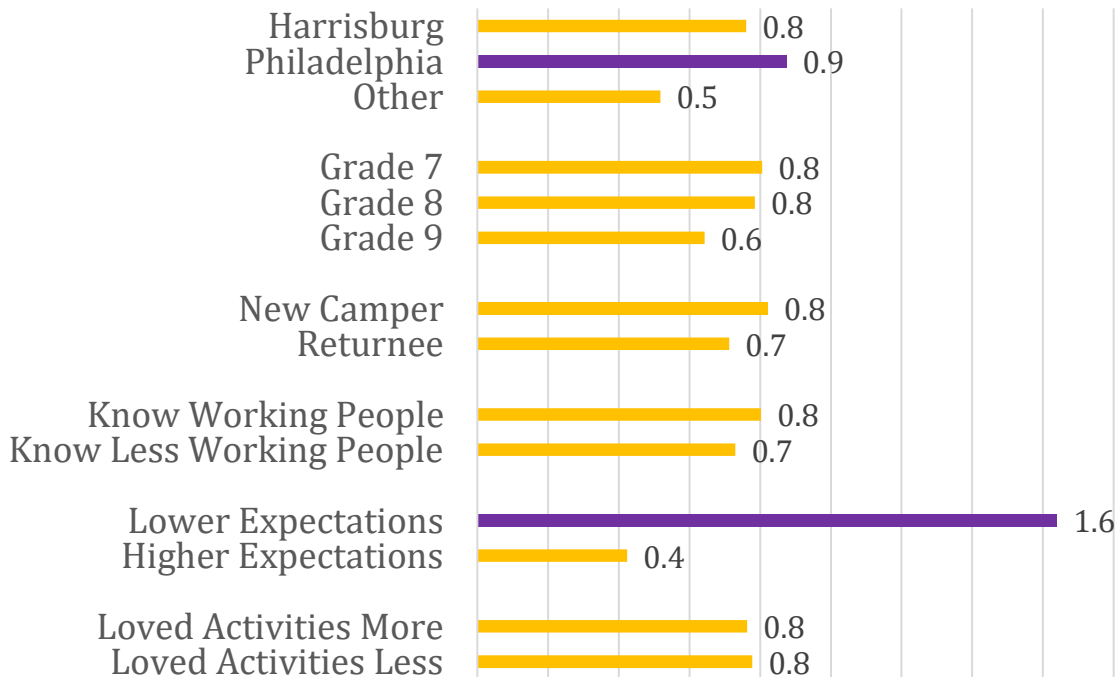
*\*The comparison of means by lower/higher pre- scores were significant beyond the 0.05 level.*

We conducted the same analysis for the "My expectations" scale and those results are shown in Figure 5. The major difference shown as compared to what was just presented for the "My feelings scale" consists of only a slight change in students in the reactions when disaggregated by age group. Specifically, the ninth-grade students reported less change on this particular scale.

Otherwise, findings are consistent with the discussion included above for the "My feelings scale," including higher change for those with lower index scores on the "My expectations" section and slightly greater for students from Philadelphia. Similarly there was no reported difference in positive change for:

- campers who were attending the camp for the first time, as compared to those who were attending the camp as a returnee,
- campers who know more people actively employed in different industries as compared to those who know less, and
- campers with more stated love of the camp activities, than those with less.

Figure 5. Disaggregation of camper "My Expectations" change scores by key variables



\*The comparison of means by lower/higher pre- scores were significant beyond the 0.05 level.



We added one final analysis using these variables for the first time in 2017. Specifically, we included these variables as conditions in a fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). An fsQCA promotes the utility of data collected by focusing on the "causes" of the effects that were seen. In this case we looked at both changes in expectations, as well as the expectation status of campers post-event.

The fsQCA methodology allows to embrace the complexity of the experience for each of the campers, and promotes gaining understanding from the full variation in camper experience, including those who are outliers, rather than attempting to regress each campers experience and outcomes to some kind of "average value."

At the same time, the fsQCA is effective in examining causation for a dataset collected to represent complex human behavior, especially among youth, because the following considerations must be attended to:

1. Equifinality: We expect that there will be more than one pathway for campers to positive outcomes
2. Conjunctuality: We expect that variable influence is in combination rather than isolation
3. Asymmetry: We do not expect that a simple absence of a variable(s) responsible for positive outcomes will lead to negative outcomes.

For more information about fsQCA, please see a blog posted by the author at [www.terralunacollaborative.com](http://www.terralunacollaborative.com). Below, we present our sufficient causal conditions for our two outcome of interest, and their negation (because we do not assume asymmetry). Our conditions (in QCA variables are termed conditions) were: School grade (G), beginning expectations (E), loved activities (L), and know working people (W). In the solutions presented below, a lower case letter means low membership in that set, or in other words, a degree of absence of that trait.

**g \* e \* l + w \* e \* L → Positive expectations change: high magnitude** (consistency 0.81; coverage 0.78)

**E \* l + w \* E + g \* E → Positive expectations change: low magnitude** (consistency 0.93; coverage 0.80)

**G \* W + G \* L → Post-camp expectations status: high** (consistency 0.94; coverage 0.61)

**g \* W + g \* L → Post-camp expectations status: low** (consistency 0.39; coverage 0.71)

Let us investigate these sufficient causal conditions in more detail. For the outcome of positive change in expectations of high magnitude we found that the combination of low grade, low expectations, and low love of activities OR the combination of low know working people score, low expectations, and a high love of activities were sufficient. There were three campers that were members of the first condition combination and two students in the second.

For the outcome of positive change in expectations of lower magnitude (the less desired outcome) we found that the combination of **high expectations and low love of activities** OR the combination of **low know working people score and high expectations** OR the combination of **low grade, and high expectations** were sufficient for the less desired outcome. There were 11 campers that were members of the first condition combination, 11 that were members of the second and 14 students in the third.

For the outcome of more positive post-camp expectation status we actually found one necessary condition. Necessary conditions are rare and can be considered as a superset of the outcome. In this case, that condition was high expectations pre-camp. In other words, though the condition is not the only that needs to be met, **high expectations are necessary in order to get to the desired outcome of post-camp expectations status**. In this case, this makes theoretical sense, as those entering camp with lower expectations have so much further to go than those who enter with higher expectations.

In general, our findings for this status outcome were less strong than those we found for the other outcomes (see the lower coverage score, meaning less students were covered by this solution). At any rate we found that the combination of **low grade and knowing more working people** OR **low grade and a high love of activities** were sufficient for a higher final status for expectations. There were 8 campers that were members of the first condition combination, and 9 students in the second.

We will not explore the findings for the fourth outcome, the lower end status for expectations in detail. Consistency and coverage scores for this solution are abysmal. As a result, given the data that we have collected, one must infer that **we still do not understand with certainty why students would end up at a lower place for their expectations following camp**, other than the expected fact that they came in with lower expectations to start with.

## STUDENT CAMPER ENJOYMENT RATINGS

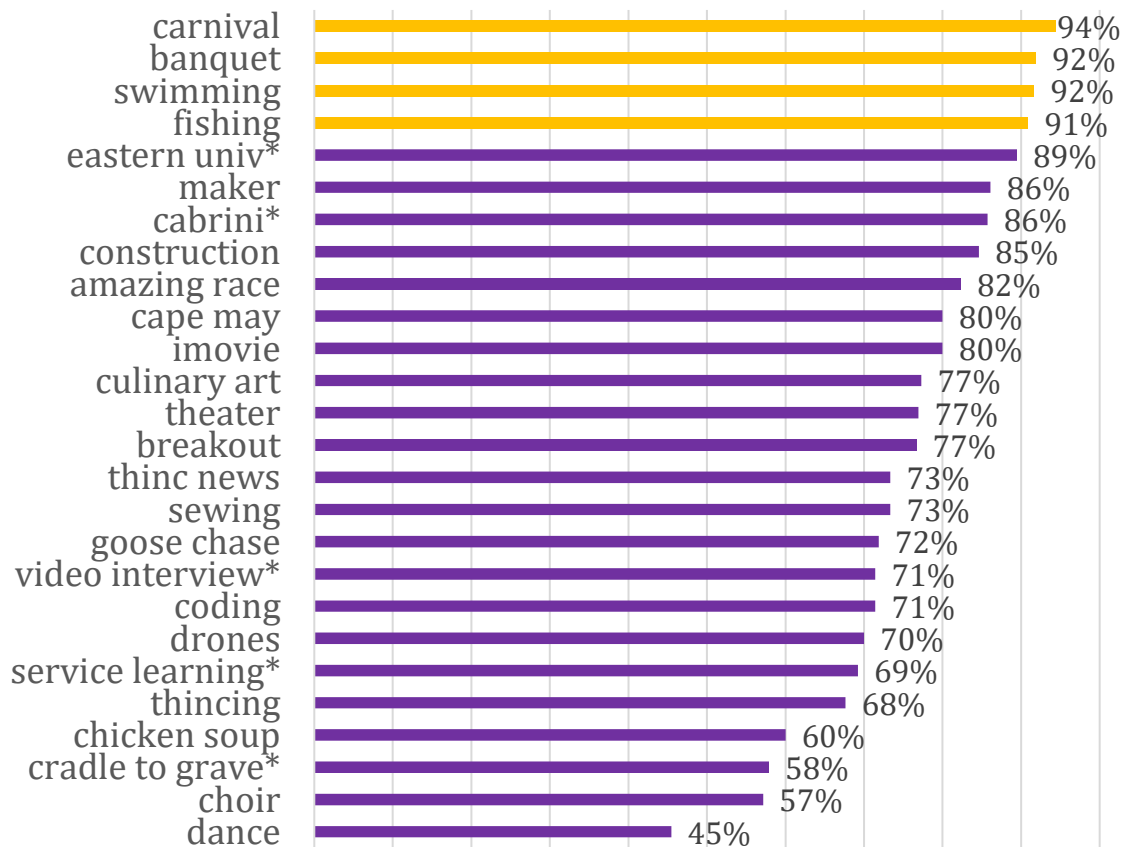
Student campers were asked to respond with their enjoyment levels for various camp activities on the post-camp survey. As many as all responding campers answered a prompt about each individual activity, however others were answered by just those that participated in that elective activity. As shown in Figure 6, among activities that all campers participated in, **"Swimming", "Carnival Night" and the "Banquet" were most popular. These three activities were the top three activities in 2016 as well.**

In fact, the "Banquet" activity has been among the most popularly connected to a statement of "I loved it" among all activities in 2015. And, of course, "Swimming," has

been among the most popular with students since 2013. Ratings were also favorable for the two university related activities, “Eastern University,” and “Cabrini,” in a way that was not as clear in past years. “Construction” was among the lowest rated activities in 2015 and has been climbing in rank ever since.

Alternatively, "Cradle to grave", "choir", and "dance" were less likely to have been "loved" by campers. However, about 50 percent of respondents still marked that they "loved" these activities.

Figure 6. Percent of camp participants that loved a number of different camp activities



## YEAR-TO-YEAR CHANGE IN SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Only those campers who were returnees responded to questions about their engagement during school during the 2016-2017 school year as compared to other years. The objective was to better understand whether the changes experienced at the 2016 Thinc Camp were lasting throughout the school year. For each of the prompts, a number of students responded that the statement provided was either "more" true or "much more" true during this past school year. In fact, 70 percent of these students responded that the statements "I actively participated in class this school year," "I was aware of good choices that students sometimes make," and "I kept my parents well-informed about my academic progress," were at least "more" true in 2016-2017 than in past school years. The same can be said for the other statements shown in Figure 7.

In an attempt to put these findings into context, we compared them to the findings from the 2016 Camp cohort. Responses in 2017 were nearly identical to those in 2016, differing by an average of just two percentage points across all prompts. The biggest change across years was a 33 percentage point drop in agreement that "I read outside of school hours just for fun." It is possible that students are reading less because some of them are getting older and likely have less free time than in past years. More campers reported keeping parents well informed (12 percentage point increase), the statement that is seeing the greatest acceleration of positive change.

We do note that it is likely that as students age and mature that they might say some of these statements are more true in the absence of any intervention.

Figure 7. Percent of returning participants that reported particular school engagement-related statements were at least “more” true in 2015-2016

