

WAE4-HYDP SPECIALTY: Citizenship in 4-H Youth Development

1. Goals and Objectives (25 points)

More than one third of high school students in the U.S. do not have a basic understanding of democratic citizenship and government. Therefore, they lack the skills to competently participate as informed citizens. In addition, it has been found that lack of civic knowledge and skills decreases the likelihood of engagement in community education (Van Camp, 2016). Every summer, high school students from across the country travel to Washington, D.C. to participate in Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF) to learn how to be citizen leaders and make a difference in their communities. Young people in Wisconsin, however, are offered an additional opportunity to develop their sense of citizenship and learn about historical events that shaped the country. The 4-H American Spirit Experience is designed to introduce youth to and develop this knowledge, provide opportunities to practice citizenship skills and foster skills that can be applied in their own communities.

According to Sherrod (2003), “key to the development of citizenship is identification with the nation state, so that the country becomes the social reference group for the development of political attitudes, and attitudes then function to promote participation as a citizen in the country” (p. 287). Unlike local citizenship programming, the 4-H American Spirit Experience engages youth on-site of national decision making events and provides the opportunity for participants to learn about the people and places that shaped this country’s governing ideals. In addition to providing youth with a greater sense of national citizenship, this experience offers the opportunity for youth to identify role models in civic leadership, an important connection because Sherrod’s (2003) found “the lack of role models involved in civic experiences decreases the personal development opportunities for youth” (p. 287)

The 4-H American Spirit Experience committee has identified the following learner objectives for participants:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of America’s heritage
- Build awareness of the many steps taken to gain U.S. independence and freedom
- Develop skills in leadership and personal expression of values
- Increase awareness of self in relation to others
- Share what was learned with others in the club and county

2. Target Audience (10 points)

Since its inception in 2005, 13 groups in the East-Metro Region and 4 groups in the North Central Region of Wisconsin have participated on this rich educational experience, reaching approximately 748 youth. All youth participants are in grades 8-10. Youth are selected through various local methods including applications and interviews and first-come first-serve registration. One 4-H Youth Development Educator travels with a group of four additional adult chaperones on each experience.

3. Program Content (30 points)

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The American Revolution is rich subject matter that teaches a great deal about citizenship. It is apparent that the establishment of the country’s original rights and laws stemmed from the pursuit of independence, equality, democracy and justice. Participants on the 4-H American Spirit Experience are exposed to opportunities to draw conclusions about the mistakes and progress that have been made in this country’s development and the realization or lack of the “American Promise.”

Each 4-H American Spirit Experience affords 44 youth per program the opportunity to travel via a coach bus to and through the New England states and Canada. The program includes nightly stops and hotel accommodations. Youth must contribute to the overall experience by working together to accomplish daily tasks. Youth practice responsibility, caring, compassion and tolerance while developing their sense of personal identity in relation to others. These characteristics are essential first steps toward being engaged politically or at the community level (Van Camp, 2016). Youth must work together to care for the bus they are traveling on, restock the food and beverages provided throughout travel, and care for their own and others’ luggage. One participant in 2017 indicated that, “being responsible for certain bus duties taught me the importance of everyone doing their job.” Facilitated mixers and new roommate assignments each night of the experience are designed to give youth the opportunity to practice caring, compassion, and tolerance, as well as personal identity formation.

The cost of the 4-H American Spirit Experience ranges from \$45,000-\$50,000 in total or around \$1,200 per youth delegate. This includes educational materials, hotel accommodations, meals, tickets, and transportation via coach bus. An active committee of volunteers coordinates the reservations and logistics, plans the itinerary, and provides orientation to those on the experience. At least two 4-H Extension Professionals are active in the communication to delegates, collecting and designing resources for the experience, establishing processes and practices for the experience and serving as support for the committee and adult chaperones. One Extension Professional travels on the experience to ensure proper practices are implemented, support chaperones on the experience, and support education and youth engagement throughout the experience.

4. Teaching/Delivery Methods (15 points)

The 4-H American Spirit Experience is a learning environment that boasts of a broad spectrum of teaching modalities. These varied methods appeal directly to older youth who learn through different styles and through multiple intelligence strategies.

A Field Study in History- Historic places are valuable opportunities to investigate history, social studies topics, geography, and other classroom subjects. Investigating how and why people interact with their environment speaks volumes about their lives, motivations, and experiences. The 4-H American Spirit Experience offers participants the opportunity to delve into a field study of locations, cultures and people. The experience offers the opportunity for participants to be in the place where history played out and imagine how the story unfolded. It offers youth the privilege of walking through the space—developing empathy for these people and their experiences—and can provide evidence for use in historical inquiry

Peer Teaching: Teachable Moments- Prior to departure delegates are assigned various events, locations, or people to research. They then plan a lesson and teach their peers about the subject during the experience. This peer teaching is called *Teachable Moments* and these moments align with the locations visited and events that occurred at these sites. The main purposes of *Teachable Moments* is to engage youth in individualized learning. In addition, direct interaction between delegates promotes active learning, supportive relationships and a greater sense of well-being and social competence.

In addition to youth participants teaching one another, youth from A-VOYCE—the youth program of the Boston Asian Community Development Corporation—provide delegates with a street-level tour of Chinatown that goes beyond the restaurants and the Gate. The tour provides knowledge about Chinatown that focuses on community issues, and explores themes relating to education, activism, and culture. Through this tour, youth get an in-depth glimpse of Chinatown and its transformations over time as well as inspiration from dynamic youth and community workers who are dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of Boston's Chinatown.

Historical Experts on Site- Several of the sites that are experienced throughout this opportunity involve learning from historical experts or guides. Site guides are arranged to provide background and historical information to highlight the context of the location. Valley Forge, Philadelphia, Boston Freedom Trail, and Fort Erie are sites where expert guides are engaged.

Self-Guided Discovery- Most sites offer kiosks, plaques, photos, audio stations, or interactive tools where guests can learn more about a topic. The self-directed learning method that is used in these locations is an approach where students select and investigate topics of their own choosing, using information sources, and/or tools available to them. The intention behind the approach is that students are more engaged and motivated when they are able to focus on those topics for which they have a personal interest. Opportunities that promote this style of learning include Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, 9/11 Memorial, Central Park, Plimouth Plantation/Wampanoag Village and the city of Niagara Falls.

Learning through Simulation- Learners are provided two specific opportunities to learn through role play or simulation. One simulated workshop is facilitated to teach the principles of cultural diversity and democracy as it relates to the experience of immigrants traveling through Ellis Island. Each participant is assigned a role that they must emulate as they navigate the stations of health, skill and financial ability throughout the immigration process. Another example of a simulation is the Taxation without Representation activity that is facilitated in Lexington, MA. This activity assigns roles to participants such as colonists, members of parliament, and the king. Participants are taxed based on various characteristics similar to the taxation that early colonists experienced. By participating in these simulated events, students experience specific processes or imitate circumstances from the past. They are asked to respond, to enact roles, and to consider the consequences of their actions and decisions.

Learning through Food-Participants have an opportunity to learn about people and culture through the foods that are prepared, served and consumed. In some cases the recipe alone is the discovery. In most cases however, the food is one piece of the lesson that also includes, atmosphere, cultural meaning, ethnographic context, and historical contexts of food provisions. Some of the locations throughout this experience that combine food and culture include Amish Acres, Plimouth Plantation/Wampanoag Village, Philadelphia, Chinatown in Boston, Gloucester House, and the *Oh Canada Eh* Dinner Show.

Using Movies to Increase Participant Learning-There are a number of movies that are available to view while traveling on the American Spirit Experience including *The Patriot*, *Saving Sarah Cain*, *Harvest of Fire*, *Honor Flight*, *World Trade Center*, and *National Treasure I & II*. Each of these films, based on history and cultures, provides an opportunity for participants to learn the important skills of visual literacy. These films provide the opportunities for students to learn, as well as question possible assumptions

Service Learning-Service learning combines community service with more formal educational programs in order to deepen the service experience through self-evaluation. Throughout the experience students engage in applying the historical knowledge of the sites and events of the Revolutionary Era to the service and sacrifice of modern day veterans. Through purposeful reflection and instruction students apply their personal learning and social development to the experiences of veterans throughout history. Each participant concludes this experience having written a letter to veterans who experience the Honor Flight.

5. Outcomes/Impact (20 points)

Evaluation strategies for the 4-H American Spirit Experience include daily reflective evaluation, unstructured observation, a post experience evaluation, and reviewing of the 4-H American Spirit Blogsite (a site produced and updated by participants on the Experience.) Finally, a retrospective post-then-pre design evaluation was conducted. In this design respondents rate their knowledge, skill, attitude and behavior now or after participating in the program and then reflect back and rate that same knowledge, skill, attitude and behavior before participating in the program.

Reflective evaluations in the form of postcards are distributed daily to all participants. Each day's postcard contains Likert scale questions for the experiences throughout the day and reflection questions related to overall learning and growth. On some evenings postcards are completed and collected immediately. Other times the postcards are distributed in the evening and collected upon checkout in the morning. These are designed to offer feedback to the program design and the achievement of outcomes, and are an opportunity to communicate with chaperones regarding changes that need to be made while on the experience.

- In 2017, 44 participants completed these postcards daily throughout the East-Metro Region 4-H American Spirit Experience. In 2017, the Day 7 reflective postcards revealed that 100% of respondents rated the Freedom Trail Tour in Boston as good to excellent. When asked what participants liked best in Boston, one participant said, "Being able to see the locations of places I've always heard about in school. Now, when I hear about it again, I can imagine it better in my head."

A post-experience evaluation is distributed while traveling through the final hours toward home. In 2017, 44 participants completed these paper questionnaires after the East-Metro Region experience. This evaluation asked about teachable moments, chaperones, educational benefits of the experience, what was learned, and how it would be used. These responses revealed many highlights (included in supplementary materials) for participants including:

- In the 2017 post-experience questionnaire, 100% of the participants rated the educational benefit of the experience as good to excellent. One participant shared they, "learned so much about the history of our country and a lot about myself."

Finally, a retrospective post-then-pre questionnaire was sent to all participants in the experience from 2013-2017. The 28 question electronic survey was sent out by e-mail and accepted responses for a two-week period. The survey was sent to 335 unique contacts. 102 responses were collected at a response rate of 30%. Highlights of these results are available in supplementary material and include:

- 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were encouraged to think critically about American heritage and events that shaped this nation. In addition, 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that before participating in the American Spirit Experience they could teach others about American heritage. When respondents reflected on their abilities after the experience, 94% agreed or strongly agreed that they could teach others about American heritage. This is a 22% increase in their confidence from their participation in the American Spirit Experience.