

## WHEN LEADERSHIP COUNTS: ENGAGING YOUTH THROUGH THE WASHINGTON LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

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### Abstract

*The National FFA Organization continues to be a leader in the positive development of youth. Programs sponsored by the FFA provide youth with opportunities to develop their capacity for leadership and citizenship. The Washington Leadership Conference (WLC) is a weeklong conference during the summer that culminates the FFA experience. The WLC's objectives range from defining authentic leadership and relationship building to evaluating ethical decisions and serving communities. Over a 3-year period (2003, 2004, and 2005) the WLC showed consistent results in creating a positive change in the leadership development of its attendees. The greatest area of change was in the WLC's ability to impart new knowledge in its participants, demonstrated by ease of recall for specific facts. However, once participants returned home there was a slight decrease in their ability to carry out behaviors related to the leadership competencies taught at WLC. Overall, results were favorable as to the accomplishment of the WLC's programmatic objectives. Continual support from chapter advisors and online resources would ideally increase the behavioral aspects of students becoming more civically engaged in their home communities and carrying out positive leadership behaviors.*

### Introduction/Theoretical Framework

If you were to ask a typical student to explain authentic leadership, you would more than likely get looks of confusion or the response, "real." As the nature of leadership has changed, the National FFA Organization has continuously focused on ways to maintain the pace. There are many programs which offer youth leadership experiences, and the National FFA Organization contends to be one of the strongest for agricultural youth. For over 30 years, one method used by FFA has been the Washington Leadership Conference (WLC). The WLC challenges participants to become civically engaged and informed about the importance of authentic leadership.

Throughout members' involvement in the FFA, they are encouraged to participate in a number of programs designed to enhance their growth and development.

WLC is a capstone experience that culminates their FFA involvement in these programs. WLC provides FFA members with the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. and "develop personal leadership," "learn how to influence others to lead," and "make a positive impact on the community" (National FFA Organization, 2005). WLC promotes service learning through two key experiences: a weeklong conference in Washington D.C. and a yearlong interactive online study course (WLC On-Line). FFA members from across the country may elect to attend any one of the seven weeklong conference events, and each year approximately 2,100 youth leaders attend the WLC.

The 5-day conference provides members an opportunity to continue their leadership development through a variety of lessons. The conference programmatic objectives for students include understanding what it

means to be an authentic leader, listing the stages in problem solving, describing the role of problem solving in leadership, defining the four stages of relationships, practicing effective relationship-building skills, explaining the relationship between personal values and virtues, evaluating ethical decisions using virtues, teaching others about healthy lifestyle choices in terms of character development, listing actions of an involved community citizen, developing and implementing a plan for leading and serving others, and becoming a “teacher of leadership” in his/her home FFA chapter (National FFA Organization, 2004). The lesson topics include character development, healthy lifestyles, relationship building, problem solving, and civic engagement, with the overarching goal of building attendees’ capacity to carry out service plans in communities across the country.

Civic development of youth is an essential component of the WLC. A key tenet is the understanding that “citizenship includes the ability to move beyond one’s individual self-interest and to be committed to the well-being of some larger group of which one is a member” (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002, p. 265).

Eccles and Gootman (2002) wrote that a key ingredient of successful community-based youth development programs is the support youth have in feeling that they matter and that their voices are being heard. Programs of this nature should seek to provide youth with not only knowledge but also the hands-on application of participation and practice. The WLC provides attendees with just this opportunity.

To accomplish the hands-on component, WLC designers ascribe to the theory of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership is used to provide a means for evaluating both the leadership and civic development of youth participating in the WLC. The experiential nature of servant leadership is indicative of programs that provide meaningful opportunities for youth to engage in their communities. This is evidenced through much of the WLC literature, which consistently addresses the

notion that participants and FFA members will develop through civic engagement through servant leadership. The theory supports key components, also evident in the WLC, as consensus-making, decision-making, and conflict resolution.

Another central concept emphasized through the WLC is the development of authentic leadership. Authentic leadership is defined as a leader’s ability to, “bring people together around a shared purpose and empower them to step up and lead authentically in order to create value for all stakeholders” (George, 2007, p. xxxi). The intent of the WLC is to only provide participants with enough exposure to describe authentic leadership; however, it is an important concept which is reiterated throughout the curriculum.

The FFA’s mission is dedicated “to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education” (National FFA Organization, 2006). Over the years, research conducted on the impact of the FFA on the development of youth has shown consistent results. FFA activities have been shown to enhance the leadership traits of youth (Townsend & Carter, 1983). Involvement with local activities is once again a factor in youth’s perception of their leadership traits. Rutherford, Townsend, Briers, Cummins, and Conrad (2002) continued this research line, specifically assessing WLC participants’ leadership perceptions. Their study supported the relationship between FFA participation and self-perceptions of leadership; as FFA involvement increased, so did members self-perceptions.

With the majority of research emphasizing differences between FFA members and nonmembers, one area remained in question, what is the impact of the WLC on attendees’ leadership development? In 2005, the National FFA Organization posed this question, and the intent of this study is to evaluate the impact of the WLC on four learning objectives established by the National FFA Organization for the WLC.

## Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to identify the changes occurring in the leadership development of WLC participants after attending the conference. Leadership development was measured through five scales developed from the WLC objectives. The primary objective of this study was to determine the impact of WLC on attendees' self-perceptions of their change in the 12 learning programmatic objectives (based on knowledge and behavior) of the WLC compared by year (2003, 2004, and 2005). Additionally, the following four objectives of the study were developed to determine the impact of WLC on attendees' self-perceptions of their ability to:

1. describe authentic leadership and define character,
2. list the stages and describe the role of problem solving in leadership,
3. describe opportunities to serve others in a community and list actions of an involved community citizen, and
4. define the four-stage model for building relationships.

## Methods and Procedures

This was a quantitative study using survey research methods. Researchers used an *ex post facto* design to gauge participants' self-perceptions of their change in ability of specific WLC objectives. For the purposes of this study, the researchers designed a web-based questionnaire to collect data.

The target population was all FFA members who attended the Washington Leadership Conference during the summer of 2003, 2004, or 2005. These participants were identified through participant rosters provided by the National FFA Organization. The total population for this study was 6,617 WLC participants. Pre-notice e-mail letters and traditional postal service postcards were sent to all members of the population, inviting their participation in the study and outlining the incentives available. The postcards and e-mail letters provided a link to an online instrument. Two-hundred e-mails and 140 postcards were returned with

invalid addresses. Therefore, the accessible population was 6,277 WLC participants. Of the total accessible population, 338 self-selected as volunteer participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Dillman (2000) recommends a sample size of approximately 361 for a population of 6,000. All data were collected over five weeks. Because of a shortened timeframe creating an inability to contact postal-mail-only participants for data collection, follow-up notices were not sent. This created a convenience sample of 338 volunteer respondents.

The online survey began with instructions and an agreement of informed consent before entering the survey. Data collection began January 30 and concluded March 6, 2006. Incentives were included in the data collection to increase the response rate as supported by previous research (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2006). After completing the survey, respondents received a coded gift certificate providing a \$10 discount on purchases of FFA merchandise at the FFA Online store. Respondents were then directed to an entry form for participation in a random drawing incentive. Participants had the option to enter into a random drawing for one of three \$50 Best Buy gift cards. An enhanced incentive was provided to the first 100 participants; each was entered into the Best Buy drawing twice.

Usable responses were collected from 338 participants. Of those who responded, 92.3% had only attended WLC once, 63% were female, and 94% were 19 years of age or younger when they attended WLC. Thirty-seven percent of respondents were seniors in high school; an additional 21% were enrolled at the college level. Seventeen respondents were teachers or advisors who attended WLC. These respondents were maintained in the data because of their experience with WLC and insight into the programs.

Nonresponse error was calculated by comparing early to late respondents (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001). Based on the short data collection timeframe, no stimuli were provided to the respondents. Early respondents did receive an enhanced incentive, as previously described. Because no stimuli were provided, it was not possible

to utilize the successive waves as recommended by Lindner et al. (2001). The researchers chose to operationally define early as the first 50% of respondents and late as the later 50%. The comparison of these groups on the five scales yielded no statistically significant results. Therefore, the results from this study can be generalized to all respondents. It is relevant to note that half of the respondents answered the survey during the first 4 days of the survey posting. The remaining respondents completed the survey during the remaining four weeks.

All data were analyzed by using SPSS version 14. A significance level of .05 was established *a priori*. Descriptive statistics for each section and the instrument were analyzed. Demographic data were derived by using frequencies and percentages.

The researchers developed the questionnaire for the FFA WLC impact assessment. The questionnaire consisted of eight distinct sections: WLC programmatic objectives; lesson objectives broken down into authentic leadership, problem solving, relationship building, character development, and servant leadership; living to serve plan; and demographics.

The questionnaire was written by using the programmatic objectives of the WLC. By using the programmatic objectives as a guide, the researchers were able to direct the focus of the questionnaire to the specific outcomes desired by the National FFA. Demographic questions were written to specifically address the variance in program participants over a 3-year period of the WLC (2003, 2004, and 2005).

The questionnaire was comprised of 65 distinct items. Two questions determined what year respondents participated in the WLC: 2003 ( $n = 90$ ), 2004 ( $n = 74$ ), or 2005 ( $n = 163$ ) and whether or not they participated in WLC On-Line resources. A post-then questionnaire was used to determine the change in the 13 programmatic objectives. A post-then questionnaire requires respondents to reply to two separate levels of responses, "Before the WLC" and "After the WLC." Respondents were given a Likert-type scale ranging from one to five, where 1 = strongly

disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Five more independent scales were developed to further determine changes: authentic leadership, problem solving, relationship building, character development, and servant leadership. Again, by using the post-then model, a Likert-type scale was provided. Authentic leadership was measured through six questions, problem solving through five questions, relationship building through five questions, character development through four questions, and servant leadership through four questions. Specific questions were written by using the WLC curriculum and lesson objectives as guides.

To determine the inter-correlations among the questions, factor analysis was conducted. Researchers established *a priori* five internal scales mirroring authentic leadership, problem solving, relationship building, character development, and servant leadership. Factor analysis confirmed that five internal scales existed within the questionnaire, which indicates that the question sets developed by the researchers fit within five distinct measurable areas.

Validity and reliability were established for the questionnaire. Content validity for the questionnaire was confirmed through a panel of experts, including feedback from National FFA staff. This showed that the questionnaire was developed appropriately and that questions were indicative of the identified content domain. Face validity established that the questionnaire was user-friendly and designed for the intended purpose. The purpose of establishing validity is to show that the questionnaire taps the underlying measure for which it is intended.

By using SPSS version 14, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire measuring the FFA WLC programmatic objectives was .96, which meets the established desired standard of .95 (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the individual scales were authentic leadership .87, problem solving .84, relationship

building .85, character development .86, and servant leadership .77.

Researchers calculated mean differences by subtracting “Before WLC” scores from “After WLC” scores. Because the data were collected in matched pairs; “the difference between the means of the two groups equals the mean of the difference scores” (Agresti & Finlay, 1997, p. 227). This procedure was used consistently to identify all mean difference scores and is denoted by *MD*.

### Findings

By using the appropriate data collection methods, researchers obtained the following findings. The first set of questions was designed to elicit findings based on the overall programmatic objectives of WLC established by the National FFA Organization. These 12 questions provided a broad look at the impact of WLC on participants. Statistical analysis confirmed that WLC has made a significant impact on the mean scores of participants at the  $p < .05$  level.

*Objective 1: To determine the impact of WLC on attendees' self-perception of their change in the 12 learning objectives of the WLC compared by year, 2003, 2004, and 2005.*

The greatest mean difference for all 3 years was participants' ability to define the

four stages of relationship building ( $MD = 1.70, n = 322$ ). The least impact was made in participants' ability to evaluate ethical decisions using virtues ( $MD = 1.05, n = 323$ ).

Scores from participants in 2003 were consistently lower than in subsequent years. In 2003, the lowest mean score difference was practicing effective relationship building skills ( $MD = .87, n = 86$ ). The greatest impact was in defining the four stages of relationship building ( $MD = 1.50, n = 88$ ). In 2004, the lowest mean difference in scores was in participants' ability to evaluate ethical decisions using virtues ( $MD = .97, n = 74$ ). The greatest increase in mean scores was in defining the four stages of relationship building ( $MD = 1.72, n = 75$ ). Scores from participants in 2005 varied slightly from other years, with the lowest mean difference in scores being in participants' ability to recognize opportunities to serve others in communities ( $MD = 1.12, n = 160$ ). Like previous years, in 2005, the greatest mean score difference was in recognizing the four stages of relationship building ( $MD = 1.79, n = 159$ ). These findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Mean Difference Scores in Programmatic Objectives for WLC Participants (n = 327)*

Statement	WLC Year 2003 (MD)	WLC Year 2004 (MD)	WLC Year 2005 (MD)	Total WLC (MD)
Understand what it means to be an authentic leader	1.38	1.35	1.67	1.52
Identify the stages within the COMMUNITY problem solving model	1.24	1.43	1.60	1.47
Describe the role of problem solving in leadership	.97	1.20	1.16	1.12
Define the four stages of relationship building	1.50	1.72	1.79	1.70
Practice effective relationship-building skills	.87	1.18	1.21	1.11
Explain the relationship between personal values and virtues	.91	1.09	1.32	1.16
Evaluate ethical decisions using virtues	.92	.97	1.16	1.05
Teach others about healthy lifestyle choices in character development	.89	1.08	1.24	1.11
Recognize opportunities to serve others in communities	.89	1.12	1.12	1.06
List actions of an involved community citizen	.88	1.12	1.13	1.06
Develop a plan for leading and serving others	1.15	1.38	1.35	1.30
Implement a plan for leading and serving others	1.12	1.43	1.34	1.30
Be a “Teacher of Leadership” in home FFA chapter	1.07	1.43	1.34	1.30

*Objective 2: To determine the impact of WLC on attendees' self-perception of their change in ability to describe authentic leadership and define character compared by year, 2003, 2004, and 2005.*

Respondents were asked six questions to determine the impact of WLC on authentic leadership. The greatest change ( $MD = 1.72$ ,  $n = 325$ ) was on participants' ability to recognize the four key elements of authentic leadership. The least amount of change was in participants' ability to practice authentic leadership in their home communities ( $MD = 1.20$ ,  $n = 327$ ).

Analysis further showed the differences between groups (2003, 2004, and 2005) varied in impact. All 3 years of WLC participants showed the greatest change in their ability to recognize the four key

elements of authentic leadership. Scores in 2003 were  $MD = 1.52$ ,  $n = 89$ , in 2004  $MD = 1.62$ ,  $n = 73$ , and in 2005  $MD = 1.87$ ,  $n = 163$ . In 2003, participants had the greatest change in recognizing the four key elements of authentic leadership with the least change in two areas, practicing authentic leadership in their home FFA chapters ( $MD = 1.08$ ,  $n = 89$ ) and practicing authentic leadership in their home communities ( $MD = 1.08$ ,  $n = 89$ ). For 2004 participants, this varied slightly in that the lowest score was in practicing authentic leadership in their home FFA chapters ( $MD = 1.27$ ,  $n = 74$ ). In 2005, participants showed the least change in practicing authentic leadership in their home communities ( $MD = 1.21$ ,  $n = 163$ ). The scores are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

*Mean Score Change in Authentic Leadership of WLC Participants (n = 327)*

Statement	WLC Year 2003 (MD)	WLC Year 2004 (MD)	WLC Year 2005 (MD)	Total WLC (MD)
Define authentic leader	1.40	1.54	1.87	1.67
Practice authentic leadership in home FFA chapter	1.08	1.27	1.29	1.23
Practice authentic leadership in home community	1.08	1.31	1.21	1.20
Recognize the four key elements of authentic leadership	1.52	1.62	1.87	1.72
Understand the impact of authentic leadership on my community	1.29	1.38	1.49	1.41
Differentiate between authentic leadership and inauthentic leadership	1.38	1.45	1.47	1.44

Character development was measured with four questions. A simple one-sample *t*-test revealed that WLC made a significant impact on character development at the  $p < .05$  level for all 3 years included in this study. For all the participants of WLC during 2003, 2004, and 2005, one item consistently scored low: practice habits of personal wellness ( $MD = .81, n = 326$ ). The greatest change was seen in participants' ability to identify their own virtues and how they effect decision making ( $MD = 1.01, n = 323$ ).

Each year was examined to identify whether differences existed within years. In 2003, the lowest scoring area was participants' responses to practicing habits of personal wellness ( $MD = .61, n = 90$ ). The greatest mean difference was in

participants understanding of the impact of their character on those they were trying to lead ( $MD = .88, n = 89$ ). In 2004, the trend remained constant, with the lowest mean difference in practicing habits of personal wellness ( $MD = .82, n = 73$ ). Similarly, the greatest mean change was in the impact of character on those they were trying to lead ( $MD = 1.08, n = 73$ ). In 2005, analysis showed again the lowest mean change in practicing habits of personal wellness ( $MD = .93, n = 163$ ). The greatest mean difference occurring in 2005 participants was in identification of their own virtues and their effect on decision making ( $MD = 1.10, n = 161$ ). Further analysis identified significant changes across the 3-year period. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3  
Mean Score Change in Character Development of WLC Participants ( $n = 327$ )

Statement	WLC Year 2003 ( <i>MD</i> )	WLC Year 2004 ( <i>MD</i> )	WLC Year 2005 ( <i>MD</i> )	Total WLC ( <i>MD</i> )
Practice habits of personal wellness	.61	.82	.93	.81
Develop virtues that make a difference	.71	.89	1.01	.90
Identify my own virtues and how they effect my decision making	.81	1.05	1.10	1.01
Understand the impact my character has on those I am trying to lead	.88	1.08	1.04	1.00

*Objective 3: To determine the impact of WLC on attendees' self-perception of their change in their ability to list the stages and describe the role of problem solving in leadership compared by year, 2003, 2004, and 2005.*

Respondents were asked five questions concerning the community and their problem solving approaches based upon returning to their community after WLC. Over the 3-year period (2003, 2004, and 2005) the statistical analysis confirmed that WLC has made significant ( $p < .05$ ) impact on problem solving. The greatest change ( $MD = 1.49, n = 327$ ) was on the ability to

explain to others the COMMUNITY problem-solving approach. The least amount of change was having the ability to identify narrow and short-term questions.

In 2003, the lowest mean score was with identifying and narrowing and short-term questions. The greatest change for participants in 2003 was with applying the COMMUNITY problem solving model to address a question within a defined community ( $MD = 1.43, n = 89$ ). For 2004, participants showed the least amount of change in identifying narrow and short-term questions ( $MD = 1.08, n = 72$ ). The greatest change for participants in 2004 was with



explaining to others the COMMUNITY problem-solving approach (*MD* = 1.51, *n* = 73). In 2005, the least amount of change was with identifying narrow and short-term questions (*MD* = 1.07, *n* = 163). The

greatest amount of change was in explaining to others the COMMUNITY problem-solving approach (*MD* = 1.58, *n* = 164). The scores are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Mean Score Change in Problem Solving of WLC Participants (n = 327)*

Statement	WLC Year 2003 ( <i>MD</i> )	WLC Year 2004 ( <i>MD</i> )	WLC Year 2005 ( <i>MD</i> )	Total WLC ( <i>MD</i> )
Explain to others the COMMUNITY problem solving approach	1.32	1.51	1.58	1.49
Practice problem solving to address large and long-term questions	1.07	1.27	1.27	1.21
Identify narrow and short-term questions	.78	1.08	1.07	.99
Apply the COMMUNITY problem solving model to address a question within a defined community	1.43	1.45	1.43	1.44
Develop a set of skills and a mindset to problem solving	1.09	1.35	1.23	1.22

*Objective 4: To determine the impact of WLC on attendees' self-perception of their change in their ability to describe opportunities to serve others in a community and list actions of an involved community citizen compared by years, 2003, 2004, and 2005.*

A range of factors related to service leadership was measured with four questions. Overall, for the 3-year period included in this study, WLC had the greatest impact on participants' ability to identify the four components of the leading and serving model (*MD* = 1.53, *n* = 327). With that, the least amount of change was in the participants' perception of their abilities to influence others' thoughts, actions, and

attitudes (*MD* = .95, *n* = 328). Across the board, participants' ability to identify the four components of the leading and serving model reflected the greatest mean change, with *MD* = 1.43, *n* = 89 in 2003, *MD* = 1.54, *n* = 74 in 2004, and *MD* = 1.58, *n* = 164 in 2005. In both 2003 and 2004, participants' lowest mean score change was in the influencing of others' thoughts, actions, and attitudes (*MD* = .80, *n* = 91 and *MD* = 1.05, *n* = 74). However, in 2005, the least amount of change was seen in participants' perception of their ability to actively participate in the processes of government within my community (*MD* = .96, *n* = 164). The findings are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5  
 Mean Score Change in Service Leadership of WLC Participants ( $n = 327$ )

Statement	WLC Year 2003 ( $M$ )	WLC Year 2004 ( $M$ )	WLC Year 2005 ( $M$ )	Total WLC ( $M$ )
Identify the four components of the leading and serving model	1.43	1.54	1.58	1.53
Practice acts that contribute to the betterment of my community	.89	1.18	1.04	1.03
Actively participate in the processes of government within my community	.93	1.27	.96	1.02
Influence others' thoughts, actions, and attitudes	.80	1.05	.98	.95

*Objective 5: To determine the impact of WLC on attendees' self-perception of their change in their ability to define the four-stage model for building relationships compared by years 2003, 2004, and 2005.*

Respondents were asked five questions concerning their relationship-building skills before and after attending the WLC. Over the 3-year period (2003, 2004 and 2005), the greatest change was the ability to develop positive relationships with a diversity of people. The least amount of change was the ability to build relationships built upon shared interests, commonalities, and mutual trust ( $MD = .88, n = 327$ ).

In 2003, the least change was with building relationships built upon shared interests, commonalities, and mutual trust

( $MD = .71, n = 91$ ). The greatest mean change was with using the four conversation builders when interacting with others ( $MD = 1.34, n = 91$ ). In 2004, the least change was with building relationships built upon shared interests, commonalities, and mutual trust ( $MD = .97, n = 74$ ). The greatest amount of change was with using the four conversation builders when interacting with others ( $MD = 1.38, n = 91$ ). And in 2005, the least amount of change was with build relationships built upon shared interests, commonalities, and mutual trust ( $MD = .93, n = 163$ ). The greatest amount of change in year 2005 was with using the four conversations builders when interacting with others ( $MD = 1.47, n = 163$ ). These findings are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6  
*Mean Score Change in Relationship Building for WLC Participants (n = 327)*

Statement	WLC Year 2003 (MD)	WLC Year 2004 (MD)	WLC Year 2005 (MD)	Total WLC (MD)
Build relationships built upon shared interests, commonalities, and mutual trust	.71	.97	.93	.88
Identify the best practices associated with each stage of relationship building	1.07	1.26	1.24	1.20
Use the four conversation builders when interacting with others	1.34	1.38	1.47	1.42
Handle special situations in relationships	.83	1.15	1.06	1.01
Develop positive relationships with a diversity of people	.86	1.19	.97	.98

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The programmatic objectives were a large portion of the success of the WLC. In all programmatic objectives, WLC participants showed gains in their abilities. WLC curriculum had the greatest impact on participants' ability to recognize the four key stages of relationship building but had the least impact in participants' practicing habits of personal wellness. This could be a result of the curriculum design, in that the curriculum specifically focuses on the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom & Krathwhol, 1956), which is more knowledge-based vs. application based. The taxonomy categorizes levels of intellectual behavior important learning.

A consistent theme throughout the findings, participants were able to identify and recall the specific concepts or stages of the various objectives but unable to follow through practicing or demonstrating the behavior. The particular areas where this was evident were authentic leadership (participants were able recognize the four key elements of leadership but less able to practice authentic leadership in their home communities) and character development

(participants were able to identify their own virtues and the effect of virtues on decision making but unable to practice habits of personal wellness).

Within the program area of problem solving, participants were able to explain the COMMUNITY problem solving approach but were unable to identify narrow and short-term questions. This was also reflected in participants' responses regarding the preparation provided by WLC for problem solving through the living to serve process.

The last area of programmatic emphasis was servant leadership. This area fell under the same outcomes as authentic leadership and character development. Participants' were able to identify the four components of the leading and serving model but unable to make contributions in the areas of active government participation and influencing others' thoughts, actions and attitudes. Eccles and Gootman (2002) postulated that community-based youth programs provide youth support in having their voices heard. In this particular case, WLC falls short in assisting youth move into this role of active citizenship.

There are two primary recommendations from this study. First, there should be a more

intensive review of WLC year 2003. This stems from the researchers noting consistently lower scores in all of the objectives and outcomes. WLC should integrate a model of service learning expanding across the 7-week conference. This would provide participants with a hands-on experience in service learning to further encourage their service in community projects once they return home. Additionally, this would offer them an opportunity to develop their capabilities to be influential civic participants.

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