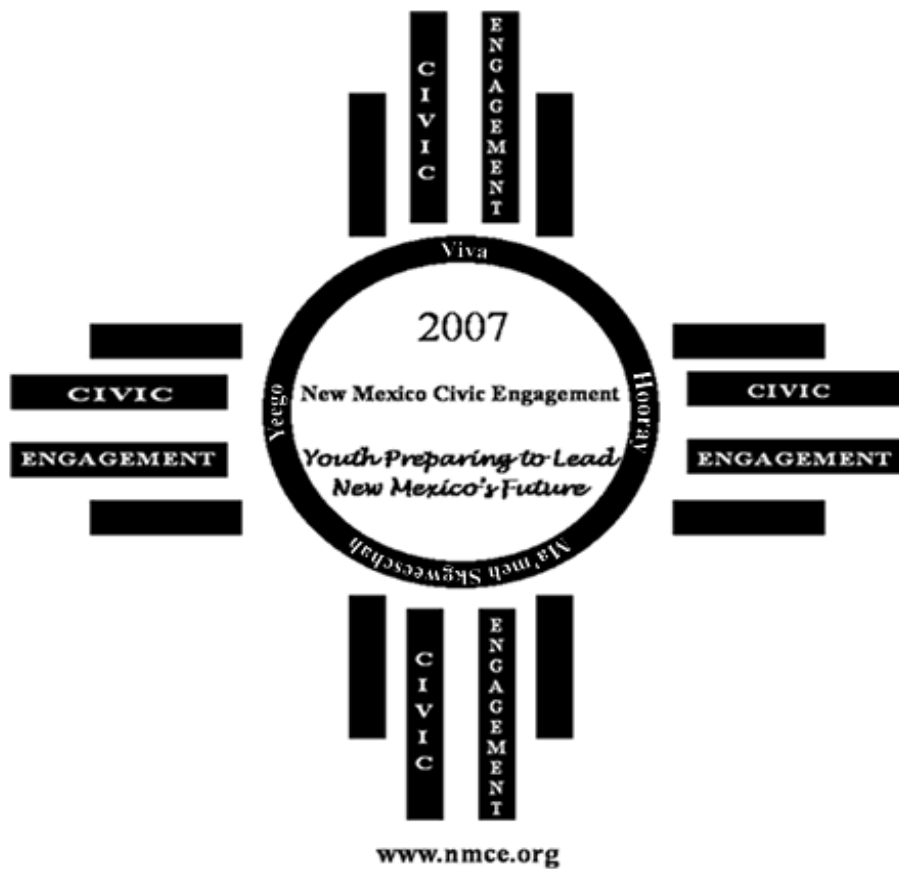


The Sixth Annual  
New Mexico Civic Engagement Initiative Summer Institute  
Evaluation Report  
May 30-June 3, 2007  
Albuquerque, New Mexico



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**Evaluation Report**

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August 3, 2007

## **Introduction**

The Sixth Annual New Mexico Civic Engagement Initiative Summer Institute was held on the campus of the University of New Mexico from May 30 through June 3, 2007. More than 80 youth and 15 adults participated in the four day event. They spent the time involved in various educational and social activities learning about the many programs and initiatives that engage young people in the civic process. Eighteen organizations and schools were represented as they collectively tried to help young people and their adult sponsors establish and develop youth voice in New Mexico, making young people a civic and political force in the state.

## **Brief Program Outline**

The Institute started in the morning of May 30th with a kickoff scavenger hunt. Teams of youth and adults walked across the University of New Mexico reading clues that took them to various places on campus. The goal of the hunt was to orient participants to the different classrooms and buildings they would go throughout the conference and to also provide an opportunity for people to get to know one another.

The scavenger hunt was followed by an outdoor lunch and then a general orientation to the Institute itself. Organizers explained the purpose, the process, and the general plan for the four days of activities. Participants met the Institute planners and then had a chance to ask questions about the upcoming events.

The orientation was followed in the afternoon by a plenary session where conference leaders helped youth to identify important issues for the youth community. For an hour youth brainstormed about issues and concerns of importance to them (approximately 80 recommendations), and then spent another hour trying to sort out those that were most popular. The list developed included items such as George W. Bush, lack of respect for women, “me” instead of “we” mentality, teen pregnancy, gas prices, and racism. Youth took these six ideas and divided up into smaller focus groups where they debated whether their topic was a good one and what implications it had for future youth action.

The groups reconvened as a large group and reported to the others what they had discussed. They highlighted the major issues involved in each topic and what stirred them to think about future action.

This activity was followed by dinner at an outdoor facility. After dinner youth and adults from the various organizations presented information about their programs. It was a great opportunity for everyone to get to know one another and to see and hear what programs were operating in New Mexico.

The second day started with breakfast and then a round of workshops. Five workshops were offered, including a special group of youth who were trained as youth evaluators. The four workshops were repeated during a second session (late morning) and then all convened for lunch at La Posada (dining commons).

In the afternoon all participants attended a workshop on “Life After High School”, led by three different presenters. Then all the members engaged in team-building exercises held on the athletic field. They scaled walls, swung on ropes, and balanced on platforms, with each activity requiring groups to work together and problem solve physical and mental challenges.

After dinner at La Posada all the participants went to Cliffs Amusement Park for an evening of fun and camaraderie. Youth had a chance to get to know each other in an informal environment and evaluation data indicated that this was one of the most popular events of the Institute.

The third day (June 2) started with breakfast at La Posada and then a round of dodgeball and volleyball on the athletic fields. After the physical activities, participants attended to group workshops, one on digital storytelling and one on public announcement production. At the end of the first session, all the participants switched to the other workshop so everyone had a chance to learn about both processes.

A highlight of the third day was the Champions 4 Youth luncheon. Several adults from the community and the University of New Mexico were honored for their contributions to the New Mexico Civic Engagement Initiative. Youth were able to see and hear from individuals who helped to make the current and previous Institutes a success.

After the luncheon two rounds of workshops were held covering topics from School Health Advisory Councils to Service-Learning 101. Youth had the opportunity to choose 2 of the 4 offerings as they were repeated during the hour and ten minute rounds.

A barbeque dinner was held by the Anthropology Building and then youth had the opportunity to prepare for the live radio broadcast. A live radio broadcast was held from 7-8 PM in the lecture hall hosted by two Community Learning and Public Service staff. Various panels were interviewed and youth had a chance to speak during an open microphone session. A reflective activity followed where youth and adults had a chance to discuss what was accomplished and what was learned during the radio broadcast.

The evening concluded with a dance, held from 9 – 12 PM, at the Coronado Gymnasium facility. All youth participants had the opportunity to further their social connections and have fun.

The last day (June 3) started with breakfast at La Posada and then moved to an orientation dealing with reflecting on the Institute activities and planning for summer homework. Youth broke into small groups described by their own programs to develop action plans for the summer and the fall.

In a follow-up activity each group reported on their plans, including what they were going to do and who was responsible for doing it. As part of the final reporting, the Youth Evaluation Team reported on the conference based on personal experiences, interviews, and surveys completed by team members.

The final session included a presentation of a digital story about the conference and included some pictures from the previous 5 years. It ended with pictures from this year's Institute. The last activity included taking a group photo of all the participants and a send off where people expressed a desire to see everyone next year.

## Goals for the Institute

The Institute was designed to address several goals. They were framed by terms of excitement: Viva! Ma'meh Skgweescheah! Hooray! Yeego! Civic Engagement. The specific goals were

1. Help youth make ourselves voices for engagement by learning how to develop an effective youth voice
2. Help you to take leadership role in their communities and in youth conferences
3. Help you and adults learn how to work together to make youth voice a regular part of New Mexico's democratic process.
4. Help youth and adults learn how to plan for and document effective civic engagement initiatives.
5. Help youth and adults connect with the political process in New Mexico in order to bring about policy and practical changes for improved youth environments.

These were exactly the same goals for last year's Institute.

## Evaluation Report

As all these events unfolded, participants were asked to complete a comprehensive evaluation form (see Appendix) where they rated and commented on all the activities. The next section of this report is based on those survey responses, interviews and observations conducted by the Youth Evaluation Team, and on observations and interviews conducted by the external evaluator. Approximately 43 youth and adults completed the survey forms. The average number of responses per question was 37.

The evaluation of the conference was very positive. Youth and adults rated the Institute a combined 4.74 (where 5.0 is best) for overall satisfaction and value. This compares with a score of 4.7 for last year's Institute, so the score was a little bit higher. As for the most popular and highly rated sessions, the outing to Cliff's Amusement Park received the second highest rating, 4.71; overall rating for Day 2 was third (with 4.60); the rating for the Teambuilding activity was fourth at 4.57; and the rating for the youth evaluator reporting was fifth at 4.56. Workshop III proved to be the most popular workshop session at 4.35, with all the other workshops scoring in similar ranges from 4.27 (Workshop II), to 4.25 (Workshop IV), to 4.23

(Workshop I). The Radio Town Hall received a similar score as the workshops (4.25) and the Digital Storytelling Workshop received the lowest score, still a respectable 4.0. Interestingly, these same activities also garnered the highest ratings in last year’s Institute. Consistent scores across the years indicate that workshop sessions are consistently well received. Youth report they like the workshops because they are active, they allow youth to express their own opinions and tell their own stories, and they cover information that is meaningful to the participants. Involving youth presentors in the workshops was also mentioned as a feature that made them effective.

### Participant Rating Scores for Institute Events/Activities

Average Score for each item was as follows:

- |     |      |                                 |
|-----|------|---------------------------------|
| 1.  | 3.49 | Scavenger Hunt                  |
| 2.  | 4.08 | Orientation Meeting             |
| 3.  | 3.95 | Focus Group Forum               |
| 4.  | 3.91 | First Day                       |
| 5.  | 4.21 | Workshop I                      |
| 6.  | 4.27 | Workshop II                     |
| 7.  | 4.20 | Life After High School Workshop |
| 8.  | 4.57 | Teambuilding Activity           |
| 9.  | 4.71 | Cliff’s Amusement Park          |
| 10. | 4.60 | Second Day                      |
| 11. | 4.35 | Workshop III                    |
| 12. | 4.25 | Workshop IV                     |
| 13. | 4.00 | Digital Storytelling Workshop   |
| 14. | 4.25 | Youth Radio Town Hall           |
| 15. | 3.93 | Dance                           |
| 19. | 4.32 | Action Planning Activity        |
| 20. | 4.56 | Youth Evaluator Review          |
| 21. | 4.74 | Overall Institute Evaluation    |

Those activities that received the lowest ratings included: the scavenger hunt (3.49), the First Day overall (3.91), the Focus Group forum (3.95), and the Orientation meeting (4.08). All these events occurred during the first day and lower scores were perhaps indicative of youth not being familiar with the program and having events that were conducted as a large group activity with little active participation at any one given

time. In the orientation session one person spoke at a time for almost an hour, so many youth were observed just sitting or getting up to go outside...indicating that they were perhaps not as engaged in the overall activity. While the focus groups were smaller and more engaging, the fact that youth felt they were just beginning to learn about the conference seemed to affect the overall scores.

The good news about the scores is that all the sessions were well received and had scores that indicated that participants thought they were exceptionally good. The second day's activities appear to be the best over overall single day, with high rankings for the day itself and for all the events of the day. Of course the day's ending visit to Cliff's cemented the top ranking and suggested that sessions that are engaging, fun, and allow for social interaction are consistently effective.

The high ratings of all the events added credibility to the overall evaluation of 4.74, where attendees were very satisfied with the Institute. While starting a bit slowly with the scavenger hunt, the activities built upon one another, with the final reflective activities (the action planning and youth evaluation) helping to ensure that youth learned about really needing to do something during the summer and fall and thinking that evaluating their own work was a necessary activity in the civic engagement process.

## **Participant Comments**

Besides rating the various Institute events numerically, participants were also able to make comments about the conference and about what they liked, learned, and were concerned about. Almost every evaluation submitted included written comments. The various comments were listed and analyzed for general trends. Representative comments are presented here to provide a sense of what participants had to say about their experiences at the Institute.

Very Best Experience at the conference (Question 22):

- To work in groups and learn from each other and their issues
- The team building because I learned how to trust each other
- The team building because it was really challenging and it was cool to hang out with other people

- Speaking on the radio because I have never done that before. It is a great experience. Also, for once, I felt that maybe I was heard and that hopefully, someone, somewhere, will take youth to heart
- Cliffs because I went on rides with everybody and we talked and got to know each other a little more
- The racism workshop because it helped me understand why people are racist
- The Youth Focus Group because it make everyone get together and get acquainted with one another. Also, the youth expressed their feelings about their community

One thing I will sure to do when you apply what you learned (Question 23):

- I will bring up the teenage pregnancy in my school and work to develop programs to help inform students about issues related to it
- The After High School thing because it will help prepare me for college
- Researching skills that I learned in Database to Make the Case workshop
- Digital stories because it is a great way to spread messages to and around the community
- Think when you speak because you have a voice and it needs to be heard
- Help out in my community because if no one wants to make it look good, then I will
- Public service announcements because I would like to let my community know that Action for Youth exists
- I would apply getting attention, getting organized, getting busy and all the way through with doing work and making it interesting
- TAKE ACTION

Recommendations to improve the Institute (Question 24):

- Everything was very awesome; once again gets better every year. Thank you Joaquin for everything you have done. And Areli too. Thank you to NMCE staff and volunteers. Luv to you all.
- Not that I can find. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and to me it doesn't get much better than this
- Find out more problems and more ways to fix the problems

Workshops (Questions 5, 6, 7,8,11, 13):

- I learned how to give a speech (Get Our Voice Heard)
- I learned how to look at something from two perspectives (Youth Evaluation)
- How to get and find statistical information (Database to Make the Case)
- How to present information to a public official to get funding (Database to Make the Case)
- Watching other teams on how to do something better; to improve on whatever they were doing; improved communication and working together (Teambuilding)
- Work as a team and communicate to accomplish things (Teambuilding)
- Learned about trustworthiness and participation, working as a team (Teambuilding)
- I learned how to make a PSA and get your message across in a video way (Digital storytelling)
- Make your message clear and don't make it boring

- How to get people energized (Energizer workshop)
- That oppression can come from everyone and we must work together to solve it (Undoing Racism)

## Comments and Recommendations

The overall assessment suggests that, as one participant reported, “the Institute gets better each year.” With the exception of the Scavenger Hunt and first day activities related to the large group discussion and focus group, the majority of participants found the Institute to be a worthwhile learning and social event. They had plenty of opportunity to work together, learn from one another, and become inspired to do more civic work in their communities when they returned home. Data reported from the Youth Evaluation Team and the external evaluator supported these findings (see Appendix). In fact, the information contained in the Youth Evaluation Team report at the end of the conference very accurately describe each day’s major outcomes and activities and provides a good example of how effectively youth can assess their own reactions to a program such as the NMCE Institute.

With three years of evaluation it is fairly clear that the same outcomes and observations reinforce Institute findings:

- Workshops and proceedings that actively engage youth in the session are perceived to be most effective in keeping youth interested and in helping them to learn the most
- Workshops that focus on teambuilding exercises and radio broadcasting are consistently rated as among the best activities at the conference
- Involvement of youth in workshops and in evaluation (this year) are perceived by youth to be important components of the Institute offerings
- Activities that engage youth in fun, social events (such as Cliff’s Amusement Park) are consistently perceived to be effective approaches to engendering fun and an effective way for youth to meet and interact with other young people from around the state

- Workshops that encourage civic involvement through digital storytelling and researching topics are effective mechanisms to get young people to want to take action in their communities.

While the Institute is clearly successful in educating and activating youth about identifying and addressing community problems, there are still several changes/improvements that can be made to make it even more effective next year. Based on participant comments obtained through interviews and through the survey evaluation, some improvements can be achieved if the following steps/activities are implemented:

- Provide more training and experience for youth who present at sessions. Several youth indicated that they could have done a better job of engaging their audience if they had more preparation and practice in doing public presentations
- Use electronic media/Internet to engage youth before and after the Institute. While there are plans to work with participants post-conference on developing digital stories for their projects and to utilize storytelling as an evaluative approach, use of the Internet and the NMCE website could facilitate and enhance communication among and between programs prior to the Institute. More sharing of program information and civic experience of participants might help them to utilize the time at the Institute more effectively
- Continue to utilize post-Institute evaluation approaches such as the Community-Based Research course that was taught last year. Several members of the NMCE staff were able to take the class and produce in-depth studies about what happened to program participants after they returned home from the Institute. Perhaps this year youth participants who were involved in the Youth Evaluation Team could use their knowledge and skills to continue evaluation activities in the programs both during the summer and throughout the school year.
- Conduct fewer workshops, but have them be more in-depth, and perhaps even have one group function as a home group so participants could get to know each other better and have a greater likelihood that they will share knowledge and experiences in the future. The home group could

meet for 45 minutes to one hour each day and allow participants to debrief each day's activities in more depth and also have a chance to get to know each other better.

Implementing these recommendations, in addition to the highly successful events and processes already employed by the staff of the NMCE Initiative, should ensure an even more successful Institute next year. Of course, we will all be watching to see how many pieces of legislation and how much community work emerges from participants as they strive to make their voices heard in New Mexico.

#### Appendices

- 1 Youth Evaluation Team report (part of presentation from end of the Institute)
2. Institute Evaluation Form

## YOUTH EVALUATION RESULTS

### FIRST DAY REFLECTIONS

Welcoming activities were good.

Scavenger Hunt was a good introduction to people and places; some groups worked better than others.

Some people were scared or nervous about meeting new people

Positive experience: people showed interest in topics during the large group session (although the session probably went a little too long; some lost interest after about an hour)

Most people liked the small group discussion. It was a chance to hear other people's opinions

Overall, was a fun day. Glad to have the experiences, although relieved when it was over.

### SECOND DAY

Reflections: Day was better than the first. The best parts were Cliffs and discovering that many people had similar interests.

Classes were more hands on.

Team Building activities were clearly the best of the day: everyone got along, everyone had fun, everyone met new people and used their names more, and it was active and engaging all the time.

After High School workshop: was both interesting for some and not very engaging for others. It depended on which group you were with. Energy of presenters affected enjoyment and value. Many did get good information; some thought it was boring because they had already heard the material before.

Cliffs was fun for all. Fun rides, nice to meet other people. Some participants, primarily from Albuquerque, thought there should be some alternative choice since several of them have been to Cliff's many times.

### THIRD DAY

Workshops had mixed reactions: some people really liked them while others were not as engaged. Needed more activity in the workshops to make them more interesting.

Suggested that good workshops often start with a small group activity that encourages participants to engage one another and to feel more connected to the activities at hand.

Some issues: people were tired from the night before and their energy level was down when there is a late night activity.] Perhaps start later.

Good presentations tend to have presenters that have high energy and interest in their subject, hands-on activities, and a variety of activities throughout the workshop.

There was some concern expressed by a few participants that others were text messaging during the workshops, especially when things were a little slow. They were also talking to friends and not paying attention. Perhaps there is a need for policy, although most youth thought it wouldn't be effective.

#### RATINGS FOR SESSIONS ATTENDED (Through Friday):

1.	Scavenger Hunt:	3.81(out of 5)
2.	Orientation activities	4.22
3.	Focus Group Forums	4.22
4.	First Day (overall)	3.44
5.	Workshop I (evaluation)	4.22
6.	Workshop II	4.43
7.	Life After High School	4.88 (greater variance)
8.	Team Building (discussion considered best)	5.0
9.	Cliffs	4.75 (one 3, all 5)
10.	Second Day	4.71
11.	Workshop III	4.85
12.	Workshop IV (evaluation)	4.28
	Average of 12 scores:	3.97
	Overall rating for Institute as of 3:30 PM Saturday: (separate rating for only conference)	4.00

## OVERALL COMMENTS

Thought the Institute was generally very successful.

Lots of opportunities to meet new people and to interact with them

Everyone had at least two or three workshops they attended that was helpful

### Learning From Conference Activities

Everyone said they learned something about Leadership, either a skill or knowledge

Everyone said they learned something about Civic Engagement, what it was, how to improve their own program or connect with others who could help

Approximately half of the participants said they were able to network with one or two other people to follow-up with after the conference

### Best Parts of the Conference

Team Building Workshop: active, fun, opportunity to learn teamwork, trust

Cliffs: fun, chance to meet new people in comfortable environment

### Recommendations

Perhaps have fewer workshops, but in more depth, with chance to produce something

Have workshops be more interactive, with small group work, and have speakers be more energetic

**New Mexico Civic Engagement Institute**

May 31 to June 3, 2007

Welcome to the New Mexico Civic Engagement Institute. Hopefully you will have a good time and learn a lot of things you can use this year to make yourself a model of civic engagement. The purpose of this evaluation form is to help you track what you learn from major portions of the Institute and to help you plan to use this knowledge and skills throughout the year.

Please take a minute or two, after each session, to jot down a few notes about what you did and learned. It will help you to remember the good times and assist you in thinking about what you are going to do throughout the year. Please answer questions honestly and as completely as you wish. The more you say, the more we learn. Good luck and enjoy the conference. Filling out this form could be worth \$50!!

Your Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Your Age \_\_\_\_\_ Your Gender F M

Your School \_\_\_\_\_

City Where You Live: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been to a New Mexico Civic Engagement Summer Institute before? Y N

If YES, when did you attend? \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating System: Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow**

*Ow is awful*

*Wow is a really great experience*

**Please circle the number that reflects your experience with each activity.**

**Day I (May 31)**

1. **The Scavenger Hunt:** Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow

What part was the most fun?

What one thing did you learn from the Hunt?

2. **Orientation Meeting:** Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow

What one thing did you learn from the presentations?

3. **Focus Group Forum:**      Ow 1            2        3        4        5 Wow

What did you discuss in the focus groups?

What was the highlight of your comprehensive plan?

4. **Rate the value of the first day for you?**

          Ow 1            2        3        4        5 Wow

What was the best thing you did and/or the most important thing you learned?

What did you learn that you can use next school year? How would you use it?

**Day II (JUNE 1)**

5. **Workshop I** (name the workshop you attended): \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the value of the workshop:      Ow 1            2        3        4        5 Wow

What 2 things did you learn from the workshop?

What did you like best about the workshop?

6. **Workshop II (name the workshop):** \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the Overall Value of the Workshop: Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow

What one important thing did you learn from this workshop?

7. **Life After High School session:** Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow

Name two things you learned about preparing for college:

8. **Teambuilding Activity:** Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow

What was the best part, for you, of the teambuilding activity?

What two important principles did you learn about the teambuilding process?

9. **Cliffs Amusement Park:** Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow

What did you like most about going to Cliff's Amusement Park?

10. **What was the value of the second day?** Ow 1 2 3 4 5 Wow

What was the most important thing that you learned on the second day?

**Day III (JUNE 2)**

11. **Workshop III** (name the workshop) \_\_\_\_\_  
Rate the Overall Value of the Workshop:   Ow 1    2    3    4    5 Wow

What 2 things did you learn in this workshop?

What activity did you like best at this workshop?

12. **Workshop IV** (name the workshop) \_\_\_\_\_  
Rate the Overall Value of the Workshop:   Ow 1    2    3    4    5 Wow

What were the most important things you learned from this workshop?

13. **Digital Storytelling Workshops**   Ow 1    2    3    4    5 Wow

What two important skills did you learn from this workshop?

How will you apply them during the year?

14. **Youth Radio Town Hall**                      Ow 1              2              3              4              5 Wow

What was the best part of the Town Hall meeting?

What did you learn that you can use when you return home?

15. **Dance**                      Ow 1              2              3              4              5 Wow

What was the best part of the dance, for you?

Did you meet any new people? Where were they from?

16. **What was the value of the third day?**

What are the two or three most important things you have learned during these three days?

**Day IV (JUNE 3)**

19. **Action Planning:**                      Ow 1              2              3              4              5 Wow

List 2 or 3 things you have planned for the next year.

What was the most important thing you learned from this session?

20. **Youth Evaluators review:**                      Ow 1                      2                      3                      4                      5 Wow

What did you learn that was new at the Youth Evaluators' session?

**OVERALL INSTITUTE EVALUATION**

21. **Thinking about all the events and activities during the New Mexico Civic Engagement Institute, how would you rate the overall experience this week?**

Ow    1       2       3       4       5       Wow

22. **Of all the activities and events you experienced at the Institute, which one stands out as being the very best one?**

Why?

23. **Of all the people you met during sessions and Institute events, who stands out as being the person that had the most influence on you?**

Why?

23. Of all the things you did at the Institute, which one thing will you be sure to do when you apply what you have learned during the upcoming school year?

Why?

24. Any suggestions you want to make to improve the Institute for next year?

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**IMPORTANT**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW. YOUR EVALUATION WILL BE ENTERED INTO A DRAWING FOR A \$50 GIFT CERTIFICATE. We will remove this page from your evaluation and enter it into the drawing. That way the evaluation will not be identified by your name and your anonymity will be maintained. Thanks for completing the evaluation!**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_