

October 1, 2025

Dear Applicant:

Congratulations on your decision to apply for the Hancock Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA). In order to have the best chance of being selected for the program, please read through the application materials very carefully, especially the scoring information to help you be successful.

The Hancock Youth Leadership Academy is seeking current high school juniors (Class of 2027). If you would like to develop leadership skills, learn about Hancock County and its many assets, and prepare for college life, this is a great opportunity for you.

There will be an in-person application workshop for interested students at the Hancock Resource Center located at 887 Washington St., Bay Saint Louis, MS, 39520, on Thursday, October 16th at 6:00pm. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend.** We will review the application requirements, discuss the interview process, and answer questions.

To get ready for the application process, interested juniors should:

- Talk to your parents about the tuition and check with school about scholarships if needed;
- Review the tentative program dates and talk with coaches, employers, and other activity directors about attending HYLA sessions;
- Decide which teacher you will ask for the Teacher Recommendation and make the request;
- Mark your calendar for Interview Day: Tuesday, November 11;
- Review the application preview and prepare drafts of your answers.
- Attend the HYLA Application Workshop;
- Submit your application by October 30, 2025 at <https://www.hancockhrc.org/hancock-youth-leadership-academy.html>.

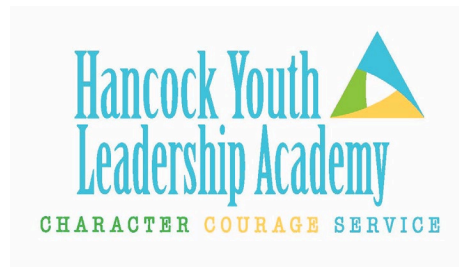
We wish you luck with your application and do not forget the deadline is **Thursday, October 30th at 4:00pm.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhonda Rhodes", is positioned above the typed name.

Rhonda Dean Rhodes
President/Executive Director
Hancock Resource Center

Hancock Resource Center
887 Washington Street
Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi 39520
228-463-8887 | 228-463-8901 (fax)
www.hancockhrc.org



October 1, 2025

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are excited that your student is considering applying for the Hancock Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA). The Hancock Youth Leadership Academy is seeking current high school juniors (Class of 2027). This is a terrific opportunity for your student, and we wanted to provide some additional information for parents about the program. The program begins in January 2026 when the students are juniors and concludes in December 2026 halfway through the senior year. Admission to the program is incredibly competitive; we usually receive sixty to seventy applications per year and select about twenty-four students from the four high schools in Hancock County. For this reason, we ask that attendance for the program be a high priority for both students and parents. We meet with the school administrators each year and they also commit to prioritizing the program. This becomes challenging as the year goes on because students are involved in so many activities that compete for their time. If your student is selected, the Welcome Packet will include an agreement to be signed by parents and students, attesting to this commitment.

To get ready for the application process, interested juniors should:

- Discuss with you and the school arrangements for tuition. Most schools require students to pay all or part of the tuition, but a scholarship may be requested as well. We do not want the tuition to be the reason a student does not apply.
- Review the tentative program dates (and the reverse side of this letter) and talk with coaches, employers, and other activity sponsors about attending HYLA sessions;
- Mark your calendar for Interview Day: Tuesday, November 11.
- Attend the HYLA Application Workshop on Thursday, October 16;
- Submit their application by Thursday, October 30, 2025. The link to the application can be found at <https://www.hancockhrc.org/hancock-youth-leadership-academy.html>.

We know that you want your student to succeed, but we encourage students to make the decision to apply, complete the application process, discuss the program with coaches and sponsors, and ask questions about the program and the process without your help. If there are any questions about the program, please encourage your student to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Dean Rhodes
President/Executive Director
Hancock Resource Center

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Mission

Through providing education and experiences, the Hancock Youth Leadership Academy seeks to develop courage, character and service in the young people of Hancock County, ultimately forming the leaders of tomorrow.

Target Participants

1. Balance academics and multiple activities while prioritizing this program.
2. Be open-minded and have a positive attitude.
3. Be community minded.
4. Will contribute to the program and the program will help participants meet their goals.

Program Description

High school Juniors from Hancock County will be selected for the Hancock Youth Leadership Academy High School Program. The class will meet for eight sessions; two are overnight sessions. The sessions below are tentative and may change.

Session 1:	Wednesday, January 14	Orientation & Leadership
Session 2:	Sunday, February 22 & Monday, February 23	State Government (Jackson-overnight)
Session 3:	Wednesday, March 18	Local Government
Session 4:	Wednesday, April 15	Stennis Airport & Port Bienville
Session 5:	Wednesday, May 6	Stennis Space Center
Summer:		Self-Directed Project (no meetings)
Session 6:	Wednesday, August 12	Community Day
Session 7:	Wednesday, September 16	Small Business/Entrepreneurship Day
Session 8:	Tuesday, October 13 & Wednesday, October 14	College Cruise (overnight)
Session 9:	Wednesday, November 11	Launch Day
Graduation:	Wednesday, December 2	Graduation

*Dates may change slightly if school calendars require. Please note the State Government session is an overnight trip to Jackson that begins on the Sunday following Mardi Gras break. Please consider this when planning travel. Please review carefully for conflicts.

Requirements

- Applicants must be a high school junior (Class of 2027) or home-schooled equivalent.
- Applicants must live or go to school in Hancock County.
- Applicants must have a 3.0 grade point average and be able to manage absences.

- Applicants must secure a completed Recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or principal.
- The cost of the program is \$300. Applicants may request a scholarship through the school they attend.
- Applicants must submit a **photograph** of themselves with the application.
- To complete the program, class members must attend the program in its entirety. An unexcused absence will result in dismissal from the program.
- Class members must sign an agreement to abide by all Hancock Youth Leadership Academy policies and procedures.

Application Process

1. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit the application on time.
2. Applications must be submitted in the application portal by **4:00pm on Thursday, October 30, 2025.**
3. Other than a photograph and the personal statement required, no attachments are permitted.
4. Applications **must be** complete to be considered.
5. Applicants must attend an interview with members of the selection committee. Interviews will be held on Tuesday, November 11th at the Hancock Resource Center. An interview time will be assigned once your application is received. All students submitting a completed application will receive an interview.
6. Letters notifying applicants of the selection committee results will be emailed and sent via U.S. Mail in December 2025. School counselors will receive notification of the selected students as well.
7. Once the applicant is selected, he or she must accept the appointment as explained in the acceptance letter.

Information about Scoring

1. **Application**
 - The application should be completed in complete sentences with correct spelling and grammar. We recommend that applicants write a draft of their answers and cut/paste them into the application portal. Scoring is based on spelling, grammar, and quality of answers. If you submit more than one application, the latest will be scored. If you have an issue with submitting or after submission, email rrhodes@hancockhrc.org. The use of Artificial Intelligence will result in disqualification. The link to the application portal may be found at <https://www.hancockhrc.org/hancock-youth-leadership-academy.html>.

2. Interview

Applicants should dress professionally, be on time, and greet interviewers. Applicants should be prepared to discuss the questions on the application but may expect additional questions intended to understand applicant's suitability for the program. It is recommended that the applicants practice interviewing to help appear comfortable, confident, and relaxed. **The Application Workshop** includes interviews, tips and example questions. All interviews are held on November 11 between 8am and Noon. If you have a conflict with the time, we may be able to work with you, but it will be within the above date and time.

3. Recommendation

- Recommendations should be completed online by the deadline and filled out completely to be considered. The recommendation may be found at <https://www.hancockhrc.org/hancock-youth-leadership-academy.html> or click the QR code below, or the teacher may email rrhodes@hancockhrc.org for the link.



Teacher Recommendation Form

Essay Questions

A list of essay questions and the word count for each question is listed below. It is highly recommended that applicants write a draft of their answers and cut/paste them into the application portal. You cannot enter/re-enter the form. Scoring is based on spelling, grammar, and quality of answers. A complete, quality answer, in general, requires at least a paragraph. The use of AI will result in disqualification.

- Tell us about your work so far as a leader. Describe your academic accomplishments, awards, and honors. What extracurricular and community activities are you involved in? Tell us about any leadership roles you have held. (Word Count 150)
- HYL A involves missing school and extracurricular activities and sports for one day of school a month in your junior year January-May and one day a month in your senior year in August, September, and November, and two days in October. Regular sessions run until 4:00pm. Please describe your plan to balance academics, sports, and other activities with HYL A. (Word Count 150)
- Please describe community service or volunteer work experience and briefly explain what was involved. (Word Count 150)
- Please describe yourself including anything in your history that has been formative in your life. (Word Count 250)
- Describe a time when you had to be open-minded. (Word Count 150)
- Give a specific example of how attitude (good or bad) has played a role in your academic, activity or community experiences. (Word Count 150)
- What skills and characteristics do you possess that will help other students have an amazing HYL A experience? (Word Count 150)
- What do you hope to gain from your experience in HYL A? Specifically, what do you want to learn and do? (Word Count 150)
- HYL A's three pillars of leadership are Courage, Character, and Service. Which of these three values is most important in leadership and why? (Word Count 250)

Good luck and don't forget the deadline is THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30TH AT 4PM