



# Youth Horizons Learning: Overview and Curriculum Development Insights

## Mission and Vision

Youth Horizons Learning (YHL) is a **global online education platform** dedicated to **nurturing the next generation of confident speakers and critical thinkers** <sup>1</sup>. Its motto, "*Speak with Confidence, Think with Clarity*," reflects a commitment to building students' communication and reasoning skills for academic and lifelong success <sup>2</sup>. The organization's vision centers on the belief that "**every voice matters**" – YHL strives to unlock each student's potential through personalized coaching, fostering a community of articulate and empowered young leaders <sup>3</sup>.

## Educational Services and Programs

YHL offers a range of **online educational programs** focused on speech, debate, and holistic enrichment for youth. Key programs include:

- **Public Speaking Programs:** A structured curriculum that develops speaking skills from the ground up. The program is organized into three progressive levels – "**Speak with Courage**," "**Speak with Skill**," and "**Speak with Impact**" – guiding students from overcoming stage anxiety to mastering persuasive, professional-grade communication <sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup>. Through courses in prepared speeches, impromptu speaking, interpretation, and even humorous performance, students learn to express ideas clearly and confidently at each stage. This pathway helps transform a student's expression "**from confidence to impact**," equipping them to speak so that people listen <sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup>.
- **Debate Programs:** Comprehensive training in **competitive debate formats** that also emphasizes individual skill development. YHL's debate curriculum covers formats such as **Impromptu Debate**, **Congressional Debate**, **Lincoln-Douglas (LD) Debate**, **Public Forum (PF)**, and **World Schools Debate (WSDC)** <sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup>. Uniquely, YHL focuses on "**individual mastery**" in debate – each student learns to craft arguments and think on their feet without over-reliance on a partner <sup>10</sup>. The curriculum builds critical thinking, quick reasoning, and respectful communication. For example, **Impromptu Debate** teaches rapid idea organization and calm thinking under time pressure, reflecting real-world situations like interviews or negotiations <sup>11</sup>. **Congressional Debate** simulates legislative sessions to instill civic awareness and collaborative leadership <sup>12</sup>. Formats like **LD** hone ethical reasoning and value-based argumentation <sup>13</sup>, while **Public Forum** and **WSDC** develop teamwork, audience-friendly communication, and global perspective <sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup>. This wide-ranging debate program helps students progress based on their own skills and resilience, building leadership and confidence through speaking with conviction <sup>16</sup>.
- **Horizon Scholars Program:** YHL's signature **three-stage enrichment pathway** that blends academics with real-world experience <sup>17</sup>. **Stage 1 - Foundation:** students strengthen core

knowledge (across history, culture, current events, science) along with basic communication skills

<sup>18</sup>. **Stage 2 – Research & Mentorship:** students undertake specialized research or innovation projects under the guidance of university professors and professional mentors, building real-world problem-solving and academic writing skills <sup>19</sup>. **Stage 3 – Leadership & College Pathways:** students engage in leadership experiences, community initiatives, and advanced research, preparing for college applications and global competitiveness <sup>19</sup>. This program is designed to spur **academic, intellectual, and personal growth**, empowering young learners to become confident thinkers, compassionate leaders, and lifelong learners ready to make a difference <sup>20</sup>.

- **General Knowledge Courses:** A **Liberal Studies** series aimed at broadening students' global vision and critical thinking. YHL offers courses in four interconnected fields – **World History & Culture, Humanities & Geography, Economy & Current Events, and Science & Development** <sup>21</sup>. These courses combine inspiring lectures, interactive discussions, and practical tasks, encouraging students to understand the past, explore the present, and imagine the future <sup>21</sup>. This general knowledge curriculum not only builds content knowledge but also strengthens English proficiency and critical thinking. It is particularly valuable for students preparing for international exams like IELTS, TOEFL, AP/IB, and for those building a strong foundation for public speaking, debate, and research <sup>22</sup>. In essence, it provides "*perspectives and skills that empower young learners to engage confidently with the world.*" <sup>22</sup>
- **Social Impact Projects – Future Speakers Initiative:** YHL also leads a youth-oriented **non-profit initiative** called **Future Speakers**. This program is dedicated to empowering young people through public speaking, debate, and leadership training in a community service context <sup>23</sup>. It gives students opportunities to apply their skills beyond the classroom – for instance, by organizing youth-led events, participating in volunteer projects, and using their voices for social impact in their communities <sup>24</sup>. Through workshops, mentorship, and service projects, the Future Speakers initiative helps students develop confidence, empathy, and a sense of global responsibility <sup>25</sup>. (A link on YHL's site directs to **Future Speakers' own platform**, underscoring YHL's commitment to practical leadership and civic engagement.)
- **Other Offerings:** All programs are delivered **online** by top-level coaches based across North America, making YHL a truly global platform <sup>26</sup>. The institute caters to different learning schedules by offering both **regular courses and seasonal intensive camps**. Students can enroll in ongoing weekly classes or join **winter/summer camps** for public speaking and debate, as well as engage in longer-term research enrichment projects, depending on their interests <sup>27</sup>. YHL also provides trial classes for newcomers to experience the teaching style <sup>28</sup>. Upon program completion, advanced students may continue into a **College Mentorship track** for one-on-one university admissions guidance <sup>29</sup>. Overall, YHL's educational services form a comprehensive ecosystem – from skill-building courses and competitive training to academic enrichment and community leadership projects.

# Educational Philosophy and Curriculum Design

YHL's approach to education is grounded in developing **future-ready communicators and critical thinkers** through a well-structured, student-centered curriculum. Key aspects of their philosophy include:

- **Communication Skills as Essential in the AI Era:** YHL emphasizes that in an age when artificial intelligence can generate information instantly, uniquely human skills like **expression, persuasion, and leadership** have become more important than ever <sup>30</sup>. The curriculum is designed to cultivate these irreplaceable human abilities. As the program states, AI cannot replicate *authentic human expression or the emotional connection* of a well-delivered message <sup>31</sup>. Thus, YHL trains students to harness the power of their voice – turning thoughts into compelling speeches, and ideas into meaningful influence – skills that will define success in academics, careers, and life <sup>32</sup>.
- **Building Confidence and Critical Thinking:** A core belief at YHL is that **effective communication fosters clear thinking**. Students are taught to articulate complex ideas precisely, which in turn strengthens their analytical and reasoning skills across all subjects <sup>33</sup>. The curriculum interweaves public speaking and debate with critical thinking exercises so that students learn to evaluate ideas critically and advocate for meaningful change <sup>34</sup>. By practicing organized speech and argumentation, learners improve logical reasoning and become more discerning thinkers. This dual focus on confidence and cognition reflects YHL's mission to produce not only eloquent speakers but also responsible, "*confident thinkers*" <sup>35</sup>.
- **Progressive, Structured Learning Pathways:** YHL's curriculum design is highly structured and **stage-based**, ensuring that students progress through skill levels in a logical sequence. In public speaking, for example, the **three-level pathway** (Speak with Courage → Speak with Skill → Speak with Impact) gradually increases the sophistication of speaking tasks <sup>36</sup> <sup>5</sup>. Beginners start by overcoming stage fright and learning basic speech organization (Level 1), then move on to refining style, structure, and persuasion techniques (Level 2), and finally master impactful performance and original oratory (Level 3) <sup>4</sup> <sup>6</sup>. Each level has clear **outcomes** – from delivering short speeches with confidence, to using rhetorical devices, to crafting memorable messages that can educate or inspire <sup>37</sup> <sup>38</sup>. This stepwise curriculum helps inculcate an essential mindset in students: "*I can speak – and my voice matters*" at Level 1, evolving to "*I'm speaking effectively*" at Level 2, and ultimately "*I speak, and people listen*" at Level 3 <sup>39</sup> <sup>7</sup>. Similarly, the debate curriculum progresses from basic argumentation to advanced formats, but always tailored so students build on their own capabilities.
- **Personalized and Coach-Led Instruction:** YHL's philosophy stresses **personalized coaching** to unlock each student's potential <sup>40</sup>. Classes are kept interactive, with coaches providing individualized feedback on students' speeches and debate rounds. The absence of a rigid partner requirement in debate is one example of how YHL personalizes skill development – students advance at their own pace, and their progress reflects their individual skill rather than being tied to a team's performance <sup>41</sup>. This approach ensures that *every student's voice* is heard and cultivated. Testimonials from parents note the **engaging curriculum and supportive environment** that transforms students' confidence, indicating YHL's people-centric teaching style <sup>42</sup> <sup>43</sup>.
- **Real-World Relevance and Leadership:** YHL designs its curriculum to extend beyond competitions into real-life applications. Courses highlight **why each skill matters** in broader contexts. For instance, impromptu speaking is linked to excelling in unplanned situations like interviews or Q&A

sessions<sup>44</sup>. Parliamentary debate practice is tied to understanding how decisions are made in governments and organizations, teaching advocacy with diplomacy<sup>45</sup>. By framing skills in terms of college, career, and community scenarios, the curriculum instills a sense of purpose. YHL ultimately aims to develop not just prize-winning debaters, but **articulate leaders** who can collaborate, persuade, and inspire in the real world<sup>46 47</sup>. This is reinforced in Stage 3 of the Horizon Scholars Program, where students undertake leadership and community initiatives as part of their learning<sup>48</sup>. In short, YHL's educational philosophy blends **academic excellence, practical communication skills, and character development**, preparing students to lead and make a positive impact using their voices.

## Notable Technologies and Frameworks (Mind × Machine)

One distinctive element of YHL's approach is its integration of **technology and human learning**, often referenced as the "**Mind × Machine Framework**." According to YHL's materials, this framework is an **integrated educational system combining human thinking with artificial intelligence** to enhance learning outcomes (blending the strengths of the human "mind" with the capabilities of the "machine")<sup>49</sup>. In practice, this means YHL not only teaches traditional communication skills but also incorporates **AI-related content and tools** into its curriculum. For example, the academy offers "*AI related courses*" alongside public speaking and debate training<sup>49</sup>, signaling that students may learn about emerging technologies and how to work with AI. The emphasis on "*Future-Ready Competencies*" in YHL's tagline<sup>50</sup> further underscores their commitment to preparing learners for a tech-driven future.

While the website does not detail the Mind × Machine Framework explicitly, the philosophy is evident: YHL recognizes that **artificial intelligence is reshaping information and education**, and thus it aims to equip students with the skills to not only coexist with AI but to leverage it. This could involve using AI tools for research and content creation, teaching students about AI ethics or communication in a digital age, and adapting curriculum to include problem-solving with technology. (One of YHL's instructors even holds a dual Ph.D. in Artificial Intelligence and Art History<sup>51</sup>, suggesting interdisciplinary and tech-informed teaching expertise.) By integrating AI, YHL ensures its pedagogy remains cutting-edge – students learn to combine **the power of the human mind (creativity, empathy, critical thinking)** with **machine capabilities** for data and information, mirroring the Mind × Machine approach. This forward-looking framework aligns with YHL's identity as a "*future-focused training system*" that keeps education relevant in the 21st century<sup>52</sup>.

## Target Audience

YHL's programs are tailored for **youth and adolescents**, primarily targeting **students aged 12 to 18**<sup>53</sup>. This roughly corresponds to middle school and high school age, though the programs can accommodate various skill levels (from beginners to advanced competitors). Within this age range, courses are often **grouped by level** (beginner, intermediate, advanced) to ensure appropriate challenge and growth for each student<sup>49</sup>.

As a **global online platform**, YHL serves an international student body. The organization is based in North America (with top coaches across different cities in the U.S. and Canada), but delivers all instruction online, making it accessible to students regardless of location<sup>26</sup>. Indeed, YHL has coached students who go on to represent countries like Canada, China, and Singapore in world speech competitions<sup>54</sup>, reflecting its worldwide reach. The curriculum is conducted in English (beneficial for non-native speakers aiming to

improve academic English fluency), and often helps students prepare for English-medium exams and activities <sup>22</sup>.

The **demographic focus** is on motivated youth who seek to improve their communication skills, competitive speaking/debate abilities, and overall academic profile. Many students are likely aiming for success in school competitions, admissions (college interviews, etc.), and leadership roles. Parents interested in enrichment for their teens' confidence and critical thinking are a key audience as well. YHL caters to these needs by providing age-appropriate coaching – for instance, early teens might start with confidence-building in *Stage 1* or *Level 1* courses, while older or more experienced students might engage in advanced debate formats or research projects. In summary, YHL's target audience is **12-18 year-old students worldwide** who are eager to become articulate, critical thinkers, and it provides differentiated programs to suit each learner's developmental stage.

## Partnerships, Certifications, and Affiliations

YHL has developed several partnerships and affiliations that enhance its offerings and credibility:

- **“Future Speakers” Non-Profit Affiliation:** Youth Horizons Learning has an affiliated non-profit initiative called *Future Speakers*, under the umbrella of YHL <sup>23</sup>. This partnership allows YHL to extend its mission beyond paid courses into community service and outreach. Through Future Speakers, YHL students get involved in organizing **youth conferences, workshops, and social impact projects**, often in collaboration with schools or community organizations <sup>24</sup>. This affiliation not only enriches students' real-world experience but also strengthens YHL's profile as an organization committed to youth leadership development and civic engagement.
- **Academic and Research Collaborations:** As part of the Horizon Scholars Program, YHL collaborates with **university professors and industry professionals** who serve as mentors for student research and innovation projects <sup>19</sup>. These mentorships can be seen as partnerships with higher education and professional spheres, giving students access to expertise in fields like science, technology, economics, etc. While not formal institutional partnerships, the involvement of professors indicates a network of academic supporters. Additionally, YHL's faculty includes individuals with advanced degrees (including Ph.D. holders and retired professors) who bridge the gap between secondary education and higher academia <sup>55</sup> <sup>51</sup>.
- **Competitive Circuit Affiliations:** YHL and its students are actively engaged in prestigious speech and debate competitions, which serves as an informal affiliation with those circuits. For example, YHL students have participated and excelled in events like the **Harvard Debate UKTOC International Qualifiers**, earning bids to the Tournament of Champions (TOC) Nationals <sup>56</sup>. YHL coaches and curriculum prepare students for competitions under organizations such as the **World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships (WIDPSC)**, **National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA)**, and others – evidenced by students qualifying to national teams and winning awards <sup>54</sup> <sup>57</sup>. Coaches often have personal affiliations or accolades in these circuits (e.g. one coach was a **head coach of the Singapore national speech team and advisor to Team China** for WIDPSC <sup>54</sup>, and another coach is a former winner of the U.S. collegiate debate championship <sup>58</sup>). While YHL may not be officially certified by these bodies, its **curriculum aligns with international standards** and its success in competitions indicates strong working relationships with the speech & debate community.

- **Certifications and Recognitions:** As a relatively specialized education provider, YHL's "certifications" are reflected in its results and staff credentials rather than formal accreditations. The program is **recognized as a comprehensive, future-focused training system** for youth communication skills <sup>52</sup>. Moreover, YHL's reputation in certain communities (for instance, it is regarded as a high-level speech training institution for middle schoolers in some education circles <sup>54</sup>) highlights its standing. Coaches on the team hold notable certifications or titles – e.g., some are certified national coaches, champions, or have advanced academic degrees – which lends YHL authority. While not a partnership per se, YHL's inclusion in platforms like the **North America Chinese Debate/Academic Community (NACA)** suggests an affiliation with international education networks (one such profile describes YHL's co-founder and highlights the organization's coaching caliber on a global stage <sup>54</sup>).

In summary, YHL is well-connected through its **non-profit initiatives, mentorship networks, and active participation in global competitions**. These affiliations support its curriculum development (by staying aligned with competition standards and academic trends) and provide students with additional opportunities and recognition.

## Key Staff and Leadership

Despite its global reach, Youth Horizons Learning appears to be a relatively lean organization with a core team of expert educators. Key staff and leadership figures include:

- **Hannah Zeng (Co-Founder):** Hannah Zeng is identified as a co-founder of Youth Horizons Learning <sup>54</sup>. She has a background in youth leadership development and has been instrumental in shaping YHL's vision. According to an external profile, Hannah is adept at building youth programs and non-profit initiatives – she played a key role in creating a youth organization called *SFL (Shaping Future Leaders)* alongside her son and other team members <sup>54</sup>. Her expertise lies in fostering the kind of leadership and community engagement that YHL values. Hannah's understanding of what universities and employers look for in young talent informs YHL's focus on debate, public speaking, and service as avenues to build those traits <sup>54</sup>. As co-founder, she likely oversees strategic development and partnerships for the organization.
- **Head Coach "Sarah" (Head of Curriculum and Coaching):** YHL's head coach (referred to simply as **Head Coach Sarah** on the website) leads the instructional team, especially for speech programs <sup>59</sup>. She is a **national-level speech coach** with an impressive pedigree – described as having served as the coach/advisor to **China's national high school speech team in 2024 and Singapore's national team in 2025** <sup>54</sup>. This means she has experience training students who compete at the world championship level. Sarah's credentials (which include heading a national speech team and mentoring students who represent multiple countries in the World Individual Public Speaking Championships) bring substantial credibility to YHL's curriculum. She likely designs and oversees YHL's speech & debate curriculum, ensuring it meets international standards. Under her guidance, the program's five core series (Prepared Speech, Debate, Impromptu, Interpretation, Humorous Communication) have been developed as a "*comprehensive and future-focused training system*" <sup>60</sup> <sup>52</sup>. Sarah's presence in YHL leadership ensures that the pedagogy remains top-notch and up-to-date with global competition trends.

- **Coaching Team and Faculty:** Supporting the head coach is a **world-class coaching team** of instructors, each with specialized expertise <sup>61</sup> <sup>62</sup>. YHL's coaches include champion debaters, experienced educators, and subject-matter experts:
- Several **speech coaches** hold titles such as national champions or have coached national teams. For example, the speech coaching roster features coaches focusing on categories like Original Oratory, Impromptu, Interpretation, etc., many of whom have accolades in the WIDPSC or NSDA circuits <sup>59</sup> <sup>63</sup>.
- The **debate coaches** include experts in formats like Lincoln-Douglas and Public Forum who have won or trained winners at major tournaments (one coach is noted as a *former U.S. collegiate debate champion* and an economics Master's graduate <sup>58</sup>). They bring experience from coaching at top schools and events (e.g., Harvard, TOC, NSDA Nationals) <sup>64</sup>.
- In the **General Knowledge faculty**, YHL has notable educators such as a retired professor (Dr. Culhane) and a current university professor with dual Ph.D.s (Dr. James), ensuring that even the content courses are taught at a high academic level <sup>65</sup> <sup>51</sup>.
- Many coaches carry multi-faceted roles – for instance, one profile mentions a coach who is both a **media journalist and a former university lecturer** in history <sup>55</sup>, indicating YHL values broad expertise.

This diverse team is a cornerstone of YHL's quality. Each instructor's background is leveraged in curriculum development: debate coaches with **world-champion backgrounds** help shape rigorous debate modules, while teachers with advanced degrees design intellectually rich coursework <sup>54</sup>. The **Head of Curriculum (Curriculum Director)** role, reportedly held by Sarah Sahagian as per external sources, suggests that one of the leaders specifically ensures coherence and educational rigor across all programs <sup>66</sup>. Meanwhile, a **Program Director or Operations lead** (potentially Hannah or another co-founder) likely manages program structure and student experience.

In conclusion, Youth Horizons Learning is led by individuals who are highly accomplished in the speech and debate arena. The **leadership team's experience** – combining entrepreneurial vision (Hannah Zeng) and top-tier coaching expertise (Head Coach Sarah and her team) – drives YHL's mission. This ensures that anyone contributing to curriculum development at YHL will be working alongside seasoned professionals dedicated to innovative, results-driven education for youth <sup>54</sup>. Understanding the priorities of these key staff (e.g., emphasis on structured skill progression, integration of AI and global perspectives, and maintaining competitive excellence) would be crucial for aligning any new curriculum contributions with YHL's established philosophy and standards.

#### Sources:

- Youth Horizons Learning – Official Website ("Who We Are" and program descriptions) <sup>67</sup> <sup>68</sup> <sup>4</sup> <sup>10</sup>
  - Youth Horizons Learning – Program Pages (Public Speaking, Debate, General Knowledge, Future Speakers, FAQ) <sup>30</sup> <sup>44</sup> <sup>69</sup> <sup>23</sup> <sup>53</sup>
  - Youth Horizons Learning – Student Achievements (Competition results and affiliations) <sup>57</sup> <sup>56</sup>
  - North America Chinese Academic (NACA) profile on YHL (co-founder and coaching credentials) <sup>54</sup>
  - Testimonials and Additional Info – YHL site (mission statement, future-ready focus) <sup>3</sup> <sup>50</sup>
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1 2 3 29 40 42 43 52 60 67 68 **Enroll in Public Speaking Courses at Youth Horizons**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/>

4 5 6 7 30 31 32 33 34 36 37 38 39 50 **Youth Horizons Canada: Master Public Speaking Skills**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/public-speaking---critical-thinking-course>

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 41 44 45 46 47 **Empowering Youth Through Public Speaking in Canada**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/bp---wsdc-course-2>

17 18 19 20 35 48 **Unlocking Public Speaking Skills for Canadian Youth**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/professional-public-speaking-course>

21 22 51 55 58 64 65 69 **Cultivate Public Speaking Skills at Youth Horizons**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/liberal-studies-course-series>

23 24 25 **Master Public Speaking at Youth Horizons in Canada**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/public-forum-debate-course-2>

26 28 49 53 **Discover Public Speaking Skills at Youth Horizons Canada**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/frequently-asked-questions--faqs>

27 **Master Public Speaking Skills at Youth Horizons Canada**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/contact>

54 **Our Global Team – naca-org.com**

<https://www.naca-org.com/category/our-global-team/>

56 57 **Master Public Speaking at Youth Horizons in Canada**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/public-forum-debate-course-2-2>

59 61 62 63 **Elevate Public Speaking Skills at Youth Horizons Learning**

<https://youthhorizonseducation.com/our-coaching-team>

66 **Sarah Sahagian's email & phone number - Executive Director ...**

<https://www.signalhire.com/profiles/sarah-sahagian%27s-email/98864564>