



**YOUTH POLICY SUMMIT
PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT
Fall 2011**

WITH THANKS TO THE ALTRIA GROUP FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF YPS PROGRAM EVALUATION

I. OVERVIEW OF THE YOUTH POLICY SUMMIT PROGRAM

The Youth Policy Summit (YPS) program of The Keystone Center (Keystone) is a multi-faceted educational immersion experience that brings high school students together in a group learning environment to analyze a contemporary, science-intensive policy issue. YPS is designed to produce a broad range of knowledge and skill outcomes for participating students.

The primary metric of success for this program is demonstration of positive outcomes for student participants in their collaboration, complex communication, and problem solving/critical thinking skills, all of which are widely recognized as essential 21st century learning skills. YPS also contributes to students' knowledge of current public policy issues as well as their understanding of policy-making processes. In addition, Keystone is measuring the performance of the program itself in order to strengthen it over time.

With generous contributions from The Altria Group, Keystone initiated evaluation of the YPS program in March 2010. Collaborative Research Associates (CRA) conducted the program evaluation and simultaneously worked with YPS program staff members to build organizational capacity for ongoing evaluation of the YPS program.

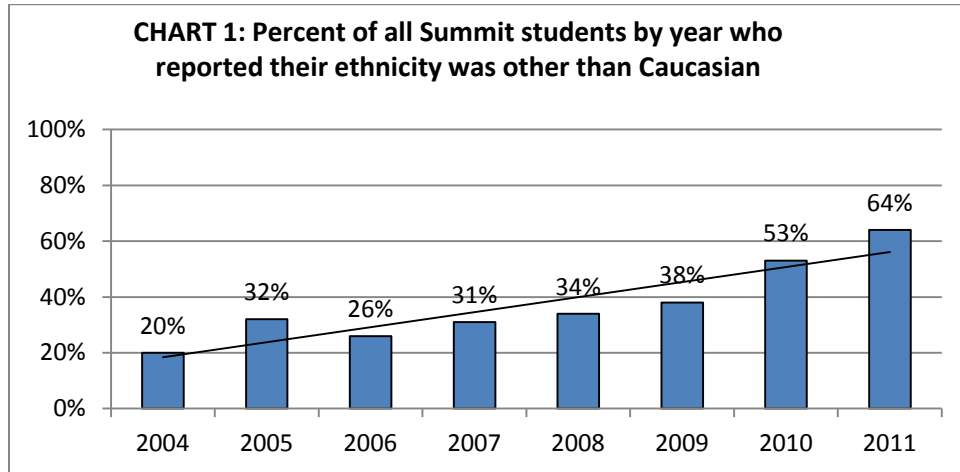
This Fall 2011 program evaluation report incorporates findings from both the 2010 and 2011 Youth Policy Summits. Evaluation findings from 2011 Summits are based on data collected through questionnaires administered in person to students and teachers at the end of their Summits. Prior evaluation reports, available on the YPS website (www.youthpolicysummit.org) describe additional evaluation data collection methods used in 2010.

II. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM-RELATED FINDINGS

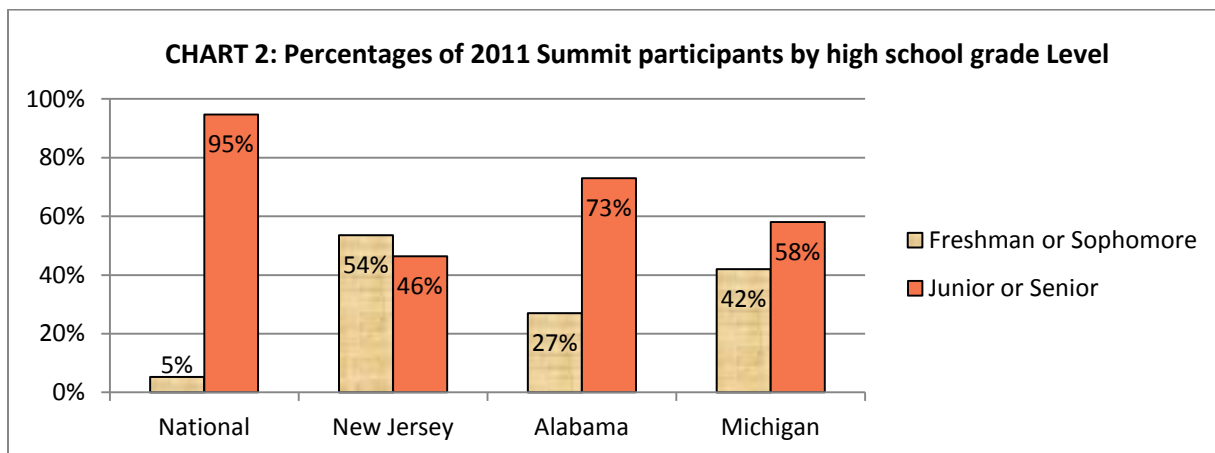
A. The program has grown substantially from the one Summit conducted in 2004 that served 40 students to the five Summits conducted in 2010 that together served 167 students and the five Summits in 2011 that served 125 students. Over the program's eight year history, a total of 682 students from more than 70 schools in 23 states have participated in Youth Policy Summits. Despite lower enrollment

numbers in 2011 due to recruitment-related factors, Keystone plans to hold six Summits during the summer of 2012.

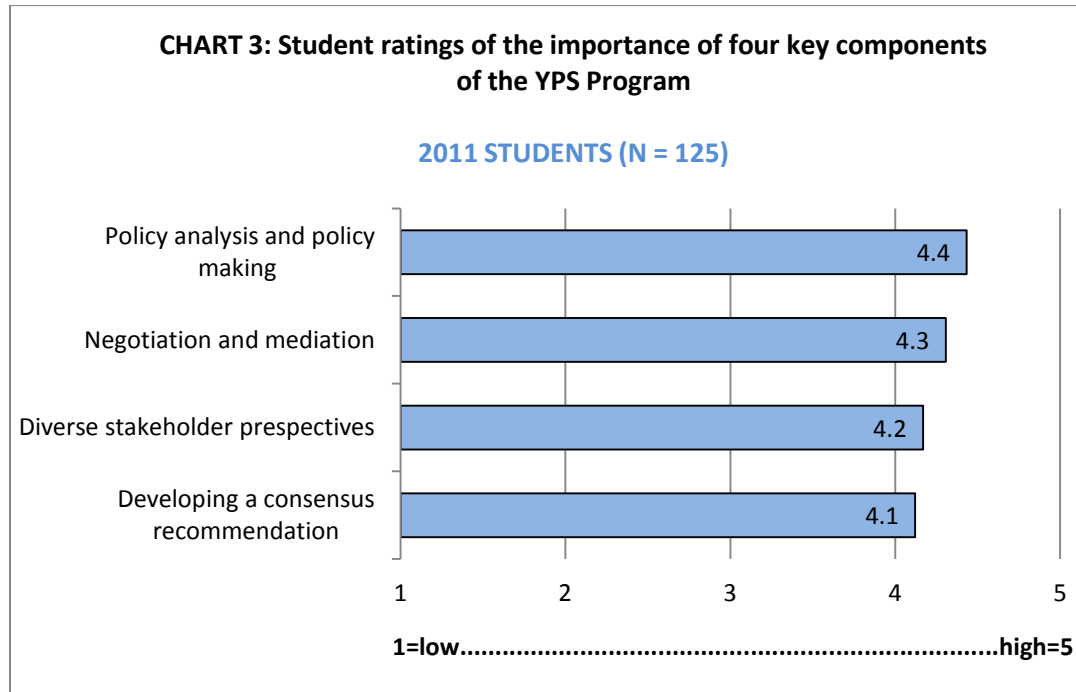
B. The ethnic diversity of YPS students has increased steadily over the program’s eight year history. The percent of all Summit students who self-reported that their ethnicity was other than Caucasian has increased significantly from 20% in 2004 to 64% in 2011, as illustrated in Chart 1.



C. The YPS program is effective for high school students in various grade levels. Analysis of YPS participant data found no substantial differences in student outcomes by grade level. However, the student ratings from the 2011 Summits that had higher percentages of freshman/sophomore participants were somewhat less positive on several aspects of the Summit experience than were the ratings from Summits with lower percentages of freshman/sophomore participants. It appears that the YPS program, while also beneficial for freshman/sophomore students, is most appropriate for rising high school juniors and seniors, due to the level of academic expectations and rigor of the Summit experience. Chart 2 shows the percentages of high school freshman/sophomores vs. high school juniors/seniors in each of the 2011 Summits.



D. Students highly valued the four key components of the program. The YPS program focuses on the four key components listed in Chart 3. Students consistently rated the four key components of the YPS program as highly or very highly important to them: *Policy analysis and policy making* (4.4 on a 5.0 scale); *Negotiation and mediation* (4.3 on a 5.0 scale); *Diversity of stakeholder perspectives* (4.2 on a 5.0 scale); and *Developing consensus recommendations* (4.1 on a 5.0 scale).



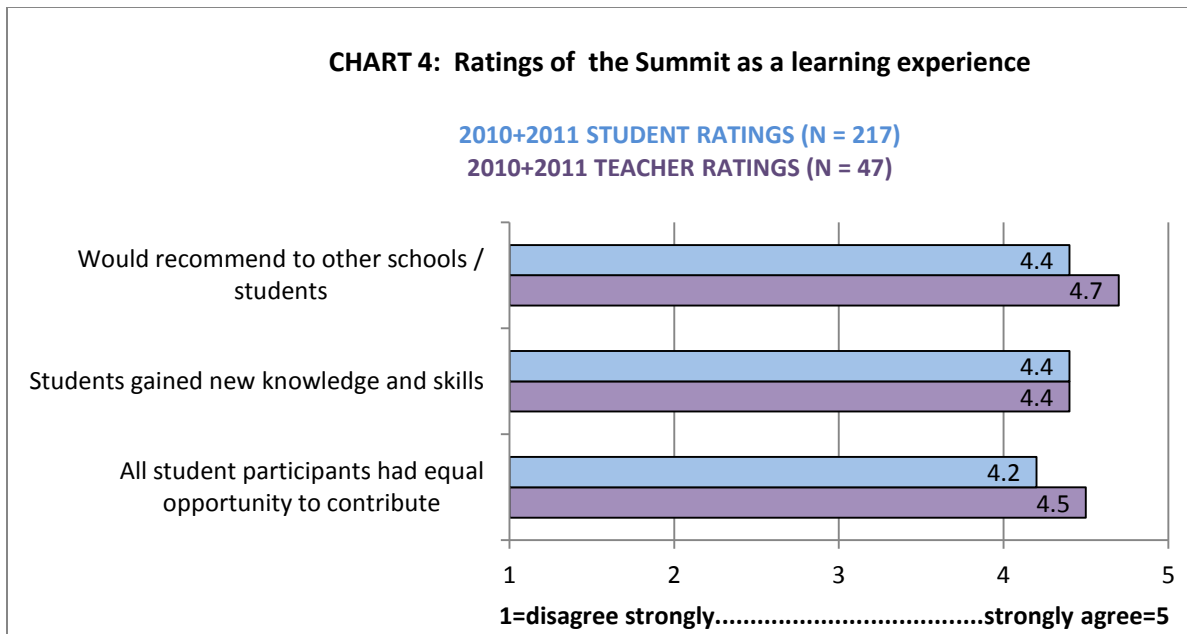
III. SUMMARY OF STUDENT OUTCOME FINDINGS

Evaluation results indicated that the YPS experience had many positive effects for student participants including the gain or increase of specific skills, knowledge, and positive personal attributes.

A. The YPS program is a valuable experience for students. Participating students and teachers rated the YPS program as a highly positive learning experience for students (4.5 or greater on a 5.0 scale). As shown in Chart 4, students and teachers said they would recommend the YPS program to other schools and students (4.4 or greater on a 5.0 scale). They believed that students gained new knowledge and skills through their participation in YPS (4.4 on a 5.0 scale), and they thought that all participating students had equal opportunities to contribute during the Summit experience (4.2 or greater on a 5.0 scale).

NOTE: In order to standardize the discussion of teacher and student Likert-scale responses throughout this report, the following terms are used to describe numeric response ranges for questionnaire items that used a 1.0 to 5.0 response scale.

- Very high = 4.5 to 5.0
- High = 4.0 to 4.4
- Moderately high = 3.5 to 3.9
- Moderate = 3.0 to 3.4
- Moderately low = 2.5 to 2.9
- Low = 2.0 to 2.4
- Very low = 1.5 to 1.9
- Lowest range = 1.0 to 1.4



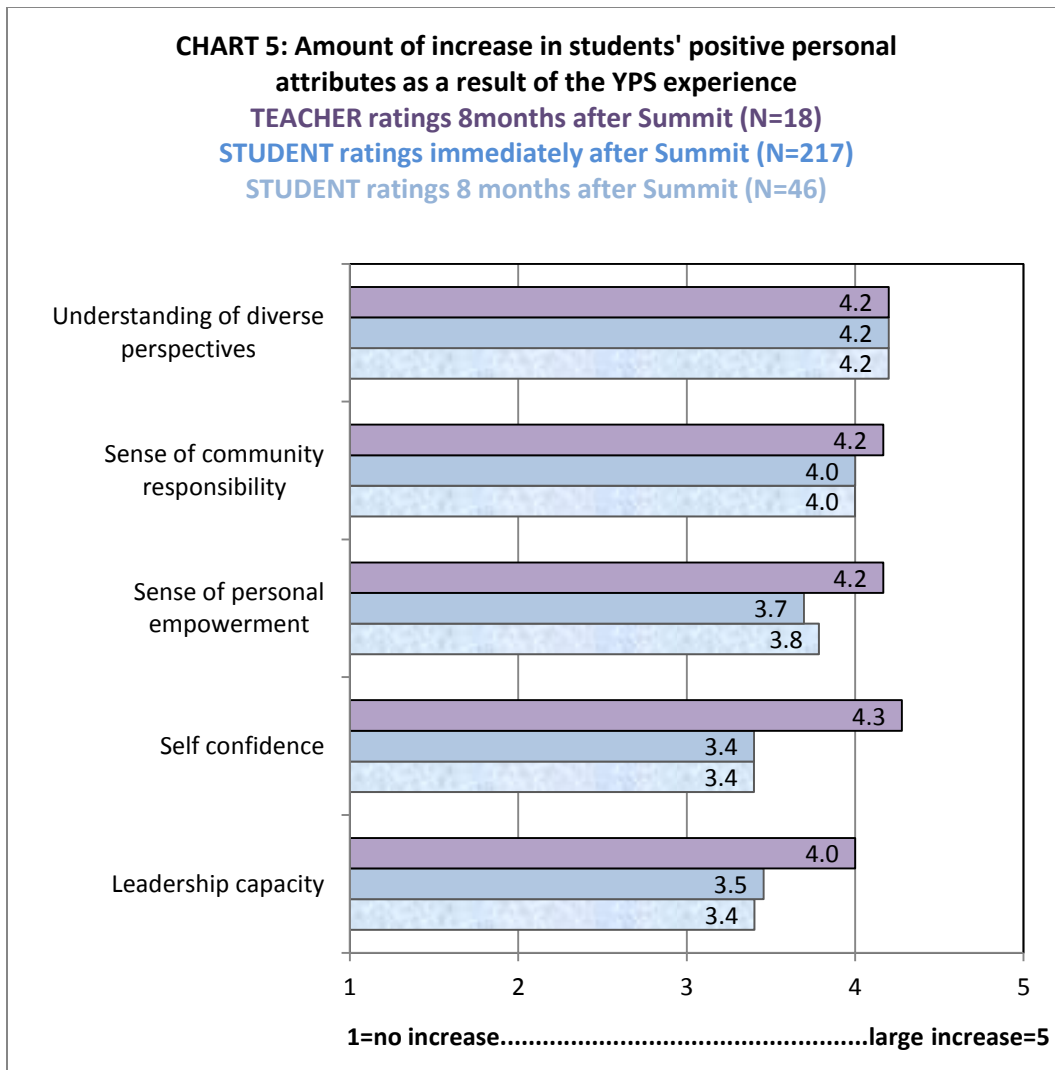
B. Students increased five positive personal attributes. Students and teachers agreed that students had made substantial gains in *Understanding of diverse perspectives; Sense of community responsibility; Personal empowerment; Self confidence; and Leadership capacity* as a result of participating in YPS. As shown in Chart 5, eight months after the Summit 2010 teachers said they had observed large increases in these personal attributes in their YPS students (from 4.0 to 4.3 on a 5.0 scale). Students agreed both immediately after the Summit and eight months after the Summit that their positive personal attributes had increased at moderate to high levels (from 3.4 to 4.2 on a 5.0 scale).

C. Students used their increased leadership capacities. Eight months after they had completed the 2010 Summit, students were asked to comment on how participation in YPS had affected them. A number of students offered comments related to their increased leadership skills and leadership activities resulting from their Summit experiences.

Example student comments illustrate how 2010 YPS participants had used their increased leadership capacities in various ways.

“I learned to break out of my comfort zone and explore areas of leadership and public speaking that I never knew existed.”

“For my university honors program, I am expected to create and lead my own project for an Honor’s Academy Leadership course. Currently, I am planning on discussing water quality issues in our local neighborhood at a local conference.”



D. Students gained or increased a broad range of knowledge and skills. When asked to comment on any knowledge or skills they had gained or increased through their YPS experiences, students described a wide range of knowledge and skills gained. Qualitative analysis of these student comments categorized them into four groups: *Working with others*; *Topic knowledge and research skills*; *Communication Skills*; and *Social skills*.

As shown in Table 1, in both 2010 and 2011 the greatest percentage of student comments concerned gains in knowledge and skills for *Working with Others* (40% and 54%). Also in both years, the second greatest percentage of comments concerned gains in *Topic Knowledge and Research Skills* (29% and 33%). The third largest percentage of comments described increases in *Communication Skills* (19% and 7%), followed by comments regarding gains in *Social Skills* (12% and 6%).

TABLE 1: Percents of student comments in various categories of knowledge and skills they gained or increased through YPS		
Knowledge / Skill Category	Percentage of all 2010 Comments	Percentage of all 2011 Comments
Working with Others	40%	54%
Topic Knowledge and Research Skills	29%	33%
Communication Skills	19%	7%
Social Skills	12%	6%

Example comments from 2011 Summit students are presented below in each of these four categories. Additional comments from 2010 YPS students on the knowledge and skills they gained are included in the 2010 evaluation report, available at www.youthpolicysummit.org.

Example 2011 Student comments about working with others:

"I learned how to see things from a different perspective than my own and focus more on winning together than just having one winner and no compromise."

"I learned how to properly and effectively negotiate with others. Meeting so many new people and learning about other stakeholders really helped me understand what needed to happen in order to benefit everyone."

"I learned that even though different people and groups have different ways of thinking we can all come together and come up with a solution."

Example 2011 Student comments about topic knowledge and research skills:

"I gained a lot more knowledge on water and how I can conserve it. I also learned many organizations that care for water or anything related to it."

"I gained a lot more information on all of the final topics we chose to present (tourism/ recreation, agriculture, invasive species, industry, wind and hydro, nuclear). Also I learned a lot about Michigan state government and the state as a whole."

"I didn't think that the policy on water would be so complex. Now I know that water pollution in rivers, lakes and oceans are not the only things to take into account when the U.S. deals with regulations, infrastructure, and saltwater intrusion."

"I learned about policy recommendations and how to write one."

"I learned how to better manage my time and I learned how to find better research."

Example 2011 Student comments about communication skills:

"I learned that you need to have your own base of knowledge to understand and to take the lead in what you want to say."

"I learned how to see from the perspective of those I don't agree with."

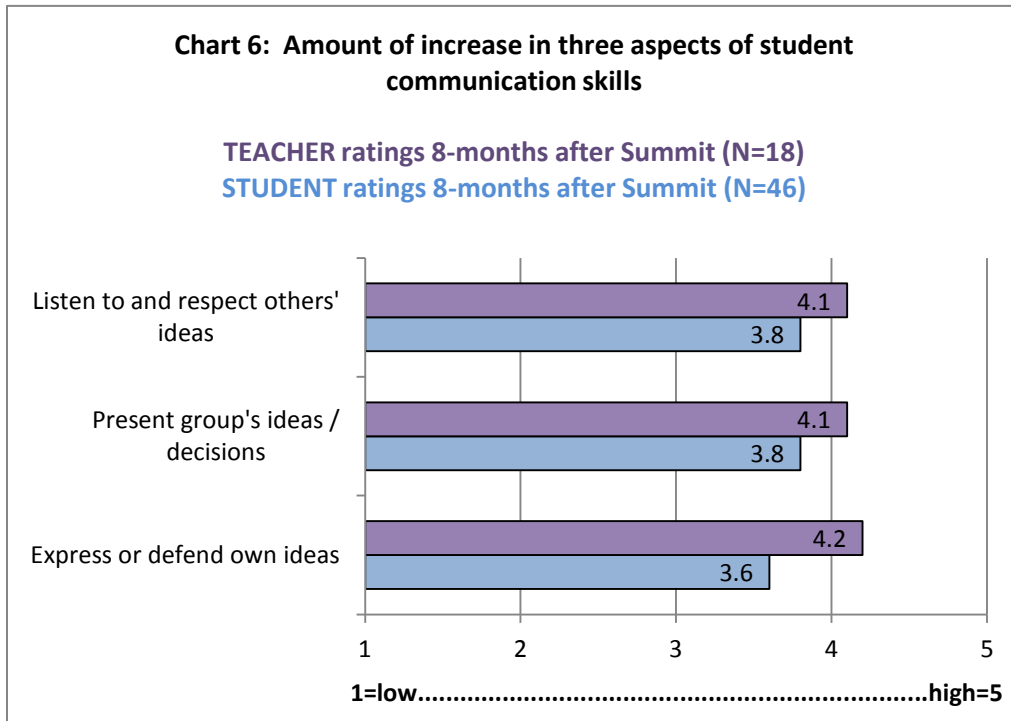
"I learned that it feels really good to come to the table with one opinion, but through the comments of others, leave the table with my eyes completely opened."

Example 2011 Student comments about social skills:

"I learned a lot in this program about myself and other people. I don't regret coming here and I will remember this experience for the rest of my life."

“YPS offers many different people coming from different ethnicity groups. Therefore, YPS is a great way to learn about people’s cultures and debate current events amongst our peers.”

E. Students increased and applied three important communication skills. Eight months after the Summit, teachers and students were asked about increases in three aspects of students’ communication skills. As shown in Chart 6, teachers said they had observed moderately high to high gains (4.1 or greater on a 5.0 scale) in YPS students’ abilities to *Listen to others*, *Express their own ideas*, and *Present their group’s ideas*. Student rated their own gains in these skills as moderately high (3.6 or greater on a 5.0 scale).



Example student and teacher comments illustrate some of the ways in which students have used these increased communication skills.

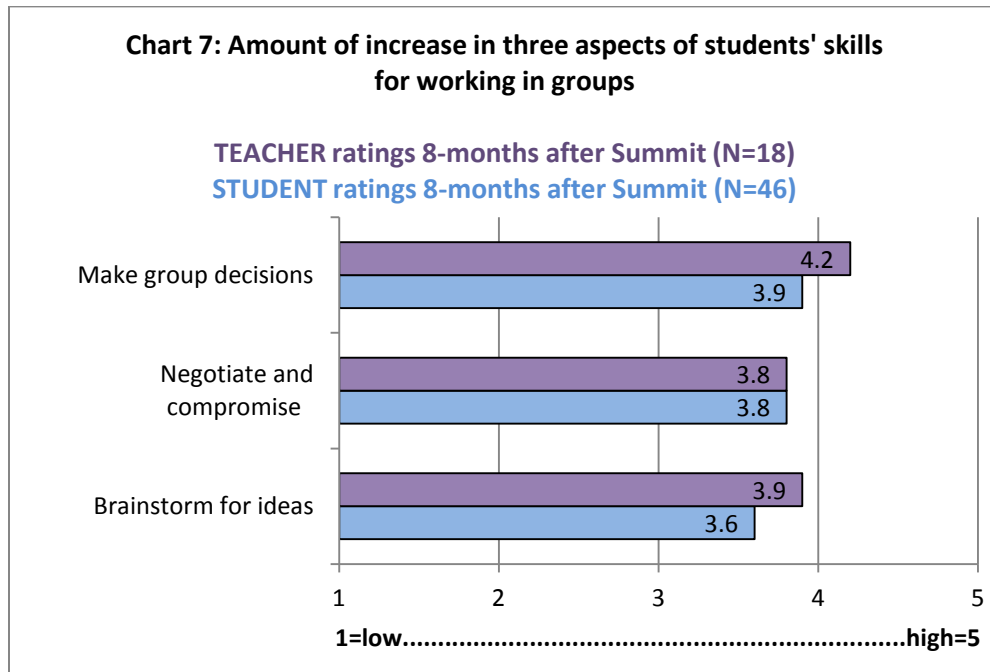
“I am better able to listen to other people’s ideas and compromise if we disagree. In my Science, Research, and Technology (SRT) class in school - we always work on group projects and often must compromise on the best way to complete the project.”

“When I do group projects now I speak more and am willing to present our research more easily.”

“The students used their policy recommendations to lobby other students and tried to change their minds about water policy.” (2010 Summit teacher)

F. Students increased and applied three important skills for working in groups. Eight months after the Summit, teachers and students were asked about increases in three aspects of students’ skills for working in groups. As shown in Chart 7, teachers had observed moderately high to high gains (from

3.8 to 4.2 on a 5.0 scale) in their YPS students' abilities to *Brainstorm for ideas*; *Negotiate and compromise*; and *Participate in group decision making*. Students rated their own gains in these skills as moderately high (from 3.6 to 3.9 on a 5.0 scale).



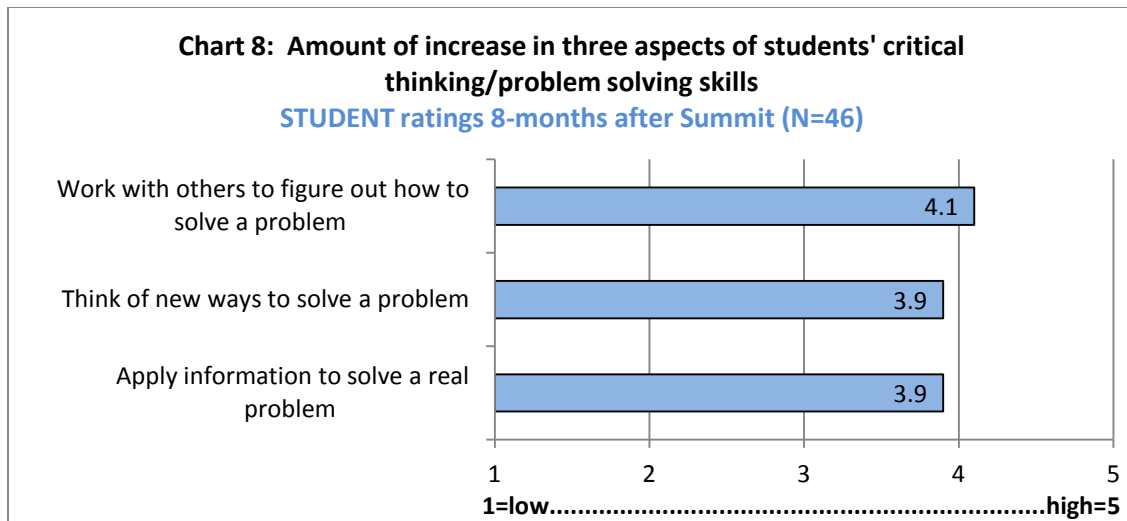
Example comments from 2010 YPS students illustrate ways in which students have used their increased skills for working in groups.

"I've used negotiation in club management, in class discussion, and in Model UN; it has really characterized my ability to mediate conflict, approach a problem with a level head, and facilitate action."

"As the president of a club at my school, I have used techniques in brainstorming that were fine tuned with my officers about ideas for community involvement and club activities."

"I used the skills learned at the summit during our robotics team. We all had ideas about the design, which all seemed completely different, but after we each listened to what the others had to say, we found that most of our ideas overlapped. We were able to work faster and more efficiently."

G. Students developed and applied problem solving / critical thinking skills. Eight months after the Summit, YPS students were asked about their gains in three aspects of problem solving / critical thinking skills. As shown in Chart 8, students rated their gains in skills for *Working with others to figure out how to solve a problem* as high (4.1 on a 5.0 scale). They rated their gains as moderately high for *Thinking of new ways to solve a problem* and *Applying information to solve a real problem* (3.9 on a 5.0 scale).



H. Students increased and applied their knowledge of the Summit’s environmental-societal topic.

Student and teacher comments emphasized the importance of the in-depth understanding students gained on their Summit’s topic.

“I’ve used our Summit report as a good source for building efficiency improvements for my school. It is something that makes financial sense and can be applied at the private (or local) level despite the national scope of such a topic.”

“I really learned that there were so many different aspects in energy policy and how much the US can actually do to create a greener environment.”

“Two of our students went to Washington DC to present with YPS and at our school they used their knowledge to help push forward some changes to make our school more sustainable.” (2010 Summit teacher)

I. The Summit influenced students’ academic decision making. Eight months after completing the 2010 Summit, YPS students were asked how much the Summit experience would influence their various academic decisions. Responses indicated that students would be influenced at a moderate level (from 3.0 to 3.4 on a 5.0 scale) when *Choosing a research topic; Applying to a college program; Considering a college major, or Applying for a scholarship*. Example comments offered by 2010 students revealed YPS influence on some of their academic decisions:

“YPS is part of the reason I’m considering going into law.”

“I learned so much about water quality and am interested in pursuing a chemistry major as an application to solving the problems the world faces with water quality and shortage.”

“I am looking towards a political major in college; YPS was a huge eye opener to the different possible things that I could influence in my future with the environment.”

J. Students gained awareness of careers and related industries. Eight months after the Summit, 2010 YPS students were asked how much the Summit experience would influence their thinking about: *Applying for an internship or job or Investigating a career or profession*. Responses indicated students

were influenced at a moderate level (3.3 on a 5.0 scale). Student comments revealed their increased awareness of careers and industries related to their Summit’s topic.

“I think that the YPS experience has helped me to better understand some of the career paths I might be interested in as well as how I can help to bring a new dimension to those careers. For example, if I become a scientist or an engineer exploring alternative sources of energy I believe the YPS summit will have prepared me to be able to then take this research and apply it to real world solutions presentable to the general public.”

“It was very interesting to think about and understand how major energy companies might envision the future and how these companies will likely lead the way to renewable energy sources in order to preserve their business.”

K. Students planned to share what they learned from their YPS experiences. 2010 Summit students and teachers were asked how important it would be, after the Summit, for students to share what they had learned. Teachers said it would be very important (4.9 on a 5.0 scale) and students said it would be important (4.4 on a 5.0 scale).

When asked to comment on ways in which they wanted to share what they had learned through their Summit experiences, 2011 YPS students described a range of ideas. Qualitative analysis of these student comments categorized them into four groups, as shown in Table 2: (a) *Outreach and presentations*; (b) *Taking further action*; (c) *Person-to-person interactions*; and (d) *Sharing specific learning*.

The greatest percentage of 2011 student comments about sharing what they had learned in YPS related to ideas about *Outreach and Presentations* (58%). The second greatest percentage of comments concerned students’ plans for *Taking Further Action* (17%). The third largest category described *Person-to-person Interactions* (13%), followed by comments regarding *Sharing of Specific Learning* (12%).

TABLE 2: Percents of 2011 student comments in various categories of ways they plan to share what they learned from participating in YPS	
Category	Percentage of all comments about sharing
(a) Outreach and presentations (presentations to school or community; sharing the written report of policy recommendations; other outreach)	58%
(b) Further action (be a change maker; implement ideas learned; other actions)	17%
(c) Person-to-person interaction (encourage peers to attend YPS; be active in YPS community; other interactions with peers)	13%
(d) Sharing specific learning (share/ use mediation practices; share topic knowledge; share other aspects of YPS learning)	12%

Example student comments from 2011 Summits in each of the four categories in Table 2 illustrate the range of student responses.

Example 2011 Student comments about sharing through outreach and presentations:

"With the other participants from my school, I'd like to either invite legislators to our school and present to them or travel to the state capital and present."

"I plan to publicize through my clubs and network with media people as I have before."

"I would love to share our 60-page paper we created with any California legislators."

"Through presenting our report to local community organizations and schoolboard. Also presenting what I learned to the research departments of major colleges in my state."

Example 2011 Student comments about taking further action:

"Once I get back home, I plan on trying to organize my block to invest in renewable energy. Wind power was proposed before, but was shot down by the city council. Solar power, however, was not tried yet."

"I definitely want to get more involved with the green movement at my school and at the local level in general."

"I plan to get in touch with various environmental organizations over this summer and volunteer."

Example 2011 Student comments about sharing through person-to-person interactions:

"I would like to get my school, community, and family involved in these issues because I really feel that we are capable and very close to making a difference."

"I will spread the work in my school and to my family members who are of age to join in, also people who work with me at the museum."

Example 2011 Student comments about sharing specific learning:

"I want to share the perspectives I've gained---how there is no one future or right path for the nation, and truly everyone needs to contribute to that future."

"I'd like to let my higher confidence + mediation skills come through in all of my activities: band, baseball, track, etc."

IV. PROGRAM ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE 2012 SUMMITS

YPS makes program adaptations in response to program evaluation findings (see also the 2010 YPS evaluation report available at www.youthpolicysummit.org). Several program changes planned for the 2012 Summits include:

A. Student Pre-Summit Research. When asked about the value of the various aspects of the YPS experience, students gave lower ratings to the *Pre-Summit research* and *Student presentations of pre-Summit research* than they gave for other aspects of the YPS program. To create a more engaging and positive experience for students, YPS staff members are restructuring the pre-Summit research assignments as well as the approach to student sharing of their research findings with their YPS peers.

B. Student Social Interaction. Students and teachers have frequently commented on the social benefits of the YPS program and the value students place on the friendships they develop through YPS.

To enhance this aspect of the program, all 2012 Summits will be held in residential settings to increase the time available for structured and informal student social interactions.

C. Grade-levels of YPS Student Participants. Evaluation findings, as well as the experience of YPS staff members, indicate that the YPS program is most beneficial for older high school students. Going forward, YPS recruitment strategies will focus primarily on rising high school juniors and seniors, as they generally are better prepared for the work involved and level of understanding required to thoroughly benefit from the Summit experience.

V. OVERALL SUMMARY OF YPS EVALUATION FINDINGS

The Youth Policy Summit (YPS) program of The Keystone Center (Keystone) is a multi-faceted educational immersion experience that brings high school students together in a group learning environment to analyze a contemporary, science-intensive policy issue.

The program has grown substantially over its eight year history and has served a total of 682 ethnically diverse students from more than 70 schools in 23 states. The YPS program is effective for high school students in various grade levels, but is most effective for rising juniors and seniors.

The YPS program is a valuable experience for students. Participating students and teachers rated the YPS program as a highly positive learning experience for students (4.5 or greater on a 5.0 scale). Both students and teachers agreed that they would recommend the YPS program to other schools and students (4.4 or greater on a 5.0 scale).

Students placed high value on the four key components of the program: *Policy analysis and policy making* (4.4 on a 5.0 scale); *Negotiation and mediation* (4.3 on a 5.0 scale); *Diversity of stakeholder perspectives* (4.2 on a 5.0 scale); and *Developing consensus recommendations* (4.1 on a 5.0 scale).

The YPS experience produces a broad range of knowledge and skill outcomes for participating students including increases in five positive personal attributes: *Understanding diverse perspectives*; *Sense of community responsibility*; *Sense of personal empowerment*; *Self confidence*; and *Leadership capacity*. After their YPS experience, students reported that they were applying these increased personal attributes in a range of academic, community, and personal situations.

“Whenever I work in group projects with my classmates, I look back on my YPS experience and utilize those skills that I learned there. I am a stronger leader because of it and am much more willing to step up in my everyday and school life.”

YPS students increased and applied important communication skills. Both students and teachers thought that students had made substantial gains in their abilities to *Listen to and respect others’ ideas*; *Present a group’s ideas*; and *Express or defend their own ideas*. Students offered comments that illustrated ways in which they were applying these increased communication skills.

“After this experience I feel that I have the ability to formulate ideas and express them clearly in a short amount of time.”

“I learned to speak my mind more freely. I learned to argue for my opinions.”

Students also increased and applied important skills for working in groups. Both students and teachers thought that students had made substantial gains in their abilities to *Make groups decisions; Negotiate and compromise; and Brainstorm for ideas*. Students offered comments that illustrated a wide range of ways in which they were applying these increased skills for working in groups.

"I'm glad to say that the mediation training that I received while at YPS plays a role in nearly every argument or discussion that I'm in today."

"I think learning to work with others and contribute ideas to reach a common consensus was the most important. The experience was unlike any I've ever had in a classroom, and prepared me for similar situations that I will encounter later in life in my career."

YPS students developed and applied critical thinking / problem solving skills including: *Apply information to solve a real problem; Think of new ways to solve a problem; and Work with others to figure out how to solve a problem*. Student comments revealed that they were using these problem solving skills in academic, extracurricular, and personal situations.

"Through participation in the YPS I am able to research/gather information better, work with others to find a solution more efficiently."

Students increased and applied their knowledge of the Summit's environmental-societal topic, and the YPS experience increased their awareness of related industries. Some students commented that the Summit was influencing their academic decisions such as *Applying to a particular college or Applying for a scholarship* as well as their exploration of various career possibilities related to their Summit's topic.

"I think that the YPS experience has helped me to better understand some of the career paths I might be interested in as well as how I can help to bring a new dimension to those careers."

Students planned to share what they had learned through their YPS experiences both within their own schools and in their communities and states through: *Outreach and presentations; Further Action; Person-to-person interactions; and Sharing specific learning*.

"I have used this knowledge in determining what project I should undertake to improve the community as a whole. Since water quality is a diverse issue in which every community member is a stakeholder, I believe this could potentially spur community awareness and action."

In summary, program evaluation results show that the YPS program provides valuable learning experiences from which students are gaining important knowledge and 21st century skills applicable in their current and future academic, community, and personal lives.