



# Youth Senate Voices

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A PUBLICATION OF THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

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## Recent Events and Achievements

### Leadership Training

First semester, the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) sponsored three *Basic Leadership Trainings (BLT)* for area high school student leaders. The third was for Pioneer's 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Boys Basketball team. They all participated in interactive activities to learn their own leadership styles, communication skills, the value of youth voice, teamwork, and time-management skills. After evaluating each activity, students were enthusiastic about applying their skills for success at school and in the community.

Also in December, the Youth Senate hosted the first of six *Advanced Leadership Training (ALT)* sessions. It was on "Presenting Yourself" and covered confidence building, public speaking, and basic communication skills.

### Achievement Solutions (Sequel to Leap the Gap)

In November, members of the *Achievement Solutions Teams (AST)* presented their Report on *The Condition of Youth Voice in Ann Arbor Public High Schools* to the Board of Trustees. Prior to their report, *AST* students met with PHS and HHS administrators to discuss the benefits of 'engaging youth as resources' and expanding *AST* in their schools.

### Africa Project: Faces of Poverty

The Youth Senate's *Africa Project* held its annual district-wide fall Walk-a-Thon and winter *Dream to End Poverty in Africa* Benefit Ball on January 18<sup>th</sup> celebrating MLK. Both raise funds to support youth peer education efforts to fight the impact of poverty in Africa.

Students also engaged in service-learning presentations in the weeks leading up to the Benefit Ball educating peers in social studies and health classes about the impact that abject poverty has on African youth. Classes sat down row by row to simulate high death rates due to

disease and violent conflict. Presenters stressed AIDS awareness due to the growing rate of people affected in our own Washtenaw County.

## Coming Events (Open to All!)

- *Achievement Solutions Teams* weekly lunch meetings: **Mondays at Pioneer (C227), Wednesdays at Huron (first: 9300, second: 3206)**
- *Africa Project* weekly meetings: **Mondays, Lead Team, 4:00 to 5:30** (Senate office); lunch on **Tuesdays at Huron (Media Center), Wednesdays at Pioneer (C227)**
- *Advanced Leadership Training Session 2 "Teamwork"*—**Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup>** (e-mail [alt@youthempowerment.com](mailto:alt@youthempowerment.com))
- *Basic Leadership Training* (e-mail [blt@youthempowerment.com](mailto:blt@youthempowerment.com))
- *Youth Senate Town Hall* meetings: **Huron on Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, and Pioneer in February/March TBA.**
- District-Wide *Youth Senate Lead Team* Meeting: **Monday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00** and *School Board Committee: Wednesdays 5:00* (Senate Office).

## Youth Senate Beginnings

Students from Community, Huron, and Pioneer founded the Youth Senate in 1998 by creating leadership teams where students identified barriers and solutions to youth voice, service and civic engagement, and district-wide communication. Upon completion of a 1999 Youth-Adult Partnership Summit sponsored by YEP, and with the help of adult allies from the AAPS School Board, the Senate grew. Through Senate committees and projects, students from across the Ann Arbor area continue to work together to effect positive change in their schools, community and the world.

## Senate Committees & Projects

### Achievement Solutions Teams (AST)

In-school peer support teams for students to address barriers to achievement while helping each other identify personal and systemic change solutions and strategies.

### The Africa Project: Faces of Poverty

Students engage in philanthropic work to aid youth impacted by abject poverty in Africa (i.e. AIDS orphans and child soldiers).

### Basic Leadership Training (BLT)

A training workshop for emerging high school leaders in which they develop an understanding of their leadership styles and the value of youth voice, as well as effective time-management, teamwork and communication skills.

### Advanced Leadership Training (ALT)

A six part training series in which students attend workshops on *Self-Presentation, Stress Prevention, Teamwork, Dialogue for Social Justice, and Reading Nonprofit Financial Reports or Productive Meetings and Committees or Leadership Transition.*

### Generation Vote Campaign

Non-partisan student initiative working to 'Get Out the Vote' among people 18 to 30 years old, and identifying a Youth Agenda.

### School Board Committee

Great for aspiring journalists! Students collect and write up info on student and school events and issues to present from the Senate's association seat to the School Board.

## Student Inspirations

*"I joined the Youth Senate because of the variety of options—from the Africa Project to the School Board Committee . . . there are always opportunities for my voice to count and for my actions to make a difference in someone else's life. The Youth Empowerment Project is just that—empowering, and I'm happy to belong to such a wonderful organization."*

*-Aparna Ghosh, PHS '09*

*"YEP has really given me a new outlook on my voice as a young person. With the Youth Senate, I was placed in the driver's seat and told, 'Drive, no one else is going to do it for you.' I now know the strength and the power of my voice as a young person."*

*-Priyanka Menon, SHS '12*

*"I was at the Inauguration. Standing in celebration with several million others was a truly amazing experience. Having worked as a member of the Obama Campaign, and in the YEP Generation Vote Campaign, it was fantastic to see the result of our contribution to the political process. To see that I, a mere fifteen year old, could contribute to this was wonderful."*

*-Oliver Kendall, PHS '11*

*"The Youth Senate provides a way for us to participate and actively voice our opinions . . . [T]he Achievement Solutions Team immerses me in a world of adult and student cooperation that teaches me how to overcome and handle obstacles in a productive way."*

*-Lenyé Tynes, HHS '10*

## Leadership Team Profiles

**SHS Action Senate:** Skyline has organized its own unique student government! Each small learning community (similar to CHS "Forums") sends representatives to the Action Senate.

**CHS Forum Council:** Community's new Council seats representatives from each Advisory Forum.

**HHS Student Council:** Aiming to involve more students at Huron.

**PHS Student Council:** Using a conventional student council system . . . tried and true.

**Youth Senate:** Meets in schools and across the district. Seats on the district-wide *Senate Lead Team (SLT)* are available to student group and council representatives, as well as at-large individual representatives from all high schools.

New project initiatives usually begin at school-based Senate Action Team or Town Hall meetings, then Lead Team members increase communication among students across the district in order to reach decisions regarding youth voice and other issues impacting youth.

The Youth Senate's ultimate goal is for all youth to have a voice and to be engaged as resources in their schools and the community through individual initiative and teamwork.

*YEP is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.*

*YEP projects are youth initiated and youth led.*

*Receive "Voices" by e-mail! Tell us:  
[senate@youthempowerment.com](mailto:senate@youthempowerment.com)*

**NOTICE:** YEP and the Youth Senate are currently looking for a few experienced people to help revamp our website. E-mail [info@youthempowerment.com](mailto:info@youthempowerment.com) for details.