



Department Source: City Manager

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: June 4, 2018

Re: Youth Advisory Council 2017- 2018 Report to City Council

Executive Summary

Below is a report on the 2017-2018 activities of the Youth Advisory Council.

Discussion

Introduction

We are the Youth Advisory Council and we are committed to ensuring that the voices of the youth in our community are heard. Our council is made up of members from three of the high schools in the Columbia Public Schools District. Students between the ages of fourteen and nineteen submitted an application with their response to a few short questions. They attend monthly meetings throughout the school year and work together to pursue the topic(s) of their choice, as agreed upon by the council.

What did we research/discuss/do?

During the beginning of the year we created a list of topics that for the 2017-2018 year. We voted on our top two choices based on what we were interested in working on during the school year. Our two choices were social justice and more activities for the youth. These became our two subcommittees in the council.

Why did we research/discuss/do?

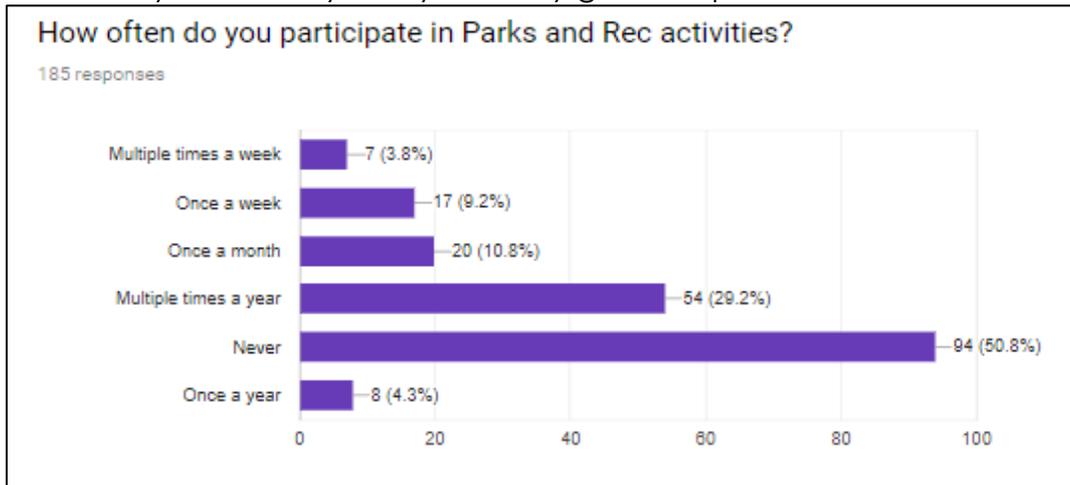
We chose more activities for the youth and social justice because these were the top two topics that members were interested in working on. The students seemed very interested in finding ways to provide more opportunities for the youth to have fun and spend time with friends. We spent some time doing research and contacting the City's Parks and Recreation Department. We learned about many wonderful programs and opportunities that already existed and wanted to figure out why participation for our age group was low at these activities.

Parks and Recreation Activities

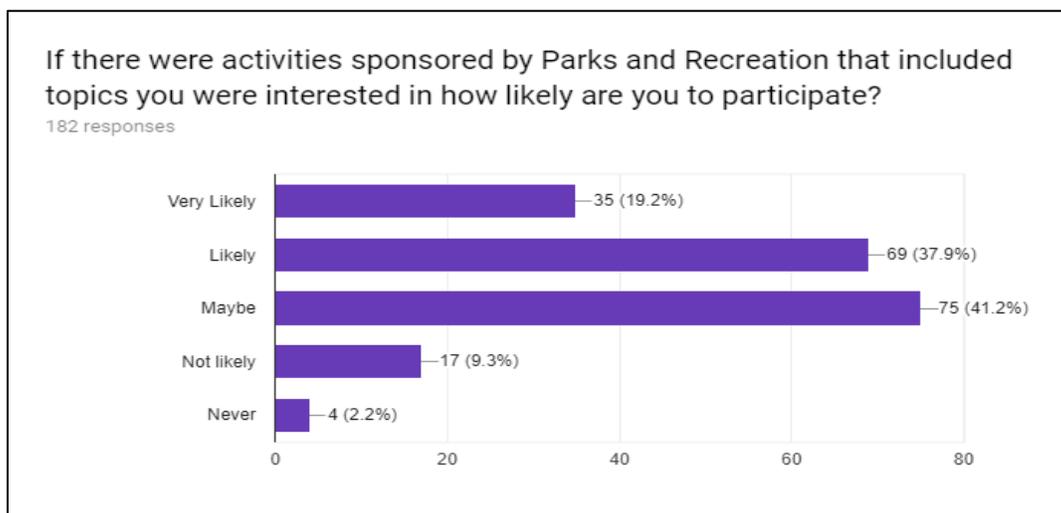
This spring we conducted a survey intended to identify reasons for the lack of involvement, as well as ways to increase participation in Columbia Parks and Recreation activities and events aimed towards the youth community. We concluded that the lack of involvement is due to the lack of knowledge and the absence of widely seen promotional material. To increase engagement, the Parks and Recreation Department should pursue methods to increase knowledge of events, primarily through social media as well as other paper formats. The main conclusion is that there are enough activities for youth, but the largest barrier between youth participating in a large scale is the knowledge of those activities.



50.8 percent of students surveyed said that they never participated in Parks and Recreation activities. We assumed one of the possible barriers to participating in Parks and Recreation activities was access to transportation. However, when surveyed, only 14 percent said that they could not easily or would be unable to get transportation to an activity. 86 percent said that they could very easily or easily get transportation.



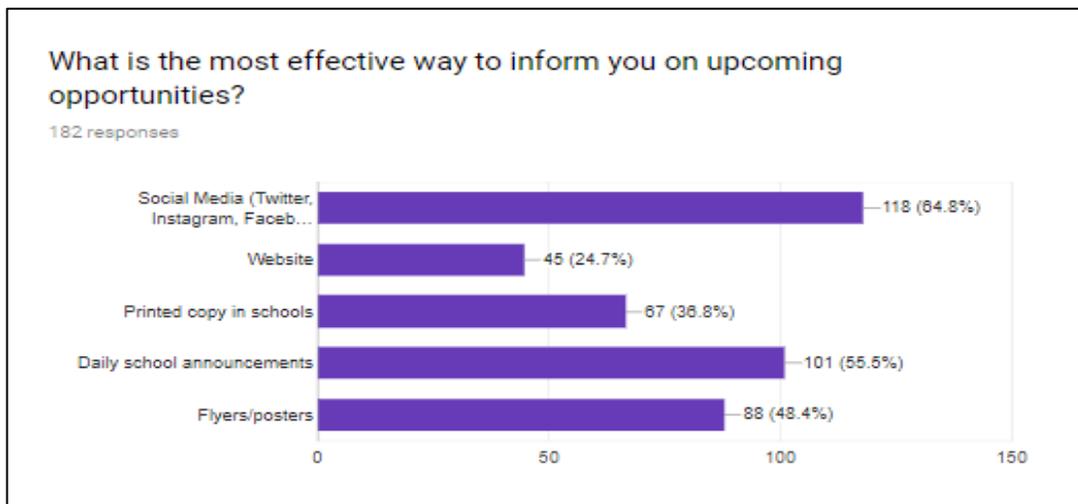
Another possible barrier is lack of activities that appeal to youth. When asked if they would attend a Parks and Recreation activity if the subject appealed to them, 90 percent said they would be very likely to, would be likely to, or might attend. Only 10 percent said they were not very likely to or would not participate.



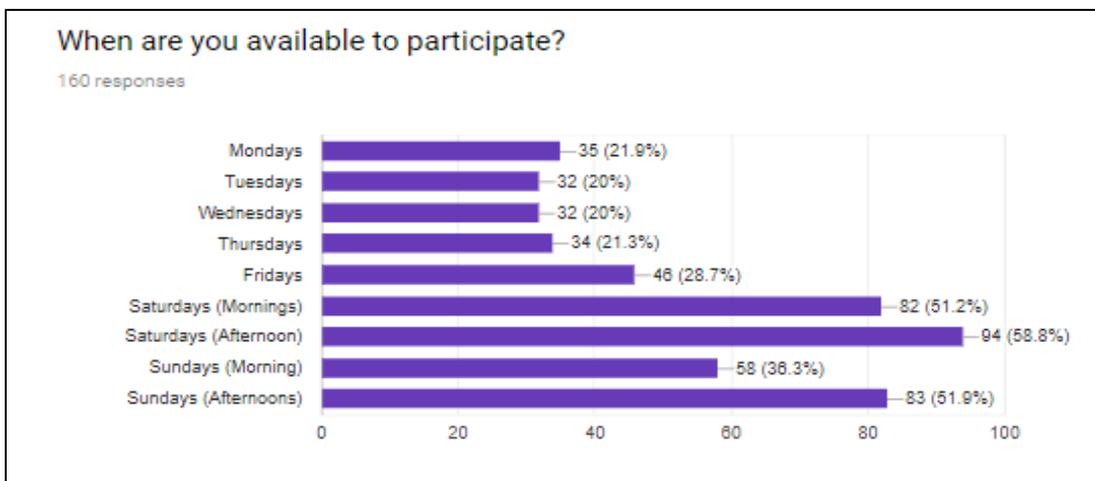
When surveyed about which activities would appeal to them, community events such as movies and concerts received the highest response rate. Other likely choices included fine arts, arts and crafts, and athletics. Most of the activities suggested and selected overlapped with already existing events sponsored by Parks and Recreation. This led us to the conclusion that it is not lack of events, but lack of advertisement of those events that causes lower participation than ideal.



The best way to inform students of these events is through social media. 64.8 percent of survey respondents said that social media would be most effective in reaching them and informing them of any upcoming activities. The second highest choice was to release it through daily announcements, but this would likely not be feasible due to the lack of an announcement system across Columbia Public Schools, with Rock Bridge High School having no daily announcements. The third and fourth best options were through a combination of printed pamphlets, posters, and fliers around schools. To address the issue of communication of Parks and Recreation events to students, Ron Rowe with Youth Community Coalition, agreed to reach out to CPS and create a newsletter of some sort that would advertise the upcoming events to be disseminated in Columbia high schools.



Students were also asked when they would be available to attend these Parks and Recreation events. All day Saturday and Sunday afternoons were the most popular responses.



We hope that with this information on types of activities desired; the willingness of students to participate; best ways to communicate with students; and best available times



for students; the Parks and Recreation Department can increase the attendance of high school age youth at the numerous events and activities.

Social Justice Subcommittee - WakeUp! Campaign

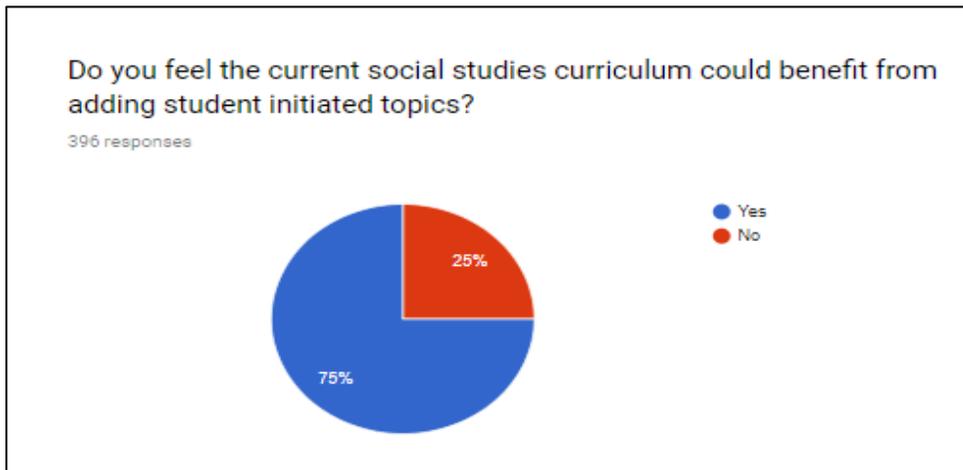
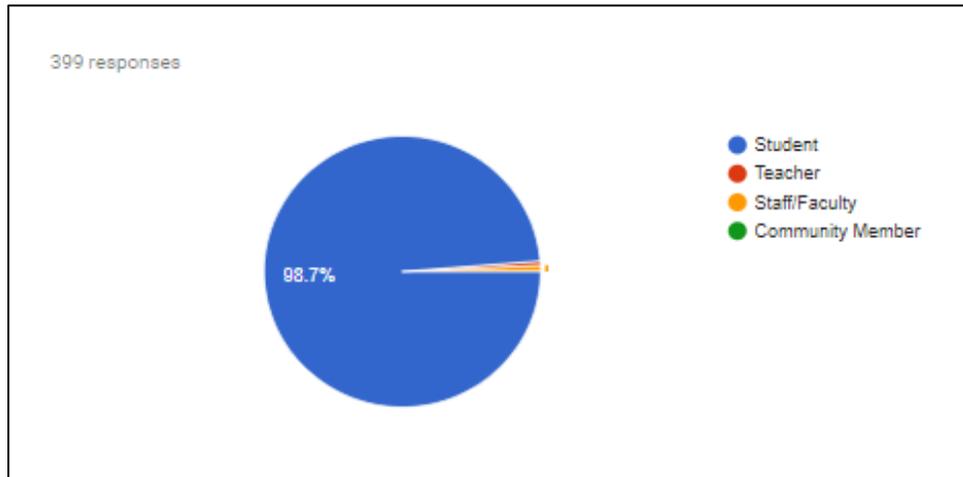
The Youth Advisory Council social justice subcommittee wanted to create and promote programs that encouraged dialogues on issues that were affecting high school aged youth. YAC members began by discussing what programs if any were already in place in each of their schools. It was discovered that Battle High School already had created and were involved with a program called the WakeUp! Campaign. Hickman High School had a club called Amnesty and Rock Bridge did not have a club that focused on Social Justice. YAC members then evaluated what they could do to establish or improve the already existing clubs and programs.

Battle High School

Since the WakeUp! Campaign, a separate club that focuses on social justice forums and education, was already established, YAC members decided to assist WakeUp! Campaign members with focusing towards the social justice issues seen in the curriculum.

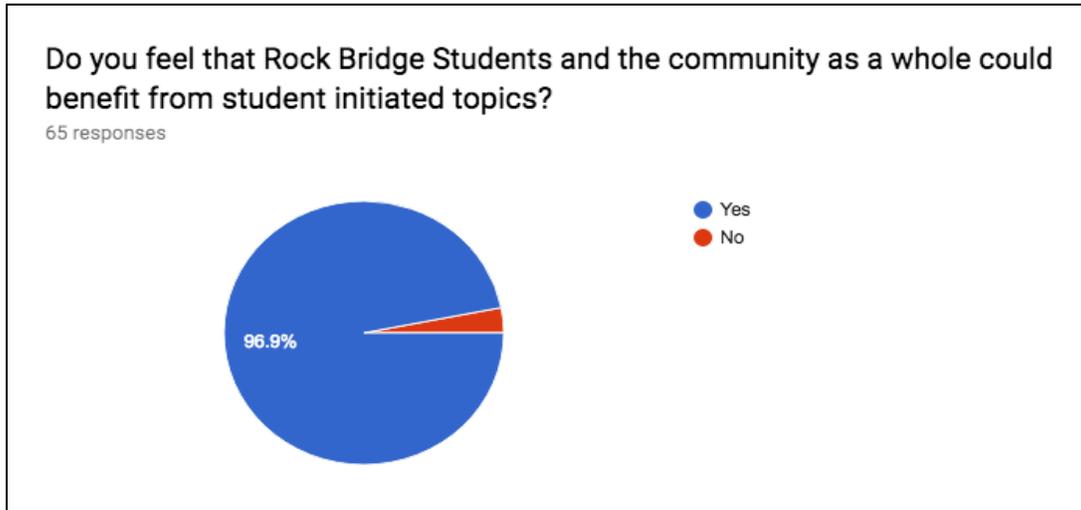
During the first semester of this school year the WakeUp! Campaign met with the social studies department hoping to gain their support for disseminating curriculum centered on social justice. They gave us constructive feedback and requested that we provided physical data that showed that students were interested. A few weeks later we were able to create a survey that asked students if they felt the current social studies curriculum could benefit from adding student initiated topics.

The campaign members had an immense amount of participation from students, teachers, and faculty members that took this survey. Over 400 responses were collected by the end of November, which were used to gain the support of the social studies department in curriculum that included student initiated topics. We used resources such as social justice toolbox and diversity toolkit to plan out the "Social Justice through Human Rights Curriculum" that would be delivered to all social studies classes. Topics include Social Justice, Comfort Zone, Learning Edge, and Intersectionality. The teachers in the social studies department were trained in facilitation and dialogue techniques, so that they could create a safe environment in their classrooms for students to feel comfortable sharing their ideas. The curriculum includes many wonderful activities to engage the students and promote civil dialogue.

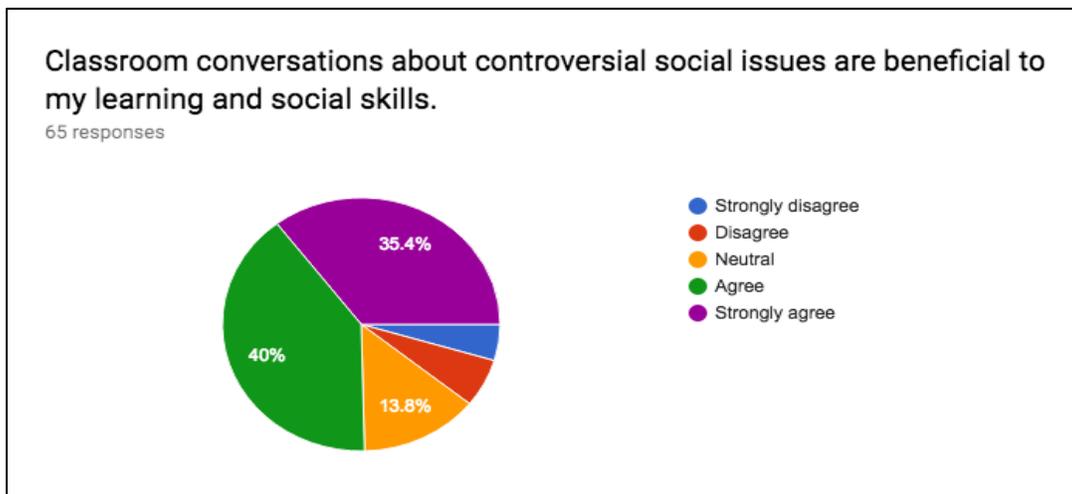


Rock Bridge High School

Rock Bridge High School (RBHS) conducted a survey in cooperation with the Battle High School's chapter of the Wake Up! Campaign. The survey, with 65 survey responders, came back with an overwhelming support of student initiated topics with 96.9% of respondents in favor. From a diverse group of sophomores, juniors, and seniors from a variety of classes, one can assume that the survey is generally representative of the RBHS population. Our team ran into initial issues with the administration as it challenged the status quo of the social studies department, so we had to reorient our survey to look at the possibility of creating club of students who would like to help facilitate the discussions that Wake Up! is doing at BHS.



Among the respondents, 75.4% had positive responses to the statement “Classroom conversations about controversial social issues are beneficial to my learning and social skills” and also replied to a list of suggested topic materials. Amongst these, 74.2% of respondents reported wanting to discuss mental health, 58.1% wanting to discuss current events, and 48.8% wanting to discuss building a more inclusive community. Another topic of interest was sex education.



Hickman High School

Hickman High School already has more than 50 clubs, and the objectives of the WakeUp! Campaign were too similar to “Amnesty’s” to create a solely independent club. The program that was created by the Youth Advisory Council to launch in Hickman High School is a dialogue. The purpose of this dialogue would be to engage Hickman students in student led conversations about sensitive and prevalent social justice issues. While “Amnesty” also has forums, we believe that the objectives regarding the purpose and operation of their forums and ours are different. We believe our own creation of a diversity dialogue forum would be beneficial in bringing together Hickman students on Diversity and Equality topics prevalent to them. Our goal would be that the more that students become involved in the



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dialogues, the more educated about diversity and equality in our school and community, they will become. Through these dialogues, students will learn how to hold these difficult conversations and they are given an outlet to express their opinions in a concentrated and controlled setting. Students gain perspective from their fellow peers, and all will leave more educated and informed on the issues discussed.

A committee of Hickman students was chosen and created a plan to draw in more members, brainstorm topics, and go over a light civil discourse training in order to prepare them for facilitating the forum. We reached out to the Pop Culture and Teen and Social Issues teachers to offer the idea of participation in the forum as a potential form of extra credit. We have reached out to clubs like Young Democrats, Young Republicans, GSA, Minority Priorities, and the ELL students in order to put together a committee and to publicize the event. The forum has been approved by the principal, and was originally scheduled for late April or early May. It would have been after school, most likely in the Media Center, and would serve refreshments. Discussions would have been held in small groups, with facilitators at every table to help the discussion flow freely and smoothly. There would have been multiple topic questions, with roughly 20 minutes discussion time for each.

This year a Diversity Dialogue never physically took place. All the planning and coordinating was accomplished, but the forum was cancelled because of the Parkland school shooting. The weeks following the tragedy, our school had a variety of student forums about gun control and gun violence in schools. We cancelled the dialogue as we did not want to take away from the strong movement taking place at Hickman during this time. After this happened, we realized that we would not be able to realistically hold the forum at the end of the year. We knew that in order to hold the forum we would need at least three weeks of heavy publicity, and because our timeline was thrown off, that could not be accomplished. However, after talking to Hickman High School Principal, Mr. Gragnani, we decided we will attempt to hold a forum at the start of the new school year. He has been working with teachers about also bringing more social justice awareness into Hickman, and he said they might begin implementing activities next year if the planning goes well. Holding the forum next year will work well if we can coordinate more with Mr. Gragnani and his efforts.

Vision Zero

Vision Zero, as described by the City of Columbia, is *"a transportation policy goal and data-driven strategy to achieve zero traffic deaths or serious injuries on our roadways."* With hopes to conquer this mammoth task by 2030, the city asked us to provide a helping hand in order to get the youth on board. Our compliance was much more than that, this is a subject important to many of our youth advisory council members due to the fact that over half of the populations distracted drivers are under the age of 20. The YAC then tasked itself with youth outreach within each of the high schools that are represented on the YAC.

In order to get this idea of care and responsibility ingrained into the students we hung posters and flyers up around Battle, Rock Bridge, and Hickman, this was to get them aware of our city government's efforts as well as to inform them of the booths we had set up at lunch



across the three schools. These booths served as a place to take the pledge against distracted driving; the students were able to first experience what distracted driving was like with the Virtual Reality goggles provided to them, and after their experience, they were encouraged to take an online pledge against distracted driving alongside an incentivized ZERO candy bar. A total of 168 pledges against distracted driving were received between the three high schools.

The feedback we, as a council, received was great. Our peers very much enjoyed the hands-on learning that the VR goggles allowed for them. This included the underclassman as well, many of which are still unable to drive. Captivating the minds of these students before they enter the driving world reinforces the idea of caution and prepares them to be an excellent driver. The idea of the pledge was to encourage students to 1) Never drive distracted- keeping their eyes on the road, their hands on the wheel and their mind on driving; 2) Speak out if the driver in their car is distracted; 3) Encourage their friends and family to never drive distracted. It is our hope that the future YAC members can partner with Vision Zero in the future and continue to educate our peers about the importance of not driving distracted.

Conclusion

The Youth Advisory Council's presence in the community grows every year. We serve as a platform for community groups, organizations, and campaigns to voice their ideas to our cities young people and acquire youth perspective to make their programs more susceptible to youth involvement. Over the course of this year, organizations such as Ukatsu, Youth Community Coalition, the Look Around Campaign, Louder Than a Bomb, the Climate Action and Adaptation Committee, Vision Zero, and the Youth Volunteer Corps of Columbia, have all sought out the Youth Advisory Council's assistance in progressing their respective programs in the youth community. As we further establish our presence and involvement in the Columbia community we hope to collaborate with even more Mid-Missouri organizations and further build upon the presence of young people in Columbia.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None

Long-Term Impact: None

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable



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Legislative History

Date	Action
N/A	N/A

Suggested Council Action

This report is for information only.