

September 15, 2025

Dear Parent:

Your eighth grader recently attended a session at their school about the Hancock Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA). HYLA's Eighth Grade Program targets students that have potential for leadership but have not yet had the opportunity to develop it.

During the informational session, HYLA staff explained that the Eighth Grade Program is geared toward young people that think they can be a leader or be a better leader if they learn more about it. We explained that most HYLA middle school students have not had much experience with leadership. If your child is interested in applying, please talk with him/her about his/her leadership experience and fit for the program.

HYLA's program consists of four sessions; three one-day sessions during the school day held at various locations and one retreat that includes a service project and the closing program. The cost of the program is \$100.00. No student will be turned away because they cannot pay the tuition. If your child is accepted and the tuition creates a financial hardship, please request a scholarship through the school. The school contacts are:

Bay/Waveland Middle – Rachel Herrmann
Hancock Middle – Heather Harper
Our Lady Academy – Susan Gelpi
Saint Stanislaus – Andree Bonnaffons

The application process may be intimidating. For most students, this is the first time they are compiling this information. Please encourage your child to complete the application on their own. Please do not complete any part of the application for them. **Applications are due on Thursday, October 30, 2025.** Depending on the number of applications from each school, we may meet with each applicant to discuss their application and to get to know them better. It's a very informal interview process that will occur in November at the school. We will post the dates on our social media- Facebook and Instagram.

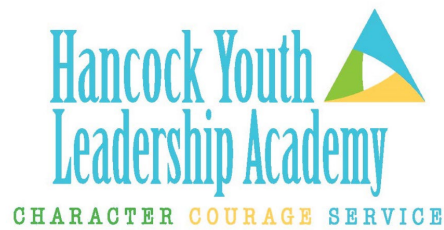
If you have any questions about the program, please contact me at rrhodes@hancockhrc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda Rhodes".

Rhonda Dean Rhodes
Program Director

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



2026 Junior High Session Dates

Times are 8:15 am until 2:45 pm, except Graduation. Locations TBA.

Parents/Guardians for students from all schools except Hancock Middle School are responsible for drop off and pick up. HMS provides transportation.

Tuesday, January 20 Orientation, Leadership

Tuesday, February 10 Local Government/Prevention Day

Tuesday, March 10 Art and History

Tuesday, April 21 Retreat

May 5 Graduation (6:00-7:00pm)

***Junior High Program
Application for 2026 Class***

HYLA is seeking eighth grade students from each school to be part of a county-wide leadership program. Candidates for HYLA have leadership potential but have not yet had the opportunity to discover it. The Hancock Youth Leadership Academy will help unlikely leaders recognize their potential. Students from the four schools will meet for four full-day sessions to learn about leadership skills, community development and high school readiness. The last session will include a service project planned by students. Approximately 20 students will be selected for the program.

Program Requirements

- Applicants must be in the eighth grade or home-schooled equivalent.
- Applicants must live or go to school in Hancock County.
- Applicants must have a grade point average that is adequate to allow school absence (excused).
- Applicants must submit a completed application including a picture of the applicant.
- Applicants must secure a Recommendation Form from a teacher, counselor or principal.
- Class members must attend the program in its entirety.
- Class members must agree to abide by all Hancock Youth Leadership Academy policies and procedures.

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Dates are tentative

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Tuesday, January 20	Orientation, Leadership
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Tuesday, March 10	Art and History
Tuesday, April 21	Retreat/Service Project
Tuesday, May 5	Graduation

Application Process

1. It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit the application online.
2. Applications must be **RECEIVED through the application portal no later than 4:00pm on Thursday, October 30, 2025.**
3. Applications **must be** complete to be considered.
4. Letters notifying applicants of the selection committee results will be mailed in December 2025. School counselors will receive notification of the selected students as well.
5. Once the applicant is selected, he or she has three business days to accept or decline.
6. The cost of the program is \$100.00. Applicants may request a scholarship on the acceptance form.
No student will be turned away for inability to pay for the program.

Applicants are chosen based on three areas:

***Junior High Program
Application for 2026 Class***

1. Application

The application should be completed in complete sentences with correct spelling and grammar. It is recommended 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.

2. Interview

Depending on how many applicants we get from your school, we may come to the school to meet you and talk with about your application.

3. Recommendation

Recommendations should be completed online by the deadline and filled out completely to be considered. The recommendation may be found at www.hancockhrc.org. Click on HYL A, HYL A Junior High School Program, and 2026 HYL A Junior High School Recommendation Form, click the QR code below, or the teacher may email rrhodes@hancockhrc.org for the link.



HYLA 8th Grade Teacher
Recommendation

4. 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 can enter and re-enter the form. Scoring is based on spelling, grammar, and quality of answers.

- Tell us about school Do you have any accomplishments, awards, or honors to tell us about? What activities are you involved in? Tell us about any leadership roles you have held. It is okay to type "NONE". (Word Count 150)
- Please describe community service or volunteer work you have done and what you did do? It is OK to type "NONE".
- Why are you applying to the Hancock Youth Leadership Academy?
- Who is someone you admire and why?
- What do you want to be or do when you grow up?
- What is something in your community (church, school, town) that you would like to see changed and how would you change it?
- What do you hope to gain from your experience in HYL A? What do you want to learn and do?
- Tell us something you have worked hard for or you are proud of.