

Belle Isle Youth Council Participant Program

Purpose and Objectives

- **Purpose:** Provide students with a unique opportunity to experience local government by participating in a city council meeting.
 - **Objectives:**
 - Foster awareness of civic duties and responsibilities.
 - Encourage future involvement in community leadership.
 - Build public speaking and organizational skills in students.
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Program Overview

- **Eligibility:**
 - Open to Belle Isle residents in grades 6-12 (public, private, or homeschooled).
- Or students enrolled in Cornerstone Charter Academy 6-12 grad.

Selection Process:

- Students may apply or be nominated by their school or a community leader.
 - Simple online application to include:
 - A brief personal statement on their interest in local government.
 - Parental/guardian consent.
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Role at the City Council Meeting

- **Meeting Participation:**
 - Open the council meeting with a **welcome statement**.
 - **Lead the Pledge of Allegiance**.
 - **Confirm Quorum** (with guidance from the City Clerk).
 - Sit with the council to observe proceedings (as a non-voting honorary member).

- Present an **idea, issue, or observation** from the youth perspective (optional and pre-approved by the City Clerk).
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Program Guidelines

1. Preparation:

- Students will meet briefly with a council member or the City Clerk prior to the meeting for an overview of their role.
- Provide students with a **script or checklist** of their responsibilities.

2. Recognition:

- At the meeting, students will receive:
 - A **certificate of participation** signed by the Mayor and City Council.
 - A **photo opportunity** with the Mayor and council members.
- Their name will be mentioned in the meeting minutes.

3. Community Engagement:

- Encourage students to invite family and peers to attend the meeting to celebrate their involvement.
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Program Schedule

- **Frequency:** One student per council meeting or quarterly events with multiple participants.
 - **Length:** Participation will last approximately 15-20 minutes at the start of the meeting.
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Benefits

- Builds youth confidence and public speaking skills.
- Strengthens ties between local government and the community's youth.
- Offers students a firsthand experience of civic processes without a long-term commitment.

In August 2008, Wellington Vice Mayor Carmine Priore was sworn in as president of the Florida League of Cities. In his first speech as president, he spoke about how students are receiving little or no civic education instruction in the classroom and cited surveys and studies showing that a large percentage of high school students know little about their governments. He made it his presidential priority to promote civic education and encouraged cities to create youth councils to educate this younger generation.

While many of Florida's cities already have youth councils, we wanted to create a document that would serve as a "road map" for others wanting to start similar programs. These special citywide councils are composed of students from different high schools within the city and serve as an advisory board to the city commission/council. These students are the leaders of tomorrow and it is important to expose them to municipal government at an early age. We hope that your city will consider forming a youth council.

The Florida League of Cities would like to thank the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium for providing a template for this document. Additionally, the League would like to thank the following Florida governments for providing information on their youth councils: Dade City, West Palm Beach and Destin; and also Greene County, N.C.

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