



YOUTH INITIATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

VIROQUA, WISCONSIN | USA



“To truly know the world, look deeply within your being; to truly know yourself, take real interest in the world.”

RUDOLF STEINER, Founder of Waldorf Education



WANTED: DOERS, DREAMERS, LEARNERS—LEADERS.

Youth Initiative High School provides a holistic Waldorf-inspired education for grades 9-12. We offer an academically rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum infused and balanced with the arts. In all we do, we strive to engage students’ heads, hearts, and hands, offering them real opportunities to grow as confident, independent thinkers.

At Youth Initiative, we foster an engaged, active learning environment where students have real purpose, exercise both leadership and teamwork, flourish creatively, think critically, collaborate readily, and take initiative in every aspect of school life.

Faculty, parents, and students work cooperatively to create an educational experience that challenges and inspires each student to become a mature, empowered, and active participant in their community and the world beyond.

We hope you’ll join us!



“Youth Initiative offers a great holistic education and more. It engages the students in the workings of things and inspires involvement and purpose in their work in the world. Students are engaged in every aspect of the running of the school. Because of the commitment and initiative these activities inspire in the students, I think it is a form of education that should be available for more teenagers.”

MARTHA B., YIHS Parent

BUILDING CHARACTER

At Youth Initiative, our classes are not just concerned with *what*, but *how*, and *why*, and *what if*. With a curriculum that’s both rich and rigorous, we challenge students to demonstrate not just what they know, but who they want to be.

And, because we believe in learning by doing, we offer our students a real challenge—running a nonprofit! From the Board of Directors to the Administrative Group to the Curriculum Committee, students serve alongside faculty, parents, and community members on every decision-making body of the school, helping to shape Youth Initiative’s present and future.

By taking a role in the day-to-day responsibilities of running Youth Initiative and accepting the accountability that comes with it, students develop skills that have lasting value once they leave the halls of high school.



BUILDING **COMMUNITY**

From student governance to community service, our students are deeply engaged in activities that ask them to be good stewards of our school and citizens of our community.

Maintaining the school: YIHS does not have a janitor. Students have daily cleaning tasks and periodically parents and students perform larger-scale maintenance and beautification of the school.

Student Fundraising: Students collaboratively organize dances, dinners, and other events that raise over \$12,000 every year.

School Governance: Students, along with parents and faculty, sit on the Administrative, Personnel, Curriculum, Development, and Finance committees. Students also have positions on the Board of Trustees. Students' voices are central to school policy discussions and decisions.

Through student meetings, cleaning and maintaining the school facility, attending committee meetings, and organizing fundraisers, students learn that their contributions have value and that their voices and actions matter. At Youth Initiative, we often say that we don't teach to the test, we teach for life!

“I remember scrambling to fundraise for the school, cleaning the hallways, and meeting with my peers to discuss the school’s future. Now that I’m supposedly “all grown up”, I’ve realized that not only did YIHS provide me with an excellent education, but it also taught me some invaluable life skills.”

JEFF M., YIHS Graduate





A SENSE OF **PLACE**

Rolling hills, contour farming, bubbling springs, and clear brooks at the bottom of every coulee: The Driftless Region, so named because of the lack of glacial activity during the last Ice Age, is made up of southeastern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa, and our home, southwestern Wisconsin. Along with its natural beauty and extensive recreational opportunities, the Driftless Region is known for its vibrant rural culture, its wealth of organic agriculture, and its social activism.

Youth Initiative High School, founded in 1996, is one of many independent cultural institutions and progressive businesses in and around Viroqua: a thriving, creative small town in which to live and learn.

Our curriculum is informed by, and deeply tied to, the land and to this community.

Geology and Geography classes visit nearby caves. Water Cycles classes visit the nearby Kickapoo and Mississippi Rivers. Agriculture classes do projects on local organic farms. Foods and Nutrition classes learn how to forage for wild foods and cook a meal with what they find. Each year, students embark on a one-week learning journey into the surrounding landscape as part of our Land Ethic Expeditions. The spirit of this place even inspires the literature we read in English classes.

In the heart of the unmatched beauty of the Driftless, Youth Initiative students learn what it means to live in harmony with nature and as part of a community.



“The highest truth that I try to teach my students is that we are all capable of cultivating creativity. It takes creativity to look at a challenge from a different perspective and imagine a solution.”

ANNA R., YIHS Teacher



LEARN AND LEAD: OUR CURRICULUM

Youth Initiative students learn how to think, collaborate, and create. We believe that the creative process is a critical skill set for generating change and creating meaning. Our integration of arts into almost all classes develops the will and gives our students not only the skills, but the confidence to create positive change in the world!

9th Grade: What is there?

From karst geology to comedy and tragedy, freshmen develop skills of keen observation and *precise description*, discovering they have the ability to generate knowledge about the world around them.

10th Grade: How does it work?

Sophomores take things apart, explore *process*, and combine observation with critical thinking to discern the connections that compose the whole. From the history of technology to ancient civilizations, students peel back layers to analyze and understand complex processes at work.

11th Grade: Who am I? What is important?

Juniors *question assumptions* about the world and themselves. Whether it's Parzival's grail quest or the physics of electricity, students go far below the surface to find stable ground, conceptually and within themselves.

12th Grade: What other perspectives are there?

Seniors are ready to *synthesize* and bring alternative perspectives together. To solve the world's challenges with creativity and pragmatism, students learn to see the truth from radically different viewpoints and to chart their own path forward.

MAIN LESSON CLASSES

Class Type	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
Nutrition & Cooking	What is Food?	People & Planet	Why Organic?	Spice of Life
Earth Science	Geology/Geography	Water Cycle	Meteorology	Astronomy
Biology	Human Anatomy	Zoology	Botany	Genetics & Biotechnology
Physics	Thermal Physics	Kinematics	Electricity	Cosmology
Chemistry	Carbon Cycle	Acids/Bases	Periodic Table	Environmental Chemistry
Mathematics	Drafting	Statistics & Probabilities	Personal Finance	Projective Geometry
Global History	Revolutions	Ancient Civilizations	World History ←1914	World History →1914
History of Americas	U.S. History ←1877	English Language	Native Cultures	U.S. History →1877
Thematic History	Art History	History of Technology	Computers & Society	Arc of Life
World Religions	Western Religions	Eastern Religions	Religious Literature	Meditation & Mind
Social Studies	YIHS Governance	Drugs & Society	Economics & Money	Psychology
Literature	Comedy & Tragedy	Poetry	Parzival	Transcendentalism
English	Art of the Short Story	Dystopian Literature	Identity	Russian Literature
Specialty Blocks	2D & 3D Design	Auto Mechanics	Junior Workshop	Senior Workshop

Mornings begin with in-depth study in main lessons. After main lesson, students take skill-based classes—movement, music, math and foreign language—that extend through the year.

SKILL BASED PATH CLASSES

Languages (*Spanish, French, German, Lanuage Independent Study, Foreign Exchange/ESL*)

Mathematics (*Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus, Calculus*)

Movement (*Spatial Dynamics, Sports, Yoga, Dance/Circus*)

Music (*Jam Band, Guitar, Orchestra, Chorus, Sound Recording, Songwriting, Ethnomusicology*)

In the afternoon, students engage in three- to six-week long art blocks, including manual arts, visual arts and performing arts. These classes are mixed-age, elective and often punctuated by public showings and performances. Arts inspire students' discipline and creativity. Through practicing arts, students not only learn to create and appreciate beauty, but also become more agile and innovative in their thinking.

AFTERNOON ART BLOCKS

Visual Arts (*2D Design, Photography, Figure Drawing, Block/Screen Printing, Stained Glass, Sculpture, Jewelry, Art of Comics*)

Performance Arts (*Drama/Fall and Spring Plays, Circus Arts*)

Manual Arts (*Carpentry, Agriculture, Computers/Robotics, Auto Mechanics, Woodcraft, Garment Construction, Set Design*)

SPECIAL BLOCKS

Service Weeks (*Week-long school-wide service projects, locally and regionally*)

Wilderness Expeditions



Nutrition+Cooking Earth Science Biology
Movement Physics Chemistry Mathematics
Visual Arts Global History Carpentry



Computers/Robotics History of Americas
Thematic History Performance Arts Music
World Religions Social Studies English

SOMETHING **COMPLETELY DIFFERENT**

At regular intervals throughout the school year, we shift gears at Youth Initiative; we shake things up a bit. During Service Week we might assist at a fish hatchery, perform highway and waterway clean up, work at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter, volunteer in grade school classrooms, or entertain elders at a retirement home.

We kick off each school year in the fall with an all-school Orientation Camping Trip that helps build community and camaraderie among the students and faculty.

For Theme Week, students choose a novel theme around which to build a series of special classes and enrichment activities.

Other weeks are devoted to special blocks for each grade:

- 9th Grade Expedition
- 10th Grade Expedition
- 11th Grade Expedition, College Tour
- 12th Grade Expedition, College Tour

We find that these breaks during the academic year revitalize and recharge our batteries, give us opportunities to develop new skills, and provide us with fun ways to come together as a school community as we work hard and play hard together.



MEANINGFUL EVALUATION AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Growing up comes with great opportunities and challenges. Adolescents grapple with questions of identity, purpose, belonging, personal values, and what the future holds. At the same time, they are learning to balance school, jobs, homework, sports, relationships, and extracurricular activities.

At Youth Initiative, we understand adolescents. We provide challenge and support, responsibility and freedom, structure and independence.

From our small classroom size to our unique Care Group system of support, we are able to pay close attention to each student, to meet them where they are, and to help them grow and flourish in the ways they need most.

Our faculty members write detailed reports of student progress for each class weekly, so parents and students can track growth and look for areas of improvement. These reports reveal far more about each student's capabilities, contributions, and areas of challenge than a letter grade ever could.

Collectively, these narrative reports also create an impressive transcript that helps Youth Initiative students stand out in the college application process.



“No matter where else I go in the world I know there’s a place where I can feel comfortable being myself and I know people accept me for who I am. I feel like everyone should have a place like that.”

MARIS B., YIHS Student

BOARDING PROGRAM

Taking the step to move to a new place and go to school takes a lot of courage. Far from home, our individual support, strong community, and emphasis on personal development help boarding students feel at home.

We believe that it is vital for our boarding students to have a caring, safe, supportive home life, so we place our students with host families. Our host families are deeply connected to the community and are able to help boarding students become involved.

Most of our host families live in town so students are able to walk to school, to local stores and restaurants, to the library, and to friends' houses. Viroqua is a bustling small town with theater, art, music, small shops, great food, and loving, intentional community.

Youth Initiative has been immensely enriched by the presence of boarding students from other parts of the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Japan, Thailand, Grenada, Ecuador, Denmark, Rwanda, and South Korea. In addition, we've hosted exchange students from Germany, Italy, France, Israel, and more.

Youth Initiative students and faculty cultivate an environment where everyone can belong!



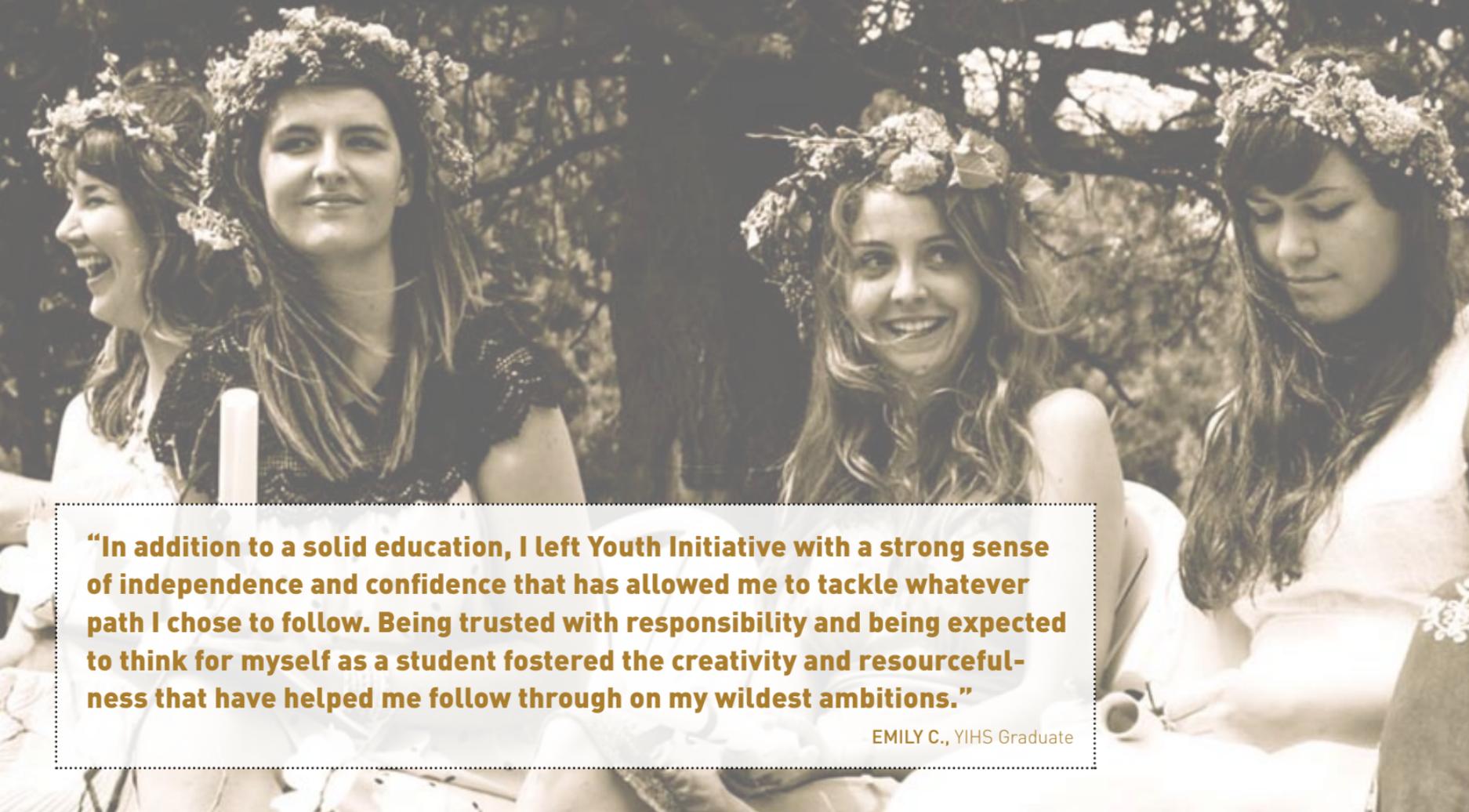
WHERE DO YIHS GRADUATES GO? **EVERYWHERE!**

Youth Initiative High School graduates are doing remarkable things all over the world. Some run businesses in the Driftless Region; some are teachers, architects, and web designers; some are environmental scientists and social activists and human rights lawyers; some have started their own families.

Yale University
Deep Springs College
University of Chicago
University of California, LA
Naropa University
Cornell College
Earlham College
Shimer College
American College of Eurythmy
Prescott College
Antioch College
Audubon Expedition Institute
College of the Atlantic

Minneapolis College of Art and Design
American Academy of Art
Milwaukee School of Engineering
Madison Area Technical College
Cooking and Hospitality
Institute of Chicago
University of Wisconsin
University of Minnesota
University of Iowa
Florida State University
Viterbo University
Hamline University
Lake Forest College

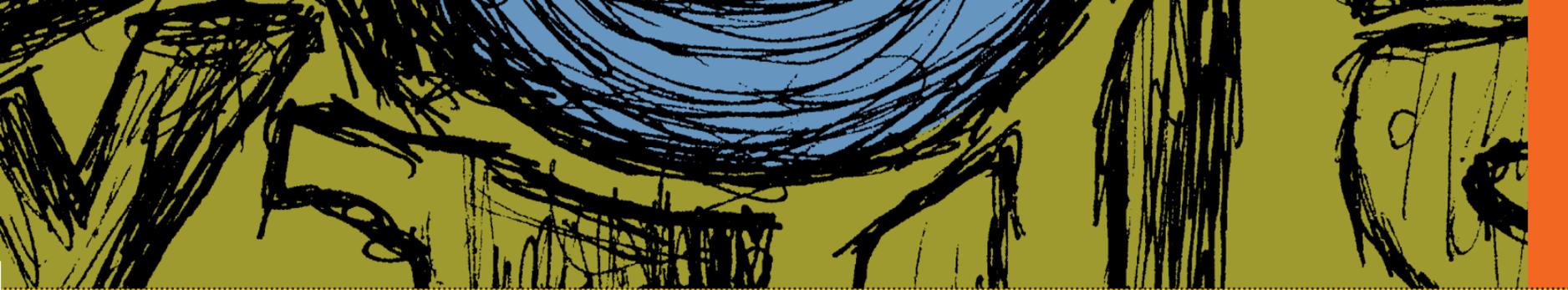
Lawrence University
St. John's University/
College of St. Benedict
Kalamazoo College
St. Olaf College
American University in Cairo
American University in Bulgaria
European College of Liberal Arts,
Germany
St. Louis University, Spain
Trinity College, Ireland
St. Andrew's University, Scotland



“In addition to a solid education, I left Youth Initiative with a strong sense of independence and confidence that has allowed me to tackle whatever path I chose to follow. Being trusted with responsibility and being expected to think for myself as a student fostered the creativity and resourcefulness that have helped me follow through on my wildest ambitions.”

EMILY C., YIHS Graduate





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