

Young Scholars' Social Science Summit

High School teachers and students from the Washington, D.C. area recently met at the American Psychological Foundation to participate in a new social studies initiative, Young Scholars' Social Science Summit (YS4), created by The Esther Katz Rosen Center for Gifted Education Policy (CGEP). The topic was refugees.

Five scholars representing different social sciences—psychology, economics, anthropology, geography, and demography—and a diplomatic correspondent for a local newspaper engagingly talked about how they chose their field of study—or how it chose them—and how each of them has been involved with the topic of refugees. Scholars came from local universities, the Smithsonian, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations, including humanitarian aid organizations.

The YS4 Founding Committee included representatives from CGEP, the American Anthropological Association, Association of American Geographers, National Association for Gifted Children, National Cathedral School, Fairfax County Public Schools, Montgomery County Public Schools, DC Public Schools, and the American Psychological Association. Sixty-four students and teachers attended the October 24 summit.

Participating teachers chose up to three students to participate, but how the students were chosen was up to each teacher. One anthropology teacher from Virginia asked student volunteers to show up at 7:30 the next morning, which, he said, weeded out several students. Those students remaining were required to write an essay on why they wanted to attend the summit.

In preparation for the one-day summit, the school team (teacher and students) read five articles, one of which was Stephen Lubkemann's *AnthroNotes* article, "Refugees: Worldwide Displacement and International Response" (Fall 2002). The team then developed several questions in response to the readings that they could ask the speakers.

The day consisted of the initial panel of scholars and a journalist, with Q & A; two break-out sessions (the first included sandwiches); and a final keynote speaker who was a second journalist. For each break-out session, students and teachers were individually assigned by the organizers to one of five groups, headed by one of



Students and their Teachers from Washington-Lee High School in Virginia.

the panelists accompanied by a facilitator. All participants attended two of the five groups.

Following the summit, the school teams are expected to meet, debrief, and decide how to disseminate the information they gained to their school or broader communities. Each student is also encouraged to undertake a school project such as preparing a news announcement on the school television, writing an article for the school or local newspaper, doing community service for an organization that helps refugees, conducting original research for a behavioral/social science fair project, or preparing a research article for publication in a professional journal of student papers such as the *Concord Review*.

The students' exploration into the world of refugees helped them better understand this complex global problem and the emotional, political, and social consequences of being a refugee. As one student said, "Global inequality is a people problem that is difficult to control. Learning about refugees gives us a new perspective of the people we refer to as 'illegal immigrants.' They deserve respect."

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