

2007 Youth Policy Summit Summary

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The NCSSMST and Keystone Science School co-sponsored two Youth Policy Summits during the summer of 2007. 40 students represented 10 high schools from across the country at each Summit, meeting for a week in June and August at Keystone Science School and The Keystone Center in Keystone, Colorado to discuss Obesity in America and Energy Efficiency in America. The purpose of the Summits was to give students an opportunity to debate, discuss and recommend solutions to problems that currently affect the nation.

Keystone Science School and The Center for Science and Public Policy blend hands on learning in the natural world with on the ground mediation and conflict resolution skills. These two separate divisions of The Keystone Center partnered with NCSSMST in 2004 after realizing that the hands on education of youth needed to incorporate more than just science. Tomorrow's leaders need the experiential tools of conflict resolution to find solutions to issues they have adopted from previous generations. The Summits have awakened the student participants to a world of

problem solving that incorporates critical thinking and consensus instead of the courtroom.

Obesity in America

During the Obesity Summit, students brainstormed ways to reduce obesity over the next 10 years, including providing the public with additional information on healthy lifestyles, developing educational strategies to disseminate information about healthy lifestyles and brainstorming additional methods or programs to motivate change. Students also suggested potential research areas to increase information about obesity.

Student participants looked at obesity from different points-of-view and came up with solutions that would involve the government, the food industry, medical professions, educators and the public health community. For their final proposal, the Summit members considered trends in food consumption, the role of physical activity, government dietary guidance, commercial and social marketing, nutrition standards and the emotional and psychological impact of obesity.

The Summit proposed several strategies to reduce obesity in the United States. Recommendations included reaching youth at schools by providing healthy food and beverage choices in public school vending machines and cafeterias. Students also suggested that schools increase nutrition education by offering more nutrition and health courses for K-12 students. The final proposal also recommends the implementation of a monthly Health Day in public schools as well as using active video gaming, such as Dance Dance Revolution, to get kids to increase physical activity. Other suggestions the summit had for increasing activity at schools was to require daily physical education classes at elementary and

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middle schools, to build intramural sports programs at schools and to create a group for students that focuses on healthy lifestyles called Students Opposing Unhealthy Lifestyles (SOUL).

The Summit also wanted to increase public awareness of nutrition resources and the importance of physical activities. Two proposed methods to increase awareness include the creation of an education campaign that would teach the public about how to read food labels. Students also would bolster the government's MyPyramid campaign by hanging mypyramid posters with nutrition guidelines in grocery stores and doctors' offices and advertising the mypyramid Website online.

The students included a plan for decreasing cases of obesity in adults. A proposed marketing program would make public health and nutrition information available in the work place, through memos, in doctors' offices and in the media. Media advertising campaigns would include television, radio, billboards, online ads, magazines and public service announcements to name a few.

Finally, the students brainstormed new research areas to improve the available information on healthy lifestyles. The Summit suggested an increase in the following areas: the psychological effects of obesity, effective methods of mass communication, medical research, diet pills and the production of healthy foods by food corporations.

Energy Efficiency in America

Similar to the Obesity Summit, students from across the country met for a week at the Keystone Center in August 2007 to discuss and make recommendations to significantly reduce the consumption of energy in America with the hopes of reducing carbon emissions over the next 50 years. The Energy Summit focused on three primary areas: standards and measurement of energy use, incentives and dissemination of information on energy reduction.

The Energy proposal included several changes in energy standards and measurement. The students suggested the creation of a Carbon Cap and Trade



Authority (CCTA) that would monitor national carbon emissions and distribute carbon emission credits to states based on the state's recorded carbon emissions compared with the rest of the nation. The CCTA would then place a national cap on carbon emissions by 2.5% in 2012 and 4% in 2032. Each state would be responsible for distributing and enforcing its allotment of carbon emission credits. The Summit also proposed changes in building and electricity standards that would encourage new buildings to be energy efficient and promote efficiency in electricity transmission from power plants to consumers.

The students also brainstormed incentives that would encourage organizations and individuals to reduce energy use and carbon emission. Among these incentives was the creation of Smart Growth communities that would encourage public transit and pedestrian traffic. Additionally the proposal included a tax on fossil fuels to encourage consumers to try alternative fuels and energy efficient vehicles. The creation of an Energy Week that would coincide with Earth Day would allow for the tax-free sale of Energy Star appliances. The Summit recommended tax rebates for "green" buildings, suggested making government loans available to anyone who would like to invest in energy efficient change but cannot afford to do so, and proposed a tax on incandescent light bulbs.

Finally, the Energy Summit considered ways to increase education on energy efficiency. Students suggested that non-profit organizations and corporations could be encouraged to create informational videos and promotional material as well as public service announcements. Teachers could be trained in methods of energy conservation in order to pass on information to students and parents. The Summit also would add information about energy efficiency to driver's handbooks and suggested the creation of a National Energy

Conservation Society (NECS) that would promote leadership and environmental awareness.

The participants from both Summits believe strongly in their final policy recommendations and included an agreement signed by each participating student to support this conviction. These young minds represent the future leaders of America and feel that obesity and energy issues can be greatly reduced within our nation by implementing the proposed changes.

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