



Racine County Youth in Governance 2019-2020 Program Report (Group 6)

The Racine County Board of Supervisors and University of Wisconsin-Madison, Extension Racine County faculty launched the Youth in Governance Program in 2013 with the goal to create a model of youth empowerment through direct participation in local government. Oversight for the Youth in Governance Program rests with the Racine County Government Services Committee.

The main objective of the Youth in Governance Program is to bring youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, independent, and motivated youth leaders. Teachers, coaches, civic leaders, and youth program staff nominate youth who demonstrate leadership and an interest in civic engagement.



Youth in Governance Members (2019-2020)

Back Row: Jarrett Janes, Zachary Eifert, Katlynn Gill, Melody Dunk-Chapman, Jillian Humphreys, and Abbas Bader;
Front Row: Keilani Trujillo, Eric Morocco, Marissa Bray, Sophia Higgs, Diya Mehra, and Vincent Pulice

Youth Participants and Mentors by Committee Assignment

Economic Development and Land Use Planning

Youth Participants: Jarrett Janes and Vincent Pulice

Mentor: Thomas Roanhouse

Finance and Human Resources

Youth Participants: Zachary Eifert and Keilani Trujillo

Mentors: Robert Miller and Brett Nielsen

Government Services

Youth Participants: Melody Dunk-Chapman and Eric Morocco

Mentors: Janet Bernberg and Melissa Kaprelian

Health and Human Development

Youth Participants: Marissa Bray and Diya Mehra

Mentors: Kay Buske and Scott Maier

Public Works, Parks, and Facilities

Youth Participants: Marissa Gill and Jillian Humphreys

Mentors: Mike Dawson and Tom Hincz

Youth Recruitment

- Information about the Youth in Governance Program was sent to various school contacts during December 2018. County Board members met with school administrators and staff to promote the program and explain the nomination process. Other recruitment efforts included a news release and outreach to youth-serving organizations and homeschool contacts.
- Twenty-one nominators nominated 66 youth. The distributions included 9 freshman, 12 sophomores, and 45 juniors. Nominators were affiliated with Hispanic Roundtable, Jerome I. Case High School, Union Grove High School, Racine County 4-H, St. Catherine's High School, The Prairie School, Walden III High School, Washington Park High School, SAFE Haven of Racine, Burlington High School, Waterford Union High School, Racine Youth Sports, Krampitz Academy, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Catholic Central High School, and Parent and Veteran Outreach.
- All nominees were asked to submit a written application in order to be considered for interviews. Twenty-four youth submitted applications and eighteen youth were interviewed. Interviewed youth participants included 10 females and 8 males. Ten youth representatives were selected to serve. Of the ten youth selected to serve, six are female and four are male. Two alternates were selected to serve as well, one is female and one is male.

Program Outcomes

Impacts were measured in the areas of *Civic Engagement* and *Leadership*, both quantitatively and qualitatively, through a retrospective survey that was distributed to ten youth representatives via email. Of those youth, six completed the full survey. The indicators in which respondents showed the most growth are summarized in this report.

Civic Engagement

Participation in the program positively impacted the youths' perception of their own knowledge of Racine County government. An increase in the average value for all of the eight questions related to Civic Engagement was experienced. After participation in the program, youth indicated the following.

- An increase in knowledge of Racine County government and a greater awareness of local issues that affect Racine County.
- An increased feeling that their opinions make a difference in the community.
- A strong connection to Racine County.
- Youth representatives are considering a future career related to government or public service.
- Youth representatives felt welcomed and supported by their mentors, fellow committee members, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Extension Racine County Office.
- Their opinions were respected, and they were encouraged to share their thoughts with committee members.

Leadership

Participation in the program positively impacted the youth's perception of their leadership skills. An increase in the average value for five of the six questions related to Leadership was experienced as a result of participation in the Youth in Governance Program. Youth indicated they grew in the following areas.

- Ability to talk knowledgeably with others about local issues in Racine County.
- Being a resource to people in Racine County.
- Participate in group discussions with adults
- Seeing issues from multiple perspectives.
- Preparation for future leadership opportunities.

Many of the youth entered their Youth in Governance role with leadership experience and skills. Self-evaluation of their ability to see issues from multiple perspectives, taking responsibility for their decisions, and sharing new ideas with others, only increased slightly or remained the same because these were perceived as existing skills.

BEFORE Participating in Youth In Gov.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Value
I was knowledgeable about Racine County government.	2	3	1	-	-	1.83
I was aware of local issues that affect Racine County.	1	-	4	1	-	2.83
My opinion could make a difference in the community.	1	1	1	2	1	3.16
I felt comfortable in group settings with people of mixed ages.	1	-	-	4	1	3.67
I felt a strong connection to Racine County.	1	1	1	2	1	3.16
I had a useful role in the community I live in.	1	1	2	2	1	3.14*
I was likely to seek other leadership roles.	1	-	1	3	1	3.5
I was thinking of a career related to government or public service.	1	2	1	1	1	2.83

AFTER Participating in Youth In Gov.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Value
I am knowledgeable about Racine County government.	-	-	-	3	3	4.5
I am aware of local issues that affect Racine County.	-	-	-	2	4	4.67
My opinion can make a difference in the community.	-	-	-	2	4	4.67
I feel comfortable in group settings with people of mixed ages.	-	-	-	1	5	4.83
I feel a strong connection to Racine County.	-	-	-	2	4	4.67
I have a useful role in the community I live in.	-	-	-	3	3	4.5
I am likely to seek other leadership roles.	-	-	-	3	3	4.5
I am thinking of a career related to government or public service.	-	-	3	-	3	4.0

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

How did the Youth in Governance Program create an environment conducive to allowing for youth voice and engagement?

“All of my committee members were very welcoming and invited us to partake in discussions.”

“I was empowered and encouraged to speak up and share my views.”

“The committee chairman and members of the committee were very encouraging towards my participation in the meetings. I’ve been approached by several members of the committee and county staff who said that they appreciated my involvement in the meeting. That to me shows a strong commitment to including youth voices in the discussion.”

“The YIG group meetings were an environment that I believe every member felt comfortable voicing their ideas and opinions. We accomplished so much. The committee meetings also were great for allowing this, because the adults made sure to allow the YIG representatives to ask questions or comment without feeling as if they interrupted (the meeting).”

*One youth checked two responses.

BEFORE Participating in Youth In Governance	Unsure	No Ability	Some Ability	Good Ability	Excellent Ability	Average Value
I could share new ideas with others.	-	-	-	4	2	4.25
I could participate in group discussions with adults.	-	-	1	3	2	3.75
I could see issues from multiple perspectives.	-	-	-	5	1	4.0
I was confident in taking responsibility for my decisions.	-	-	-	3	3	4.5
I could talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	-	3	1	2	-	1.25
I could be a resource to people in Racine County.	-	2	3	1	-	1.5

AFTER Participating in Youth In Governance	Unsure	No Ability	Some Ability	Good Ability	Excellent Ability	Average Value
I can share new ideas with others.	-	-	-	2	4	4.5
I can participate in group discussions with adults.	-	-	-	2	4	4.5
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	-	-	-	1	5	4.75
I am confident in taking responsibility for my decisions.	-	-	-	2	4	4.5
I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	-	-	2	1	3	3.25
I can be a resource to people in Racine County.	-	-	2	1	3	3.5

“I now know more about Racine County, and I know that our county government works well, which gives me hope considering that not every level of government works as well and efficiently as our county government.”

LEADERSHIP

Did the Youth in Governance Program prepare you for future leadership opportunities?

“I believe that YIG will aid me in my pursuit of other government related positions. It also will make me feel more comfortable in taking on other leadership positions because I feel successful in this one.”

“It allowed me to observe and learn from our leaders and gain insight into what a good leader is, does, and how they do things.”

“With the ability to participate in group discussion during both my committee meetings and youth representative meetings, I could have a voice and state my opinions or thoughts on certain things.”

“By participating in the program, I was able to be a part of a group larger than myself, with people from various walks of life. The projects we worked on helped me develop skills to delegate tasks, to work with others for a greater good. Those are some of the key skills that this program promotes.”

The results below, which probed for change in the civic engagement of the youth, are based on a five-unit scale that included “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “uncertain”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”.

<i>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</i>	# OF YOUTH REPORTING NO CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 1 UNIT OF POSITIVE CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 2+ UNITS OF POSITIVE CHANGE
I am knowledgeable about Racine County government.	0	0	6
I am aware of local issues that affect Racine County.	0	3	3
My opinion can make a difference in the community.	1	3	2
I feel comfortable in group settings with people of mixed ages.	2	3	1
I have a strong connection to Racine County.	1	3	2
I have a useful role in the community that I live in.	2	3	2*
I am likely to seek other leadership roles.	3	2	1
I am thinking of a career related to government or public service.	2	3	1

*One youth checked more than one box.

The results below, which probed for the change in leadership skills of the youth, are based on a five-unit scale that included “no ability”, “some ability”, “unsure”, “good ability”, and “excellent ability”.

<i>LEADERSHIP SKILLS</i>	# OF YOUTH REPORTING NO CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 1 UNIT OF POSITIVE CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 2+ UNITS OF POSITIVE CHANGE
I can share new ideas with others.	4	2	0
I can participate in group discussions with adults.	3	3	0
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	2	4	0
I am confident in taking responsibility for my decisions.	5	1	0
I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	1	4	1
I can be a resource to people in Racine County.	1	3	2

Supportive Environment

The youth felt supported in their role and were particularly grateful to their mentors and committee supervisors. Below are several positive comments youth shared about the supportive environment provided for them during their term of service.

“My mentor supported me by answering questions and by helping me understand what was going on.”

“Janet Bernberg was with me at committee meetings and was there if I needed an answer to a question or an explanation.”

“Pam Larson was always so enthusiastic and helpful. She conducted the group meetings, but also allowed plenty of time for representatives to discuss amongst themselves.”

“I think every member of the committee and every member of the county staff have supported me at one time or another while I was on the committee. Everyone was always patient and willing to share their knowledge and expertise with me.”

“All of my committee members were very welcoming and invited us to partake in discussions.”

Outreach Beyond Committee Assignments

THE ESSENTIALS OF VOTING
KEYS TO FULFILLING YOUR CIVIC DUTY

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO VOTE?

To vote in the state of Wisconsin, you must be a legal US citizen, at least 18 years old, and registered to vote. On Election Day, all voters must bring a Voter ID to prove their identity.

WHERE DO YOU REGISTER TO VOTE?

There are four different places that you can register to vote: online, at your municipal clerk's office, by mail, and at your polling place on Election Day.

ABSENTEE VOTING

Can't make it to the polls on Election Day? You're in luck! With an absentee ballot, you can vote from the comfort of your own house. All you need to do is fill out a 1 page form to get your ballot mailed to you! Find the link below!

VOTING RESOURCES

<https://www.isideswith.com/> (Political Ideology Quiz)
<https://myvote.wi.gov> (Information about your ballot, voting location, how to register to vote, and more)
<https://www.wisconsin.gov/Pages/government.aspx> (Information about your local elected officials and other voting information)
<https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/VoteAbsentee> (Request an Absentee Ballot)

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Spring Election - April 7, 2020
 Partisan Primary - August 11, 2020
 General Election - November 3, 2020

"NOBODY WILL EVER DEPRIVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE EXCEPT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES; THE ONLY WAY THEY COULD DO THIS IS BY NOT VOTING." - FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

When challenged to think about a need in Racine County, the Youth in Governance representatives unanimously decided to educate Racine County high school juniors and seniors on the essentials of voter registration. In particular, the Youth in Governance representatives wanted to share with juniors and seniors information not only about how to register to vote, but also the importance of exercising one's right to vote. At no time were youth promoting any specific political party. The youth met as a team, conducted research about the essentials of voter registration, created a slideshow presentation, designed an informational pamphlet, and created an evaluation survey. Youth representatives met with building administrators at their respective schools. School administrators indicated that the information youth representatives wanted to share with their peers was valuable. Presentation dates were set at a few schools when Governor Evers enacted the shelter-at-home order. Therefore, youth were unable to present to their peers. Copies of the pamphlet they created were sent to the Wisconsin Election Commission for possible distribution through their office.

The youth representatives presented to the Racine County Board in May. Supervisors shared with the youth that they were impressed with the information contained in their presentation as well as the pamphlet that was created. It was stated that the pamphlet looked professionally done.



Besides the voter registration project, youth representatives worked with Kerry Milkie, Manager of the Family and Youth Division of Racine County Human Services, and Emily Brands, Social Worker for Racine County Child Protective Services, to determine how to refurbish the supervised visitation room at the Dennis Kornwolf Service Center. In order to make informed decisions, youth representatives read informational articles provided by Kerry Milkie, participated in a Trauma Informed training session, discussed the needs and challenges of the current visitation room with Kerry

Milkie, and toured the site. After much discussion and consideration, Youth in Governance representatives made recommendations regarding general room layout, walls, storage, and toys and activities by age level for the supervised visitation room. Youth representatives provided approximate costs for each item they recommended. Computer renderings were created to visually represent their recommendations.

Overall Program Recommendations

Youth and County Supervisors made several recommendations in writing or verbally to the Extension Racine County Youth Development Extension Educator regarding the current Youth in Governance Program.

- Dedicate ample time in orientation about the procedures of formal meetings. It takes time for youth to understand committee meeting procedures.
- Include committee specific governmental terms in the orientation.
- Stress to youth the importance of asking questions and sharing their thoughts and opinions during committee meetings.
- Encourage mentors to send an email or contact their Youth in Governance mentee before a meeting to discuss key terms, explain meeting agenda items, and explain confusing topics.
- Have an initial meeting, in addition to the orientation and tour, to create a space for program participants and mentors to connect.
- Involve future Youth in Governance representatives in County Board meetings.



Racine County Youth in Governance is a program of the Racine County Board of Supervisors in partnership with Extension Racine County. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX and ADA requirements.