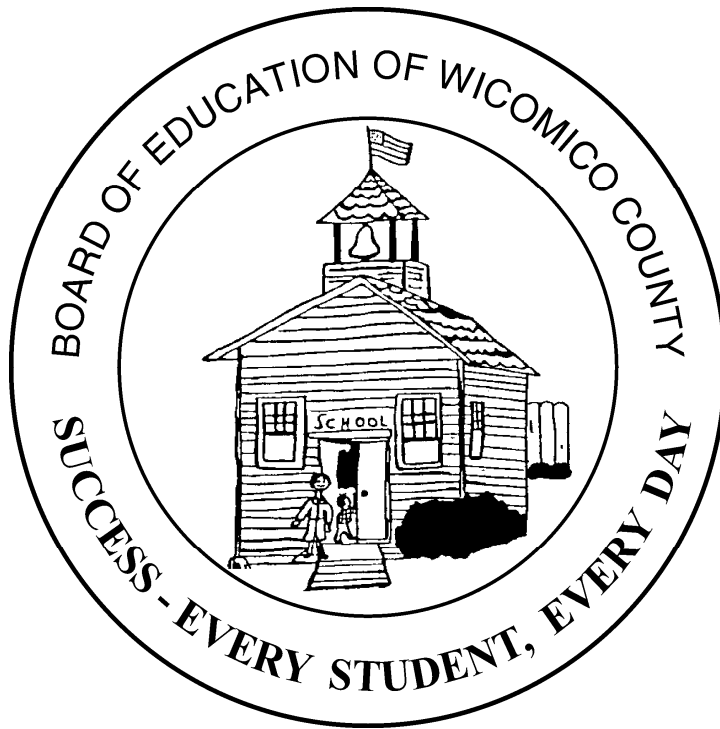


Wicomico County Public Schools Student Service-Learning Implementation Plan



2008-2012

I. Implementation Plan and Curricular Connections

A. Minimum Level of Student Engagement

Seventy-five hours of SSL is connected to the Essential Curriculum in a variety of courses in grades 6 – 9. Additionally, students may earn hours through independent service projects. Students may fulfill the requirement by participating in all infused activities in Grades 6-9, **or** by completing at least seventy-five hours of verified independent service-learning projects, **or** a combination of the two.

B. Curriculum Connections.

1. Infused Service Learning (Attachment A)

- a. 6th Grade – English, science, social studies, family & consumer science.

Five hours in each class / Total of 20 hours.

- b. 7th Grade – English, math, science, social studies. Five hours in each class /

Total of 20 hours.

- c. 8th Grade – English, math, science, social studies. Five hours in each class /

Total of 20 hours.

- d. 9th Grade – English, math, science, social studies. Five hours in each class /

Total of 20 hours.

- 2. Infused service-learning projects are designed to engage students in community service while seamlessly aligning with curricular goals. Ideally, infused service-learning projects are not seen by the teacher or students as some “extra” task that must be done, but instead as an integral part of the coursework. This tight

integration is aligned with Maryland's Seven Best Practices for Service-Learning and should include all three aspects of the service-learning process: preparation, action, and reflection. Individual classroom teachers (with input from students) ultimately have the responsibility of determining what the service-learning project will be, but as curriculum guides are reviewed and revised, ideas for appropriate, integrated service-learning opportunities are included. Additionally, service-learning Fellows have served as enthusiastic supporters of other teachers, and have assisted colleagues in developing and implementing quality projects. Attached is a unit from a Family & Consumer Science class with an infused service-learning project. This unit was created by Service-Learning Fellow Cheryl Doughty (Attachment B).

3. Infused service-learning projects support the approved curriculum, VSC, and CLGs. For example, a high school biology class performed an advocacy project involving energy conservation at home and in school. The students completed an audit of energy use at both home and school, and developed action plans to reduce energy consumption at both locations. The students wrote persuasive letters to school administration detailing the action plan for the school. This supports Science Core Learning Goal 3.5.3, as well as writing standards from the English curriculum. In another exemplary project, a middle school team participated in a beach clean-up and dune grass planting project at Assateague Island State Park. Approximately one-half of the students completed the clean-up activity, collecting several hundred pounds of trash from the beach and dune

area. The other students transplanted dune grass from a nursery area to exposed sand in order to stabilize the dunes and thus preserve the integrity of the island's geologic structure. The trip to Assateague came after Preparation activities centered on an in-class study of environmental issues in the students' science class. This supported Science VSC (6.B.1.a and 6.B.1.b). Reflection took place in the form of a multi-disciplinary lesson in English and social studies classes in which the students wrote advocacy letters to state and local officials (the English VSC (4.A) and Social Studies VSC 6.A). Reflection also occurred in math class as students gathered and analyzed data about the amount and types of litter removed from the park in the clean-up activity (Math VSC 4.A.1, 4.B.1).

4. Service learning concepts/suggestions for activities are incorporated in the curriculum during the regular curriculum review/writing process. The county Supervisor of Service-Learning interacts with other instructional supervisors to ensure that suggested service-learning activities spend a significant portion of the experience on the action phase and do in fact meet a recognized community need. The Supervisor of Service-Learning has met with secondary principals to discuss expectations for Service-Learning activities that are conceived and carried out in their buildings. In addition, the Supervisor of Service-Learning has identified a Service-Learning Coordinator in each secondary school to serve as an additional reference/contact for teachers as they plan their Service-Learning experiences. The Coordinators will also coordinate year-end reporting of teachers' service-learning experiences; these reports will include an assessment

of how much time is spent on solving problems and direct action as opposed to learning about the problem and reflecting.

5. Service-Learning concepts/suggestions that are written into curriculum guides include a wide variety of activities that include all three types of service-learning experiences. Reports submitted by content-area supervisors indicate that existing service-learning units are infused into the curriculum in the following approximate amounts: 20% direct, 60% indirect, 20% advocacy.

6. Service-learning experiences in our infused classes are the direct responsibility of the classroom teacher. While they must follow guidelines such as the Best Practices, they are given great latitude to be creative, and are indeed encouraged to solicit input from their students in creating the project. Often times, community agencies will contact the Supervisor of Service-Learning with a need they have; this information is then passed on to school administrators and school-level service-learning coordinators who in turn share this with teachers. Many of our teachers are themselves involved with community organizations, and get ideas for service-learning activities from this involvement. \

C. Transfer Policy

1. Transfer students are offered several options for completing the service learning requirement:
 - a. Students who transfer to Wicomico County in grades 6-8 will be required to complete the infused service-learning with their grade-level peers for the current and all subsequent grades. If they do not satisfactorily complete the infused service-learning projects, they must document 20 hours of service-learning in an approved school and/or community agency for each year enrolled through Grade 9.
 - b. Students who transfer to Wicomico County in Grade 9 will be required to complete a total of 35 hours. This may include the up to 20 hours from the 9th grade infused service-learning if they transferred early enough in the school year to participate in these experiences.
 - c. Students who transfer in grade 10, 11, or first semester of grade 12 shall complete 10 hours of service-learning in an approved school and/or community agency for each year (or part thereof) enrolled.
 - d. Students who transfer to Wicomico County in the second semester of Grade 12 shall complete five hours of service-learning in an approved school and/or community agency.
 - e. Under no circumstances is a student exempt from Student Service-Learning.

D. Connections

1. In Wicomico County, service-learning stands alone and is not explicitly connected with other education initiatives (character education, civic education, etc.). Implicit links are made, however, as the required hours are infused into curriculum areas as noted above.
2. There is not a specific connection to environmental education in Wicomico County's service-learning plan. However, many teachers recognize how well environmental education links with service-learning, and choose to infuse service learning projects that deal with environmental issues. Two such examples are detailed earlier in this report. Additionally, the supervisor of service-learning is also the science supervisor, and science teachers are encouraged to use environmental education as a context into which service-learning can be effectively infused.
3. Service-learning is featured in Wicomico County's Master Plan, under the Strategic Priority: High Student Achievement, Strategy 2: Promote the system-wide, consistent use of proven instructional practices (See Attachment G).

II. Student Leadership

1. Students play a leadership role at the individual classroom and school level. In the classroom, students, guided by the teacher, help to create and plan the service-learning project. Students are then given primary responsibility in carrying out the service project. At the school level, student leadership teams such as the Student Government Association and many clubs/organizations plan and carry out service projects that go beyond those required in their classrooms with infused service-learning. For example, our secondary school SGA's plan and carry out canned-food drives; high school SGA's worked with the local blood bank to plan and carry out a blood drive; a middle school environmental club organized a used electronic device collection with the dual goals of keeping harmful chemicals out of the waste stream and raising money for environmental charities.
2. The level of student involvement in project selection and/or development varies from classroom to classroom. Some teachers introduce the concept of service learning in a particular unit and present students a variety of content-relevant service-learning options, while other teachers have pre-planned with community-based organizations and have a project in mind. Even in these cases, students are typically given some degree of decision-making in the details of the project. At the school level, Student Government Associations and other student groups take the lead role in planning and implementing their service projects. It is the goal of the new supervisor of service-learning to increase the level of student

involvement in project selection and development for the infused curriculum area projects, and plans are underway to work with the principals and school-level service-learning coordinators to help support teachers in empowering students with this decision-making responsibility.

3. Community groups in need of assistance for service projects contact the supervisor of service-learning, who in turn passes this information on to principals, guidance departments, and school coordinators. Students may participate in these activities, or other self-initiated service beyond the 75 hours infused in curricular areas, and have the hours verified and tracked by their school's guidance department.

4. Two county students are chosen each year to be honored as Maryland State Department of Education Service Stars, as recognition for their meritorious service and/or leadership in service-learning activities at the classroom, school, or county level. The supervisor of service-learning will be working with principals and service-learning coordinators to refine the collection and tracking of hours, and provide additional school- and county-based recognition for meritorious service beginning in the 2008-09 school year.

III. Community Partnerships & Public Support and Involvement

1. Community sites and projects are approved based on the alignment of the service to be completed with Maryland's Seven Best Practices for Service-Learning. Community sites for service learning are selected by the teachers and students, who determine there is a service need. Oftentimes, teacher and students may speculate which agency's needs might relate in some way to the course content.
2. Agencies selected come under three types of umbrella agencies: social service agencies, religious organizations, and civic groups. Wicomico County teachers and students have utilized approximately fifty-five community-based organizations. Teachers and students will consider the three types of umbrella agencies for service needs. Agencies not under the umbrella may be considered after a review by the Service Learning Supervisor.
3. Occasionally, a new community organization may approach the supervisor with the offer of providing service-learning opportunities for our students. If the organization/project meets Maryland's Seven Best Practices, the supervisor sends information about the partner to each school to be disseminated to students. Students are made aware of approved sites and projects through announcements made at the school and through contact with their guidance counselors. The supervisor will be working with school coordinators make use of them as another

point of contact for students in search of additional service-learning opportunities.

4. Service-learning is introduced to students in the 6th grade social studies and language arts classes. Parents are informed by information students bring home from this and other classes with infused service learning.
5. The degree of parental notification of student participation varies from class to class. Many of our infused projects include field trips (e.g. Assateague Island) which require parental permission. Other projects are tightly aligned with the curriculum to the extent that parents may not be aware that work students are doing includes a service-learning component. It is the goal of the supervisor of service learning to raise the awareness of community stakeholders, including parents, of our service learning program. The new website and brochure will be useful tools in meeting this goal.

IV. Accountability

1. Hours for infused service-learning are tracked by the classroom teacher in their individual grade books. Students from these classes who do not earn all five hours are reported to the guidance department on a form that is part of their year-

end sign out report. Principals and teachers have the responsibility of ensuring that projects are completed.

2. Service learning hours are printed on each student's 4th term report card. This includes hours earned from participation in infused service-learning, as well as hours earned in approved community-based service projects.
3. Teachers with infused service-learning projects complete a verification form as part of their year-end sign-out procedure. This form allows the teacher to document which students have/have not completed the infused project, and is delivered to the guidance office for recordation and reporting on year-end report cards.
4. The assessment of infused service-learning projects varies from school to school. At some schools, there is a committee including teachers and administration that examines and assesses service-learning project plans using the Seven Best Practices prior to their implementation. This committee approves and/or offers constructive feedback to the teacher. In other schools, the principal is the exclusive in-house assessor of service-learning quality. The supervisor of service-learning ultimately reviews all infused projects at the end of each academic year. In addition, the supervisor has availed himself to building principals to provide training to as needed to ensure that a high level of institutional awareness of the Best Practices exists. Independent projects are

assessed for quality by guidance counselors when documentation reports are submitted by students. If the guidance counselor has reason to question the quality of an independent project, they may refer the documentation report to the supervisor. Students will be strongly encouraged by their guidance departments to ask for a review of their plans prior to beginning independent projects to ensure they meet the Seven Best Practices.

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