



Young Women's Leadership Charter School of Chicago

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School Profile

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The Young Women's Leadership Charter School of Chicago (YWLCS) was founded in 1999 and was the first single-sex public school to open in Chicago. The granting of the charter was the culmination of eighteen months of hard work by twenty-three women who were determined to create a school which offers urban girls a college preparatory education emphasizing math, science and technology; areas where women, particularly women of color, have long been seriously underrepresented.

Vision

All young women have the skills, tools and opportunities to develop as ethical leaders shaping their lives and the world.

Mission

The Young Women's Leadership Charter School of Chicago inspires urban girls to engage in rigorous college preparatory learning in a small school focused on math, science and technology that nurtures their self-confidence and challenges them to achieve.

Who We Serve

Located in the historic Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago, our student body is comprised of students from 30 different communities in Chicago, with one-third from the Historic Bronzeville, Bridgeport and other Near South Side neighborhoods near the school.

Enrollment: 335 students in grades 7-12
Class of 2011: 41
Free/Reduced Lunch: 80%

African-American 80%
Latina 11%

White 6%
Multi-Racial 3%

Faculty

Of our 30 faculty members, 51% hold master's degrees or beyond, while 98% of our faculty is certified and 10% percent of our teachers are Nationally Board Certified Teachers. The student to faculty ratio is approximately 12:1.

Curriculum

Our curriculum includes Math, Science, Humanities, English, and Leadership every year. Our approach is inquiry-based teaching with an integrated Arts, Technology, and World Languages curriculum. Our assessment system is standards based, and student achievement is evaluated using the College Readiness and Common Core Standards. All students are required to complete a college prep course.

Science

All students at YWLCS take year-long Science courses every year from grades 7 through 12. We use a hands-on, experiential approach to science which helps students gain an understanding of concepts and processes such as chemical interactions, biological effects of chemicals, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and the difference between science and public policy. Seventh grade students focus on life science objectives and concepts that connect their textbook knowledge to the real world. Eighth grade students engage in physical science content and activities that develop higher order and critical thinking skills. Ninth grade students take Environmental Science, where they learn about the living and non-living factors and phenomena that make up the world in which they live. As they learn about the environment and their role in it, they will also sharpen critical thinking and analytical skills. Tenth grade students explore a series of concepts beginning with matter, atoms and molecules, and leading up to

molecular properties, structures, phase changes and chemical reactions. Eleventh grade students cover key concepts of biology related to the fields of cell biology, genetics, ecology and evolution. Twelfth grade students study physics through the Modeling Physics approach and its applications to the world around us.

Humanities

Humanities courses combine Literature and English Language Arts with Social Studies to broaden our students' understanding of what it means to be human and why it is important to have a socially just world. Special emphasis is placed on the lives, work and history of women and people of color.

Seventh grade covers "Humanities in the Ancient World," Mesopotamia-Ancient Rome. Eighth grade covers early American History from the earliest American civilizations to the creation of the United States Constitution. Ninth grade focuses on the relationship between one's identity and one's role in the local and national community. Tenth grade analyzes how Science, Economics, and government policies affect membership in American society. It also analyzes the role of individual (social) responsibility to challenge injustices. Eleventh grade explores the people and ideas that shaped the United States from before the nation's founding to after the Civil War. Twelfth grade examines the way people interact with their government across history and today. Civil Wars and independence movements around the world have taken many different shapes, and each holds lessons for how we as Americans should interact with our government in 2011.

English

Students at every grade level take an English class that meets five times per week. English classes use the Springboard Curriculum to focus on building solid language skills and developing strategies that can be used in every subject area. English classes also contain supplemental Grammar and Writing activities that enhance critical thinking around textbooks, novels, poetry, media and real world reading. Writing instruction provides practice in identifying specific writing tasks in preparation for ACT writing prompts as well as preparation for Advanced Placement English courses. The overarching goal remains to help students communicate their ideas clearly in school, in the workplace, and in everyday life.

Advanced Placement

Students who enter Advance Placement (AP) classes are required to take a minimum of two Advanced Placement (AP) classes for the 2011-2012 school year. These classes are AP Human Geography and AP Language and Composition. The first group of AP candidates at YWLCS prepared vigorously during the summer with an intense and purposeful summer book club. The students were also given two summer assignments as a prerequisite, which allowed students to delve into great American, Contemporary, and classical literature (The Great Gatsby and Their Eyes were Watching God), Middle Eastern cultures beliefs and norms and how these works of fiction and non-fiction impact them globally and socially.

Leadership

Every student in every grade at YWLCS takes a leadership course. The leadership curriculum is designed to help young women become better leaders. They learn what it means to be a leader, identify leaders and explore what leaders do. An essential part of the leadership program is the Civic Leadership Projects. CLP's are an opportunity for the students to practice the skills they have learned through the development of a project that will change their community – both school and neighborhood. The project development begins in the 7th grade and the management of the project continues until 12th grade and beyond. Through readings, in class discussions, and hands-on activities YWLCS is developing well-prepared leaders who can and will effect change in the world.

Mathematics

YWLCS has recently adopted a new inquiry-based curriculum. The SpringBoard curriculum is the College Board's official Pre-AP program, based on the College Board Standards for College Success. SpringBoard is designed to be engaging and interesting, yet challenging and rigorous. It is a student centered, inquiry-based curriculum where students solve complex math problems using a variety of mathematical knowledge and skills, collaborate with others to complete a task, and communicate effectively using the language of mathematics. With SpringBoard, students explore the "big ideas" and develop the critical thinking skills needed to apply and communicate concepts in real-world situations. .

Technology

Our new technology program, GOALS (Girls Online: Achievement, Learning & Success) addresses the inconsistent academic preparation our students have received in their lower school education before matriculating through YWLCS. This lack of preparation creates a large variation between high-achieving and less accomplished students which requires YWLCS faculty to cater to a wide range of student skills in a differentiated learning environment. Using technology to create an always on, self-paced and collaborative environment for our students, we can weave technology into the fabric of our disciplines while simultaneously creating a more interactive and responsive teaching model. In this way, we hope to prepare our graduates for successful careers in a highly global and interconnected society. Our GOALS program creates a more personal differentiated teaching environment for the students. This will be achieved by implementing a blended learning environment, which includes online learning combined with traditional classroom instruction.

Visual Arts

The Visual Arts play a key role in shaping students' creative modes of learning. By engaging students in the exploration of projects in a variety of media (pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, clay, ceramics, collage, printmaking, etc.), instruction will also focus on developing students' capacity to make connections between the visual arts and other disciplines; to understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures; and be able to ask meaningful questions about the role of the arts in general. Art projects are frequently integrated with studies in other classes such as Science and Humanities. Art projects and class assignments are designed to increase each student's unique creative awareness and capacity for learning.

World Language: Spanish

Students strive to understand and interpret written and spoken Spanish well enough to be able to use the language both within and beyond the school setting. In class, students will perform dialogues based on real life situations (i.e. buying food at the market, asking directions to school) to put their written vocabulary and grammar into authentic practice. Our goal is to provide a non-competitive atmosphere where the student is highly motivated and feels comfortable with the language in as short a time as possible. This course asks students to practice and study Spanish outside of the classroom daily. Students will learn Spanish through reading, speaking and listening comprehension.

College and Career Prep

The College and Career Prep department provides a comprehensive program that includes, but is not limited to individualized counseling sessions, testing, career and interest inventories, college preparation courses for both junior and senior students, and financial aid. The goal of the department is to work with all students in cultivating attitudes and behaviors that will lead to success while navigating their post-secondary options.

In the Senior Academy (grades 11-12), the College Prep seminar plays an important role in preparing students for their life after high school graduation. Students are encouraged to do a lot of self-examination as they navigate their junior year. They are exposed to many resources that will make the process of decision making a little bit easier. The course requires a considerable amount of independent work and study.

Health and Fitness

YWLCS offers a health related fitness program. Students will experience a variety of cardiovascular and fitness related activities as well as develop skills while participating in individual and team centered activities. YWLCS aims to prepare students for a lifetime full of physical activity and provides opportunities to be active. Students will acquire the practical knowledge needed to establish a healthy lifestyle, both as an adolescent and as a maturing adult. YWLCS also offers a health course that provides students with essential preventative health information that is intended to help avert negative health behaviors and enhance the student's quality of life.

Assessment and Transcript Explanation

The Young Women's Leadership Charter School does not use the traditional letter grade system (A, B, C, D, and F) for student assessment. Instead, students are evaluated based on their performance on specified College Readiness and Common Core Standards. This standards-based system has five levels: Exemplary, High Performance, Proficient, Emerging, and Not Proficient. No Evidence will only be used as an indicator for assignments. The language of our assessment system is reflective of our grading policy. Grades will be determined by the number of points earned out of the total number of points possible.

Exemplary (EX = 90-100): Student's work exceeds expectations and student consistently performs at a mastery level; student's work deserves imitation because of excellence and serves as a clear example of what is expected from the lesson, assignment, assessment, and overall coursework standards.

High Performance (HP = 80-89): Implies extraordinary proficiency; has great knowledge of the content; has thorough competence from consistent practice and demonstration of standards.

Proficient (P=70-79): Student has demonstrated that she understands this concept and can reliably demonstrate the expected standards.

Emerging (E=60-69): Student is showing some understanding of the skill, but not at a level that demonstrates proficiency of standards.

Not Proficient (NP = 1-59): Student has attempted to complete work, but does not demonstrate any comprehension of standards.

No Evidence (NE = 0): Student has no documentation or has turned in no work.

Because Young Women's Leadership Charter School has set very high standards and expectations for our students, it is necessary to hold them accountable for their responsibilities as students in a college preparatory environment. While many students may need to work on a standard repeatedly before mastering that standard, it is imperative that all students comply with the timelines set by the teachers and administration of YWLCS. If a student receives a grade that is lower than Proficient, it is the teacher's and administrator's discretion on the time allotted for make-up work.