



A Youth Conference – Led by Youth!

By Evie Hantzopoulos

Founded in 1995, Global Kids, an educational non-profit in New York City and Washington, DC, works to develop youth leaders for the global stage through dynamic global education and youth leadership development programs. Our flagship program, Power of Citizenry (POC), reaches over 1,500 high school and middle school students each week. In the program's workshops, youth explore such issues as global health, poverty, children's rights, sustainability, discrimination, and human rights. Field trips, guest speakers, mentoring, and hands-on service projects supplement the workshops.

The program equips youth from underserved communities with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in school and participate in shaping international and public policies in a complex 21st century world and it prepares students to become active citizens and leaders not only in their communities, but the world at large.

Annual Youth Conference

The culminating event for the students involved in our year-long POC program is the Annual Youth Conference. The conference provides Global Kids (GK) students with a space to demonstrate their growth in the program.



Every spring since 1990, the Annual Youth Conference brings together over 500 students and 100 educators for a youth-led event that addresses an international issue of importance and showcases the leadership skills of our youth. The event is organized and carried out by students in Global Kids' Conference Planning Committee, who participate in a rigorous training process, select the conference theme, choose the event's guest speakers and, working with experts and GK staff members, develop and facilitate interactive workshops for their peers. The youth on this planning committee

commit countless hours to the program and many of them identify organizing the Conference as one of the most important events of their high school careers.

The 2015 Conference theme, "Know Justice, Know Peace," was chosen because our students felt compelled to explore issues of justice in a year where they witnessed the events in Ferguson and Staten Island, among others. This theme was well aligned with Global Kids' efforts to empower youth to become active, engaged global citizens. Students wrote and led workshops on environmental justice, LGBTQ rights, racial and economic justice, and immigration, among other topics.

The Annual Youth Conference is a life-changing event for the students who organize and facilitate the workshops. Conference participants comment that the event is one of the few forums in which youth are exposed to challenging international content and given an opportunity to voice their opinions about critical world issues. According to Global Kids alumna Yassi Tamdji, "I was empowered by the knowledge that I had gathered from my research leading up to the Annual Youth Conference. It felt good explaining this knowledge to my peers in an interactive, fun and educational workshop that I developed with another GK Leader."

Students walk away from this program with leadership skills that they can carry with them to college and beyond.

--Evie Hantzopoulos joined Global Kids in 1996 as Director of Training and served as Deputy Director and Director Programs for 12 years before her appointment as Executive Director in 2010. For more information, contact her at info@globalkids.org