



COMMUNITY SERVICE GRADUATION REQUIREMENT



**BEGINNING WITH STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE
9 IN 2013 - 2014 AND BEYOND**



Community Service Graduation Requirement Beginning with Students Entering Grade 9 in 2013 - 2014

Purpose

The handbook was developed in order to implement guidelines for crediting participation in community service activities. The community service requirement is designed to promote civic responsibility through active participation in service experiences, to enhance the students' ability and desire to impact the community, to foster a sense of caring for others, and to develop a habit of volunteer service to those in need as a part of the College and Career Readiness initiative.

What is Community Service?

Community Service activities are non-curricular based opportunities that engage students in authentic and meaningful service to their communities.

Students may begin earning Community Service Requirement (CSR) hours the summer after successfully completing Grade 8. Hours may accrue throughout the summer and school year.

All forms needed to document progress toward this graduation requirement are available at www.spsk12.net. Students and parents may also speak with a guidance counselor at any Suffolk Public Schools' high school.

What are the benefits of Community Service?

- Students receive an invaluable learning experience outside of the normal classroom setting.
- Students analyze, evaluate, and synthesize concepts using problem-solving skills, while at the same time positively impacting their community.
- Students have the opportunity to examine various aspects of industry and receive mentoring before exiting high school.
- Students generate positive school-community relations and relations within the school.

- Students perform better in school when they are able to connect learning to their areas of interest.
- **State Board of Education's Excellence in Civics Education Seal** – This seal is awarded to students who meet each of the following four criteria:
 - Satisfy the requirements to earn a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma
 - Complete Virginia & United States History and Virginia & United States Government courses with a grade of "B" or higher
 - Complete 50 hours of voluntary participation in community service or extracurricular activities; such as volunteering for a charitable or religious organization that provides services to the poor, sick or less fortunate; participating in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or similar youth organizations; participating in Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC); participating in political campaigns, government internships, Boys State, Girls State or Model General Assembly; and participating in school-sponsored extracurricular activities that have a civics focus. Any student who enlists in the United States military prior to graduation will be deemed to have met this community service requirement.
 - Have good attendance and no disciplinary infractions as determined by local school board policies.

The Virginia Department of Education's service requirements for the diploma seal of Excellence in Civics are listed at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/diploma_seals/index.shtml.

What types of activities constitute Community Service Requirement (CSR)?

Activities which benefit the school or community constitute a community service provided that the community organizations benefiting from the services are non-profit with the exception of hospitals, nursing homes, or educational activities.

How many Community Service hours are required for Suffolk Public Schools students to graduate?

Students entering grade 9 beginning with the 2013-2014 school year and beyond will complete fifty (50) Community Service hours as a requirement for graduation. Students may elect to earn the 50 hours in varying combinations such as beginning as a rising freshman, earning all hours in one (1) year, two (2) years, three (3) years, or four (4) years. The *recommended* numbers of Community Service hours per year are as follows:

- Grade 9 complete at least 16 hours
- Grade 10 complete at least 17 hours
- Grade 11 complete at least 17 hours

Students transferring into SPS will be required to complete the following number of Community Service hours:

- Entering in Grade 10 after 2014-15 complete at least 35 hours (recommend at least 18 hours per year)
- Entering in Grade 11 after 2015-16 complete at least 20 hours (recommend at least 18 hours per year)
- Entering in Grade 12 after 2016-17 complete at least 10 hours

Any student transferring into a high school in the Suffolk Public School system with *documented* hours of Community Service at a high school outside of Suffolk Public Schools will be awarded credit for those hours as long as the service hours were completed during his/her high school career.

Extenuating Circumstances

The school superintendent may waive the community service requirement when there are extenuating circumstances. *Extenuating circumstances* shall mean student illness, death of an immediate family member, homelessness, natural disaster, injury, or disability, which impacts the student’s ability to reasonably satisfy the community service requirement.

Procedure

When submitting hours of service to the guidance counselor, the student must include the:

1. Date(s) of service,
2. Number of service hours provided,
3. Name of the person or organization benefiting from the service provided,
4. Description of the service performed,
5. Name, signature, and contact information (phone or e-mail) of the adult supervisor of the service, and
6. Parent /guardian and student signature.

The adult supervisor of the service organization is required to sign the ***Community Service Verification Form*** indicating completion of the service as described on the form and the number of hours of service performed. The student is to submit this form to the school’s guidance counselor during the academic year the service is provided.

Deadlines

What are the deadlines for submitting the Community Service Verification Forms?

Community Service Hours completed	Deadline for submission
over school breaks and summer vacations	Last Friday in October
during 1 st semester	Last Friday in February
by underclassmen for official transcript and Academic Career Plan (ACP)	Last Friday in May
by Seniors for meeting graduation requirement	Last Friday in April

Community Service activities are usually divided into three distinct categories: **Direct Service**, **Indirect Service**, and **Advocacy**. Each area is listed below with a few examples of the type of service (please note that these are only examples). Students who engage in individual projects will be allowed to submit hours earned from scouting requirements and national society memberships.

Direct Service

Working with youth through education / recreation programs
Working with senior citizens
Working with sick or disabled individuals
Working with immigrant populations
Preparing/serving food for others

Indirect Service

Collecting/distributing food items or clothing
Organizing fundraisers for special causes or events
Engaging in neighborhood beautification projects
Engaging in local conservation efforts

Advocacy

Informing the public about a variety of issues
Working with local political organizations
Speaking on behalf of underrepresented segments of the community

Note: If training is required by the organization, i.e. candy striping at a hospital, the hours required for training may be included as credit for community service.

Frequently Asked Questions for Students

Parents and/or guardians may contact individual organizations to verify safety and background check information. **It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to determine if an organization or service opportunity is appropriate and safe for their child.**

Questions? Contact the high school Guidance Department.

How can SPS students earn community service requirement hours?

Students may earn CSR hours that are promoted by school-sponsored civic clubs or organizations by participating in community service activities during and outside of the instructional school day. The advisor is to verify the CSR hours.

What forms are used to document CSR and where can they be found?

The Community Service Verification Form is required to document every CSR activity. The Community Service Verification Forms are available in any high school and can be downloaded from the CSR home page on the SPS website. Students should keep copies of *all* CSR documents.

How are student CSR records maintained?

A guidance counselor is available in every high school to provide information about CSR opportunities, timelines, and forms. Hours documented on the Community Service Verification Form are documented in the student's record and Academic Career Plan (ACP). Students should keep copies of *all* CSR documents.

Is there an appeal process for CSR disputes?

Yes. Students may appeal decisions made by school-based personnel to the school principal. Extenuating circumstances substantiating the appeal may be presented via a written communication from the student, parent, or guardian to the Superintendent.

How are CSR hours awarded?

CSR hours are awarded by adults who supervise the student and represent an approved organization. A student's parent, guardian, or relative cannot award CSR hours to the student.

Students receive one CSR hour for every hour of service.

Are there occasions where students may earn CSR hours with for-profit organizations?

Yes. For-profit organizations (such as banks, businesses, and corporations) that promote activities that address recognized community needs through activities such as coat drives and food collections may award CSR hours to involved students.

Students may earn CSR hours with for-profit assisted living facilities and nursing homes for direct services to the residents/patients/clients.

Are there activities that do not result in CSR hours?

Yes. Some activities for which students may not earn CSR hours include: service supervised by parent or relative; service without sponsorship of an approved nonprofit, tax-exempt organization; service supervised by one younger than 18 years of age; and service resulting in financial or other compensation.

Can students participate in CSR activities with nonprofit organizations that are located outside of the City of Suffolk?

Yes. SPS students may participate in CSR opportunities with a wide geographic range of organizations.

Is there a range of activities with nonprofit organizations that qualify for CSR?

Yes.

- Nonprofit organizations provide opportunities that address need in the greater community indirectly. Clothing and food drives are examples of indirect service activities.
- Nonprofit organizations provide opportunities that address needs in the greater community directly. Serving the elderly and working at soup kitchens are examples of direct service activities.
- Nonprofit organizations provide opportunities that address needs in the greater community through advocacy activities. Letter writing promoting a particular viewpoint and participation in community events are examples of advocacy service activities.

Does service with nonprofit organizations prior to enrollment in SPS count toward the CSR requirement?

Yes. At the time of SPS secondary school enrollment, new students may bring documentation of service from the summer after successful completion of Grade 8. A letter on official nonprofit organization letterhead signed by an executive of the organization identifying the number of hours contributed in activities under organization supervision in a public place will be accepted. The official letter will be placed in the student's CSR folder and the documented hours entered into the student's record.

Can CSR hours be earned by assisting classroom teachers with instructional tasks?

Yes. One CSR hour may be awarded for every hour of service spent in a school and outside of a student's instructional day for assisting classroom teachers with tasks such as: setting up and cleaning up labs and learning centers, reading to students, tutoring students in academic subjects (Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, etc.), updating bulletin board displays, copying, and collating worksheets, participating in content-based PowerPoint presentations, etc. **Classroom teachers may not award** CSR hours for tasks that involve student access to the work of other students. Activities that would support the instructional program of a teacher, but potentially jeopardize the confidentiality of another student such as checking or correcting student papers (including homework, projects, tests, etc.), computer use that would reveal student records (confidential, personal, academic, attendance etc.), or entering grades in student records. Overall, any activity that would reveal to one student the achievement record of another student is not appropriate for CSR.

What procedures must be followed in order to receive CSR credit?

Each participating student will be expected to have his or her parent/guardian sign the **Suffolk Public Schools' Community Service Parent Consent Form** prior to completing any community service. The form may be downloaded from www.spsk12.net or obtained from a school counselor. Once signed, this form will act as a pre-approval for the community service activities.

Each student will provide the guidance counselor with a signed **Community Service Verification Form** as a means of valid documentation which indicates the type of project completed, the date(s) of the project, and the amount of hours spent to complete the project. Such documentation will require the signatures of the adult responsible for coordinating the efforts of the project, the parent/guardian and the student.

As each experience is completed, the guidance counselor will provide a signature confirming credit for service rendered. The **Community Service Verification Form** can be used for a maximum of seven activities.

A Step-By-Step Guide for Students

- Step 1** Read the Community Service Requirement Handbook.
- Step 2** Turn in the signed *SPS CSR Parent Form* to your Guidance Counselor prior to completing any community service activities.
- Step 3** Select an appropriate Community Service activity.
- Step 4** Contact the community agency to ask for and offer your volunteer services.
- Step 5** Acquire a *Community Service Verification Form* from any high school or at www.spsk12.net and perform the community service.
- Step 6** Complete and acquire all required signatures for the *Community Service Verification Form* and submit it to your high school Guidance Counselor.
- Step 7** Maintain copies of *all* CSR documents.

Getting Started: A Guide for Students when Contacting Agencies

Before Calling an Agency:

1. Decide what you would like to do. Look through the suggested organizations and activities. Decide on the time you have available (day, month, hours, etc.).
2. Have a calendar, pen, and paper with you when you place the call.
3. Be professional when talking on the phone. (*Be sure to dispose of chewing gum before placing a call.*)

When you make the call, it is a good idea to know what you are going to say.

The following is a simple guide:

“Hello. I am a student at (name of school). May I speak to the volunteer coordinator?” (Use the name of the person, if available).

“Good afternoon. My name is _____, and I am a student at _____. I am interested in volunteering my time to our community. I would like to talk to you about what I could do to help your organization. Is this a good time for you?” From this point on, you will need to simply follow the lead of the other person. Be sure to find out: what services are needed; when the services may be performed; and whom you should contact upon arriving at the site.



School Name
Address
Principal's Name
Phone, Email

Community Service Parent Consent Form

Student's Name:	Grade:
Site Supervisor's Name:	
Service Site Name:	
Service Site Address:	
Service Site Telephone Number:	
Start Time:	End Time:
Student will leave from (circle one)	Home School

Parent's Release

As the parent/legal guardian of the student named above, I hereby give permission for my son/daughter to take part in the Community Service Program at the site indicated above.

I understand that my child will travel to and from the community service site unaccompanied.

I agree not to hold the school or any of its employees responsible for any expenses of injuries that my child may incur while engaged in program activities, including travel to and from community service sites.

I understand that my child is responsible for his/her behavior at all times and that my child may be sent home unaccompanied at my expense, if he/she exhibits inappropriate behavior.

I agree that in the event of any injury, the supervisor in charge of the program may act on my behalf in obtaining medical treatment for my child. I have indicated at the bottom of this form any permanent or temporary condition, which should be known about my child.

In an emergency, I may be reached at:

Daytime Phone Number: _____ Evening/Weekend Phone Number: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

Permanent or temporary condition, which should be known about my child:

REFLECTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Reflect on your experience. Share why you selected the agency, the benefits you gained from the experience and the possible impact the experience will have on your future.

Verification Form Due Dates

Forms must be submitted to the school’s Guidance Counselor by the following to guarantee that the accurate amount of hours are recorded on the student’s report card:

Completed Sequence	Due Date
Summer Hours	Last Friday in October
1 st Semester Hours	Last Friday in February
2 nd Semester Hours	<i>Underclassmen:</i> Last Friday in May <i>Seniors:</i> Last Friday in April

I certify that I have provided the services listed above:

Student’s Signature _____

Date _____

Guidance Counselor’s Signature _____

Date _____

Community service hours are handled by the Office of Secondary Leadership through the work with the high school guidance counselors and should be the point of contact for questions about the guidelines regarding the policy and regulations.

Dr. Stenette Byrd III, Director of Secondary Leadership
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Suffolk, VA 23434
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Email: stenettebyrd@spsk12.net

Disclaimer Statement

Suffolk Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies.

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