



Teen Conference traditionally serves three pivotal objectives:

- 1) To bring WA 4-H Teens together to share and advance their social, career and leadership interests.
- 2) To encourage young people to consider post-secondary educational avenues of success.
- 3) To increase familiarity with the WSU campus and increase the likelihood that they will attend WSU.

Challenge and Opportunity:

The 4-H Teen Conference had not been held since 2016 in Washington. For several years, members of the 4-H Adolescent Leadership Committee have advocated for the establishment of a State Teen Event Coordinator (STEC) who could guide and mentor a motivated group of teens in planning and delivering an on-campus State Teen Conference in Pullman, for their peers. In addition, the ALDC has supported the efforts of WSU Extension to increase opportunities for diverse youth to engage with 4-H programming.

Response:

Beginning in 2022, the State 4-H Director provided support for a team of youth and 4-H staff to attend the Idaho "STAC Conference." Teens used this experience as a primer and example from which the WA State 4-H Program could rebuild a contemporary and successful WA 4-H Teen Conference program.

Thirteen Washington State 4-H teens and three staff established the core planning committee for a 2023 WSU State Teen conference. They were instrumental in partnering with faculty and staff to create and deliver a three-day conference that included campus living, career and university recruitment workshops and social and leadership development opportunities. This was a demonstrated youth-adult partnership that fully engaged the voices of the teens in program development.

94%

of the teens cited that the Conference was a positive experience for them

32%

of whom gave it the highest possible positive rating

The State 4-H Director in cooperation with WSU CAHNRS Extension secured funds to contribute financially to establish the vital role of an event coordinator. The STEC directed the planning efforts of the teens, coordinated with other contributing 4-H staff and faculty, and secured necessary partnerships with university programs and administration. Coordination of multiple agreements for housing, food and events were managed by this individual. The planning committee prepared the agenda for the conference and provided online orientation sessions for chaperones and attendees. (The STEC was a 4-H Administrative Professional, a member of the Adolescent Leadership Development Committee, and experienced in delivering the adolescent leadership curriculum, "Facilitate the Awesome.")

Supporting a Welcoming Environment:

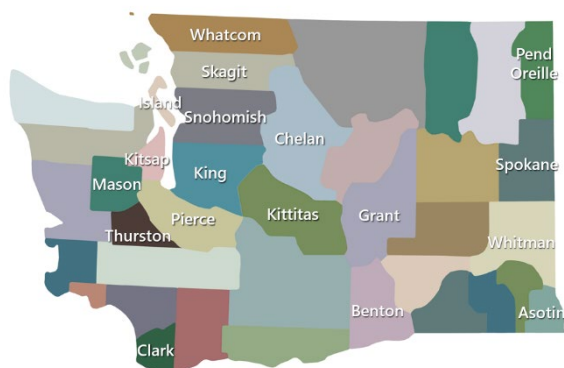
Priority invitations were made to the WSU Latinx Juntos program, and several GEAR UP groups in southeastern Washington, which increased the Hispanic attendance at the State Teen Conference to 21%. (The current population of enrolled Hispanic 4-H members statewide is about 7% of the enrolled 4-H population, which is 19% lower than the number of Hispanic youth enrolled in Washington's public schools.) The faculty and the keynote speaker offered activities encouraging youth to "step out of their comfort zones," have "brave conversations," and learn about new and different people. Adult verbal and experiential support in this process, and having representative staff of color in support roles at the event, helped make this a meaningful experience for our Hispanic participants, some of whom are eager to serve on next year's planning committee.



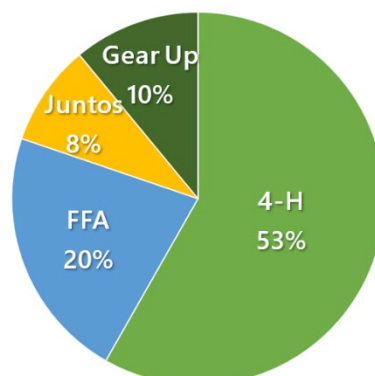
Who Was Served:

The overall demographic of registration for attendees is as follows:

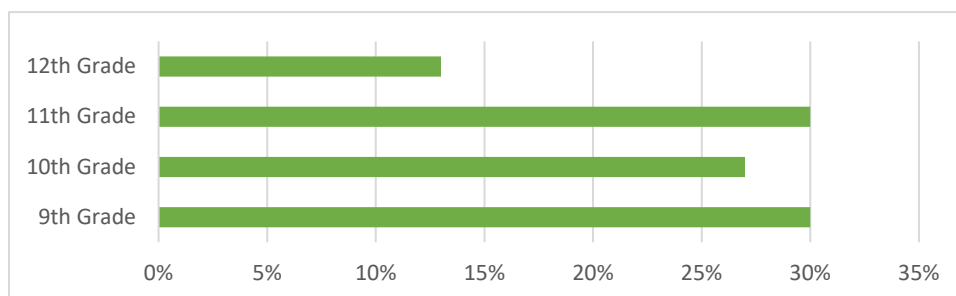
For four days in late June, 105 youth and 33 adult resources (a ratio of 1:3) attended from across the state.



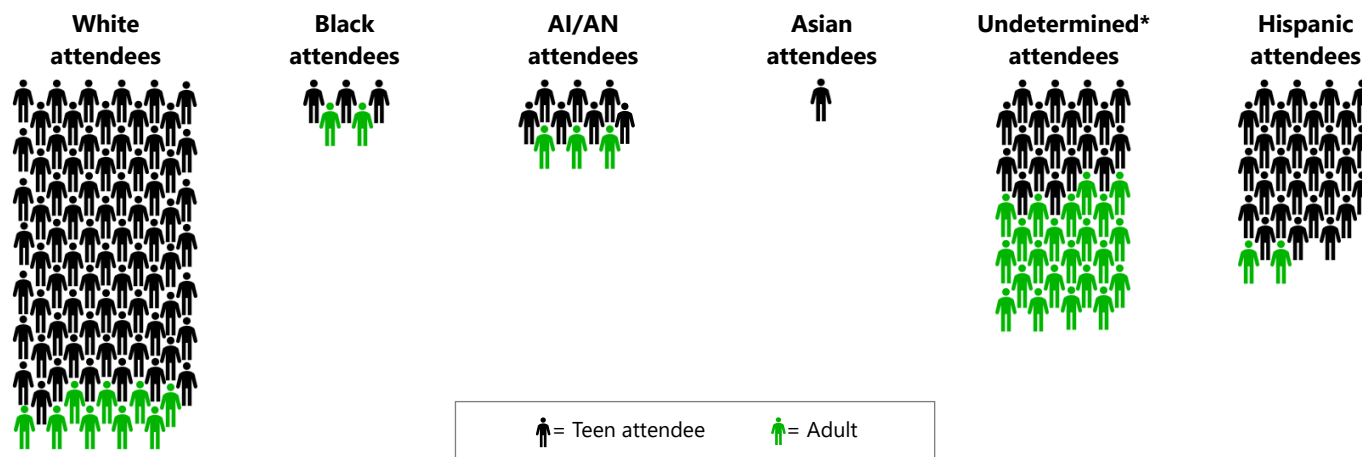
Counties that attended conference.



Youth programs that attended conference.



Grades that attended conference.



WSU demographics would indicate the 22 undetermined adults were predominantly white staff.

Impacts:

Objective 1:

To bring WA 4-H Teens together to share and advance their social, career and leadership interests.

Teens were asked about their most valuable personal experiences at conference, and these were loosely categorized into three domains: About 65% identified specific new experiences: including workshops, tours, social events, college living; about 44% said they were meeting new people and making new friends, and about 39% said they picked up new skills, particularly related to leadership and college preparation. Of the 61 respondents who cited personal experiences, 44% had a combination of two or more of these categories.

Objective 2:

To encourage young people to consider post-secondary educational avenues of success.

Selected and popular conference workshops included: money management, interviewing skills, stress management, using AI and Chat GPT, and careers in agriculture. The conference also included educational/career-oriented tours to engineering labs, emergency services, livestock production, food technology, Morrow College, and the School of Veterinary Medicine. A tabling event for the WSU colleges was included on the final day of the conference.



Youth Advocates for Health teaching nutrition.

Objective 3:

To increase familiarity with the WSU campus and increase the likelihood that they will attend WSU.

As a result of their 2023 WA State 4-H Teen Conference experience, based on the pre-post retrospective survey, the students considering attending WSU more than doubled, from 13% to 28%. The number of youth who said they would not attend WSU dropped from 47% to 15%.

Thirty-five percent of the conference attendees, should they all choose to attend a post-secondary institution, would be 1st generation college students.



Futuring:

The following intentional actions increased the success of having a summer teen conference:

- 1) Administrative support, including the assignment of a State Teen Event Coordinator
- 2) Teen involvement at all levels of planning the event
- 3) The support of many of the educational programs and resources contained in the College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resources
- 4) Intentional funding and support of diverse youth and their support staff
- 5) Intentional efforts to encourage and support teens in bridging to new experiences

