



# *How To Evaluate A Summer Camp*

**After years of welcoming families to visit our community we have gathered some tips on how to evaluate a summer camp, whether online, in a home visit, or on a summer tour. We offer you these suggestions, whether or not Camps Kenwood & Evergreen is on your list of camps.**

**1) Understand The Basics.** Ask questions that get to the heart of what this camp is all about. Is this a single-gender, co-ed, or brother-sister camp? How long are the sessions? How does the Camp handle teasing & bullying? What is the camp's counselor-to-camper ratio? How many campers live in a bunk or cabin? What is the typical return rate for campers? How does the camp balance competition, inclusion and skill building?

**2) What Does A Day Look Like?** Parents unhappy with their child's summer camp often remark "it seemed like such a nice place and then I found out afterwards that ...". Schedules vary greatly from camp to camp. Some offer varied routines that introduce campers to all sorts of new, fun activities. Some offer campers the choice to do the same few things over and over again, while others require your child to pick a single activity to focus on. Some camps have a lot of choice, but no one making sure that campers move outside their comfort zone and try the team sports or the ropes course. Make sure that the camp's schedule and philosophy regarding activities is in line with your expectations & goals.

**3) Make Sure That They Are Clear About Expectations.** What are the outcomes that every parent can expect for their child in a given summer, and do they match yours? Do these outcomes include how often a child will participate in a particular activity, or the ways in which they will grow as a human being? How will the camp verify that for each child? Is it in a written report, a conversation on visitors' day, or do they wait for a child to complain about something?

**4) Learn Who Is Successful...And Who Isn't.** This answer should tell you a lot. No camp should be all things to all people, so a good camp director should have a thoughtful, intentional answer to this question. "A kid who is nice" is not telling you nearly enough, nor is "a child who wants to have the summer of their life!" The answer should leave you with a sense that this person takes running a community of young people seriously. He or she should also be comfortable with the idea that the camp may not be right for your child. Only through getting to know your family well can it be determined if this program might be a good fit.

**5) Get A Clear Picture Of The Staffing Resources.** How many adults will travel with her age group every day? What is the maximum number of campers in an age group? Do the campers walk from each activity alone, or with a large group of adults who know the campers well? Do the counselors in the cabins also teach at activities all day? How does someone qualify to teach at this camp? Are there 1, 2, or *any* qualified staff in the cabin during downtime? How about at meals?



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**6) Gain An Understanding Of The Camp's Interview Process.** A Camp is only as good as its staff, and if their methods for evaluating potential counselors don't sound rigorous enough you it's an important thing to know. Are staff interviewed in person, over the phone, or only by an outside agency? Does the person interviewing the staff have any formal training in HR practices, specifically for the Camp industry? Do they hire staff under 17? Do they hire staff who want to return after their first summer, and what is their annual return rate of staff?

**7) Learn About How They Vet Their Staff.** Do they check multiple references, including personal/character references? Do they do full background checks on *all staff every year* (including the maintenance and leadership teams)? Do they use the AMSkier (pronounced "A.M. Sky-er") Staffing index? This is the only industry-wide database that keeps track of former camp employees. The index uses full names, dates of birth and social security numbers, which is really helpful. A camp that uses this index to cross-reference all applicants is demonstrating that they are really focused on knowing exactly who their staff are.

**8) Have Them Explain How They Train Their Staff.** A lot of camps do shockingly little in this department. Do they bring in recognized experts? Do they go beyond communicating the basic rules, and instead have specific modules designed to cover physical & emotional safety, creating a caring community, stages of child development, proper techniques for teaching to children, appropriate discipline, abuse prevention, etc.? Simply reading a staff rulebook during orientation isn't enough. Do they provide for their staff the tools for how to be a quality counselor, and a foundation for the philosophy & mission that gives the Camp purpose?

**9) Understand The Differences.** How is this camp different from all of the others we are looking at? You deserve a thoughtful, cogent, and most importantly, *honest* answer to this question.

**We wish you the very best in your search for the right summer camp for your family.**

**Whichever camp you choose we hope that is a positive, life-changing, enriching experience for your child or children. We hope that you find this information helpful, whether or not you end up visiting us in New Hampshire.**

**If you do have any questions about Camps Kenwood & Evergreen please contact Director Jason Sebell during business hours at 781-793-0091 or on email at [Jason@kenwood-evergreen.com](mailto:Jason@kenwood-evergreen.com)**