



Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the Youth Diplomats program! We look forward to learning about what inspires, motivates, and moves you to be an engaged young leader. Here is some general information to help you complete your application.

Eligibility

Gulf Coast Diplomacy invites students who will be high school freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors for the 2026-2027 academic year to apply for a place in the Youth Diplomats program. We accept applications from homeschooled students and public, private, and charter high school students. Thirty-two students from Northwest Florida will be invited to participate.

Applications are due May 15, 2026, and you will be notified of your status by May 22, 2026.

Cost

There is no fee to apply. The program is funded by tuition, local donors, and volunteers. This local initiative does not receive federal funding.

Tuition for June 2026 – April 2027 is \$120. Students unable to pay tuition are encouraged to apply for a needs-based waiver. Your tuition includes your participation in our Camp Global summer program. There is a link to pay on our website under the Youth Diplomats page.

Benefits

Youth Diplomats develop necessary skills, including critical thinking and collaboration, while strengthening their knowledge of their community as well as international affairs. In the process, they discover college and career options and network with local and international experts to expand their workforce development opportunities. Youth Diplomats also participate in community service projects alongside international visitors.

Students can earn digital credentials aligned with the Open Badges standard and have access to an array of scholarships promoting international exchange and language proficiency. Participation in Youth Diplomats strengthens college applications as it illustrates curiosity and a commitment to intercultural communication.

Schedule

Youth Diplomats meet one Saturday a month (10:30 AM to 1:30 PM) from Aug 2026 to April 2027. The program includes two summer international youth exchange opportunities, virtually (June) and in person (July).

The anticipated schedule is June 23-26 (online with Camp Global from 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM, *Faces of Service* Leadership Week July 13-16, and regular monthly meetings from Aug 2026 to April 2027, with specific dates to be determined upon release of the SAT and ACT fall calendar.

The Saturday meetings are reserved for learning opportunities categorized by workshops, volunteering, and collaborations to include interaction, whenever possible, with international exchange participants, both students and professionals. Youth Diplomats also have access to speeches, lectures, and networking events with visiting academics, government officials, and other leaders from the Northwest community and around the world.

Norms & Expectations

Youth Diplomats is student-led & the Leadership Committee established the following guidelines. Youth Diplomats will:

- Dress for success;
- Show respect for others by leaving their cell phones in their bags unless taking approved photographs for social media or blog posts;
- Always confirm with staff, before taking photos or screenshots, whether or not our international visitors have given media consent;
- Give timely RSVPs if unable to attend;
- Attend 7 of 9 meetings one Saturday per month, August 2026—April 2027;
- Attend either the June Camp Global sessions or the July Leadership Week (Attendance at both is encouraged.);
- Interact with visiting/online youth exchange groups;
- Take the initiative in contacting the Leadership Committee with questions or concerns;
- Come to sessions prepared to engage using the materials provided;
- Produce one blog post or social media post & be willing to help promote the program using #YouthDiplomats & #IAmDiplomacy;
- Share the Youth Diplomats application with others;
- And in discussions will:
 - Be respectful;
 - Not interrupt;
 - Ask the *why*;
 - Analyze all sides; and
 - Share speaking time.

Mission of Gulf Coast Diplomacy

Gulf Coast Diplomacy is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization facilitating and strengthening connections, collaboration, and fellowship between the people of the Gulf Coast and the international community.

Instructions

Please submit this completed application to Jena Melancon, Gulf Coast Diplomacy executive director, by **May 15, 2026, at 11:59 PM CDT as a PDF** via email: jena@gulfcoastdiplomacy.org.

Application checklist:

_____ Application Form

_____ Answers to Three Questions

_____ Student/ Parent/Guardian Signatures

APPLICATION FORM

Please print clearly or type.

I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

NAME _____

AGE _____ GRADE _____ SCHOOL _____

Grade point average _____

HOME ADDRESS (street) _____

(city & zip code) _____

EMAIL – Do not use your school email, as you may not receive notification of acceptance to the program.

PHONE NUMBER _____ Circle the best way to contact you: text / phone / email

T-shirt Size: _____

- I plan to attend Camp Global in June
(Circle one) YES or NO
- I plan to apply for the July Leadership Week in Pensacola
(Circle one) YES or NO
- I would like to be considered as a possible host family for the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program
(Circle one) YES or NO
- I would like more information about participating in a fully funded, month-long U.S. government leadership exchange for high school students this July. The program takes place in the United States and includes a 13-day community stay with American and Iraqi teens, as well as time in Washington, D.C., and at a U.S. summer camp.
(Circle one) YES or NO

5. What honors have you won either in or outside of school? Are you a dual-enrollment student? Have you or are you taking any AP or honors classes? Are you an I.B. student?

6. Do you have a job, either unpaid or volunteer? If so, what are your responsibilities?

7. Have you had any experiences with other cultures? If so, please share.
Note: You do not have to travel abroad to be exposed to other cultures.

8. What is a SECRET TALENT you possess? (We promise not to tell!)

9. Is there anything else about yourself you would like us to know?

III. Please choose three of the four prompts below to answer, using the space provided. Make sure to note which prompt you are answering by writing its number inside the small box within each rectangle.

1. Why do you want to participate in the Youth Diplomats Program? What could you contribute to the program that no one else can?
2. What do you think it means to be an engaged member of your community? Describe a community issue that you care about – or would like to learn about – and why?
3. What does the world need more of? Less of? How can you and other young people make it happen? How are you already making it happen? *Please think beyond the easy answers of the world needing more love and understanding and less hate.*
4. Where in the world would you like to get lost? What could you learn about the place, the people, and yourself? How would you use your experience to help others?

Prompt #

Prompt #

Prompt #

IV. PARENT OR GUARDIAN INFORMATION

PARENT OR GUARDIAN 1

NAME _____

EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER _____ Circle the best way to contact you: text / phone / email

PARENT OR GUARDIAN 2

NAME _____

EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER _____ Circle the best way to contact you: text / phone / email

V. SIGNATURES OF STUDENT / PARENT / GUARDIAN

I agree that all of the information in this application is true. I agree if selected, I will participate to the best of my abilities in the Youth Diplomats activities and requirements as outlined above.

STUDENT SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

STUDENT NAME (printed) _____

I agree that all of the information in this application is true. I give permission for my student to participate and will support him/her in meeting the program requirements as outlined above.

I would like to be considered for a need-based scholarship for my student's \$120 annual tuition.

FOR PARENTS of those under 18: Gulf Coast Diplomacy uses photography and video to document meetings and events. These images may be used in print publications, online publications, presentations, websites, and social media. By initialing here, you understand no royalty, fee, or other compensation shall become payable to you by reason of such use and you agree that Gulf Coast Diplomacy has your permission to use your or your child's photograph publicly.

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Thank you for applying to the Youth Diplomats!