



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 diverse group of students.

In a survey of recent Youth Leadership St. Louis graduates,

- 100% felt they increased their ability to look at issues from multiple angles, seek out new perspectives, and take meaningful action.
- 93% said they built a diverse network of peers.
- 93% gained a better understanding of St. Louis' civic landscape and issues in our region.
- 93% reported a greater sense of personal commitment to the region.

**"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 into the community to explore what leadership means in our region, while learning and practicing skills that will serve them throughout life, including group facilitation, critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and public speaking.

### 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 vary from year to year, and often include:

- Building Leadership Capacity
- Health and Wellness
- Economic Development
- Education
- Criminal Justice
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Homelessness and Poverty
- Leadership and Social Responsibility

### Commitment

The YLSL program runs from September to April, with participants 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.

“FOCUS has done a great job teaching me to be comfortable outside of my comfort zone. I think that FOCUS has made me recognize my passion in life and has helped me learn how to take charge and work for change.” — YLSL 2022-23 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:

- Blues for Kids
- Cardinals Care
- Dierbergs Markets
- Mary Ranken Jordan & Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation
- MOHELA
- Nestlé Purina PetCare Company
- RGA Foundation
- Saigh Foundation

## About FOCUS St. Louis

Recognized as a national model for civic leadership development, FOCUS St. Louis provides diverse leaders with the civic awareness and powerful connections needed to be collaborative changemakers who advance a thriving region for all.

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 11,000 individuals have completed our programs, and FOCUS alumni and members are leaders who make a difference.

## 2024-25 YOUTH LEADERSHIP ST. LOUIS PARTNERS

Affton High School  
Behavioral Health Response  
Bishop Dubourg High School  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis: St. Louis  
Internship Program  
Chaminade College Preparatory School  
Confluence Preparatory Academy  
Cor Jesu Academy  
Crossroads College Preparatory School  
Gateway STEM High School  
Ladue Horton Watkins High School  
Nerinx Hall  
O'Fallon Township High School  
Roosevelt High School  
St. Louis University High School  
St. Mary's South Side Catholic High School  
Sumner High School  
Ursuline Academy  
Vashon High School

## For More Information

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

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