

Results from 2008 Alkulana Big Girls & Boys Sessions Surveys

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Introduction

This is the fourth consecutive year we have asked for feedback from our older campers. Our goal is to provide an excellent camp experience through which each of our campers feels safe, is able to try new things, and feels loved. We have a saying at camp: “Keep the MAIN THING the Main thing.” At Alkulana, the MAIN THING is: God loves you, no matter what. For many of our campers, this is a new concept. We know that kids tend to learn by doing, so everything we do at Alkulana is geared toward this MAIN THING.

Whom did we survey?

All campers during the 12-day sessions for girls (June 30 – July 11) and boys (July 28 – August 8) aged 12-15 years. The surveys were administered on the 11th day of camp during rest time in the cabins (siesta) and were completely voluntary.

Content

The questions were based on similar questions administered during a comprehensive research study conducted by the American Camp Association (ACA) and published in 2005. That study encompassed 80 ACA camps nationwide, and included more than 5000 children and their families.ⁱ

2008 Older Camper Population (Two sessions)

Girls	34
Boys	37
Total	71

No-shows

There were a surprising number of children who registered for camp, turned in all of their paperwork, but did not attend Alkulana.

Big Girls: 9

Big Boys: 10

One of the major reasons for these high numbers was that several of the children wound up in summer school—something they and their parents had not anticipated when they registered for Alkulana in the fall. The Camp Alkulana Support Team may take up the issue of how to address this prior to the 2009 camp season, since we want as many children as possible to experience Alkulana.

Age of 2008 older-session campers

	Girls	Boys	Total
12	17	17	34
13	11	13	24
14	5	5	10
15	2	1	3

Returning campers

One of Alkulana's major strengths is that campers often return year after year, building upon their relationships with adults and other campers and increasing their knowledge of God and that God loves them. Once a young person comes to Alkulana, that child has a space reserved for them for the following summer, provided that they have not "aged out" of our program. If that child does not return their registration form or contact us by a certain date, their space is given to a new camper.

Number of Years at Camp

	Girls	Boys	Total
1	17	7	24
2	2	9	11
3	8	9	17
4	7	4	11
5	0	5	5
6 or more	0	3	3

- 66% of older campers attended camp at least one summer prior to 2008
 - Half of the campers have attended Alkulana three or more summers
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Results from written questions

The survey administered was simple and comprised of six questions. I have grouped similar responses together, and ranked them in order of frequency. For unique responses, I have quoted the child. Keep in mind that most campers wrote several answers for each question. I have commented on some of the responses.

1. *What do you like best about camp?*

- Everything (16)
- High adventure (13)ⁱⁱ
- Making friends (6)
- Staff (6)
- Have fun (6)
- Swimming hole (4)ⁱⁱⁱ

- Food (4)
- Games (4)
- Capture-the-flag (3)^{iv}
- Free time (3)
- Going to the swimming pool (2)^v
- Pow-Wow (2)^{vi}
- Campfire (2)
- Bubbling Springs (2)^{vii}
- Interest groups (2)^{viii}
- Adventure groups (2)^{ix}
- “Everything is so wonderful and all the counselors are glorious.”
- Cabins
- Morning worship
- Being able to be yourself
- Siesta^x
- Caving
- Big Lodge^{xi}
- Love
- Feels like family
- Fishing
- Learn about God
- Evening programs
- The people
- Active all the time
- Going to the river^{xii}

2. *If you’ve been to Alkulana before, why did you come back this year?*

- Fun (17)
- “I love it.” (11)
- Specific staff (3)
- Meet new people (4)
- To get away from my life and family (2)
- High Adventure (2)
- “To see everyone’s smiling faces.”
- Become a CIT [Counselor-in-Training]^{xiii}
- “I came back because last year I left early and I wanted to come back when I got home.”
- See old friends
- “To bring more of God’s love into my life.”
- “The highlight of my year.”
- “So I can prove to myself that I can do better”
- My family has been coming here for a long time
- See what the older session was like

- “I came back so that I could have something to do instead of sitting and watching TV all day.”

3. *If you were explaining camp to friends, what would you say you learned here?*

- Learned about God/Jesus/Our relationship with God (34)
- Have fun (10)
- How to be caring/kind to others (8)
- Learned about the Bible (7)
- The environment (5)
- Learned how to conquer my fears (3)
- Nothing (3)
- “Why I’m here on Earth.” (2)
- How to swim (2)
- Counselors really care (2)
- The best camp I’ve ever been to (2)
- Teamwork (2)
- How to make friends (2)
- Songs (2)
- How to forgive
- Don’t judge others
- Live without electronics
- “Adventurous stuff.”
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Cooperation
- “How to trust in God. He changed my life.”
- Plants you can eat
- Rappelling
- Caving
- How to fish
- “How to talk right.”
- How to set up a tent

4. *Can you think of things you have learned at Alkulana that could help you at home or school in the coming year?*

- Be kind/nice (9)
- No (7)
- Learn how to make friends and be a friend. (4)
- Love (4)
- Forgive (3)
- Learn respect (3)
- Bible verses/Bible reading (3)

- Responsibility (3)
- Using Jewel weed to get rid of poison ivy (3)
- Ephesians 4: 32 (3)
- Patience (3)
- Listen (2)
- “When you have a dark [time] in your life, God is there.” (2)
- Pray/quiet time (2)
- Keep promises (2)
- Working with others (2)
- Practice self-control (2)
- To do what I am told.
- Be nicer to my brother
- Do your best
- How to swim
- Try new things
- Overcome fears
- Do not let go of a moving swing
- Communicating with others
- Do the right thing
- Follow the hiking path
- Mathew 5: 43 – 48
- The world's way is not God's way
- How to set up a tent
- Help others
- Be happy with what you have

5. *Do you feel differently about yourself at camp? Tell how.*

- No (15)
- I can be myself/be a kid (14)
- Free and away from all distractions/stress. (6)
- Feel more active (4)
- Feel safe (3)^{xiv}
- Nothing to worry about (2)
- I can open up and be myself/not as shy (2)
- More friends here (2)
- “Yes, here I have to take care of myself.”
- “I feel like my family and I will get along better.”
- “I believe I’m here for a reason and I’m loved by more than 1 person.”
- “I feel closer to God because most likely everyone here is a Christian, so acting like one won’t make me feel embarrassed.”
- “I feel loved a lot, because everybody around me shows nothing but love and kindness.”

- “I’m always mean to my babysitter and I learned that you shouldn’t do that.”
- “It taught me to do better.”
- “I am nicer and funnier.”
- “I had more fun here.”
- “I can do what I want when I am home.”
- “I get more into the Bible.”
- “I can hang out with some really cool kids and counselor.”
- “I feel more active and awake and at home I’m so bored. Camp Alkulana is my home.”

6. *Is there anything we could do to improve Camp Alkulana for you?*

- Don’t change anything/No (30)
- Make free time longer (5)^{xv}
- Longer trips to the pool/go to a different pool (4)
- Clean up Caps (3)^{xvi}
- Make swim hole warmer (3)^{xvii}
- Longer siesta (3)
- Get nicer counselors (3)^{xviii}
- More time in the showers (3)
- Build more cabins so more people can come and enjoy camp (2)
- Play more capture the flag (2)
- Softer mattresses (2)
- Let counselors spend more personal time with the campers
- Phone call home^{xix}
- Organize adventure groups better
- Add archery^{xx}
- Provide choices for meals
- Create hiking trails we can go hiking by ourselves during free time
- Add soccer nets
- More bathroom stalls^{xxi}
- Fewer rules^{xxii}
- “Put some real doors on the toilet stalls in the Flush.”
- Some of the kids
- New adventure groups
- “I like it the way it is, just some kids pick on me a lot.”
- Fix up cabins
- “Let us visit all-girls camps.”^{xxiii}

Interpretation of written results

The overwhelming response from our campers is that they have many positive experiences when they come to Alkulana. Many do not want major changes made at

camp, and most like a number of things we have available at Alkulana. What is also note-worthy is the high number of campers (34), who say that they learn about Jesus and God at camp.

These results of this survey express what many of us have known for sometime:
Alkulana works.

If you are interested in learning more about Camp Alkulana, a ministry of the Richmond Baptist Association please go to www.alkulana.org

Notes

ⁱ American Camp Association. Directions: Youth Development Outcomes of the Camp Experience. Copyright 2005 by the American Camping Association. www.ACACamps.org

ⁱⁱ High Adventures are overnight tent camping trips taken by small groups outside of camp toward the end of the session. Campers choose which adventure they go on, with choices including: going into an underwater cave, a long distance hike, a canoe trip, and a rock-climbing adventure.

ⁱⁱⁱ We do not have a swimming pool at Alkulana. A creek that flows through our camp is dammed at one part, forming a beautiful, 4-foot deep swimming hole.

^{iv} This is a camp-wide game we play with the boys.

^v While we do not have a swimming pool at camp, we sometimes visit a public pool several miles away, or visit Camp Accovac, a nearby camp which has a pool.

^{vi} Cabin meeting held each day before dinner to process the day and solve problems.

^{vii} Wilderness area near camp where you can see our creek form as it literally bubbles from the ground.

^{viii} Campers can choose something they want to work on (ex. Wood burning, wood working, crafts, team games, fishing, etc.).

^{ix} Campers are placed in these groups according to age and number of years at camp. These groups go on hikes, cave, rappel, cook out and use our low ropes course.

^x Rest hour—for campers and staff.

^{xi} An old livery stable we use as a gym.

^{xii} Alkulana is located near the Cowpasture and Maury rivers, which we use for swimming, snorkeling and canoeing.

^{xiii} CITs are campers who have displayed maturity and a desire to one day serve as counselors at Alkulana. They are invited back to camp for a special training session once they have aged-out of the regular program.

^{xiv} Many of our campers come from economically depressed areas of Richmond, and some of these neighborhoods are dangerous.

^{xv} Campers get two hours of free time per day, during which they can choose from a number of activities.

^{xvi} “Caps” is short for Capital—the most important place in camp. Caps are actually outhouses, which we still use. Alkulana campers did not have flush toilets until 1994.

^{xvii} Being a spring-fed stream, the water is cold. Many campers believe that the staff “stocks” the creek with ice to keep the bugs away.

^{xviii} These answers may be the result of personality conflicts between some campers and one or more staff, or could reflect frustration on the part of the camper for being held accountable by our staff. Having firm, consistent limits is something that many of our youth are not used to.

^{xix} We only allow phone calls for emergencies, as our goal in the summer is to provide our campers with a respite from home.

^{xx} We used to have archery at Alkulana. But given our limited space, that our property is now more crowded, and the impulsive behaviors of many of our campers, such an offering would be unsafe now.

^{xxi} We have four stalls for use of our campers. A long-range plan is in place to build additional bathroom facilities at camp.

^{xxii} Rules are new for some of our campers.

^{xxiii} This was written by one of our male campers. Sorry, not going to happen.