

Keystone Youth Policy Summit

Sitting in a room at the Keystone Science School, LASA seniors Elaine Hung, Avery Garza, Cameron Thum and Megan Mattson participate in an environmental policy deliberation. In June the students participated in a youth policy summit regarding energy innovation and policy.

“The objective of the summit was to learn about energy policy,” Hung said. “We had to not only learn about it, but also discuss and debate different policy recommendations. The topic was energy innovation, so the problem posed was basically what can we do to improve the energy in the US in the next 50 years, and set goals for that.”

During the summit, the students were required to design and debate a policy that incorporated a multitude of ideas and perspectives. Some positions to consider in making their plans included government and environmental agencies, stakeholders, oil companies as well as private business owners. Garza said that the students went through a lot of mediation training to be able to compromise with all of the different perspectives.

“I learned so much during the summit,” Garza said. “Not only do I have a basic understanding of many more energy sources that can and are being used, I feel like I came from the summit with a greater understanding of how environmental policy actually works. I definitely realized how exactly I can see an issue from other points of view in order to make the best possible decision for everyone involved.”

The creation of the final policies involved many steps. After making final policies, the students went over small details and redrafted the policies in small groups. Later, these new drafts were discussed and aspects of the policies were deliberated. Although it was a long process, Thum said that all of their hard work paid off.

“After spending a week drafting and debating and revising our final policy recommendation, it felt like a huge weight was relieved when we finally submitted it,” Thum said. “There was a lot of

pressure to complete the recommendation in those last days, but getting to look over all of our work later was such a great reward."

The purpose of the summit was not to create ideas that will only work in theory, but to provide reasonable suggestions that can benefit the community. There are steps that each community can take to improve energy conditions, which Avery Garza said she hopes will happen at LBJ.

"One of the last things we talked about in Colorado was what we were all planning to do in terms of taking action in the community," Garza said. "I think it did heighten my awareness of environmental issues at a policy level and has pushed me to see what all needs to happen in order for real change to occur."

All four students are current members of the LASA Environmental Club. They said they hope the club focuses on making changes that they discussed in the summit.

"Hopefully we'll try to promote renewable energy and more energy-efficient appliances. Currently, we are trying to work on sustainability, so we have the garden beds by the tennis courts and compost as well."