

Kid City Evaluation:

Youth Videographers Focus Group

Kid City is a partnership between the City of Maplewood Parks and Recreation (Maplewood) and Z Puppets Rosenschnoz (Z Puppets). Z Puppets is a Minneapolis-based theater and puppet company. With funding from the Minnesota State Arts Board, Kid City brings the people of Maplewood together through theater, puppetry, and interactive art installations.

As part of the Kid City evaluation, we conducted a focus group with the Kid City youth videographers. This group primarily focused on impacts that youth videographers experienced by being a part of Kid City in this capacity. All youth videographers (eight in total) participated in the group. This document outlines findings from talking with youth videographers about their experiences with Kid City. Additionally, we observed Kid City youth programming, conducted a focus group with the Kid City team, and administered a short survey at Kid City events; there are separate write-ups of these evaluation activities.

Getting involved with Kid City

Youth videographers listed the following ways that they heard about the youth videography opportunity through Kid City: hearing about Kid City at their school, at their church, through Facebook, or through a flyer at the Maplewood Mall. Prior to being a Kid City youth videographer, half of the participants had previous film-making experience.

What youth videographers learned

All youth videographers mentioned learning how to operate new cameras and other hardware (such as lights, soundboard, etc.), how to edit film projects, and how to interview people on camera. When asked which of their learnings they thought was most important, youth videographers said:

- Editing skills (3 youth videographers)
- Cinematography techniques (2 youth videographers)
- Interviewing skills (2 youth videographers)
- Information about Maplewood community (1 youth videographer)

When prompted, youth videographers also noted some ways in which they learned about how the arts can bring people together, such as meeting other youth videographers through Kid City (2 youth videographers) and seeing people come together through Kid City events (2 youth videographers).

Connecting with community

Of the eight youth videographers, two lived in Maplewood, with the others living in various cities near Maplewood. As reported above, one youth videographer said that their most important learning was knowing more about the Maplewood community. Additionally, one respondent learned more about events in Maplewood, and another (who does not live in Maplewood) said they learned more about events and municipal parks in their own city.

Positives of being a youth videographer

When asked what they like about being a youth videographer, all participants mentioned that they liked learning something new and that they liked getting paid (though 6 youth videographers agreed that they would participate even if they were not paid). Other positives reported by youth videographers included: learning about others' opinions on how to improve their community (4 youth videographers), learning new technology (4 youth videographers), and collaborating with other youth videographers (2 youth videographers). One participant said they liked that they were now certified to rent cameras and other film-making equipment, and three youth videographers said that they would rent film-making equipment after their time with Kid City concluded to pursue their own projects.

When asked about their favorite assignment, participants noted various assignments, including: interviewing community leadership, interviewing friends, photography-related assignments, and focusing on the positives of their community. This range of responses to this question suggests that Kid City succeeded at engaging youth with varying interests in terms of film content.

Areas for improvement

Suggestions for improvement were related to poor performance from Suburban Community Channels (SCC), the initial community media partner that was providing training. SCC ceased operations soon after the initial training they provided to youth videographers, and also did not provide the training they agreed to. As a result, Kid City began working with CTV North Suburbs to provide training, but this new training had not occurred by the time this focus group was conducted. When asked about what could be improved about their time with Kid City, all youth videographers focused on the hardware and software trainings they received from SCC. Specifically, they suggested that the training be more spread out during the summer, with three participants worrying they might forget necessary information or skills before the program's end. Two youth videographers said that they wished the editing training had been of higher quality, and one participant said the trainings were long and it was hard to maintain attention during them. Additionally, all participants referenced the switch from SCC to CTV, suggesting consistency with their editing program and the space within which they received training as improvements, with one participant suggesting the same for the hardware they worked with.

Summary

These evaluation findings indicate that youth videographers learned technical film-making skills in the context of learning about their communities and how art might improve their communities. When asked to describe their experience with Kid City in one word, the following words were chosen: adventurous, awesome, different, enjoyable, insightful, interesting, intriguing, and professional.

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