

EXPERIENCE

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DO IT

IT WORKS

involvement • satisfaction
opportunity •



student service learning



IMPACT

GIVE A LITTLE TIME...
MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

■ In July 1992 Maryland became the first state to mandate service-learning participation as a condition of graduation. It remains the only state with such a mandate.

■ The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) student service learning (SSL) is a teaching method that combines meaningful service to the community with learning. Students improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in school to the real world; then they reflect on their experience to reinforce the link between their service and their learning.

“In the beginning I did it [service learning] just because it was required... then it got so I really liked it.”

—a high school student



■ The MSDE SSL mandate acknowledged the beneficial impact of service learning on the civic knowledge, civic engagement, academic success, and character and social development of students.

■ SSL neither substitutes nor replaces service to families, neighbors, and/or fellow religious organization members.

■ For more information, go to www.mdservice-learning.org

“My son had a chance to learn something new, meet new people, and interact with the community”

—a high school parent



STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING (SSL)

SSL is different from *volunteering* or *community service*. SSL requires the following:

- Planning in advance of service, supervision, and reflection throughout.
- Affiliation and supervision from nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations.
- Participation in secular (nonreligious) activities.
- Service performed in a public place.
- Documentation of service, according to established timelines.
- Service with preapproved community organizations, school clubs, or specific courses.
- Phases of preparation, action, and reflection.
- **Direct action**, such as tutoring or visiting hospital patients.
Indirect action, such as collections of food, clothing, or toiletry items.
Advocacy action, such as participating in community events that reflect opinions about public issues.

One SSL hour is awarded for every hour of service outside of the instructional day, with a maximum of 8 hours in a 24-hour period.

“While I was serving the community I started to think about what I wanted to do as a job...be a teacher? or maybe a doctor?”

— a high school student

“Service learning builds social capital, providing a way for young people to strengthen their connections with their schools, communities, and families.”

—State Farm Insurance

THE STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM APPROVED FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SSL GOALS

■ Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) promotes high-quality service-learning experiences for all students in various environments. It encourages habits of civic participation, responsibility, and service, which are essential to American democratic life.

■ MCPS supports the Best Practices of Student Service Learning (SSL) by encouraging students to

- ☑ Meet recognized community needs
- ☑ Achieve curricular objectives
- ☑ Gain necessary knowledge and skills
- ☑ Plan ahead
- ☑ Work with existing service organizations
- ☑ Develop responsibility
- ☑ Reflect throughout the experience

HOUR REQUIREMENT

Beginning with the class of 2011, MCPS students are required to complete 75 SSL hours as a condition of graduation. This modification to the SSL graduation requirement in MCPS is in response to a request from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Hours will be prorated according to the following schedule:

- Students enrolling in MCPS for the first time in Grade 7 will be required to complete 65 SSL hours before graduation.
- Students enrolling in MCPS for the first time in Grade 8 will be required to complete 55 SSL hours before graduation.
- Students enrolling in MCPS for the first time in Grade 9 will be required to complete 45 SSL hours before graduation.
- Students enrolling in MCPS for the first time in Grade 10 will be required to complete 35 SSL hours before graduation.
- Students enrolling in MCPS for the first time in Grade 11 will be required to complete 20 SSL hours before graduation.
- Students enrolling in MCPS for the first time in Grade 12 will be required to complete 10 SSL hours before graduation.

OPPORTUNITIES

■ Students may begin to work toward this graduation requirement the summer after completing Grade 5. They may continue to accrue hours throughout high school.

■ Students may earn SSL hours through full participation in service-learning activities and successful completion of middle and high school courses where service learning is used to achieve curricular objectives. (Grade 6 English; Grade 7 English; Grade 8 Social Studies; National, State, and Local Government.)

■ Students may earn SSL hours through full participation in service-learning activities and successful completion of specific high school elective courses where service learning is used to achieve curricular objectives. (The *MCPS Course Bulletin* identifies these courses.)

■ Students may earn SSL hours through full participation in service-learning activities promoted by school-sponsored clubs and organizations.

■ Students may earn SSL hours through participation in opportuni-

ties with nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations that are preapproved for SSL. Organizations and opportunities must be tagged as **MCPS SSL approved** at www.mcpsssl.org or they must be preapproved by the SSL coordinator after the student has completed and submitted MCPS Form 560-50: *Request for Student Service Learning Preapproval*.



■ With an approved MCPS Form 560-50: *Request for Student Service Learning Preapproval*, students may earn SSL hours for direct service to patients/residents in for-profit assisted living and/or for-profit nursing homes. This is the only exception to the nonprofit rule.

■ Students may not earn SSL hours for house-to-house distribution of any kind or telephone solicitation for financial contributions.

■ Students interested in earning SSL hours for service-learning activities with any candidate running for public office must submit MCPS Form 560-50: *Request for Student Service Learning Preapproval* for approval, in advance of any service.

“I learned some things about myself and the environment in my service-learning activity”

—a middle school student

DOCUMENTATION

■ All activities for which SSL hours are desired must be documented using MCPS Form 560-51: *Student Service Learning Activity Verification*. These forms are available in all middle and high schools and at SSL website www.mcpsssl.org.

■ Documentation of SSL activities must be reported according to the following **timelines**:

- ✓ The last Friday in September:
Deadline for turning in documentation of service learning performed during the summer.
- ✓ The Friday before first semester exams begin: Deadline for turning in documentation of service performance during first semester.
- ✓ The Friday before second semester exams begin: Deadline for turning in documentation of service performance during second semester.

■ A completed MCPS Form 560-50: *Request for Student Service Learning Preapproval* is required for approval in advance of earning SSL hours with any organization that is not preapproved on the SSL website www.mcpsssl.org.

■ Student performance toward meeting the SSL graduation requirement appears on the report card every nine weeks.

■ Students are encouraged to maintain copies of all SSL paperwork they turn in to the school SSL coordinator.



AWARDS PROGRAMS

■ Middle school students who complete and document 75 or more hours of service within a one-year period qualify for The Superintendent's Student Service Learning award. A certificate and pin are given to every student who qualifies.

■ Each high school graduate who documents 260 SSL hours or more before graduation will receive a Certificate of Meritorious Service from MSDE and MCPS. Meritorious service winners will also be recognized in the commencement program for their laudable service contributions.

"I encouraged my daughter to do the hours and just get the SSL requirement out of the way... then I saw how much she grew from the experience. I am very proud of her."

—a middle school parent

RESOURCES

■ There is an SSL coordinator in every middle and high school who maintains students' records and is available to support students in meeting this graduation requirement.

■ The MCPS SSL website www.mcpsssl.org, contains information about the SSL program, forms, frequently asked questions, and links to the Maryland State Department of Education service-learning website.

■ MCPS SSL publications include brochures, posters, and SSL graduation information booklets.

■ The MCPS/Montgomery County Volunteer Center publication, *Student Service Learning Guide to Volunteer Opportunities* (distributed every spring).

■ Middle and high school newsletters, announcements, television programming, and bulletin boards.

■ Middle and high school listservs.

■ The Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations SSL committee.

NECESSARY STEPS

■ Consider an activity of interest or a specific organization to work with (think nonprofit, tax-exempt).

■ Check *Organizations and Opportunities*, tagged as **MCPS SSL approved**, at www.mcpsssl.org.

■ If an organization and opportunity of interest is listed on the website, contact the organization and make a commitment to serve.

■ If an organization and opportunity of interest is not listed there, then identify another nonprofit organization and opportunity and submit a completed MCPS Form 560-50: *Request for Student Service Learning Preapproval* to the SSL coordinator for approval, in advance of any service.

■ Upon receiving approval from the SSL coordinator, start participating in the opportunity.

■ Always complete MCPS Form 560-51: *Student Service Learning Activity Verification*. Submit it to the school SSL coordinator, according to timelines, and keep copies for your records.

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opportunity • involvement • satisfaction

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE STATE OF MARYLAND IS AVAILABLE THROUGH—

- The SSL coordinator at the local school
- Regular editions of *PTSA/school newsletters*
- The MCPS student service learning website www.mcpsssl.org
- The Montgomery County Volunteer Center website www.montgomerycounty.gov/volunteer
- The Maryland State Department of Education website www.mdservice-learning.org

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IMPACT



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