

2025 Youth Advocacy Summit



On November 1st, 2025, the [League of Education Voters Foundation](#) (LEV) in partnership with the [Association of Washington Student Leaders](#) (AWSL) and [Gonzaga University's Office of a Pedagogy of Hope Through Research and Practice](#), hosted the third annual Youth Advocacy Summit, themed [Nothing About Us Without Us: Using Your Voice to Get into Good Trouble](#). The event, hosted on Gonzaga's campus in Spokane, saw over 100 community members come together to learn, network, and share space.

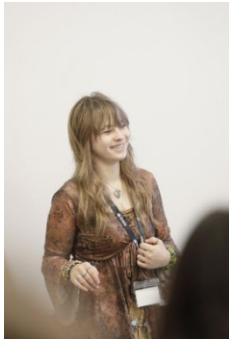


Over the last couple of years, we have seen attacks on public education and especially programs supporting our LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and Immigrant and Refugee communities. At the same time, we have seen student advocates across the country stand up for the rights of their classmates. *Nothing About Us Without Us: Using Your Voice to Get into Good Trouble* was all about making sure our most impacted communities and students everywhere are not only involved in the conversation but feel supported and empowered to speak up for themselves and their communities.

The Youth Advocacy Summit is only possible because of our student co-design team, who worked in partnership with LEV and AWSL to create an advocacy event by and for students. This year's co-design team was made up of seven passionate students who are currently attending school in the Central Valley School District, Spokane Public Schools, Cheney School District, and Columbia Basin College. The co-design team helped design the structure of the event and worked alongside LEV and AWSL staff to create and lead workshops, coordinate with community partners, and MC and host the event.



The co-design process is critically important to the creation of the Youth Advocacy Summit and to the mission and values of the hosting organizations. The process allows this event to be truly youth-focused and centered. Students gain professional development through event planning and execution, and also gain networking opportunities throughout the process.



In the planning process, our co-design team isolated three key areas: Wellness, Advocacy in Action, and Power and Voice. It was important to our student partners that we didn't just talk about getting involved, but we made sure participants were given opportunities to gain tools to be mentally and emotionally healthy while "getting into good trouble."

The day started with breakout sessions led by community partners and student leaders. We had three breakout sessions where participants chose between three options in each session.

We then came back together for lunch where we featured several community partners and resources as well as an "Art as Advocacy" gallery featuring pieces from youth in the area.

Breakout Session 1

- Well-Being in Action: Collective Strategies for Mental Wellness (Jasmine Linane-Booey Kazuko wellness)
- Safety, Support, and Action: Substance Abuse Prevention in the Real World (Adama Mbodji – Student)
- Bites and Snacks: Maximizing Student Voice in Schools (James Layman AWSL)

Breakout Session 2

- From the Streets to the Statehouse: Turning Movements into Policy for Real Change (Omar Zaragoza –LEV Foundation)
- Effects of Generational Trauma and How to Handle Them (Paikea Sammaripa – Student)
- Speak up and Stay Safe: The Youth Guide to Online Advocacy (Chika Ugorji – Student)

Breakout Session 3

- Racial Healing: Telling your story (Paikea Sammaripa & Chika Ugorji – Students)
- From Fear to Confidence: Getting Involved as an ELL Student (TC Zhao – Student * Gabriella Whitemarsh '26 WA Teacher of the Year)
- Student Voices Have Power (Ona Miller – Student)

After lunch, we had a student-led panel about advocacy at different levels of the education system. The panel featured **Luc Jasmin III** from the Washington State Governor's office, **Maddie Sontag**, the Legislative Assistant for Washington state Senator Marcus Riccelli, **Gabriela Whitemarsh**, the 2026 Washington state Teacher of the Year, **Hilary Kozel**, a Spokane School Board Director, and two students from the Spokane area.



A goal of the Youth Advocacy Summit every year is to ensure that students and community members feel empowered to use their voice and to advocate in their own unique ways. We know that it takes a village to make a difference, and the Youth Advocacy Summit is a chance to exhibit that power.

The day concluded with [Spokane Poet Laureate Mery Noel Smith](#), who takes Power & Voice to heart by using their poetry to engage in advocacy across our community. This final session allowed participants to put pen to paper and start writing their own stories and poems centered on their agency and advocacy.



Almost every day at LEV, we hear from youth across Washington state that they want a say in the conversations that will impact their futures. They do not want to sit back and watch the world change – they want to stand up and be the ones making the change. At the Youth Advocacy Summit this year, attendees saw youth ownership firsthand. They heard the passion and energy that young people have to work collaboratively to create a better future for all.

As youth-focused organizations – LEV Foundation, AWSL, and the Office of a Pedagogy of Hope – we know the important role the Youth Advocacy Summit plays in starting these conversations.

Our goal is that all participants leave feeling empowered to use their voice, to engage in advocacy, and to care for their neighbors.

This event would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our student co-design team and the support from our sponsors, **College Spark Washington**, **True Measure Collaborative**, **Microsoft**, **Foundry10**, **TrueBlue Strategies**, and the **Gonzaga University Office of a Pedagogy of Hope Through Research and Practice**, as well as the community members who showed up and supported this “good trouble.”

We would also like to extend a special thank you to College Spark Washington for creating this [video recap of the Youth Advocacy Summit in Spokane](#).

