



2026 Spring Innovation Camp

March 7–10, 2026 • Friendly Pines Camp, Prescott, AZ
Serving students ages 14–18 (with one 7th grader!) across Arizona

AYA + ASU E+I Partnership Impact Report

56

Students
Attended

29

AYA + ASU Camp
Staff

4

Days of Camp

3

Nights at Camp

27

Schools & Orgs



2026 Camp Recap Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwgdNeNtWLE>

About Aspiring Youth Academy

Aspiring Youth Academy (AYA) is a Phoenix-based nonprofit dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty by equipping Arizona's underserved youth with the entrepreneurial skills, mindset, and mentorship they need to build their own futures. Founded in 2014, AYA partners with schools, community organizations, and universities to deliver hands-on entrepreneurship education — completely free of charge — to teens who need it most. Through programs like the Spring Innovation Camp, AYA combines university-level curriculum with real-world mentorship and outdoor adventure to develop the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Serving Arizona since 2014

Mission: To ignite the entrepreneurial spirit in today's young minds.

Vision: We are focused on ending the cycle of poverty through empowering the next generation of entrepreneurs. We believe in the power of hands-on education, mentorship, and capital investment that will support the untapped dreams of our aspiring youth.

Why this camp matters

AYA's Spring Innovation Camp is unlike anything else available to Arizona youth — and it is provided completely free of charge, during spring break, outside of school time, and set in the beautiful outdoors of Prescott, Arizona. This is intentional. By removing every barrier — cost, time, and environment — AYA ensures that the teens and families who need this most can fully participate without sacrifice.

Held at Friendly Pines Camp, the four-day, three-night residential experience immerses students ages 14–18 from diverse backgrounds in a powerful combination of morning entrepreneurship workshops powered by ASU E+I and afternoon outdoor adventure activities. These two pillars are deeply intertwined — the teamwork, resilience, and creative thinking developed on the ropes course and nature trails directly reinforce the pitch practice, branding, and business strategy sessions inside. ASU just gets it, and the result is a one-of-a-kind experience that serves the whole student.

Mentorship

Students are matched with mentors from the Active 20-30 Club of Phoenix, AYA & ASU volunteers, college students, partnership school staff, and mentors from partner organizations such as New Pathways for Youth and One-n-Ten — providing real-world guidance and lasting professional relationships.

Outdoor Adventure

Ziplining, rock climbing, hiking, relay races, and team challenges build confidence, resilience, and trust — skills that carry directly into entrepreneurship.

Connection

Teens from across Arizona meet peers they would never otherwise encounter, forming bonds that extend well beyond camp.

Innovation & Education

Morning workshops deliver university-level entrepreneurship curriculum — business strategy, pitching, branding, design thinking, and the Business Model Canvas.

Real-World Application

Students don't just learn concepts – they apply them immediately through hands-on activities, team projects, and a live pitch competition.

Future Opportunities

Camp opens doors: ASU pathways, mentorship networks, innovation programs, and competitions – including the AZ State Invention Convention and Nationals.

Career Readiness

Every activity – from pitching to leading a team – builds resume-worthy skills and experiences students can carry into college and careers.

Supporting Families

Offered completely free during spring break, AYA supports not just the student but the entire family – removing every barrier so every teen can say yes.

A message from ASU

Kim Reynolds

Senior Program Manager, Youth Entrepreneurship – ASU J. Orin Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute

A Message from ASU

As a former high school business teacher and someone passionate about helping students thrive, I can't recommend the AYA Spring Innovation Camp enough. This free camp, hosted in collaboration with ASU's J. Orin Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute, is designed to inspire students who might not otherwise have access to such opportunities. Alongside thrilling activities like zip lines and hiking, students will learn critical skills like teamwork, creative problem-solving, and pitching ideas. These experiences not only boost confidence and leadership but also prepare students for success in school, their future careers, and beyond. Teachers and parents, this is a chance for your students to shine.

Key outcomes at a glance

100%

felt physically & emotionally safe at camp

100%

would recommend camp to a friend

97%

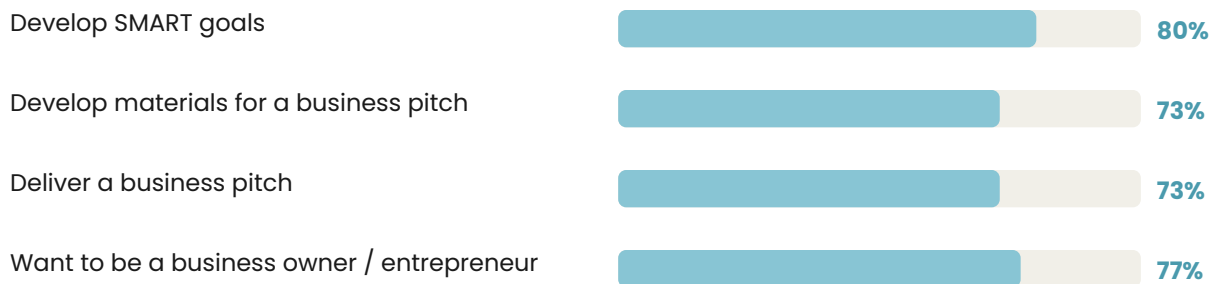
had a meaningful experience with a mentor

93%

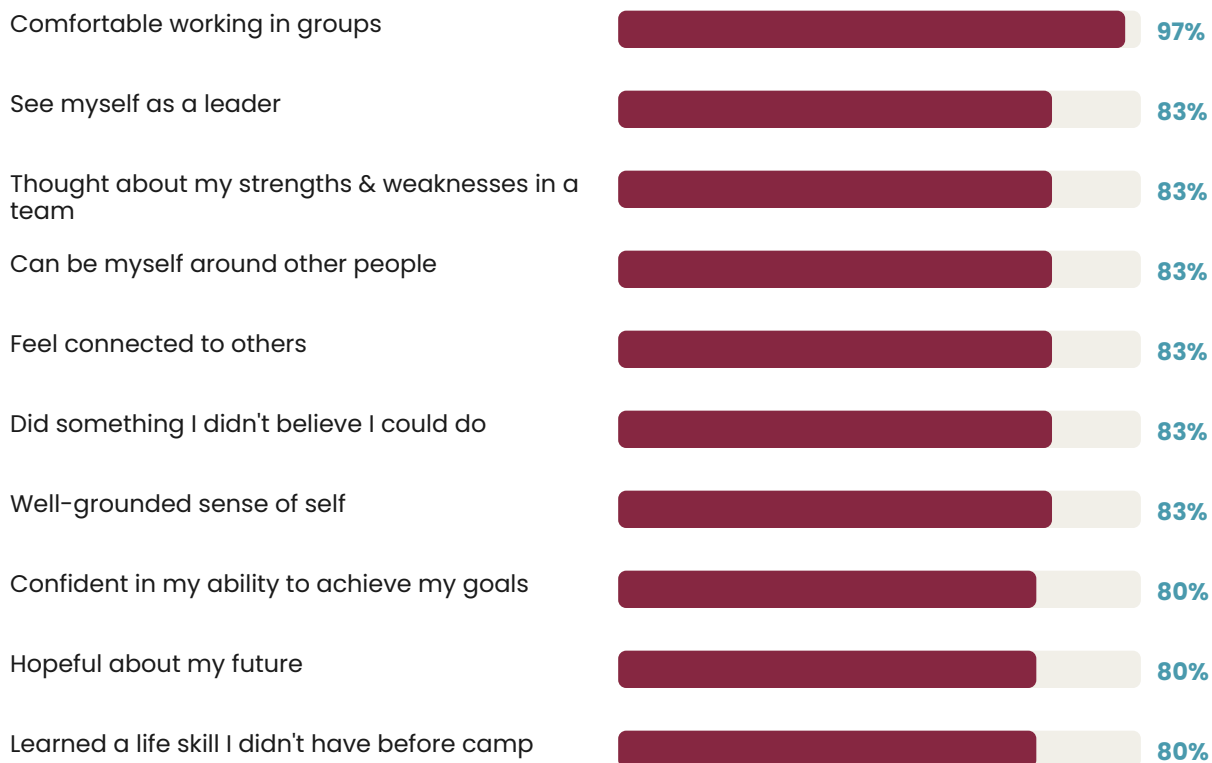
want to attend camp again (yes or maybe)

Entrepreneurship & business skills (agree or strongly agree)





Leadership & social-emotional growth (agree or strongly agree)



Schools & organizations represented

- Arizona College Prep High School
- Arizona School for the Arts
- BASIS Scottsdale
- **Betty H. Fairfax High School**
- **Bioscience High School**
- Campo Verde High School
- Canyon Valley High School
- **Central High School**
- **Cesar Chavez High School**
- Desert Ridge High School
- Desert Vista High School
- **Genesis Academy**
- Greenway High School
- Hamilton High School
- **Homeschooled**
- **Leading Edge Academy**
- **Maryvale High School**
- **Maryvale Preparatory Academy**
- Mesquite High School
- **Mingus Union High School**
- **North High School**
- Phoenix Christian Preparatory High School
- Tempe Prep Academy
- University High School
- **Wilson College Preparatory**

Partner group homes (qualifying):

- **Meraki Youth Home for Girls**
- **Ohana House**

= Title I, alternative/continuation school, group home youth, or homeschooled (qualifying underserved categories)

Underserved youth impact & bridging the gap

52%+

of students come from Title I, alternative, foster care, or qualifying underserved schools & orgs

100%

of students had never received in-depth entrepreneurship or business financial literacy education in the classroom

2

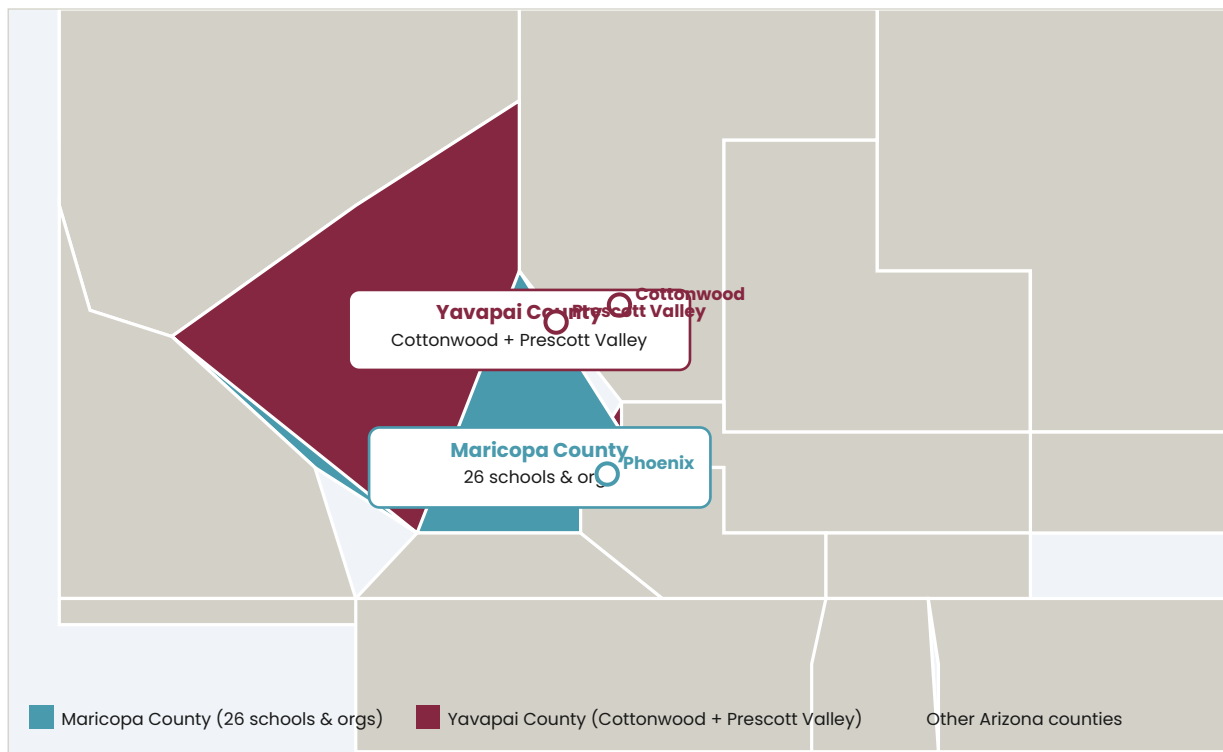
Arizona counties reached – Maricopa & Yavapai

AYA's 2026 Spring Innovation Camp served students ages 14–18 from diverse backgrounds across Arizona, with one 7th grader joining the experience. Participants came from Title 1 schools, alternative/continuation education programs, group home and foster care settings, and homeschooled youth – collectively representing the most underserved and at-risk youth populations recognized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Entrepreneurship and business financial literacy are rarely taught in depth in Arizona's K–12 classrooms – and for students in under-resourced communities, the gap is even wider. AYA and ASU E+I are directly bridging that gap, bringing university-level entrepreneurship education to teens who would otherwise never have access to it. Every student who attends camp leaves with real skills, a network of mentors and peers, and a new belief in what is possible for their future.

This investment in Arizona's youth is an investment in Arizona's future economy. When we equip teens from underserved communities with entrepreneurial thinking, business skills, and the confidence to lead – we are planting the seeds of the next generation of Arizona innovators, business owners, and community builders. The impact of this partnership extends far beyond camp, and it grows every single year.

Counties served across Arizona



Maricopa County

Home to 26 of 27 schools and organizations at camp, spanning Phoenix, Gilbert, Mesa, Scottsdale, and Glendale. Maricopa County is home to Phoenix Union High School District — one of the largest urban high school districts in the United States.

Yavapai County

Reached through Mingus Union High School in Cottonwood (confirmed Title 1) and Aversa Knutson, a homeschooled student from Prescott Valley — the same city where Friendly Pines Camp is located. Yavapai County represents AYA's geographic reach into rural and small-town Arizona.

Partnership testimonials

Bridget Costello

Executive Director, Aspiring Youth Academy

Aspiring Youth Academy is proud to partner with Arizona State University in bringing transformative opportunities to the students and families we serve. ASU has been more than a collaborator; they've been a true champion of innovation, access, and community impact.

Through our shared work on the Innovation Hub and Innovation Camp, ASU has helped us create dynamic, hands-on learning environments where young people can explore entrepreneurship, build critical thinking skills, and see themselves as future leaders. Their commitment to experiential learning and inclusive excellence aligns seamlessly with AYA's mission to empower Title 1 students and teens in foster care.

The resources, expertise, and passion that ASU brings to this partnership elevate everything we do. Together, we are not just running programs — we are building pathways for students to imagine bigger futures and take tangible steps toward achieving them.

We are grateful for ASU's continued partnership and wholeheartedly endorse their dedication to shaping the next generation of changemakers.

Ashley Woodburn

Program Manager, Aspiring Youth Academy

It has been incredible working with ASU E+I over the past year. They know this camp and the structure through and through, which makes it such a success when it all comes together for our teens – and it shows. Every single one of our teens felt safe and learned so much, which you can see in their testimonials.

I have never seen or heard of something as unique as this entrepreneurship camp that combines entrepreneurship workshops for teens in the morning and outdoor adventure in the afternoon – and how both of those aspects so perfectly support each other. ASU just gets it, and has seen the value in AYA's Spring Innovation Camp since it began. We are so grateful to them for helping us make this vision come to life each year and for integrating it into more ASU pathways that serve our students beyond camp.

Through this incredible partnership to plan and deliver such an impactful experience, along with all of our camp staff, 20-30 Club mentors, and ASU staff who facilitated the workshops, you simply cannot get any better than this. With several of our students now going even further to compete and win first and second place at the AZ State Invention Convention and on to Nationals, the impact shows and continues to grow. We cannot say enough good things about working with Kim, Alyssa, and Heidi and their entire team – what they mean to our community is immeasurable. Thank you!

Student testimonials – favorite ASU entrepreneurship workshop or topic

Sebastian Martinez

Bioscience High School

"My favorite ASU entrepreneurship workshop that stood out to me was how to present myself to the judges. I realized making eye contact with them actually catches their attention. This is a skill I will be carrying on after camp."

Danytza Coronado

University High School

"My favorite workshop was where we learned what made a good idea and pitch. It taught me what you needed to make a well-rounded and in-depth pitch!"

Lilly Buckner

North High School

"I really liked Bad Bananas in Pitch Perfect – it brought out all the jitters and showed us all the things we knew not to do."

Joshua Dorbin

Tempe Preparatory Academy

"Developing a value statement and specific product."

Video testimonials

Damacio Duarte

Central High School

"I've been focusing more on entrepreneurship and trying to get more into that. So this is really just snowballing it all for my future."

Noah Chavez

Campo Verde High School

"The classes are super cool. It's 3 hours a workshop. You got to learn about business and everything, how to put it all together. Actually learning how to make a business. And this is where you come for it."

Hudson Langford

Campo Verde High School

"What they teach us in there — it's a lot of strategy, a lot of skill, and definitely a lot of teamwork because if only one person's pulling all the weight, it's not going to work out."

Lilly Scott

Mingus Union High School — Yavapai County

"The connections that we build here are not like the connections you do on Snapchat or on Instagram because here you get to be with everyone else."

Tanya Jones-Beck

Group Home Manager, Ohana House

"They meet people they've never met before. When they do that, they form their groups, they get in their color groups and there's instantly this feeling of family, this sense of belonging."

Umare Brewster

Central High School

"When I was about third grade, fourth grade, I decided I didn't want to work for anybody else. I do feel responsible for most of my success, but I couldn't have done it without Camp AYA or ASU. It's probably one of the best experiences I've had in my entire life."

Video testimonials (continued)

Avessa Knutson

Homeschooled — Prescott Valley, Yavapai County

“I really like the ideating and the brainstorming workshops because that just helped everything come together.”

Ashton Adams

Mesquite High School

“I love the branding logo design. I’ve always been interested in how brands do these certain things — like how can I create a business that also looks cute and professional.”

Aaron Castro-Corral

Desert Vista High School

“I want to go to college, study to be a lawyer, and once I’m done with that, I want to open my own law firm. So the things that I’m learning here can for sure help me make that dream happen.”

Danytza Coronado

University High School

“Our mentor Carter really helped us push our ideas out there. He didn’t tell us what to do, he just guided us towards it. The 2030 Club was also a highlight because they helped us become more secure and know that our ideas can actually lead us places.”

Bridget Costello

Executive Director, AYA

“We have been so honored to partner with Arizona State University creating our innovation hub. Their whole staff comes out, they teach the children. It’s really university level courses that they are teaching to these high school students.”

Umare Brewster

Central High School

“This is the most fun spring break I’ve ever had in 17 years.”

Teacher & mentor recommendations

Angel Rodriguez

Jeff Goodman, Mentor — New Pathways for Youth

Why recommended:

“I have been mentoring Angel for more than 2 years. He was very nervous and disengaged, failing most of his classes. Now he is engaged in school, his grades are significantly improved, and he has grown into a curious and supportive young man. I honestly can't think of a person who could benefit more from this experience.”

Joshua Dorbin

Jacqueline McIntosh, Teacher — Tempe Preparatory Academy

Why recommended:

“Josh is truly a delightful human being. He is a deep thinker, possesses curiosity in spades, and is adept at problem-solving and thinking outside of the box. Since sixth grade, Josh has been somewhat of an entrepreneur himself — always thinking of new ideas and ways to change the world. I think this program is absolutely perfect for him.”

Aaron Castro-Corral

Katrina Montoya, English Teacher & English Department Leader

Why recommended:

“Aaron always comes in eager to learn and exuding positivity. He consciously tries to maintain an optimistic outlook and purposely tries to be a light to others. His growth mindset underscores his love of learning and achievement.”