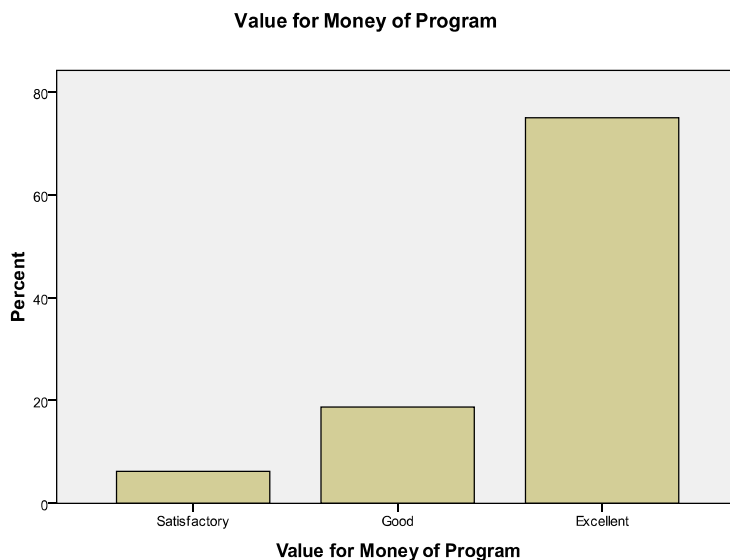


## Summer Program Statistics for “Fun in the Sun” Autism Society of Edmonton Area Program Rachel King

Annually, ASEA hosts a summer program for children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The goals of the program range to providing relief for families living with an individual with ASD, and to create memorable experiences for the child or youth themselves. We have collected data from the parents of participants (N = 16) in our summer program for 2009, asking them to rate several different dimensions of the program for us. The results have been overwhelmingly positive but we have been able to pinpoint certain areas on which we could improve. The following are a series of graphical representations of our feedback. There were five response possibilities: Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Poor, and Non-Applicable. If a particular category is not represented on the graph, this indicates that none of the parents selected it in their response. Answers which indicated Non-Applicable were not included in the calculations.

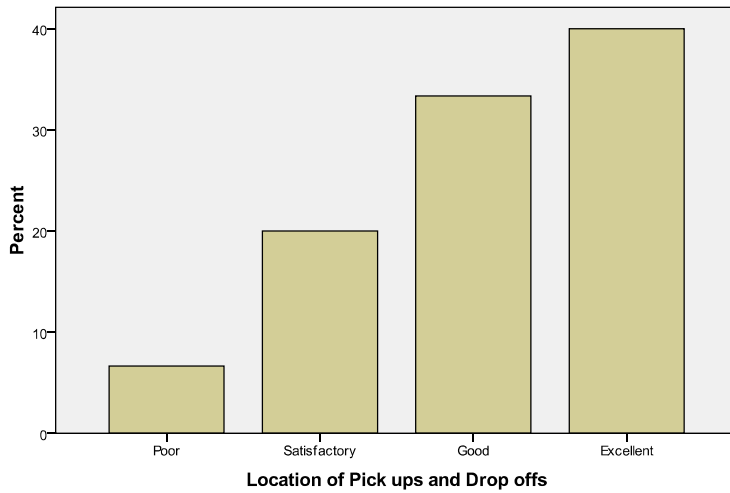


In comments, parents were impressed with the value they got from the program in relation to the cost of the program. It was indicated, though, that without FSCD funding, parents would not be able to afford the program.

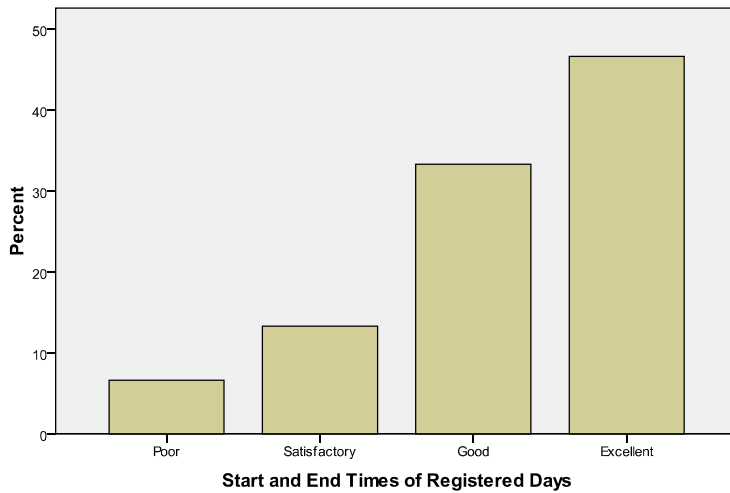
Very specifically, one parent commented that the payment set up with FSCD should be changed and that parents should be able to use their “camp” funding program as opposed to utilizing their respite care funding.

One comment mentioned that having a full accounting for where their child’s spending money was going would be ideal as they only received two receipts and many were missing.

**Location of Pick ups and Drop offs**

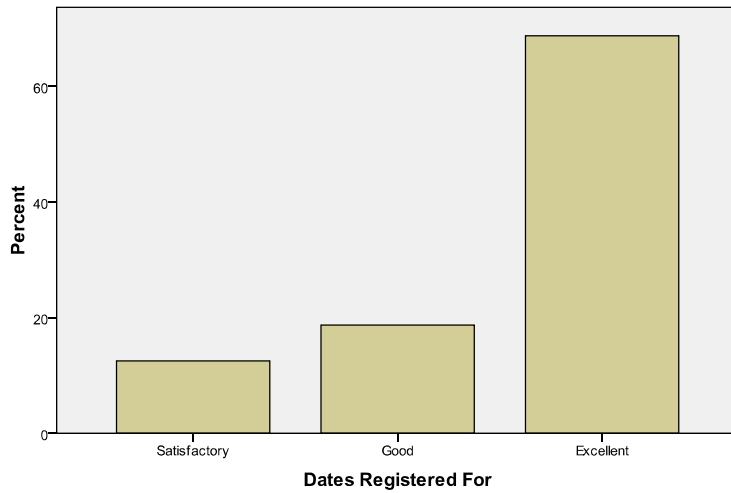


**Start and End Times of Registered Days**



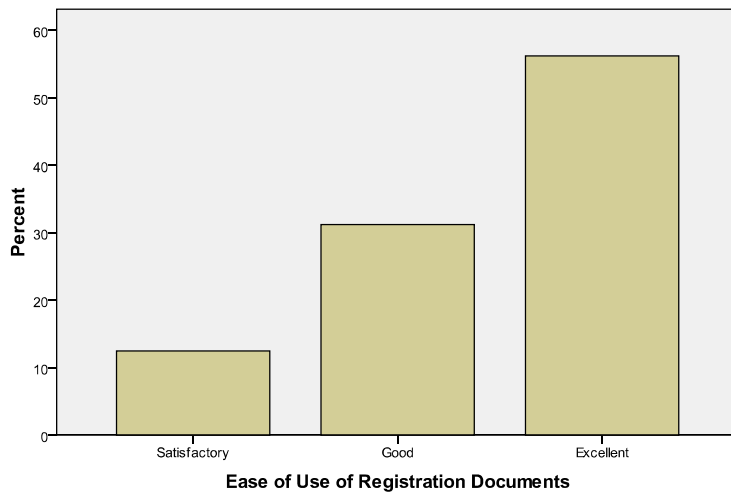
A recurring comment in the written section was that the location and times of pick up and drop offs could be better (in nearly every parent evaluation form either the time of pick up and drop offs or the location was mentioned as a challenge area). Particularly, one parent mentioned that a little more flexibility with pick up and drop off times would be appreciated and that half an hour grace period on either side could be helpful. The times also seemed to conflict with work hours for several of the parents.

**Dates Registered For**

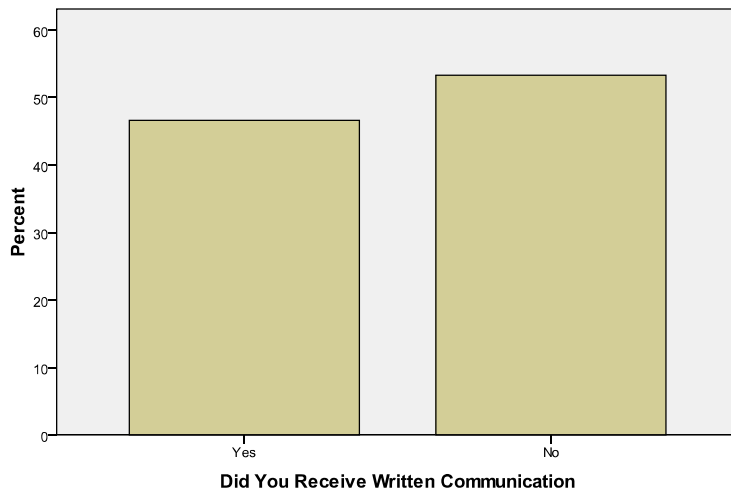


It was mentioned that although the dates are good, parents would love to have even more days open for their kids to attend. One parent mentioned that they were, "hoping for five days a week."

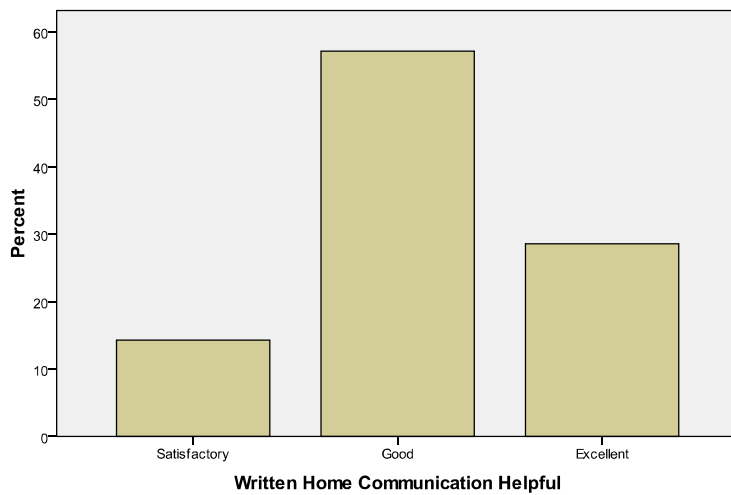
**Ease of Use of Registration Documents**



**Did You Receive Written Communication**



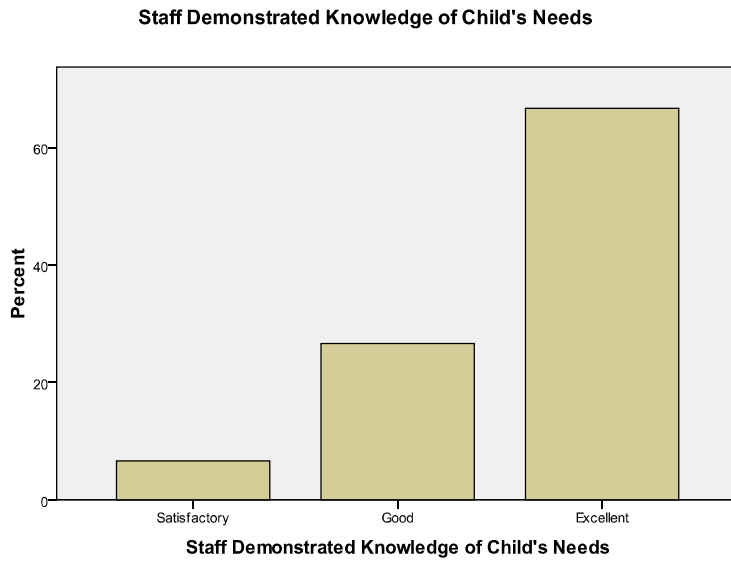
**Written Home Communication Helpful**



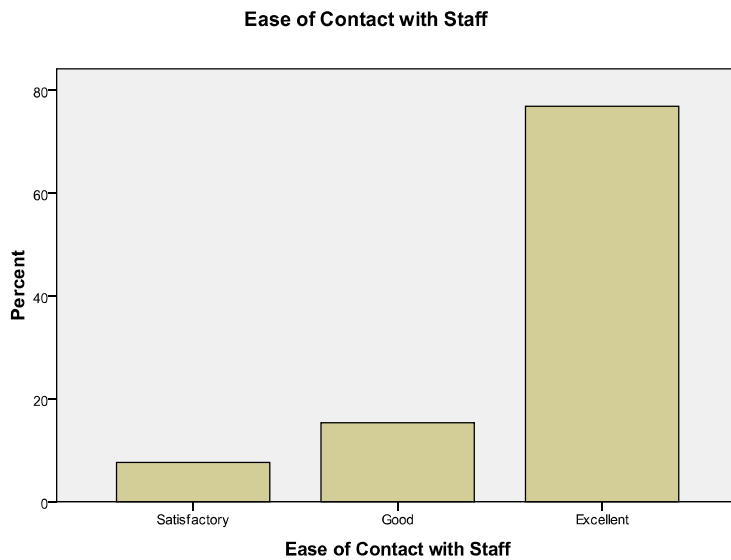
Over half of the parents do not report receiving written reports, or they report that the quantity and timing of the reports was less than they had expected. For example, a parent who rated the written home communication as "Satisfactory" said that, "the end of season report binder was FANTASTIC... but I really thought we were getting the reports at the end of the day, every day."

One parent who was receiving written home communication mentioned, "I liked the activity binder which let me know what he did that day as well as the pictures." And another parent referenced the "home package and pictures and information of how he did" as the best part of the summer program for them as a parent.

Pictures came up a few times in the written comments and it seems that providing visual reminders of the child's memories in the camps can be a very valuable service to parents and children.

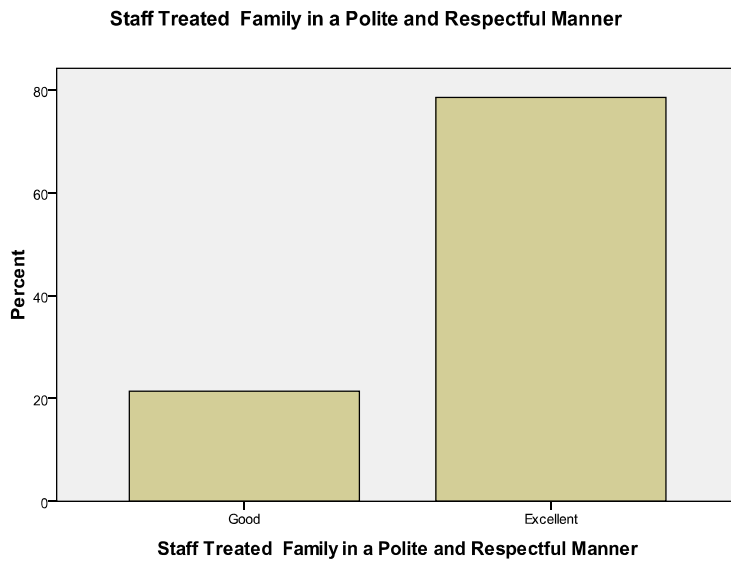


One parent mentioned that having team leaders with similar disabilities should be a priority, this could be due to an ability to empathize or have knowledge of the child's needs.



In regard to the staff, parents were generally effusive in their praise. One parent commented, "Everyone [the staff] was friendly and appeared to be there for the right reasons."

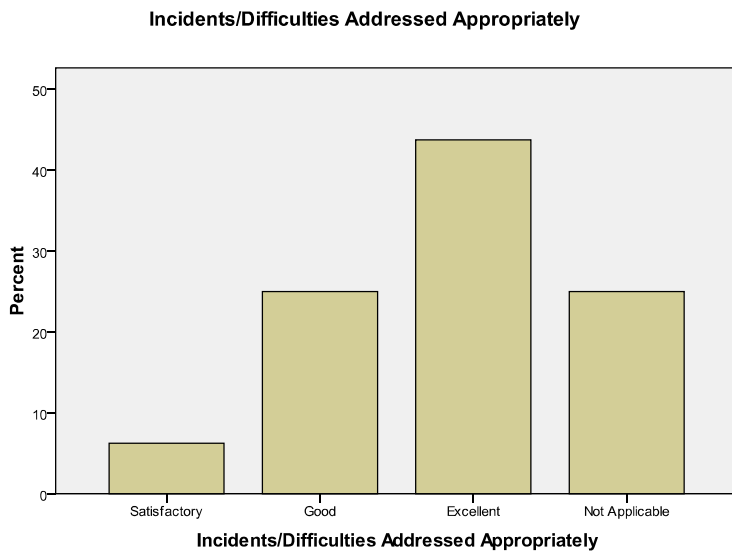
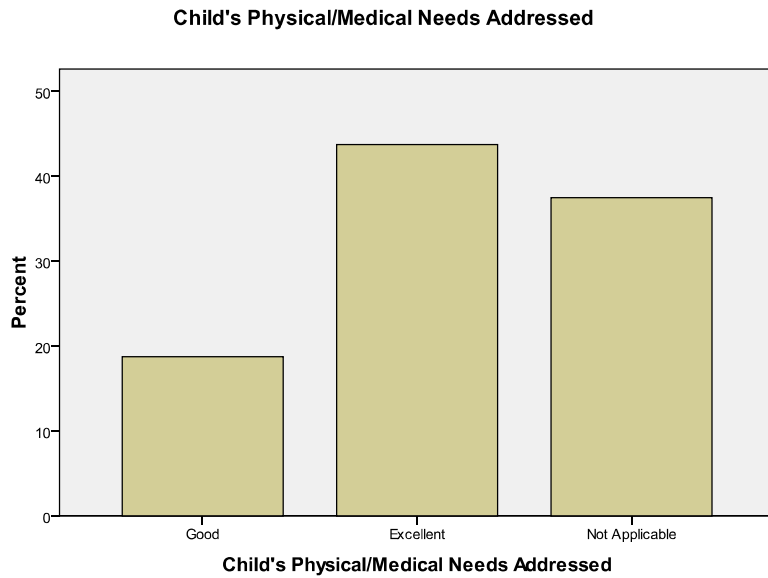
In terms of contact with staff, however, there was a suggestion that staff should wear name tags every day as they changed so frequently and it is easier for the kids to know who they are with on a given day. This could facilitate ease of contact with both the kids and the parents.



More praise for staff... "We found every staff member to be kind and very respectful to us and all the kids and their families. Didn't sense and frustration or impatience from the staff regarding the few times our child got upset or when other campers were upset at the end of the day. "

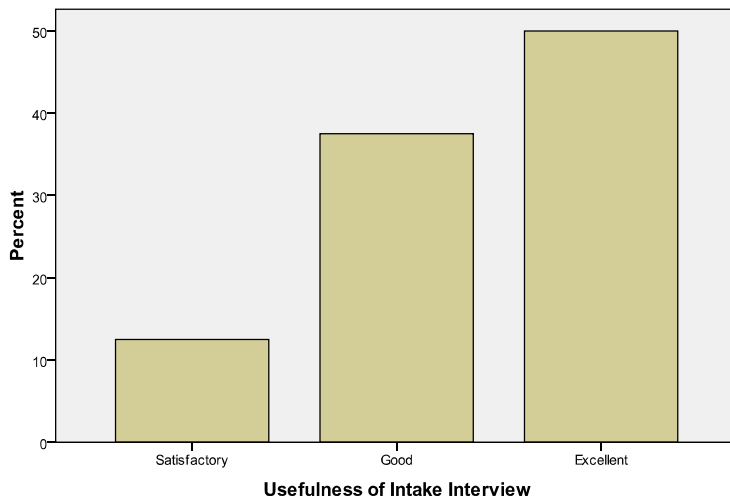
"Staff have been very motivated and committed to their work."

In particular, Ashley and Tammy were mentioned as valuable team members.

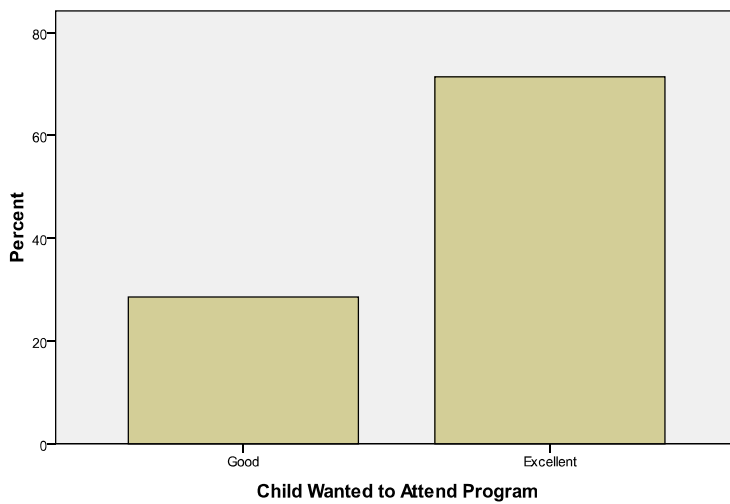


One parent mentioned that when her child was bitten by another child the staff dealt with her very compassionately.

**Usefulness of Intake Interview**



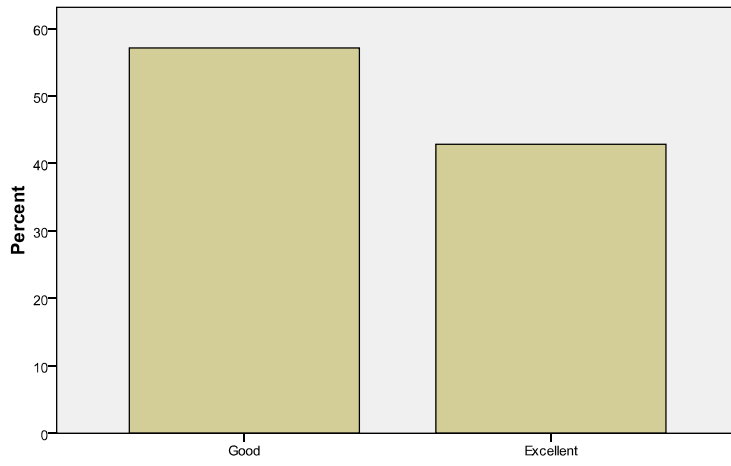
**Child Wanted to Attend Program**



In written comments, when asked what the best part of the program was for the parent, one response was that, "my child was happy to go each day."

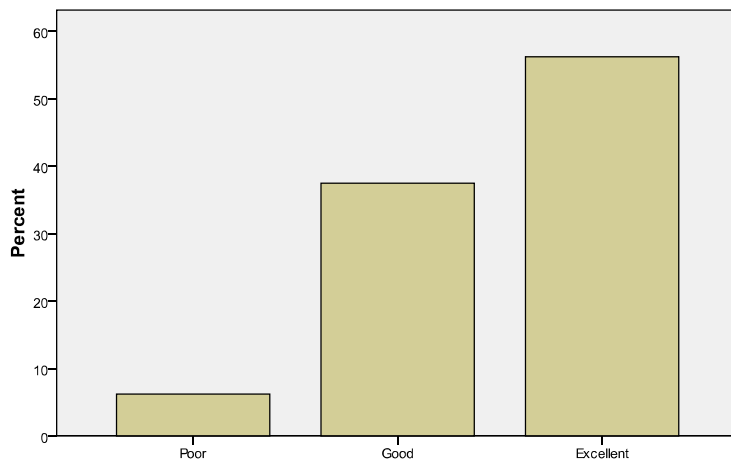
Another parent mentioned that the outcome was good, regardless of the difficulties in the child wanting to attend: "[At] drop off, my child always cries but the staff handled it well. The stickers on her hands the first day was perfect. It gave her something to focus on when she was anxious."

**Child's Report on How His/Her Days Went**

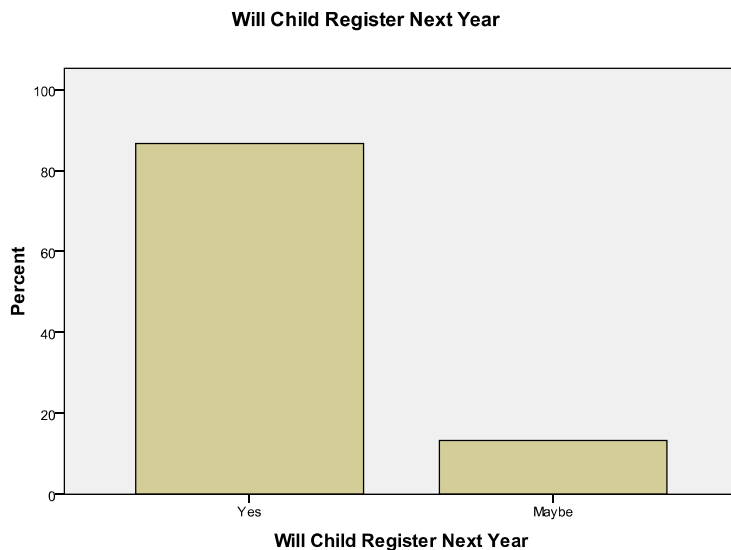


**Child's Report on How His/Her Days Went**

**Child's Individual Needs/Strengths Catered To**



**Child's Individual Needs/Strengths Catered To**



The overwhelming majority of parents indicated that their child would be attending in the following year, and those parents who did not respond affirmatively said that they were still considering it and were not sure yet.

#### Quantitative Reports

There were also several questions asked which provided substantial quantitative information for us to take away. There were most definitely themes in what parents were most pleased with and where they think that the summer programs can be improved.

#### Parents were asked what the best part of the program was for them as a parent:

The respite for parents was an extremely important theme here. Parents mentioned that the break provided for their ASD children and their other children, as well as themselves, was very helpful. One parent mentioned that they were able to work part time during the summer while their child was in the program.

A particularly moving story was from a parent whose spouse was battling illness. "When we registered our child for the camp the most important aspect was for our child to have new experiences, have fun and meet new people and of course he did! But it turned out that the camp provided very valuable respite care during the time my husband was in the hospital. It was a relief that our child had somewhere fun and safe to go to take his mind off his Dad being sick. Knowing I didn't have to worry about our child I could then focus on my husband who is well again now!"

Another theme for parents was knowing that their children were safe and that their children could be part of a group and spend time with peers. One specific comment is a great indication of how well the program is doing. The parent said the best part was "knowing that my child was safe and would be

treated fairly with compassion and respect no matter what happened. (Can't even say that about his school)." Wow!

Parents also reported what their child enjoyed most about the program:

One parent summarized the experience in that it "gave him something to be busy with that was constructive, appropriate, educational and fun. "

In particular, for the children it was important that there was extended interaction with others and that there was a wide variety of activities. Many parents reported specific activities that stood out as highlights for their child, including Millenium Place pool, Telus World of Science, The Ranch and Animal Adventures. Swimming and the Ranch were the most frequently mentioned activities.

What the worst part was for the parents:

Consistently the biggest issue for the parents was transportation to and from camp, both location and times. One comment was that "if we lived closer my child could have attended even more and havd even more fun." Rush hour traffic and long commutes were common problems for parents.

Another parent commented, "If I didn't have extra support with pick up and drop off I wouldn't have been able to get him at drop off location. Also it was on the south side and I live on the north end. "

A parent whose child was enrolled in exclusively half days mentioned: "I found difficult was the inconsistency in time of the day he would be done and returning home with his aide."

What the worst part was for the children:

The children didn't seem to have much, if any criticism. One parent reported that when asked, their child said there were "No bad parts."

Some of the children had some struggles with drop offs but the staff dealt with any issues very well and one child had a bad experience with another child harming them but again, the staff dealt with the situation well and compassionately.

What can be done differently next year:

Parents were for the most part happy with how the program already is set up. There was much encouragement in the written comments for ASEA to keep up the good work. A couple parents asked that the staff keep an eye out for even more activities for the kids, in particular bowling and golf would be something that one parent felt their child would enjoy.

Lastly, some of the specific stories and experiences that the parents chose to share with us were wonderful and really gave a picture of memories that stood out for the kids.

" He really enjoyed the training of the sea lions at West Edmonton Mall and touching a stingray. He was also very excited about riding in the Edmonton streetcar."

"We love, love , love this program"

"We thoroughly loved the program. Our child had a blast and we look forward to next year's program."

" We have done the summer camps for a few years now. This year we found the camps to be very organized and very well prepared... I was so impressed! Also, I found they had some really cool outings and many new experiences that they hadn't had in the past. Well done!!"

"My child had a good time"

"I was able to use the time that my child was in the program to work reduced summer hours"

"Often we tell our child that we ride him like an 'old rented mule; when it comes to homework or chores. So when he rode Kalya the Donkey at the ranch we said he rode an old rented mule!"