

## **Camp Quest NorthWest meeting minutes Staff Feedback / Planning / Ideas Session**

**University of Washington, Mechanical Engineering Building  
Sunday, October 28, 12:00 pm**

Board Members in attendance:

President – Chuck Wolber

Vice President – Brennon Church

Secretary – Jami Blackann

Members at Large – Yuichi Shoda

Others in attendance: Brian Demong, Kayla Ritchie, Becky Friedman

### **Meeting Minutes:**

**Start time:** 12:00 p.m.

### **Review of Summer Camp:**

All the counselors worked well together. Kids loved them; nobody reported any complaints. Likewise, the counselors adored the kids and enjoyed working with them.

A few notes from Yuichi's daughter: She said that the kids have more freedom and respect, and schedule wasn't as rigid as other camps she'd attended. There were lots of activities and choices. Loved the rope work – she continued doing rope work even when she came home.

The outdoor activities (rock wall, archery, camp fire, etc.) were very popular.

The food was especially good and healthy.

### **Freethought Activities:**

Ratings were generally good, but a little more spread out.

Socrates Cafe went over well.

Egg Drop was really popular. A good exercise in team competition.

A couple of negative reviews: Too much talking in the human evolution part. Some kids didn't like swimming in salt water.

### **What would the kids/parents want to change for next year?**

A few responses from the survey:

- Wants to play video games.
- Card game hut for card games.
- Add more board games.
- Some parents wanted daily updates from camp.
- Wanted more team sports.
- Some parents wanted to visit in the middle of camp.
- One child's parent was upset about child's hair being messed up. Didn't want her to swim.
- Don't let kids wear pajamas to breakfast during the last day. They should be dressed.
- Make it longer.
- Fresh water more pleasant to swim in than salt water.
- Misunderstanding about the Nightline piece. Nightline kept calling it "atheist camp." Parent wants kids to be respectful of other beliefs and give kids a chance to decide their beliefs on their own. One parent didn't understand that Nightline misrepresented the camp. Counselors were very sensitive to this subject. Also, most of the feedback to the Nightline episode was positive.

#### Cabin Organization and Cleaning:

Kayla: The girls didn't have dressers or anything to organize their possessions. Stuff was getting mixed up in the cabin. A cleanliness competition would help in this area. The challenge is knowing which reward is the right reward – needs to be an exciting/worthwhile reward for the task.

## Ideas for Next Year:

#### Logical Fallacies Activity (Yuichi)

Catch the counselor in a logical fallacy, win a prize.

#### Dissection Owl Pellets (Kayla)

A place in Skagit County sells the pellets – conveniently close to Camp Kirby.

Nature Walks at Kirby were pretty impromptu. Kayla points out that there should be more planning and expertise. Terra (from SSU) is a super qualified plant person.

Educational board games. Set, Taboo, critical-thinking games, math puzzles, science-oriented games.

Healthy competition: Try to incorporate this more. Makes the challenges more exciting and engaging. It's also an opportunity to learn about gracefully winning and losing. Be dynamic and see if kids might be receptive to a friendly competition for a particular activity.

Cleaning is a good opportunity for competition. They need some kind of motivation.

Mafia: One person is the angel, and one person is the grim reaper (secretly decided by the moderator). The grim reaper decides who to kill while everyone is closing their eyes. The angel

picks someone to save. A dramatic story is told about the murder, and then the remaining people try to guess who the bad person is. Reward for a task: You get to be the angel or grim reaper.

Socrates Cafe: The kids got to choose the topics. Perhaps next year we could have one mandatory topic that addresses questions like: What is dogma? What is intolerance? How do we deal with differing beliefs? How do you question someone's belief and still be respectful to the person?

In general, CQNW would like to be better at conveying that we want to promote skepticism and critical thinking while still being respectful. The camp has never been about promoting atheism, but a few people still get the wrong impression.

Do something creative with the Socratic method (Kayla). Do a skit with the counselors, dress up, explain where the name "Socrates Cafe" comes from. Make it interesting.

Discussion idea: What is science? (Yuichi)

How does this differ from religion? What are the methods/thought processes like? In either case, how do you handle uncertainty? Teach the value of questioning, and the value of "I don't know." Incorporate the discussion into a workshop experiment.

DNA experiment. There's a gene for tasting a certain chemical (PTC) – tastes bitter to some, and others can't taste it at all. Opportunity for a genetics lesson. Inheritance of color blindness. Have the kids do Punnett squares. DNA extraction is pretty easy.

Formalize equipment that we bring (like microscopes). More formalized lab and experiments.

## **Becky's Suggestions:**

Facilities: Clothes lines and folding racks.

Puget Sound: Utilize this better. Micro and macro-organisms. Ecology, biology lessons.

Camp fire: Structure can be a little tighter. Set tone the first night with a really compelling story about camp mystery (Rich Lyons would be good for this). Builds community and tradition, and it still gives the feeling of freedom.

Shift the rest hour to right after lunch. Be indoors while sun is at its peak. Better flow to the scheduling. Gives staff time to prepare for afternoon activities.

Morning cabin time seemed too long. Could move 15 minutes to the afternoon rest hour. There are a lot of arguments for or against the extra time in the morning. On the other hand, the hour after breakfast is a good time for showering.

For three or four days, rotate the kids through in pods (pods are led by CITs). All campers get to experience the same activities. Prevents the long sign-up time (and next year we'll probably have more campers). Just do this for morning activities, with free choice in the afternoon. We're

investing a lot into the educational and craft programs – we want to make sure all the kids experience these activities. Delivery is more solid.

General consensus on the board is that pods are a good idea.

Counselors had difficulty getting the kids to focus on the skits. Hard to get them out of brainstorming mode. Need to reward the best completed skit to motivate them. Initially, it was hard to get in the skit headspace. Give more specific prompts and clarify expectations.

CIT program: Becky went over the CIT application form that she developed.

Clarify distinct roles for volunteers. Staff, counselors, activity leaders, director, etc. Judgment calls – who has the authority in certain situations? Who do I go to when I need something?

Email group for staff members. Short bio so everyone knows who they are, what roles they'll be filling.

On the website, have a space for activities parents can expect so there are no surprises. Post an example schedule. Could also have a section called, "Is your child ready to be a camper?"

Tooth fairy myth.

Theme: All biology, or all physics and construction. Or the theme could be the approach, like uncertainty.

Mouse trap building. Build race cars. Rube Goldberg machine.

Caine's Arcade. <http://cainesarcade.com/>

Carnival style event.

### **Lou's Comments:**

Amazing teamwork between staff and counselors. Everyone worked together well.

He strongly suggests that we organize and label supplies better.

Archery: Lou will make better stands to hold the equipment. Need to bring our own supplies. Kids loved hitting balloons instead of targets.

Nightline comments. Would like us to be very careful about how we're portrayed.

### **Chuck's Suggestions:**

Rotation for breaks. Create a matrix so everyone knows what's happening. More structure for staff/activity leaders.

Didn't feel good about ice breakers. Wants to find other ideas. Consensus from other volunteers was that it went well. It would be good to have activities where kids talk about themselves. Another idea: Tell something about yourself that no one will forget.

Make sure that names are learned. Encourage use of name tags.

In the beginning, it didn't feel like volunteers had enough transition. Once everyone knew the schedule, it worked better.

Swim test occurred too late in the day.

Care packages? It becomes a difficult social dynamic, so it's probably not a good idea. No food in care packages. We should make sure to always have snacks available for kids and staff.

Capture the Flag – Didn't work well with Camp Kirby.

Frisbee would be a good team sport.

During the last night, the older cabin could stay up late. Stargazing.

Younger kids need to go to bed earlier.

Postcards? Some parents wanted to receive mail/updates from their kids. Cards on the first full day of camp.

Crafts: Creative things you can take home. Need to relate them to learning activities. Look at the science behind the art.

**End time: 5:30 p.m.**