

# Baltimore County Public Schools



## Service-Learning Standards & Guidelines

## ***FOREWORD***

Each county in the State of Maryland has designed a service-learning program in accordance with the state service-learning requirement. This publication is designed to provide information and guidelines to all stakeholders for the program within the Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS). This audience includes students, parents, administrators, counselors, teachers, and community-based organizations.

Baltimore County Public Schools provides students with a comprehensive service-learning implementation plan that includes classroom initiated projects in our middle and high schools, approved student service in the community, and school-wide service projects throughout the school year. The Office of Service-Learning works annually with secondary curriculum offices to identify course projects that address community issues and enhance those projects through high-quality service experiences that align with our course curricula. This plan assures a structured preparation, action, and reflection experience for all students and supports quality civic engagement activities in our schools.

For students following a typical sequence of courses and completing all activities, students can earn more than the 75 hours they need to meet the state graduation requirement by the end of grade 10. By design, the curricular infusion plan provides flexibility for students who transfer into BCPS or are absent during projects.

Along with the course-based service projects, student-initiated service projects completed outside of school with pre-approval from the school-based coordinator are acceptable for accumulating required or meritorious service hours. All secondary schools will keep a cumulative record of service-learning hours for each student and those hours will be reflected on each report card. Qualified BCPS staff members are available to assist all students in the completion of this requirement.

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## SERVICE-LEARNING GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

The Maryland State Board of Education adopted the following regulation to enact the service-learning requirement, Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.03.02.06:

### *D. Student Service*

*Students shall complete one of the following:*

- (1) Seventy-five hours of student service that includes preparation, action, and reflection components and that, at the discretion of the local school system, may begin during the middle grades; or*
- (2) A locally-designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.*

Maryland's service-learning requirement took effect in the fall of 1993 and every public school student engages in service-learning as a condition of graduation. This includes all special education students, unless exceptions or modifications are included in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

### DEFINING "SERVICE-LEARNING"

Maryland embraces the Learning in Deed definition of service-learning:

*Service-Learning is a teaching method that combines meaningful service to the community with curriculum-based learning. Students improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in school to the real world; they then reflect on their experience to reinforce the link between their service and their learning.*

Service-learning is often confused with volunteering or community service. While both activities are defined as forms of service within a community, they do not necessarily include a structured educational connection for participants, which is a foundation of all service-learning projects.

However, students are encouraged to speak with their school service-learning coordinator to discuss if a volunteer or other service activity can be developed into a service-learning project by incorporating a structured educational component.

## COMPONENTS OF A SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT

All service-learning experiences must include PREPARATION, ACTION, and REFLECTION:

**Preparation** is the first step of service-learning in which students work with teachers and community members to:

- Identify issues affecting the community in areas related to health, education, environment, or public safety
- Select project site(s) and how to address a selected issue
- Plan service-learning reflection
- Explore the concept of active citizenship

**Action** is the next step of service-learning in which students carry out their service through one of the following:

***Direct Service*** – Students have face-to-face contact with service recipients. Examples include tutoring other students, serving meals at a homeless shelter, working with the elderly in a senior citizen community, etc...

***Indirect Service*** – Students perform a service without having direct contact with the recipient. Usually resources are channeled to help alleviate a problem. Examples include food and clothing drives, environmental projects, raising money for a cause through activities such as a walk-a-thon, etc...

***Advocacy*** – Students educate others about a selected issue with the goal of eliminating the causes of a particular problem. Examples include writing letters to legislators or newspaper editors, creating web pages, creating and displaying posters within the community, writing and performing informative plays, creating educational materials for other target groups, legislative testimony, etc...

**Reflection** is the final step of service-learning in which students look back upon the completed project and review what they have learned. Reflection may be done individually (journals, scrapbooks, teacher-student meetings) or as a group (class evaluation of the project based on the goals and outcomes).

## **MARYLAND’S SEVEN BEST PRACTICES OF SERVICE-LEARNING**

1. Meet a Recognized Need in the Community
2. Achieve Curricular Objectives through Service-Learning
3. Reflect throughout Service-Learning Experience
4. Develop Student Responsibility
5. Establish Community Partnerships
6. Plan Ahead for Service-Learning
7. Equip Students with Knowledge and Skills Needed for Service

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All service-learning experiences should meet Maryland’s Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning. These best practices expand on the fundamental components of service-learning (preparation, action and reflection) and are used by BCPS staff to assess the quality of projects.

## BALTIMORE COUNTY SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM SUMMARY

Grade Level	Courses with Required Service-Learning Projects	Meritorious Recognition
<b>Middle School</b>	<p><b>6<sup>th</sup> Grade:</b>            ELA (10 hours)            Health (10 hours)            Technology Education (10 hours)*            Business/Comp Science 6 (10 hours)</p> <p><b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade:</b>            Art (10 hours)            Technology Education (10 hours)*            Family &amp; Consumer Science (10 hours)*            Business/Comp Science (10 hours)</p> <p><b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade:</b>            Science (10 hours)            Social Studies (10 hours)            Health (10 hours)            Family &amp; Consumer Science (10 hours)*</p>	<p>All 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students are eligible but only the top 5 8<sup>th</sup>-graders who achieve more than 75 Independent Hours are recognized. Hours must be entered by the end of the third quarter.</p>
<b>High School</b>	<p><b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade:</b>            Earth Systems (10 hours)            English 9 (10 hours)            American Government (15 hours)            Technology Education (10 hours)</p>	<p>All 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students are eligible but only the top 10 graduating seniors who achieve more than 150 Independent Hours are recognized. Hours must be entered by the end of the third quarter.</p>

\* Projects implemented only at schools where the noted courses are offered

Note: The above infusion projects are course requirements that are completed during the school day. Credit for projects is recorded at the end of the course by the teacher and is reflected on 4<sup>th</sup> quarter student report cards.

### RECOGNITION OPPORTUNITIES

- All schools are encouraged to offer recognition programs in their buildings as part of school events.
- BCPS offers annual recognition for students in grades 8 and 12. The top 5 8th-graders in each school are recognized who have submitted and approved more than 75 Independent hours. The top 10 graduating seniors in each school are recognized based on more than 150 Independent hours submitted and approved.
- Recognition is determined based on Independent hours submitted and entered by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.
- The Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism provides recognition opportunities for volunteers of all ages, including students, throughout the year.
- The Maryland State Department of Education also recognizes students through periodic award programs.

# INDEPENDENT SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT GUIDELINES

In addition to classroom projects, students may also complete approved service-learning projects outside of school. In order to complete an independent project, students should take the following steps:

**1. Choosing a project:** The service site supervisor must agree to provide preparation/orientation and reflection activities for students. The student should utilize the included *Service-Learning Project Checklist* to help determine if the project meets the Maryland Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning. **Service-learning coordinators may assist with identifying appropriate preparation and reflection activities.**

**2. Gaining approval:** Students are to complete the Independent Service-Learning Activity Pre-Approval Form available at the local school. This form ensures that the completed project will count toward service-learning hour and that parent/guardian approval is provided.

**3. Preparing:** The service site supervisor is required to provide the student with a structured preparation/orientation time to ensure the student fully understands the purpose and/or mission of the organization and how their service will address a community need.

**4. Acting on service:** Some service projects are short term while others are long term. The service site supervisor is responsible for tracking and verifying the hours earned throughout the project.

**5. Reflecting on service:** Students must complete the reflection questions on the Hours Verification and Reflection Form or other school approved written reflection. Service-learning coordinators may provide additional suggestions for appropriate reflection activities.

**6. Tracking hours:** When all completed forms are brought to the service-learning coordinator, the hours will be recorded and the final paperwork will be returned to the student for their records.

**All students are encouraged to keep a file at home of their service-learning projects.**



## INDEPENDENT SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT CHECKLIST

*Students and parents may use the following checklist to evaluate potential service-learning projects.*

Yes	No	
		1. The project meets an identified community need related to education, environment, human needs or public safety.
		2. The service site is a nonprofit organization or meets one of the following exceptions: hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and licensed day care centers. <i>(Clients must be served directly and the project cannot provide a financial benefit to the business)</i>
		3. Meaningful learning about a community need will be an outcome of the service experience.
		4. A parent/guardian has provided consent for the student to participate in the project.
		5. Preparation/orientation activities will be completed with the site supervisor prior to the service experience.
		6. More than 50% of the total project time will be from the “action phase” (either direct, indirect, or advocacy) of the project.
		7. Reflection activities will be completed at the conclusion of the project.
		8. There will be no payment of any kind, including gifts and scholarships, received for this project.
		9. No more than 25% of the time spent for the service project involves tasks that may be considered clerical in nature.
		10. Service time can be verified by an assigned site supervisor who is not a relative. <i>(Occasional exceptions are permitted at the discretion of the school service-learning coordinator and MUST be pre-approved before the project)</i>

**If the answer for each question is YES, then the project may be submitted to the school Service-Learning Coordinator for review and approval.**

# MAINTAINING STUDENT RECORDS

## Service-Learning Hours Records:

All schools are required to maintain official service-learning project documentation for each student through the STARS record system. Students enrolled in courses requiring service-learning projects and who successfully complete the project, will have their hours recorded by their teacher at the end of the course. Any student that does not complete the course project will not receive hours.

All other projects will be manually entered by the school service-learning coordinator. All hours must be turned in during the same school year as they were completed. Once independent projects are recorded, the date they are entered should be noted on the paperwork and then returned to the student to keep for their records.

## Reporting of Service Hours Earned:

Documentation of hours earned by each student will be reported on quarterly report cards. Once a student reaches the 75 hour requirement, the report card will show the hours as “MET”. Schools will continue to record all service-learning hours regardless of the number of hours earned. Students and parents may request a service-learning summary report of total hours from the school as desired.

# STUDENT TRANSFER POLICY

The Baltimore County Public Schools have established the following procedures for transfer students:

- 1) ***If transferring to another BCPS school:*** All records will transfer with the student to their new school.
- 2) ***If transferring to another school system within Maryland:*** Each Maryland public school system is allowed by the state to meet the requirement within its own plan. When transferring to another public school, new students should be provided with the policies for meeting the service requirement at the new school so that the student will be in compliance with their plan. Any hours already earned will be forwarded to that school by the former school.
- 3) ***If transferring into BCPS from another state, private school, or from home schooling:***

<u>Time of Transfer</u>	<u>Hours student must earn</u>
* Grade 9 student (either semester)	40
* Grade 10 student (either semester)	30
* Grade 11 student (first semester)	20
* Grade 11 student (second semester)	15
* Grade 12 student (first semester)	10
* Grade 12 student (second semester)	5

# SERVICE-LEARNING - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Every independent service-learning project must be pre-approved by the Service-Learning Coordinator PRIOR to beginning the project. All service-learning projects must address a real community need and include Preparation, Action, and Reflection.*

## 1. RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

**Q:** *My child is heavily involved in our religious organization. What activities will count for service-learning hours?*

**A:** There are many activities through religious organizations that students can use to earn service-learning hours. These include: preparing and serving meals to homeless; working in shelters; clothing/food/book/toy drives; community improvements/renovations; participating in community clean-up projects; or participating in vacation bible school (if not teaching religious content).

As specified by the federal guidelines on the separation of church and state, service that is conducted for religious practice cannot be counted for service-learning hours. This includes activities such as Altar services, Acolytes, choir, teaching and/or assisting in the teaching of Bible/Sunday school, and setting up for religious services. The State's Attorney General assigned to MSDE drafted the following statement to provide clarity on the issue:

*“According to our legal counsel, the US Supreme Court has consistently ruled that in order for a public school, school system, or the State to abide by the First Amendment of US Constitution, actions approved by the school, school system, and State must have a secular purpose, have a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits the practice of religion, and must avoid excessive governmental entanglement with religion. Our attorney believes that granting a student service credit for teaching religious education would violate all three of the components just described and would therefore be unconstitutional.”*

## 2. LIBRARIES

**Q:** *Can my children do their service-learning hours at our community library?*

**A:** Yes, however, they may not replace a paid employee and should be engaging in direct services with the patrons (e.g., literacy program for children, computer instruction). Many of the public libraries have programs designed to allow students to participate and earn service-learning hours.

### 3. **DAY CARE FACILITIES**

Q: *Can my child earn service-learning hours at a licensed day care center?*

A: Yes. All child labor laws must be followed and the center must be licensed by the state of Maryland (*a copy of the license must be attached to the pre-approval form*). Students must be working directly with children to promote healthy child development. Acceptable activities may include reading to/with children, assisting with arts and crafts, supervising recreation time, completion of learning activities that provide school readiness, tutoring, etc...

Additionally, students cannot be paid or used in place of a paid employee and the business cannot financially benefit from the student's participation (i.e., additional children cannot be brought into the day care facility because the student is present).

### 4. **BABYSITTING**

Q: *Can my child babysit for free and have it count for service-learning hours?*

A: No, students cannot babysit for neighbors, friends, or family for free and earn service-learning hours. However, if the student is providing a service that helps address a community need, such as supervising children on site during a PTA meeting or a community health meeting (such as Alcoholics Anonymous or political forum), these hours could count.

### 5. **CLERICAL/CUSTODIAL**

Q: *Does clerical/custodial work count for service-learning hours?*

A: Clerical tasks may be a **component** of many valuable service-learning projects. However, these tasks must be done in a nonprofit organization and cannot be more than 25% of the service experience (e.g., answering phones, stuffing and labeling envelopes, collating, stapling, filing, faxing). Work that is considered custodial or janitorial cannot count as service-learning hours.

### 6. **TEACHER'S AIDE**

Q: *Can my child work as a teacher's aide and earn service-learning hours?*

A: Yes, if it is direct service for other students such as tutoring or creating educational displays or resources. However, making copies, grading papers, washing boards, cleaning the classroom, etc... is considered clerical and cannot be more than 25% of the experience. Students may also work within the school office, library or with the school nurse provided the experience still meets the program guidelines 9..

## 7. **SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY-BASED PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES**

Q: *Can my child earn hours for participating in music/theatre productions?*

A: Students cannot earn hours for participating in a school performance or competition (such as the spring music concert). However, if the group is voluntarily performing in public (e.g., community parade or event, performing at a senior citizen center during the holidays) then students can earn service-learning hours for their service.

## 8. **WORKING FOR INDIVIDUALS**

Q: *Our neighbor is in need of special assistance. Can my child help and earn service-learning hours?*

A: Depending on the circumstances, this may be allowable as a service-learning project with appropriate preparation and reflection on the issue affecting the neighbor. Students should speak with the school service-learning coordinator to see if an activity could be developed into a quality service-learning experience. All activities must be pre-approved. Please note that any approved project would only be allowed on a temporary/limited basis with strict oversight due to the difficulty of verifying the hours.

**Example:** Your neighbor has a child with a disability and needs assistance with building skills that you can help develop such as reading or fine motor skills.

## 9. **WORKING FOR BUSINESSES**

Q: *Can my child work for my friend's business?*

A: All service-learning projects must meet a real community need. Students may be able to earn hours depending on the activity, but a business may not financially profit from the service-learning efforts of our students.

**Example:** Students can serve at a senior citizen home if they are visiting with residents and assisting with recreational or other approved activities. Students **cannot** work for a business without being paid to earn hours, even under an internship or work study program, unless their service meets a community need such as assisting a restaurant in the planning and serving of a free dinner for the homeless.

## **10. POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS**

**Q:** *Can my child campaign for a political candidate/specific issue and earn service-learning hours?*

**A:** Yes, a student may complete independent service-learning activities for any political candidate or endorse any issue/cause of their own choosing without discrimination as long as it is done completely outside of the school day and does not conflict with the Precepts, Beliefs, and Values of the Baltimore County Public Schools. All activities must be pre-approved and cannot be supervised by a teacher or other employee of the school system. This rule ensures that there is no appearance of the school system encouraging the endorsement of any candidates, issues, or political party.

Activities will be evaluated on an individual basis and BCPS reserves the right to decline activities that may disrupt the educational purpose of the school or has the potential to negatively impact student safety.

## **11. TEAM MANAGERS/ASSISTANTS**

**Q:** *Can my child earn service-learning hours by being a team manager?*

**A:** No. While team managers/assistants can be a valuable part of school athletic teams, participation as a manager or assistant does not meet the state requirements for service-learning. However, students assisting in the coaching and supervision of community-based teams (such as those run by Baltimore County Recreation and Parks) may earn hours if they are not paid for their service

## **12. SCHOOL THEATRE**

**Q:** *My child spends many long hours working on the theatre production at their school. Can he/she earn service-learning hours for this?*

**A:** Students may earn service-learning hours for school productions only if the production is being used to serve the community or population of people in order to teach, entertain, or promote the arts to those who may have limited access (i.e. performing the play for younger students or for the disabled in order to promote the arts). Students should share how they became involved in the arts and the work that the production takes and encourage others to get involved. Students must get pre-approval from the service-learning coordinator before any hours can be accepted. Activities will be evaluated on an individual basis.

### **13. SERVING WITH A MUSIC/SPORTS BOOSTERS PROGRAM**

**Q:** *Can my child earn hours by working with the music/sports boosters program?*

**A:** Students may be able to earn service-learning hours by working with the music or sports booster programs if they are participating in fundraising and/or other activities that provide support to those programs. If a student plans to complete some of their time working at a concession stand for a boosters program, they must be able to demonstrate in writing how their service helped the school community, what they learned through their service, why their participation was important to the success of the booster program and how that service reflects a greater need in the community for volunteers to actively support on-going programs that provide services for the community. The organizers of the booster programs are required to complete preparation/orientation and reflection activities with students for this purpose.

### **14. SERVING WITH THE SCHOOL PTA**

**Q:** *Can my child earn hours by working with the school PTA?*

**A:** Students may earn service-learning hours by working with the PTA if they are assisting in fundraising and/or other activities that support the school. Students must be able to demonstrate in writing how their service helped the school community, what they learned through their service, why their participation was important to the success of the PTA program and how that service reflects a greater need in the community for volunteers to actively support on-going programs that provide services for the school and/or community. The PTA is required to complete preparation/orientation and reflection activities with students for this purpose.

### **15. SUBMITTING COMPLETED HOURS**

**Q:** *How often should students submit their independent hours?*

**A:** Students should submit their completed service-learning hours immediately after a project has been completed. For long-term projects, school coordinators may allow students to turn in hours periodically throughout the school year. All service-learning hours must be submitted during the same school year in which they were completed. Service hours completed during the summer months should be submitted when school reopens for the subsequent school year. Any hours submitted after this time frame are subject to additional review and will only be counted with special permission from the Office of Service-Learning.

**If students or parents have questions regarding any project, they should speak directly with the service-learning coordinator at their school or contact the Office of Service-Learning at 443-809-4496.**

# APPENDIX



# INDEPENDENT SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITY PRE-APPROVAL FORM

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dates of Service:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Service Site/Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Site Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Site Contact Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

What is the purpose/mission of the organization or service site?

What community need(s) will be addressed through your service?

How will your service impact the community and support the efforts of the service site/organization?

## **Parent/Guardian Consent:**

- I grant permission for my child to participate in this service-learning experience and accept full responsibility for the supervision and safety of my child throughout the project.
- I understand the school will not be providing transportation or funding for this project.
- I am aware this request must be pre-approved by the school service-learning coordinator prior to my child beginning the activity to ensure it meets the established standards and guidelines.

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Service-Learning Coordinator Approval:**

I have reviewed this project and it meets the BCPS service-learning standards and guidelines.

**School Service-Learning Coordinator Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

# INDEPENDENT SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITY HOURS VERIFICATION AND REFLECTION FORM

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Service Site/Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date(s) of Service:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Hours Earned:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Description:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Service Site Supervisor:** *Your signature below verifies that the hours listed are correct, the student was not compensated in any manner, and that a thorough **orientation** was provided to ensure the student fully understands the purpose/mission of the organization and how their service addressed a community need.*

**Site Supervisor Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## STUDENT REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What did you learn about the community issue you addressed through your service?

How did your efforts support the mission of the service site and provide a benefit to the community?

What did this service-learning experience teach you about your role as a citizen in the community?

*Date Hours Recorded:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorded By (Initials):* \_\_\_\_\_

## **GUIDE TO PREPARATION AND REFLECTION ACTIVITIES FOR COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

Although many community-based organizations are experienced at providing the preparation and reflection activities required for students to earn service-learning hours, we have been asked by some organizations to provide direction. We hope the following information is useful as you assist students in completing meaningful service and in meeting their service-learning requirement for graduation.

### **Preparation/Orientation:**

*Preparation activities* for students earning service-learning hours should include defining service-learning, an overview of the mission of the service site, a history of the organization, and how the service that the student will perform helps meet the mission of the organization. If an organization relies heavily on volunteers to effectively function, discuss why and include the impact that those volunteers have had in the past.

**Service-Learning** is active citizenship demonstrated by identifying and learning about a real community need, carrying out a planned project of action, and evaluating the importance of these activities.

### **Sample questions for discussion:**

- 1) What is the purpose/mission of the service site?
- 2) What community need(s) will the student be addressing through his or her service?
- 3) What is the students' role in the service and how will it impact the community?
- 4) Why is the service important to the community being served (what is the anticipated gain from the service by the individual, school community, or community -at-large)?

### **Reflection:**

Reflection activities for students earning service-learning hours must include a discussion of:

- 1) What did the student learn about the community issue addressed through their service?
- 2) How did their efforts support the mission of the service site and provide a benefit to the community?
- 3) What did this service-learning experience teach them about their role as a citizen in the community?
- 4) How did the service align with something they have learned in school or enhance their knowledge of the topic addressed?
- 5) What did the student learn from the experience that will help them in school or in the future (for example, in college, at a job, as an adult)?
- 6) What steps can the organization take to ensure a better experience next time?

## RESOURCES

### Service-Learning Experts:

- **Baltimore County Public Schools, Office of Family & Community Engagement**  
Nora Murray, Specialist II  
6901 N Charles Street, Bldg A  
Towson, Maryland 21204  
Phone: 410-887-4329  
Email: [cmurray2@bcps.org](mailto:cmurray2@bcps.org)
  - **Service-learning coordinators at all BCPS middle and high schools**
  - **Maryland State Department of Education, Youth Development Branch**  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201  
Phone: 410-767-0358  
Fax: 410-333-2183  
E-Mail: [Julie.ayers@maryland.gov](mailto:Julie.ayers@maryland.gov)  
Web site: [MSDE Service-Learning Page](#)
- Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism**  
300 West Preston Street, Suite 608  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201  
Phone: 410-767-1216  
Fax: 410-333-5957  
Web site: [Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism](#)
- **National Service-Learning Clearinghouse**  
Phone: 1-800-808-SERV (7378)  
Web site: [National Service-Learning Clearinghouse](#)