



Since 1989, the Youth Leadership St. Louis (YLSL) program has been informing, connecting, preparing and empowering high school students to become civic and community leaders.

An internationally recognized program of FOCUS St. Louis, YLSL brings together high school juniors from public, private, parochial, and independent charter schools across the region, as well as community-based organizations.

What Makes It Unique

Youth Leadership St. Louis is the area's only established inter-district high school program that is non-competitive in nature. No other program brings together such a large and diverse group of students.

Upon completing the program, students report and demonstrate:

- An increase in leadership skill level and positive decision making
- Greater understanding of issues affecting the St. Louis region
- An increase in knowledge relating to diversity and willingness to interact more frequently with persons different from themselves
- A desire to become more involved in their community

"YLSL impacts students' lives by taking them to real places in our region and confronting them with the complex challenges and opportunities that leaders must face."

- YLSL Advisor

WHAT TO EXPECT

Youth Leadership St. Louis takes students out of the classroom and into the community to explore what leadership means in our region – and help them develop their own leadership potential.

Curriculum

Each program day immerses students into a different issue in the region, giving them the opportunity to connect and learn from community leaders, collaborate with their peers and put their leadership skills into action. Topics include:

- Cultivating a Learning Community and Building Leadership Capacity
- Public Health
- Education
- Criminal and Juvenile Justice
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Understanding the Effects of Discrimination
- Homelessness and Poverty
- Leadership and Social Responsibility

Commitment

The YLSL program kicks off with opening retreat in September and runs through April, meeting one to two days per month (except in December).

Program days, held during school hours and select Saturdays, include a combination of team-building exercises, experiential learning activities, site visits/tours, and dialogue with community leaders.

“YLSL has been an eye opening experience for me, and it has made a huge difference in how well I see the world from other’s perspectives.”

– YLSL 2021-22 Participant



Application Process

YLSL selection begins in the spring of sophomore year and is administered by participating high schools/organizations.

Advisors at each participating school/organization distribute student applications. Community leaders conduct interviews to select class members, and students are notified by their schools/organizations of their selection.

Program Cost

Funding from various companies, foundations and individuals enables FOCUS to offer the YLSL program for only \$500 per student. In most cases, the fee is paid by the school/district/community organization.

Thank you to the following corporations and foundations for their generous support of the YLSL program:

- Dierbergs
- Mary Ranken Jordan & Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation
- MOHELA
- The Papa John’s Foundation for Building Community
- Reinsurance Group of America, Inc. (RGA)
- Saigh Foundation

About FOCUS St. Louis

FOCUS St. Louis is the region’s premier leadership development organization. FOCUS prepares a diverse base of leaders to work cooperatively for a thriving St. Louis region through our experience-based leadership training, civic issue education and public engagement initiatives.

FOCUS offers a continuum of leadership programs to engage leaders at every stage of their journey, from high school students to senior executives. More than 10,000 individuals have completed our programs, and FOCUS alumni and members are leaders who make a difference.

2022-23 YOUTH LEADERSHIP ST. LOUIS PARTNERS

- Afton High School
- Bishop Dubourg High School
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis / St. Louis Internship Program
- Chaminade College Preparatory School
- Cor Jesu Academy
- Crossroads College Preparatory School
- Francis Howell Central High School
- Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri
- Grand Center Arts Academy
- Kirkwood High School
- Ladue Horton Watkins High School
- Nerinx Hall
- St. Louis University High School
- St. Mary’s High School
- Ursuline Academy
- Vitendo 4 Africa

For More Information

Interested in learning more or bringing the YLSL program to your school?

Visit www.focus-stl.org or contact Youth Leadership St. Louis Director Shalia Ford at (314) 657-4021 or shaliaf@focus-stl.org.