



NC 4-H



## Citizenship North Carolina Focus 2008

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The North Carolina 4-H Citizenship NC Focus conference trains teens, ages 15-19, to better understand state government, community partnerships, and public relations. Research indicates that citizenship learning and experience increases teen involvement in their communities that extends to more consistent voting, leadership, and community service during adult years. The three-day conference in Raleigh fosters youth learning about and debate of critical issues in their communities, meeting with elected officials, and planning for community service.

The Third Annual 4-H Citizenship NC Focus conference, June 16-18, 2008 hosted 105 teens, aged 14-18, and 25 adult professionals and volunteers from 43 counties. Eighty-five participants completed an end-of-conference survey, including 18 males and 60 females, of whom 61% were White, 19% Black, 8% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 10% "Other" or not specified. Conference participants were from all parts of the state, representing rural (17%) and small town (45%) as well as small (9%) and larger (4%) cities and suburbs (8%). Unique features of the conference included a panel of public officials, corporate leaders, and lobbyists on effective communication with decision-makers, a keynote by NC Secretary of State Elaine Marshall on relating to public officials, and a live showing of the public television program "NC Spin." Workshops featured life skills, action planning, asking for funding support, presenting yourself, and insights on understanding the legislative process. Youth worked in county teams to develop community action plans to be implemented during 2008-2009.

**Retrospective: Returning Delegates Affirm Conference Benefits.** The vast majority of the 24 returning delegates agreed that the 2007 conference expanded their knowledge of state government (83%) and collaboration (75%), skills in leadership (79%) and public relations (70%). They reported that the 2007 conference inspired them to seek election (79%) and recruit volunteers (92%). In addition, they had become more involved in citizenship (84%), volunteering (80%), leadership (71%), mentoring (87%), serving on a civic board (79%), and informing others on public issues (75%). Projects completed included community clean-up, Teen Court, helping with elections, teaching a leadership class, and serving on a gang prevention project board. Second-year delegates completed a Retrospective survey at registration for the 2008 conference.

**Prospective: All Delegates Affirm Learning and Aspire to Serve.** Results from the 2008 NC 4-H Citizenship NC Focus event indicate positive gains in knowledge, skills, and readiness for community involvement. A large majority of the 85 youth who completed the end-of-conference survey agreed that they gained a better understanding of state government (87%) and collaboration (81%), and increased skills in leadership (82%) and public relations (84%). A majority of participants aspired to seek election (69%) and recruit volunteers (80%). They also aspired to increase citizenship (84%), volunteering (85%), leadership (82%), mentoring (77%), informing others on public issues (76%), and serving on a civic board (68%). Written comments indicated plans to lead and serve included initiating youth clubs, attending and serving on community boards and 4-H county council, and advocating for public issues with county and state

officials. Retrospective reports from returning delegates suggest that most youth follow through on these aspirations.

Greatest benefits of the conference included better understanding of state government, skills in public relations, and commitment to volunteering. Least cited benefits included seeking election, serving on boards, and understanding collaboratives. Understanding government and interacting with legislators is a unique and significant focus of the conference that seems genuinely appreciated by all participants. Aspirations to volunteering, mentoring, citizenship, and leadership are conference objectives that may be more dependent on opportunities and other commitments anticipated during the coming year. In fact, youth who are currently engaged in such activities, those 4-H youth most likely to be selected as delegates, may be less likely to *increase* involvement in the coming year. Opportunities, experience, and personal preferences may make youth least likely to aspire to seek election, serve on community boards, or inform others about public issues. Knowledge and skill gains, as well as aspirations for leadership and service, affirm that all conference objectives were fulfilled. The pattern of youth feedback reflects perceptions of immediate benefits, emerging opportunities and barriers, and personal goals and preferences. Conference planners may gain greater insight on these patterns from more in-depth examination of youth motivations and experiences beyond the conference. A better understanding of the impact of this once-a-year event on day-to-day competencies and choices may help improve both the conference experience and year-round opportunities and support to youth engaged in citizenship activities.

***Nine of ten youth reported that they had fun, learned more about citizenship, learned from their legislator visit, and felt more capable to approach citizenship projects year-round. Youth development research indicates that teens learn best through playful but challenging interaction focused on a specific theme. Participants concur that 4-H Citizenship North Carolina Focus provides an oasis of learning in downtown Raleigh.***

Comparisons by gender found differences on aspirations to leadership ( $p = .002$ ), volunteering ( $p = .001$ ), and mentoring ( $p = .003$ ). In all cases, females' aspirations were higher. No significant differences were found by ethnic group, age group, or Extension district (e.g., region of the state). Conference planners may want to examine why a lower number of males participate in the conference and express lower aspirations to leadership and service. Males represent a smaller percentage (approximately 40%) of high school 4-Hers, but may enjoy more options, face more barriers, or find this event less attractive than females.

***Conference Climate.*** Participants valued the conference quality affirming strong adult support, inclusion of youth from all backgrounds, and encouragement of responsibility and social action. Over ninety percent of participants agreed that they “learned to accept differences in others” and “felt they could make a difference.” Nearly all participants reported that they were supported by adults, challenged to grow, become more responsible, and broaden their view of the world. Continued support from sponsors and 4-H professionals underlines the positive feedback and activity of youth.

***Support.*** NC Electric Cooperatives, Touchstone Energy Cooperatives is signature sponsor.

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## Summary Data: Citizenship NC Focus 2008

#Counties: 43; By District: NC 8; NE: 14; SC; 14; SE: 10; WC: 16; W: 7; NA: 2  
 Age Dist: Gender: Ethnicity: Check enrollments  
 Residence: more than 10G: 44%; more than 50G: 1%; 10-50G: 9%; City: 8%; Farm: 16%;  
 Suburb: 9%; Not listed: 2%

### Focus Objectives/Prospective

Construct Validity: youth citizenship research (Silliman, 2007)

Face Validity: conference objectives

Percentage Response (N = 85)

	Mean	SA	A	N	D	SD	Miss
Cronbach alpha = .94							
Better underst. state government	1.49	63	24	8	0	2	3
Better understand collaboration	1.73	46	34	14	2	1	2
Gained PR skill to advocate 4-H	1.53	59	24	13	0	1	3
More involved in leadership	1.71	54	27	7	7	2	3
Decided on elected leadership	2.00	42	26	17	7	5	3
More capable in leading	1.72	48	33	11	2	2	3
Partic. in more citizen. Activities	1.70	49	32	13	1	2	3
Serve on board, project group	1.93	43	25	22	3	3	3
Work to inform on public issues	1.74	50	25	17	0	3	4
More involved in volunteering	1.60	52	32	9	0	2	4
Serve as mentor or helper	1.71	48	28	15	1	2	6
Involve others in volunteering	1.62	48	32	12	0	2	7

### Youth Program Climate (N = 85)

Construct Validity: Youth development best practices (Eccles & Gootman, 2002)

Face Validity: Participant perceptions

Percentage Response (N 85)

	Mean	SD	D	A	SA	Miss
Cronbach alpha = .92						
Hurt or injured	3.64	2	6	13	78	1
Felt put down	1.64	63	16	11	9	1
Practiced healthy habits	3.13	5	7	55	33	1
Adults listened	3.47	2	6	30	61	1
Could go to adults	3.43	2	9	33	55	1
Kids cared about each other	3.37	8	5	37	49	1
Conflicts a problem	1.78	52	23	14	9	1
Learned teamwork	3.40	5	4	35	56	1
Service ideal	3.45	4	6	28	62	1
Didn't feel I belonged	1.77	54	24	9	12	1
All kids were welcomed	3.62	4	1	21	74	1
Differences accepted	3.48	2	5	32	61	1
Learned to develop a plan	3.52	1	7	26	65	1
Challenged to grow	3.45	2	5	34	58	1
Learned new subjects	3.44	4	4	34	58	1
Making a difference important	3.55	1	6	26	66	1
Learned responsibility	3.49	2	7	26	64	1
Perfect performance expected	2.31	28	22	15	23	1
Rules were clear	3.23	7	9	33	50	1
Discipline about right	3.26	6	9	34	50	1
Activities age-appropriate	3.12	5	6	40	44	6
Gained broader view of 4-H	3.38	3	3	31	59	5
Gained broader view of world	3.44	1	1	31	62	5
Linked to club, family, community	3.40	1	1	36	57	7
Had fun at Citizenship NC Focus	3.35	1	6	22	64	7
Learned citizenship	3.12	1	9	34	48	8
Learned from legislator visit	3.08	1	8	35	47	9
Event strengthens year-long 4-H Cit	3.14	1	5	36	49	9

## Inferential Tests: Prospective

### Paired Samples T-tests

Better underst. state government	1.49	
Gained PR skill to advocate 4-H	1.53	
More involved in volunteering	1.60	
Involve others in volunteering	1.62	
Partic. in more citizen. activities	1.70	
More involved in leadership	1.71	
Serve as mentor or helper	1.71	
More capable in leading	1.72	
Better understand collaboration	1.73	
Work to inform on public issues	1.74	
Serve on board, project group	1.93	
Decided on elected leadership	2.00	

Note: Non-significant differences marked with line;

### Independent Samples T-tests

**Gender:** significant differences (females higher in each case):

- Become more involved in leadership (p = .002)
- Become more involved in volunteering (p = .001)
- Serve as a mentor or helper to others (p = .003)

**Ethnicity:** Due to limited sample sizes, only White and Black youth were compared and no significant differences were identified

**Age Group:** No significant differences by age group (14-15, 15-18 or 14-16, 17-18) or on ANOVA by separate age groups

### Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Better understand state gov't	1.0	.56	.58	.59	.45	.60	.60	.52	.58	.60	.54	.59
2 Better understand collaboration		1.0	.52	.66	.55	.67	.45	.62	.45	.49	.47	.55
3 Gained PR to advocate 4-H			1.0	.56	.48	.62	.51	.51	.53	.44	.64	.53
4 More involved in leadership				1.0	.67	.78	.51	.68	.60	.70	.65	.68
5 Decided on elected leadership					1.0	.60	.59	.66	.45	.50	.55	.48
6 More capable in leading						1.0	.59	.66	.57	.63	.66	.64
7 Participate in more citizenship							1.0	.65	.68	.64	.71	.60
8 Serve on board, project group								1.0	.61	.60	.61	.64
9 Work to inform on public issues									1.0	.72	.69	.75
10 More involved in volunteering										1.0	.73	.82
11 Serve as mentor or helper											1.0	.78
12 Involve others in volunteering												1.0

All correlations p = .000

## Retrospective Participants

Age Dist: Check enrollments

Gender: Check enrollments

Ethnicity: Check enrollments

Residence: more than 10G: 44%; more than 50G: 1%; 10-50G: 9%; City: 8%; Farm: 16%;

Suburb: 9%; Not listed: 2%

### Focus Objectives/Retrospective

	Mean	SA	Percentage Response					Miss
			A	N	D	SD		
Cronbach alpha = .91								
Better understand state government	1.46	58	27	12	0	0	4	
Better understand collaboration	1.85	35	42	12	8	0	4	
Gained PR skill to advocate 4-H	1.54	54	27	15	0	0	4	
More involved in leadership	1.62	58	15	19	4	0	4	
Decided on elected leadership	1.62	58	19	16	4	0	4	
More capable in leading	1.54	58	19	19	0	0	4	
Partic. in more citizenship activities	1.77	39	46	4	4	4	4	
Serve on board, project group	1.69	50	27	19	0	4	4	
Work to inform on public issues	1.65	46	31	19	0	0	4	
More involved in volunteering	1.42	66	15	15	0	0	4	
Serve as mentor or helper	1.42	58	31	8	0	0	4	
Involve others in volunteering	1.42	54	39	4	0	0	4	

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## Comments on Focus Objectives Surveys

### Projects mentioned on Retrospective Surveys

Decide to serve as a Raleigh City Commissioner  
Planning a Raleigh City Gang Prevention  
Volunteered helping freshman with their graduation projects  
Almost achieved goal of having a youth on the County Commissioners' Board  
Member of Jr. Fair Board  
Sought leadership roles  
Become more engaged in elections  
Begun to recruit for and advocate for 4-H  
Formed a 4-H Electric Club  
Volunteered at livestock barn  
Camp Counselor  
Surveyed abandoned buildings  
Started County Council  
Mistress of Ceremony for Flag Retirement Ceremony  
Helped to started a home school soccer team  
Lead Summer fun class  
helped with local outreach to Catawba Ridge  
Service trip to Guatemala

### Projects mentioned on Prospective Surveys

Volunteer with SOS afterschool Program  
4-H PEP group  
Achieve the bronze level in leadership and move on the silver level  
Youth Advisory Board to discuss youth issues  
Volunteer in health instructions  
Create more recreational things

Recruit for Citizenship Focus  
Promote getting a Sex Education Class in High School  
Attend Board of Education meetings  
Work with Board of Education to Implement more youth organizations  
Become a house page  
Working with representative to resolve issues in my community  
Recruit for 4-H  
Get county involved in an action plan  
Volunteer more  
Get other 4-Hers involved in Citizenship  
Work with County Commissioners  
Seek Leadership Opportunities  
Lead leadership workshops  
Help raise money for cancer patients  
encourage people to vote  
sit in on committee session  
Focus more on political issues  
Complete Citizenship Project Record  
Vote  
volunteer for campaigns  
be more active in government  
Teach Leadership in my community  
Help teach "Health Rocks" a younger class of students  
Seek to become more involved in the local government processes  
encourage younger youth to participate in the governmental process  
Encourage awareness  
develop workshops based on local government  
Local Volunteering  
Become involved in the community  
Organize a 4-H Club  
Serve as a teen leader  
Taught volunteer photography class for SOS for two semesters  
became a county officer  
Aid in asking for support from local businesses  
Form an IMPACT Committee.  
Complete an Impact goal every three months  
Develop a health information fair  
Go to more city board meetings  
Organize a Citizenship Club  
Become more involved in citizenship projects  
Develop a public speaking workshop  
become more involved in public policy  
Increase recycling efforts in my community  
Be more efficient with my tobacco coalition  
Learn more about elected officials  
Go to County Commissioners and offer youth insights  
Attempt to establish teen court in my county  
discuss youth health issues with school board  
Encourage a youth vote  
contact legislators  
Mentor