

APS COMMUNITY SERVICE: GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Earning $\frac{1}{2}$ of a Carnegie unit, or 75 hours of community service, is the current requirement for graduation from Atlanta Public Schools. Students should begin earning community service hours upon their enrollment into high school, and divide the requirement by the number of years before graduation so that they can ensure successful completion. *For Example: If a student enrolls as a freshman and consistently completes 20 hours per school year (an average of 2 hours per school month), they will exceed the graduation requirement as they prepare to graduate four years later.*

COMMUNITY SERVICE: A DEFINITION

Community Service refers to service that a person performs for the benefit of his or her local community. Step outside of your familiar environments and expand your horizons. Strengthen your senses of civic engagement and nationalism. Broaden your educational, developmental and social goals. Prepare you to become a responsible, active citizen. As an APS student, you should deliberate, plan, implement and reflect on your community service in order to sustain the highest quality of service learning.

MAKING YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS COUNT

The purpose of the community service requirement is mirrored by the APS mission 'Through a caring culture of equity, trust, and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college, career, and life'. Additionally, exemplar community service is aligned to the following tenets of the APS profile of a graduate:

- ❖ Self-reflective and globally connected
- ❖ Self-directed and goal-oriented
- ❖ Critical thinker & skilled problem-solver
- ❖ Resourceful and driven
- ❖ Academically prepared
- ❖ Fully engaged learners

It is the hope that students will walk away with an awareness of the multiple needs of the community, a sense of moral obligation to help those less fortunate and the desire to make their community a better place in which to live.

Community service can refer to projects that members of certain youth organizations and clubs perform (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, extracurricular clubs). To gain the most exposure to various community service opportunities, students are encouraged to complete community service hours at more than one agency or organization; likewise, 75 hours is the minimum number of hours required to satisfy the APS graduation requirement, however, students are welcome to complete additional hours. If you have any question AT ALL about a community service placement or the validity of your hours, please contact your school counselor prior to beginning your service.

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN SELF SERVICE, SCHOOL SERVICE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service is NOT self-serving. The essence of community service is that you are performing an act(s) or service(s) that is directly benefiting others. Community service hours may not be awarded for tasks that students are otherwise invited or expected to complete (e.g. participating in surveillance testing, taking assessments, or assisting a school staff member or club with daily tasks or functions).

Volunteering for school service does NOT equal community service. Community service is performed as a service EXTERNAL to the school or school day. Volunteering for school service opportunities (e.g., manager of basketball team, volunteering to assist in athletic or extracurricular school activities, etc.) does not qualify as community service. Schools are not permitted to provide hours for school service events where students have volunteered their time.

STUDENT GUIDELINES

Remember that at your community service agency, you are not only representing yourself, you are representing Atlanta Public Schools. You are responsible for arriving at the given location on time, wearing the proper clothing, and respecting all the rules and regulations of the agencies with whom you are volunteering.

APPEARANCE & DRESS

Your personal appearance is considered very important. A standard of dress reflecting your community service status is equally important. The service project and location will largely determine how a student should dress. For example, a student who is helping to build homes with Atlanta Habitat for Humanity, tackle urgent needs through Hands On Atlanta, or prepare food with Project Open Hand would likely dress very differently for service than a student who is volunteering for the Ronald McDonald House or Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Students are encouraged to inquire with the service agency or the school counselor if they have questions regarding appropriate dress. Students should also practice good hygiene when participating in service.

SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Your service hours should be submitted and maintained in accordance to your school's recommended specifications. School personnel, including but not limited to school counselors and graduation coaches, will engage in conversations annually with students about their status towards achieving the 75 hours. School staff are available to provide support to students, however, satisfying the APS community service requirement is the responsibility of the student.

BENEFITS

You will benefit from your volunteering by building on your leadership, communication, and decision-making skills. You will also learn a lot about yourself. This will help you develop academically by being able to integrate your learning experiences with practical experiences. At the same time, others will benefit from your volunteerism.

CHAPERONES

If an adult chaperone is required for a student to complete community service hours at a specific location, the student is responsible for securing the chaperone prior to signing on as a community service volunteer.

QUESTIONS

Students should inquire with school staff or the school counselor if they are having difficulty securing a service placement. If you have any questions or need support in scheduling, placement or other information relative to community service, please contact your school counselor.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Remember that you represent your school and district when you are out in the community. Your actions are a reflection on you and your school. Any misbehavior or unlawful activity while on a volunteer assignment may be reported to the local authorities and/or your School Principal.

TRANSPORTATION

You are responsible for obtaining your own transportation to and from service opportunities. Atlanta Public Schools does not assume liability for any student traveling to and from service opportunities.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Although you are giving your time, your service agency is counting on you to be prompt and dependable to aid them in accomplishing their goals. Unless an emergency arises that prevents you from attending or participating in the agreed upon schedule for service, you are expected to attend and participate.

COMPENSATION

No monetary compensation is permitted for work done for community service.

HOURS REQUIREMENTS

In order to stay on track, you are strongly encouraged to complete a minimum of 20 community service hours per school for three years, and complete 15 community service hours for year four. (for a total of 75 hours over a four-year period). In other words, after the freshman year, students should have completed 20 hours; sophomore, 40 hours; junior, 60 hours; senior, 75 hours.

You are strongly encouraged to keep copies of all forms that are submitted.

POLICY FOR VOLUNTEERING WITH INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

If you question whether an activity will count as satisfying community service hours, you should talk to your school counselor **before** the activity takes place.