



## 4-H Capitol Experience

### Preparing Youth for Active Citizenship

March 16-19, 2014



#### Audience

This program is open to Michigan high school teens interested in citizenship programs and state and local government. Total attendance was 73 youth plus 13 adult chaperones from 25 Michigan counties. Grade levels reached were: 11—9th, 20—10th, 26—11th, and 11—12th graders; 62 were female and 24 male. People of minority populations comprised 24% 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 2014 there were 8 MSU faculty serving as MSU Extension Educators on Leadership/Civic Engagement work groups, 1 MSU public policy 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 stand up for things that are important to me.* — (72%) 100%
- *I recognize the value of different viewpoints.* (73%) 96%
- *I can contact someone I've never met before to get their help with a problem.* — (46%) 94%
- *I plan to vote when I turn 18.* — (84%) 99%
- *I feel an individual teen can influence state government policy and policy makers*—(56%) 89%
- *I feel teens and adults working together can influence state government policies.*—(67%) 97%

#### Select comments from Teen Participants

- *Attending 4-H Capitol Experience has inspired me to learn more about state government and other 4-H programs.*
- *This experience made me feel like I can change something. I know so much more about government than I thought I'd ever know.*
- *4-H Capitol Experience has changed my view of government. It has made me consider running for office.*
- *It has taught me communication skills and responsibility that I will use for the rest of my life.*
- *Attending 4-H Capitol Experience allowed me to experience government hands-on.*

#### 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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