A History of National Youth Leadership Council

- 1983: Founded by Dr. James Kielsmeier, NYLC incorporates as a nonprofit organization at the University of Minnesota. NYLC founds National Youth Leadership Training, and intensive summer experience in diversity training and service-learning for high school youth.

- 1984: NYLC leads effort to develop a comprehensive Minnesota youth service model. National Youth Leadership Camp network, NYLC’s first offshoot, launches programs in four states.

- 1985: NYLC leads 1,300-mile Mississippi River canoe expedition celebrating United Nations International Youth Year

- 1987: Minnesota Youth Development Act, spearheaded by NYLC, passes, allowing school districts to levy for funding to support youth service. This is the nation’s first state-funded youth service initiative.

- 1988: NYLC hosts first Governor’s Youth Service Recognition celebration.


- 1990: NYLC helps write service-learning provision for National Community Service Act.

- 1991: NYLC publishes “Growing Hope,” the first service-learning guide including field-tested curricula. NYLC launches the National Service-Learning Initiative to address the growing needs of the service-learning field.

- 1992: NYLC advises Clinton transition team on creation of Learn and Serve America grant program. NYLC launches the Generator School Project, a national service-learning and education reform demonstration project. NYLC offers first service-learning immersion summer school program, WalkAbout, through Minneapolis Public Schools.

- 1993: NYLC named technical assistance provider for Corporation for National and Community Service and launches K-12 National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, based at the University of Minnesota.


- 1999: NYLC partners with Saint Paul Public Schools to develop district-wide service-learning program.


- 2002: NYLC kicks off Growing to Greatness (G2G): The State of Service-Learning Project, which develops and publishes annual research reports.

- 2003: NYLC initiates Y-RISE: The Service-Learning and HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative.; NYLC hires future CEO, Amy Meuers as the National Service-Learning Conference Manager. NYLC establishes the Youth Advisory Council as a key part of the organization structure.

- 2004: NYLC Partners with State Farm Companies on Project Ignition, a youth-led national teen driver safety initiative. NYLC hosts first National Urban Institute on Service-Learning.

- 2005: NYLC partners with the Shinnyo-en Foundation to grow youth service through the National Service-Learning Conference. Ibero-American Service-Learning Network (REDIBAS) was founded in Buenos Aires, coordinated by CLAYSS and NYLC.
2006: NYLC Summer WalkAbout program initiated in five Gulf Coast sites following Hurricane Katrina and Rita.


2008: NYLC releases K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice, evidence-based standards and accompanying indicators that educators can use to ensure service-learning results in the best possible outcomes. ; NYLC turns 25!

2009: NYLC helps develop and support field-wide policy recommendations to promote service-learning through education and service agendas. ; NYLC launches the Generator School Network, an online community of service-learning practitioners.

2010: NYLC launches Lift: Raising the Bar for Service-Learning Practice, an online interactive tool exploring the eight K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice. ; NYLC launches Generator Go Green (G3) Initiative with 25 middle schools in Minneapolis/Saint Paul, Chicago, and the Gulf Coast. ; Dr. James Kielsmeier retires after leading NYLC for nearly 30 years.

2011: NYLC welcomes Kelita Svoboda Bak as Chief Executive Officer. ; NYLC partners with The UPS Foundation to plan an effective model for implementing service-learning throughout school districts based on work with Guilford County Schools.

2012: Project Ignition students attend a job shadow day at the U.S. Department of Transportation and receive recognition from Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood. ; Generator School Network surpasses 2,000 members and welcomes youth.

2013: NYLC celebrates 30 years!

2015: Amy Meuers becomes the next Chief Executive Officer of NYLC. ; NYLC provides support to the Afterschool State Network through the investment of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

2016: NYLC partners with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to advance teen driver safety through Project Ignition.


2019: The first virtual National Service-Learning Conference takes place during the COVID-19 pandemic. NYLC publishes handbooks for young people to take action on the Sustainable Development Goals. ; NYLC’s Youth Advisory Council hosts the first virtual Youth Summit.


2021: NYLC publishes the revised and updated Equity in Service-Learning: Self Assessment Tools for Community Engagement. ; NYLC partners with Proceed, Inc. on PODER en SALUD (Power in Health) engaging Latinx youth to address the significant challenges and impacts of COVID-19. ; NYLC launches The Power of Young People to Change the World podcast. ; NYLC launches the Certificate in Service-Learning Instructional Leadership program. ; NYLC, in partnership with other leading service-learning institutions, launches the Coalition for Service-Learning.

2022: NYLC launches Youth as Solutions, a national framework for students to take action through service-learning.

2023: NYLC becomes the K-12 partner with the National Museum and Center for Service.