

## About AYL

The Alamance Youth Leadership Academy (AYLA) is a leadership program of the Alamance Chamber supported by strong partners, including the Elon University Center for Leadership and Alamance-Burlington Schools.

***The goal of the Alamance Youth Leadership Academy (AYLA) is to empower youth through the connections of civic engagement and leadership development for a greater Alamance County.***

Founding members identified middle school as a time of critical personal development and an opportunity to engage area seventh and eighth graders in leadership and service. The vision is to inspire and create a foundation for leadership that will follow students into high school and beyond. The program began in the Fall of 2007 with two area middle schools. AYL currently serves over 200 seventh and eighth graders in eleven public, independent, and charter middle schools in Alamance County.

The model includes a three-day summer experience hosted by the Elon University Center for Leadership, school-based chapter meetings that take place during the school year, and quarterly joint events hosted by the Chamber's AYL Advisory Board. Developing and implementing a school improvement project is at the heart of the learning experience.

AYL activities help students gain:

- The ability to identify, develop, and exercise leadership skills
- The ability to work in teams
- The confidence and ability to speak well in public
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication skills
- Organization and facilitation skills
- Motivational skills
- Relationships with students from other schools



## **School Selection**

Starting with just two middle schools, the AYLA program has grown to a total of ten public, independent, and charter schools. Schools are added as funding and available space have allowed for additional growth. Schools are chosen through an application process. Participating schools commit to working with the AYLA Advisory Board to create a sustainable program that benefits student participants, their school, and the community.

### ***Participating schools are responsible for:***

- Providing a staff person who will oversee school-based meetings, as well as coach students in order for them to learn leadership skills, meeting facilitation, and project management
- Selecting students in good standing who represent a cross-section of the student body, have demonstrated the potential to lead, and are willing to commit fully to this program
- Collaborating with students to initiate reasonable, well-planned programs for change
- Sustaining the programs for at least two years

### ***The Alamance Chamber and AYLA Advisory Board will be responsible for:***

- Working with the Elon Center for Leadership to plan and implement joint events and workshops to assist students in the development of leadership skills
- Providing financial support for the summer program and joint activities
- Making available volunteer liaisons to assist school personnel with communication, program management, and sustainability

### ***Student participants will be responsible for:***

- Attending the summer experience (rising seventh graders)
- Remaining in good standing with their respective middle schools
- Attending 80% of all meetings
- Participating actively in all projects

Once identified, the participating school will be asked to distribute student applications and select the participants for their chapter. The maximum number is 12 students per grade level beginning with a seventh-grade cohort. By the second year, there should be a seventh- and an eighth-grade cohort - the original group and a new class of seventh graders. The groups can partner or work independently on one or more school projects. Cohorts for independent schools can be a little smaller (7-8 students) based on the size of the class. Student candidates should demonstrate leadership potential, be in good standing with his/her school, and commit to participating in all AYLA activities.

Each school is responsible for selecting their school's student participants. Likewise, they determine a structure for their chapter meetings that fits their school schedule and culture. Some schools meet weekly while others meet bi-weekly. Some meet before school, some during the lunch hour while others meet after school or during a designated extracurricular block in the school day.

The chapter focus should be on identifying and completing a school improvement project in partnership with school leadership. During this process students should have the opportunity to:

- Identify and develop personal strengths and skills
- Work as a team
- Plan and execute a project
- Practice organization and facilitation skills
- Learn to solve problems
- Lead meetings
- Speak publicly

**While not required.** many chapters have organized events and fundraisers to help accomplish large-scale projects. These student-led activities further enhance their leadership and project management skills. Additionally, some chapters have organized and led broader community service projects for their student bodies. Many schools use their AYLA students in other leadership roles, including that of student ambassadors.

### ***The School Chapter Advisor***

Each school chooses a member of their faculty to serve as the school's AYLA advisor. Schools develop their own model of staff leadership with some schools having a single advisor while other schools choose co-advisors. Co-advisors may work together to facilitate the whole group or choose to divide their responsibilities by grade level. The volunteer advisor(s) commits to:

- Supporting the vision of AYLA
- Coordinating the selection of each new AYLA cohort
- Facilitating collection of student forms for Summer Program
- Overseeing chapter meetings with a commitment to assisting students in the development of their leadership skills and the implementation of their school project
- Attending joint events with their students as field trip chaperones

Joint AYLA events also serve as an opportunity for school Chapter Advisors to network, share best practices, and offer guidance to the Advisory Board.

Current AYLA schools include:

- Alamance Virtual School
- Broadview Middle School
- The Burlington School
- Clover Garden School
- Graham Middle School
- Hawfields Middle School
- Southern Middle School
- Turrentine Middle School
- Woodlawn Middle School
- Western Middle School

## Student Selection

Students are selected by their schools through a competitive application process. In the application, students express their interest in becoming a part of AYLA and identify what they can contribute to the group. They also commit to the following:

- Attend the summer experience
- Attend 80% of all regular chapter meetings held at his/her school
- Remain in good standing with the school
- Actively participate in all projects and other student activities including attendance at quarterly events

Students will gain:

- The ability to identify, develop, and exercise leadership skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Motivational skills
- Communication skills
- Organizational skills and the ability to lead meetings
- The confidence and ability to speak well in public
- Relationships with other students, including those from other schools
- Knowledge that they have a voice



## **The AYLA Model and Curriculum**

The AYLA program includes:

- A three-day summer program for rising seventh graders hosted by the Elon University Center for Leadership
- School-based chapter meetings that take place during the school year facilitated by a school faculty advisor for the purpose of implementing a school improvement project(s)
- Three joint events hosted by the AYLA Advisory Board in conjunction with the Elon University Center for Leadership (These activities take place off campus during the school day. AYLA funds cover the cost of these events including transportation and substitutes for the advisors.)
- An Eighth Grade Capstone Luncheon (Again, all related costs are covered by the Advisory Board.)

### ***The Summer Program***

The AYLA experience begins with participation by the rising seventh graders in a summer program hosted on the Elon University campus by the Elon University Center for Leadership. Typically held the third week in June, the program begins on Tuesday evening and ends mid-day on Friday. Typical program hours are Tuesday from 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.; Wednesday and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.; and Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Directed by Center for Leadership staff with facilitation provided by Elon University students, AYLA students participate in large and small group sessions. Activities include:

- Identification of leadership styles
- A team building challenge course
- The FISH! Philosophy of motivating your team and your peers
- Character education focusing on courage, perseverance, respect, kindness, self-discipline, and integrity
- Faculty presentations on time management, presentation skills, and respecting diversity
- The initial development of ideas for a school improvement project

Elon student facilitators are chosen through an application and interview process, undergo a background check, and are provided with four hours of intensive training prior to the event. These students serve as inspiring and energetic role models!

### ***School-based Chapter Meetings***

Each school determines a structure for their chapter meetings that fits their school schedule and culture. Some schools meet weekly while others meet bi-weekly. Some meet before school, some during the lunch hour while others meet after school or during a designated extracurricular block in the school day.

The chapter focus should be on identifying and completing a school improvement project in partnership with school leadership. During this process students should have the opportunity to:

- Identify and develop personal strengths and skills
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- Learn to solve problems
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***While not required,*** many chapters have organized events and fundraisers to help accomplish large-scale projects. These student-led activities further enhance their leadership and project management skills. Additionally, some chapters have organized and led broader community service projects for their student bodies. Many schools use their AYLA students in other leadership roles including that of student ambassadors.

***See the section on school selection for a description of the role of the School Advisor.***

### ***Joint AYLA Events***

Three times a year, the AYLA Advisory Board in conjunction with the Elon University Center for Leadership, hosts joint events inviting every AYLA chapter to participate. The invitation extends to the seventh and eighth grade cohorts. The purpose of these events is to:

- Provide workshops that help students as they continue to develop skills needed for effective leadership and project development
- Provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among AYLA student leaders and AYLA faculty advisors
- Build relationships among students from across Alamance County
- Introduce students to current community leaders
- Receive regular updates regarding school projects

These events are held on regular school days with permission of school administration. They are held at various sites in the community based on the ability to find a large space and sufficient breakout rooms to accommodate an event that includes 200+ participants. The events are typically held from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to accommodate public school bus routes. The events are provided at no cost to the AYLA chapters. The AYLA Advisory Board through the Alamance Chamber provides lunch and covers the cost of all materials for each session and reimburses schools for the cost of bus transportation and substitute teachers. For reimbursement of these expenses, ABSS advisors should follow district policy. All other invoices should be submitted to:

Alamance Chamber, Attn: Logan Savits

PO Box 450

Burlington, NC 27216

Workshop topics are designed to help students develop skills for project implementation and personal success. Workshops are differentiated between seventh and eighth graders. This two-year curriculum is designed to help students build skills and cover a broad range of topics. Also incorporated into these events is the opportunity to meet community leaders who share their professional experiences and leadership lessons.

These events are planned and organized in partnership with the Elon University Center for Leadership and their student *Isabella Cannon Leadership Fellows*.<sup>\*</sup> This partnership gives this selective group of university students a “lab” experience to plan and execute their own leadership project. AYLAs benefit from the experiences and activities these advanced student leaders have gained and from the passion and energy they bring to the table. It is a community Win-Win!

### **\*The Purpose of the Elon University Center for Leadership**

*Elon students will graduate with strong self-efficacy, the desire and ability to work collaboratively within diverse communities of people, as well as have the confidence and competence to put innovative ideas into action for positive change.*

The curriculum includes the following topics:

- Working as a Team
- How to Run an Effective Meeting
- Goal Setting
- Event and Project Management
- Budgeting and Fundraising
- Marketing and Media – *Telling your AYLA Story*
- Public Speaking
- Listening
- Problem-solving
- Self-knowledge
- Characteristics of a Good Leader
- Your Role as a School Leader
- Great Leaders as Great Communicators
- Fairness and Justice
- The Courage to Speak Out
- Preparing for High School and Beyond

These events also serve as an opportunity for Chapter Advisors to network, share best practices, and offer guidance to the Advisory Board.

### ***The Eighth Grade Capstone Luncheon***

A fun event that has become a tradition that the schools and community anticipate is the Eighth Grade Capstone Luncheon. Held in the Spring, this event celebrates the commitment of the eighth graders to the AYLA program and offers some unique experiences that will serve them well during their high school journey. Held at the Alamance Country Club, AYLA students learn and sharpen business, table, and social media etiquette skills; practice social conversation skills including introductions, meeting new people, and appropriate topics of conversation; creating a first résumé; and techniques for a successful interview. Distinguished community leaders are invited to join them for lunch giving the students an opportunity to practice the skills they have just learned. Community leaders look forward to this opportunity to have lunch with students and to hear what is on their minds. Everyone leaves smiling.



### **Program Outcomes**

See the attached self-evaluation form used with students at the beginning and end of their AYLA experience. This self-evaluation helps us define important opportunities for learning and expected growth and helps us determine if we are helping students reach those benchmarks.





# Alamance Youth Leadership Academy

by alamance chamber™

#AccessLeadership

**Please complete the following questionnaire to help us evaluate the objectives of the AYLA Program.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please rate yourself on the following scale in the areas below:  
(0-Strongly Disagree, 1-Disagree, 2-Not Sure, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree)**

- I know what my strengths are 0 1 2  
3 4
- I know what kinds of things are challenging for me 0 1 2  
3 4
- I will get better at skills or activities if I practice 0 1 2  
3 4

**Please rate yourself on the following scale in the areas below:  
(0-Very Weak, 1-Weak, 2-Not Sure, 3-Strong, 4-Very Strong)**

- Leadership skills 0 1 2  
3 4
- Relationships with students in my school and from other schools 0 1 2  
3 4
- Communication and facilitation skills 0 1 2  
3 4
- Ability to speak in a public setting 0 1 2  
3 4
- Character 0 1 2  
3 4
- Motivational skills 0 1 2  
3 4
- Problem solving skills 0 1 2  
3 4
- Experience to carry out a service learning project that 0 1 2  
3 4  
improves my school, local, or community environment

**By participating in the Alamance Youth Leadership Academy, I have:  
(0-Strongly Disagree, 1-Disagree, 2-Not Sure, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree)**

- Planned an activity for a school or youth group 0 1 2  
3 4
- Stood up for myself when I felt that I was being treated unfairly 0 1 2  
3 4

**Please rate yourself on the following scale in the areas below:  
(0-Strongly Disagree, 1-Disagree, 2-Not Sure, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree)**

- I feel nervous speaking in public 0 1 2 3 4
- When working in groups at my school, my group is able to accomplish tasks in our meetings 0 1 2 3 4
- I would like to speak about an issue/proposal 0 1 2 3 4
- I get my point across in a positive manner, without interrupting 0 1 2 3 4
- I encourage team members to share their ideas 0 1 2 3 4
- I am willing to speak about issues/proposals before a large audience 0 1 2 3 4
- I sometimes interrupt others when I want to get my point across 0 1 2 3 4

**Please rate yourself on the following scale in the areas below:  
(0-Strongly Disagree, 1-Disagree, 2-Not Sure, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree)**

- I stand up for people when I feel they are being treated unfairly 0 1 2 3 4
- I know the steps it takes to solve a problem 0 1 2 3 4
- It is important to set goals for any project 0 1 2 3 4
- I am able to work with other students to solve a problem 0 1 2 3 4
- I feel like I can make a difference in others' lives 0 1 2 3 4

**Please rate yourself on the following scale in the areas below:  
(0-Strongly Disagree, 1-Disagree, 2-Not Sure, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree)**

- I can help develop a survey and conduct interviews in the community 0 1 2 3 4
- I am willing to raise money for special projects 0 1 2 3 4
- I would be comfortable contacting local newspapers and stations about student events or projects 0 1 2 3 4
- I could help plan and carry out some type of major community/school/church event 0 1 2 3 4

## **2023-2024 AYLA Timeline**

### **June 20 - 23, 2023 –Summer Program for Rising Seventh Graders**

Elon University Campus

### **TBD in October, 2023 – AYLA Advisor Meeting**

4:30 – 5:30 pm

Alamance Chamber

*Joint meeting dates for the 2023-2024 School Year will be distributed to all schools (Principals and Advisors) and the AYLA Advisory Board*

### **Friday, November 3, 2023 – Joint AYLA Event**

9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Elon University Campus

### **January 2024 – Review and update AYLA marketing materials as needed**

*Tentative and only with approval of the AYLA Advisory Board*

**January 15, 2024 - School Applications distributed to middle schools that currently do not participate in AYLA**

### **Friday, February 9, 2024 – Joint AYLA Event**

9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Elon University Campus

### **Friday, February 9, 2024 – Student Recruitment Packets distributed at the Joint AYLA Event.**

Chapters will develop their own student recruitment program (marketing materials provided) with a deadline of April 12, 2024 to have decisions made. Please bring copies of applications for selected students to the Chamber, to the April Joint Event, or arrange pick-up with Chamber staff. This information will assist us in planning for the Summer Program.

### **Friday, February 9, 2024 - Parent Packets distributed at the Joint AYLA Event.**

School Chapter Advisors are responsible for distributing packets to students who have completed the application process and have been selected to participate in AYLA. Please collect and submit completed packets by April 12, 2024.

### **Friday, March 15, 2024 – Eighth Grade Capstone Event**

9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Alamance Country Club

2402 Pineway Dr.

Burlington, NC 27215

**Friday, April 12, 2024 – Each school will have made their student selections and copies of those applications and Parent Packets will be submitted to the Chamber. Parent Packet forms include:**

- Emergency Contact Information
- Chamber Release Form
- Elon University Release Form
- Challenge Course Release Form

**Friday, April 12, 2024 – Joint AYLA Event**

9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Elon University Campus

**Wednesday, May 1, 2024 – Requests open for AYLA Certificates for graduating eighth graders for presentation at school-based awards day programs.**

**Friday, May 10, 2024 – Make-up day in case of inclement weather**

**Week of June 17 – 21, 2024 - Summer Program for Rising Seventh Graders**

Elon University Campus

**October 2024 – Joint meeting dates for the 2024 - 2025 School Year will be distributed to all schools (Principals and Advisors) and the AYLA Advisory Board**



## **AYLA Chapter Advisors**

### **Alamance Virtual School**

Tonya Dobson  
tonya\_dobson@abss.k12.nc.us  
Patrick Vernon  
patrick\_vernon@abss.k12.nc.us

### **Broadview Middle School**

Annie Goldberg  
Anne\_goldberg@abss.k12.nc.us

### **The Burlington School**

Bethany Baker  
bbaker@theburlingtonschool.org  
Abby Shoe  
ashoe@theburlingtonschool.org

### **Clover Garden School**

Sarah Nikola  
SarahNikola@cgsnc.org

### **Graham Middle School**

Amanda Hylton  
amanda\_hylton@abss.k12.nc.us  
Shanice Thompson  
shanice\_thompson@abss.k12.nc.us

### **Hawfields Middle School**

Ryan Leonard  
Ryan\_leonard@abss.k12.nc.us

### **Southern Middle School**

Carol Espique  
carol\_espique@abss.k12.nc.us  
Taleen Palmer  
taleen\_palmer@abss.k12.nc.us

### **Turrentine Middle School**

Renah Mitchell  
Renah\_mitchell@abss.k12.nc.us

### **Woodlawn Middle School**

Crystal Taylor  
crystal\_taylor@abss.k12.nc.us

### **Western Middle School**

Tomika Davis  
tomika\_davis@abss.k12.nc.us  
Sarah Jones  
sarah\_jones@abss.k12.nc.us

## **The AYL A Advisory Board**

The AYL A Advisory Board meets once a month to guide the development and expansion of the AYL A program. This board maintains the vision of AYL A, constantly evaluates the success of the program, oversees the implementation of the joint events, and secures funds to support the program as described. Advisory Board members include but are not limited to Chamber leadership, Elon University faculty, staff, and student leadership, AYL A school leadership, Leadership Alamance Alumni, and AYL A parents.

Current Advisory Board members are:

- Olivia Brown, Assistant Director, Elon University Center for Leadership
- Kimberly Davis, Lead Secondary School Counselor, Alamance Burlington Schools
- Allison Gant, Board of Education
- Jenna Heydt, Community Affairs Coordinator, Labcorp
- Teresa Mansfield, Community Affairs, Labcorp
- Olivia Pletter, Student, Elon University Center for Leadership
- Dr. Jodean Schmiederer, Dean of Student Development, Elon University
- Logan Garrison Savits, Director, Leadership Development & Education Partnerships, Alamance Chamber
- Tierza Watts, Director, Elon University Center for Leadership

## **2023-2024 AYL A Advisory Board Meeting Dates**

All meetings will be held at 12:30 p.m. in the Alamance Chamber Board Room unless otherwise announced.

August – No Meeting

September 6, 2023

October 4, 2023

November 1, 2023

December – No Meeting

January 3, 2024

February 7, 2024

March 6, 2024

April 3, 2024

May 1, 2024

June 5, 2024

July – No Meeting