

Summer Program for Youth (SPY)

The success of SPY is difficult to measure as our students go forward. We know that a majority of our children score better on math and reading tests, and that they love coming to SPY and love learning in the environment that we provide, but it is rare that we find out what happens to them when they grow up.

This summer, however, we had several experiences that made an impression on our board and staff, and that we would like to think are only the 'tip of the iceberg' when it comes to what happens to SPY 'graduates'.

This spring I was shopping for fabric for the children's swim bags that Wilson Middle School students sew for them, and the young manager of the fabric store asked me what I was making with so much fabric. I started to tell her about SPY, and she enthusiastically told me that she had been in SPY when she was eight years old. "I cut my leg that summer and had to have stitches," she related, "and I couldn't go to the pool. A counselor took me to the library while the other kids were swimming, and I started reading *The Little Princess* (a pretty ambitious book for an eight year old). I've been a big reader ever since."

Our SPY director had a similar experience while shopping for supplies and wearing her SPY staff t-shirt. The sales associate recognized the shirt and told her that his summer at SPY had been one of the best of his childhood.

Midway through the summer the SPY kids put on a 'songs and snacks' program for parents and one family in particular stood out. Both parents came (a rarity for SPY families) and both told us they had been in SPY as children. The fact that they are now in a stable relationship and actively engaged in parenting their children is a success.

Of course SPY is not solely responsible for any of these successes, but when any child who is at-risk of failure grows up, against difficult odds, to be a responsible, capable, independent adult, we would like to believe SPY at least made a contribution to their success.