



Student Service-Learning in St. Mary's County Public Schools

OVERVIEW

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) is committed to preparing students to serve as effective and engaged citizens in a democratic global society. A significant vehicle to achieve this goal is student service-learning. Student service-learning connects meaningful service experiences in our schools and community with academic learning and civic engagement. This educational experience allows students to develop a more profound commitment to promoting the common good and their willingness to take responsibility for the larger community.

STUDENT SERVICE-LEARNING DEFINITION

Student service-learning is an instructional approach that promotes civic engagement and empowerment by engaging students through collaborative projects that address a local problem and aligns it with curriculum content standards. Through this personalized and authentic learning experience, students apply their content knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and publish their products. Student service-learning also supports the concept of differentiated instruction and advocates inductive investigation. Hence, student service-learning supports the idea that students build content knowledge based on their experiences and by engaging in social learning. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on linking what students are doing at their schools with broader community issues and involvement.

SERVICE-LEARNING GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SMCPS requires 75 hours of service-learning to meet the Maryland State Department of Education graduation requirement as defined in COMAR 13A.03.02.06. Students fulfill the service-learning graduation requirement in the three years of middle and high school United States History and Government courses. While in the middle school, students complete a total of 45 hours. It includes 15 hours at each grade level. The high school completes 30 hours which is divided into 15 hours in HS U.S. History and 15 hours in American Government.

Course ¹	Student Service-Learning Hours
Grade 6	15
Grade 7	15
Grade 8	15
HS U.S. History	15
HS American Government	15

Even though SMCPS identifies service-learning hours for each grade level, SMCPS does not track hours. Service-learning projects align with the Maryland "Seven Best Practices," which fosters an engaging and meaningful learning environment as students take informed action to address societal ills. Hence, SMCPS emphasizes implementing a quality service-learning project that promotes civic engagement.

¹ A student enrolled in a course not under the direct guidance of SMCPS where student service-learning is embedded will need to complete an independent service-learning project. For example, a student taking an Edgenuity American Government course for credit would be responsible for independent service-learning project.

TRANSFER STUDENTS²

Students who enroll in St. Mary's Public Schools (SMCPS) later in their academic careers will have their 75 student service-learning (SSL) hours prorated according to the following scale and is based on the grade of the first-time enrollment in SMCPS:

• Enrolled or entering for the first time in Grade 6:	75 SSL hours are required for graduation
• Enrolled or entering for the first time in Grade 7:	60 SSL hours are required for graduation
• Enrolled or entering for the first time in Grade 8:	45 SSL hours are required for graduation
• Enrolled or entering for the first time in Grade 9:	30 SSL hours are required for graduation
• Enrolled or entering for the first time in Grade 10:	15 SSL hours are required for graduation
• Enrolled or entering for the first time in Grade 11/12 (First Semester)	10 SSL hours are required for graduation
• Enrolled or entering for the first time in Grade 12 (Second Semester)	5 SSL hours are required for graduation

INDEPENDENT SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS

Under the direction of school personnel, students could complete the service-learning requirement by performing an independent project. In order to complete an independent project, students should take the following steps:

- **Choosing a project:** The service site supervisor must agree to provide preparation/orientation and reflection activities for students. The student should utilize the Seven Best Service-Learning Practices to determine if a project meets the guidelines. Service-learning coordinators may assist with identifying appropriate preparation and reflection activities.
- **Gaining approval:** Students must 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 hours and that parent/guardian approval is provided.
- **Preparing:** The service site supervisor must provide the student with a structured preparation/orientation time to fully understand the purpose and/or mission and how their service will address a community need.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Tracking hours:** When all completed forms are brought to the Social Studies Department Chair, 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 of their service-learning projects.

² If the student is enrolled in Grades 6-10, the student will continue with the service-learning program in SMCPS, even if the student has fulfilled 75 hours of service.

If the student is enrolled in Grades 11-12, and needs to complete either High School (HS) United States History or HS American Government and Politics, then the student is expected to complete any service-learning activities in those courses.

Student Service Learning/Community Service Guidelines

Student Service Learning/Community Service is a high school graduation requirement for the Maryland State Department of Education and the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

- Students are required to complete seventy-five (75) hours of service prior to high school graduation.
- A minimum of ten (10) hours are to be amassed during each of your three year in middle school.
- Thirty (30) community service hours are to be presented to your high school upon successful completion of the eighth grade.
- Each service project requires the completion of the following forms:
 1. Planning form
 2. Student Service-Learning Log
 3. Project Completion Form
 4. Copies of correspondence that you sent or received
 5. Photos
- Planning forms must be submitted for approval prior to beginning your service project.

Planning Form Guidelines

- Name: This is to include your legal first, middle, and last name.
- Date: Record today's date, not the date your project will start.
- Project Title: This would be a title that tells what the project is about.
- Brief Description of Planned Project: How did you identify the problem or need in your school or community? Did you identify the resources needed to address the need?
- Goals: What do you want to accomplish by working on this project?
- Approval: Submit your project to your student service-learning advisor based on your grade level.
- Review any comments from your advisor before you begin.

Student Service-Learning Log Guidelines

All service activities must be documented on a service-learning log.

- Name: This is to include your legal first, middle, and last name.
- Project Title: Use the same title that you used on your Planning Form.
- Date: Record the date you participated in the service hours.
- Time Began: Document the time you started the activity.
- Time Ended: Document the time you ended the activity.
- Activity You Completed: Give a brief description of the service provided, and explain how it will help you achieve your goals.
- Document the date, time, description of the activity, and explain your progress towards your goal on the same log every time you provide service hours for this project.

Student Project Completion Form Guidelines

This form is to be completed at the end of your project, after you have successfully met your goals, or after you have completed ten (10) hours of service for this year.

- **Name:** This is to include your legal first, middle, and last name.
- **School:** Record the full name of your school.
- **Grade:** The present grade you are in.
- **Present Year:** Record the school year as 2022-2023
- **Advisor:** Record the advisor who approved and supervised your project.
- **Length of Project:** Record the number of days, weeks, or months you spent doing your work.
- **Name of Project:** Continue to use the same title that you used on your planning form.
- **Description of Planning:** Detail how you identified the need or problem in your school or community. Explain how you determined which resources you would need.
- **Description of Actions:** Summarize the steps you took to successfully complete your project.
- **Reflection of Your Actions:** This is a key component. Self-evaluate your actions. Could you have done more? Were the recipients of your actions better off since you completed your project? Did you realize your goals? How did you benefit from the experience?
- **Project Extension:** Could this project be continued next year or do you plan on giving ongoing support in addition to the minimum service hour requirements for this year? Explain what could be done differently to make this project better.
- **Copies of correspondence:** Check yes if you will be attaching any letters or email correspondence to the Project Completion Form. Include any correspondence that you sent or that you received from the
- **Photos:** Document your progress through photographs and attach these to the Project Completion Form.
- **Descriptions:** Describe your actions in the photographs.
- **Student Log Attachments:** Check yes and attach the required Service-Learning Logs.
- **Number of Hours Spent:** Record the total number of service hours completed on this project.
- **Advisor Comments:** This will be completed by your advisor during an exit interview.
- **Advisor Signature:** This is the final step in the documentation process.
- This finalized packet will be placed in your permanent student file, which will be forwarded to your high school after you successfully complete eighth grade.

STUDENT SERVICE-LEARNING PLANNER

Identify the type of service Direct Indirect Advocacy

How will this project address a community need?

How will this project reinforce or enhance your academic learning?

FORM REVIEWED BY THE SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT CHAIR

- ☐ Approved
- ☐ Does not meet Student Service-Learning Guidelines (explain)
- ☐ Other (explain)

Signature

Date

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