



4-H Capitol Experience

Preparing Youth for
Active Citizenship
March 22-25, 2015



Audience

This program is open to Michigan high school teens interested in citizenship programs and state and local government. Total attendance was 100 youth plus 13 adult chaperones from 28 Michigan counties. Grade levels reached were: 24—9th, 27—10th, 22—11th, and 27—12th graders; 69 were female and 31 male. People of minority populations comprised 26% 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 elected officials, observe an actual House and Senate session; and visit community and state agencies, lobbyists and legislative aides. There are 40 intentional contact hours.

In 2015 there were 9 MSU faculty serving as MSU Extension Educators on Leadership/Civic Engagement work groups, 3 Michigan Farm Bureau educators, 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 feel prepared to work toward change in my community. — (60%) 95%
- I have skills to help me serve my community. — (62%) 96%
- I learned things that will help me make a difference in my community. — (57%) 95%
- I can apply knowledge in ways that solve problems. — (73%) 96%
- I can contact someone that I have never met before to get their help with a problem.— (50%) 90%

Select comments from Teen Participants

- I realize that I have a passion for legislation and may pursue it later in my career.
- I am really excited to keep on pursuing a college degree and learn more about the government.
- Helped me to better understand that all it takes is one small voice to impact others and make a difference.
- Capitol Experience has made me believe that anything I is possible. You just need to try.

Funding

This is a fee-based program. A limited number of partial and full scholarships are available at a local level, depending on county and local Farm Bureau, and are awarded based on merit and need. Partial scholarships are also available at the state level, and are allocated based on a participant application.

Contact Information

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