



4-H Capitol Experience

Preparing Youth for

Active Citizenship

March 17-20, 2013

Audience

This program is open to Michigan high school teens interested in citizenship programs and state and local government. Total attendance was 70 youth plus 13 adult chaperones from 17 Michigan counties. Grade levels reached were: 13—9th, 18—10th, 26—11th, and 13—12th graders; 59 were female and 23 male. People of minority populations comprised 33% of youth attendees.

Objectives

This youth development conference is designed to help youth:

- Discover how to be actively involved in influencing policy decisions.
- Explore different aspects of a policy issue that may affect individuals and communities.
- Learn about the policy process at the state level.
- Increase youths' communication, team work, citizenship, and leadership skills.
- Foster participants' ability to meet new people and make new friends from different places and backgrounds.
- Develop and expand career and personal interests.
- Develop social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to college and life as an adult.

Description

Youth development and experiential education theory and practice are fundamental to the program's design and implementation. Teens participate in a nine hour Michigan Legislative Simulation over four days. The youth are assigned to an issue group; such as health, education and jobs & the economy. As part of the simulation, they research and propose Senate and House bills; conduct House and Senate leadership position elections; participate in legislative committee meetings; debate and vote on bills and have their bills signed into law by an acting governor. When not participating in the simulation, the youth spend time with their legislators, observe an actual House and Senate session; and visit community and state agencies, lobbyists and legislative aides. There are 39 intentional contact hours.

In 2013 there were 11 MSU faculty/staff, 1 MSU student and dozens of Michigan government experts involved.

Outcomes

A pre-/post-survey was used to measure participants skills and perceptions. Below are response highlights for youth who "agreed or strongly agreed" with targeted skills.

Before the event responses are shown in parentheses.

- *I can think critically about public policy issues and suggest ways for improvement—(41%) 87%*
- *I know who to contact to get things done—(35%) 90%*
- *I am open to different points of view—(55%) 88%*
- *I feel an individual teen can influence state government policy and policy makers—(56%) 91%*
- *I feel teens and adults working together can influence state government policies. - (62%) 90%*

Select comments from Teen Participants

- *It has better helped me realize that my voice and contribution of ideas are valid regardless of my age and that I can make a difference.*
- *I have a better idea of what I can do. I...know you don't have to be a politician to be in the political process.*
- *I am now going to have a summer internship because of a contact we made at Capitol Experience.*
- *It has opened up new career options that I never knew were available.*
- *It showed me that politics are working with others are extremely important to get anything done.*

Funding

This is a fee-based program. A limited number of partial and full scholarships are available at the county level based on merit and need. Partial scholarships are available at the state level.

Contact Information

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