

**Legislative Youth Advisory Council**  
**123<sup>rd</sup> Legislature**  
**Meeting Summary for November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Friday November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
3:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
Belmont Room, Conference Center  
Atlantic Oaks by the Sea  
Bar Harbor, Maine

Saturday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.  
Room 813, Willows Mansion  
Atlantic oaks by the Sea  
Bar Harbor, Maine

**Youth Members and Legislative Members Present:** Benjamin Goodman, Kennebunk; Ian Engdahl, Winthrop; Will Colan, Readfield; Meg Richardson, Kents Hill; Zoë Baker, Kennebunk; Mary Beth Moyer, Lewiston; Rep. Roberta Muse, Fryeburg.

**Youth Members and Legislative Members Absent:** Dave O’Heir, Waterville; Maureen Quinn, Portland; Hannah Lennett, Litchfield; Alex Cornell du Houx, Brunswick; Grace Wright, Brunswick; Hannah Stein, Portland; Brandon Mazer, Brunswick; Claire Howard, South Portland; Heather Pratt, Chelsea; Rep. David Farrington, Gorham; Sen. Paula Benoit, Phippsburg; Sen. Joseph Perry, Bangor.

**Staff and Others Present:** Patrick Norton, Director, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis; Brenna Byrne, Legislative Researcher, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis; Youth and adult citizens from around the state.

**About this meeting.**

LYAC’s fifth meeting of 2007 was held in conjunction with the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Peer Leadership Conference in Bar Harbor. In partnership with the Maine Youth Action Network, LYAC planned and convened a 2-part meeting including a 30-minute keynote presentation and break-out session and a one-hour workshop. The goal of this meeting was two-fold: to raise awareness about LYAC among conference participants, and to gain youth input on the issues surrounding LD 1254, An Act to Modify the Student Code of Conduct. These issues include school jurisdiction over student behavior outside of school, student codes of conduct, student co-curricular contracts, and the sharing of student information between law enforcement and school administration.

**1. LYAC Keynote Presentation (with audience break-out session)**

In front of an audience of more than 300 youth from around the state, Ben Goodman, LYAC’s youth Co-Chair introduced LYAC and spoke briefly about LYAC’s recent accomplishments and current objectives. Zoë Baker then spoke briefly about LYAC’s role in the legislature and the importance of youth input to LYAC’s work. Ian Engdahl presented the audience with a background on LD 1254, An Act to Modify the Student Code of Conduct and the issues that have arisen in LYAC’s discussions on the bill. LYAC members Mary Beth Moyer, Will Colan, and Meg Richardson then presented a skit illustrating an incident similar to one that initiated LD 1254 involving a student facing punishment by the school principal for alleged unacceptable behavior outside of school. LYAC then posed the following question to the audience:

***Should schools have the authority to hold students accountable for unacceptable behavior outside of school? Why or why not?***

LYAC asked conference participants to brainstorm this question among each other and write their answers down on paper provided. During the brainstorming session, LYAC members went around the audience to clarify the task and/or answer questions. Lastly, Zoë Baker concluded the keynote presentation by asking the audience to take a few minutes to complete the LYAC survey, provided in their registration materials.

**2. LYAC Workshop: “Making Your Voice Matter: Youth Input Into Legislative Policy”**

As part of its participation at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Peer Leadership Conference, LYAC held a public meeting in the form of a workshop. This ‘workshop’ was one of many others conference participants had the option to attend. LYAC’s objectives in holding this meeting were to 1) educate participants about how LYAC serves to bring youth voice to the legislature, and 2) to gain input from the public on the issues surrounding LD 1254. The workshop setting mimicked a typical Council meeting with LYAC members sitting in a horseshoe facing the audience and a podium. There were 24 members of the public (all conference participants) present at the workshop.

As workshop facilitators, LYAC members Will Colan and Meg Richardson called this meeting to order at 11:15 a.m. by requesting introductions from members and guests.

Next on the agenda, was a brief explanation of how youth input can impact legislative decision-making. Meg Richardson provided participants with the following examples of ways youth can provide input:

- Testifying at public hearings for proposed legislation
- Contacting their legislators about issues/concerns
- Contacting LYAC members about issues/concerns
- Attending LYAC meetings to discuss issues/concerns

Participants were also provided with information on how to contact their state representatives and senators.

Next, participants were provided with copies of the following legislation proposed last session that effect Maine’s youth:

- An Act to Prohibit the Use of Electronic Devices by Minors While Driving (Enacted in 2007)
- Resolve, Directing the Department of Education to Encourage School Administrative Units to Encourage Secondary School Students to Apply to College (Enacted in 2007)
- An Act to Establish Working Hours and Wages for Teenagers (Not Enacted, but expected to be re-introduced next year)

Participants expressed varying levels of awareness and concerns about this legislation. Several questions rose from the audience about the cell phone bill regarding penalties and the definition of electronic devices. The audience expressed overwhelming opposition to the teenage wage bill, which proposed to reduce the minimum wage for teenage workers and increase the number of hours they can work per week. LYAC members made clear that, though this bill was not enacted, it is expected to be re-visited in the future and LYAC would monitor the bill closely.

Next, LYAC members initiated a more detailed discussion of LD 1254 by explaining how the bill came to LYAC and then asking participants to share their thoughts on whether or not schools should have jurisdiction over student behavior outside of school. Many participants expressed the belief that it is appropriate for schools to have jurisdiction over student behavior outside of school only if the student has signed a contract acknowledging his/her obligation to abstain from certain behavior as a condition of participation in co-curricular activities. Several participants argued that it is the schools place to protect students' learning environment and if a student's behavior outside of school in any way threatens school safety, then it would be appropriate for the school to intervene. Most agreed strongly that schools should not be able to punish a student for alleged behavior without proof or without formal charges by law enforcement.

Many participants voiced the opinion that a school's focus should be on educating and helping students rather than punishing them. In this vein, one adult participant offered a suggestion to allow law enforcement to share information with a social worker who is bound by confidentiality rather than a school administrator. This suggestion was generally supported with the shared perspective that a social worker would emphasize the student's rehabilitation and treatment while a school administrator might emphasize punishment to protect the school's image.

Participants debated the issue of whether the behavior of one student affects the image or climate of an entire school. While some participants claimed that a school's image should be judged in academic terms and what students do while in school, others argued that student behavior outside of school can affect the community in which the school is a part of and thus reflect negatively on the school itself.

When asked by LYAC members whether students involved in co-curricular activities other than athletics should be held to the same behavioral standards, most participants agreed. Many participants expressed that co-curricular activities are what motivate many students to do well in school. In this vein, co-curricular contracts are perceived to be somewhat effective in preventing illegal behavior outside of school. Though, it was a general consensus among participants that co-curricular contracts are often unfairly enforced.

After 35 minutes of discussion, facilitators concluded the meeting with an explanation of what LYAC plans to do with the information participants provided, including the development of policy recommendations at the next LYAC meeting, and providing recommendations in LYAC's biennial report to the Legislature.

### **3. LYAC Survey of Conference Participants**

Recognizing the value of having the attention of a large audience of Maine youth, LYAC chose to conduct a one-page survey administered to all conference attendees. The goal of the survey was to collect information from conference participants to provide LYAC with a sense of the level of awareness that a relatively informed youth have about LYAC, how LYAC can improve and maintain communication with its youth constituency, and what bill proposals youth think LYAC should focus on next year.

Every conference participant received a LYAC survey along with other important conference materials at registration. The survey was introduced to conference participants during the LYAC keynote presentation. Participants were asked to take a couple of minutes after the keynote to complete the survey and return it to a LYAC member. A total of 282 completed surveys were collected. An analysis of survey results will be described in LYAC's biennial report to the Legislature in December.

**4. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m. After the meeting, LYAC members re-grouped and agreed to discuss among each other several policy recommendations they had in mind as a result of this meeting and bring them in writing to the November 28<sup>th</sup> LYAC meeting for discussion with the full Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenna Byrne, Legislative Researcher  
Office of Policy and Legal Analysis

*This meeting summary was unanimously approved on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007.*