

Baltimore County Public Schools  
Service-Learning Implementation Plan  
2012

**Implementation Plan and Curricular Connections**

A. **Minimum Level of Student Engagement**

All students receiving a Maryland high school diploma from Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) must complete 75 hours of documented service-learning between Grades 6 and 12 as a requirement of high school graduation. This school system requirement is in alignment with state law as mandated by the annotated code of Maryland (General Instructional Programs - 13A.03.02.06) which reads:

*Students shall complete one of the following:*

- A. *75 hours of student service that includes preparation, action, and reflection components and that, at the discretion of the local school system, may begin during the middle grades; or*
- B. *A locally designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.*

Students may earn hours towards the service-learning requirement through projects infused in our secondary school curricula and through pre-approved independent projects completed by students in the community.

B. **Curricular Connections**

Select courses in our middle and high schools include service-learning projects that offer ten (10) hours of service-learning credit for each student. American Government is the exception and includes a fifteen (15) hour service-learning project. The credit hours were determined by considering the amount of time students spend addressing a community need (the “action”), as well as time they spend on preparation and reflection activities in the classroom. The county-wide infusion plan is as follows:

**Grade 6**

Language Arts  
Social Studies  
Health  
Technology Education (*where offered*)

**Grade 7**

Art  
Technology Education (*where offered*)

**Grade 8**

Science

Health

Family Studies (*where offered*)**High School**

American Government

Biology

English 10

Technology Education

Baltimore County Public Schools has developed a service-learning plan that includes high-quality, centrally designed infusion projects that align with the Maryland State Curriculum and have begun work to align all projects with the Common Core standards. All infusion projects have been developed by the appropriate curriculum offices in coordination with the Office of Service-Learning throughout the ongoing curriculum writing process to ensure rigorous instruction for students and alignment with all educational objectives, including the Maryland Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning. All infusion projects are included in the course curriculum guides and are also available to all teachers via our system Web site. Teachers are assisted with implementation strategies throughout the year through professional development opportunities offered by the curriculum offices and the Office of Service-Learning.

Service-learning projects continue to be incorporated into course curriculum as a differentiated instructional strategy. This allows our teachers to implement projects as a way to successfully educate and engage all students, regardless of their learning style, about civic responsibility and “real-world” applications of the skills they are learning in the classroom. Infused service projects are designed to directly align with the state curricula; however, teachers are given flexibility in how and when projects are implemented. This flexibility allows an opportunity for direct student input based on current events and encourages students to identify community issues that are important to them and apply the knowledge and skills they have learned through their coursework to effectively address those issues. BCPS believes that the leadership our students demonstrate through these course projects encourages authentic learning and therefore, students are encouraged to take leadership roles within projects so that they directly affect the impact and execution of each project.

During our on-going curriculum revision and writing processes, all infusion projects are developed to ensure that students spend a significant portion of the service-learning experience (typically between 50%-80%) actively completing the “action” component of each project. The action component is the basis of each project and the preparation and reflection activities are developed and aligned with educational objectives to support the project focus. Although multiple project plans are created for each course by the curriculum offices, teachers are also given flexibility in selecting the service project they wish complete in their classroom. This allows teachers to modify projects to best meet the needs of their students. When this occurs, projects must be pre-approved by the school service-learning coordinator to ensure continued alignment with the Maryland’s seven best practices of service-learning and that the majority of the project will continue to be spent on the action phase where students are actively addressing a recognized community need.

Through infused projects, all students are given the opportunity to participate in direct, indirect and advocacy experiences to ensure that they are exposed to different types of civic engagement throughout their school career. In addition to the course projects developed by BCPS, the Office

of Service-Learning also encourages teachers to consider using the MSDE developed projects that are made available through our intranet. These projects also align with the state curriculum and offer direct, indirect, and advocacy service experiences for our students. Finally, students also participate in many school organized projects that are implemented after school or during the summer which provide further opportunities to participate in multiple types of service.

Finally, the Office of Service-Learning works continuously with community-based organizations to create additional direct, indirect, and advocacy experiences for our students through independent projects. Each school year, hundreds of service opportunities are communicated to or with students and their families about high-quality service opportunities that are available to them to encourage active civic participation by our students. Through our partnerships with over 100 community-based organizations, students are provided with existing service opportunities in the local community. All service-learning coordinators are provided with a weekly bulletin via email which details upcoming service opportunities in and around Baltimore County. As needed, the Office of Service-Learning also works in coordination with our schools and the approved organizations to create high-quality independent service opportunities for our students throughout the year. *[See the Assessment & Evaluation section for details of the pre-approval process for community-based organizations.]*

### C. Assessment & Evaluation

All service-learning experiences are evaluated by the Office of Service-Learning using the seven best practices of service-learning as the standard for quality in BCPS. All infused projects have been written to align with the best practices and quality implementation will continue to be assessed annually by the Office of Service-Learning and content area offices using the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed seven best practice scoring rubric as part of the annual program review. The scoring rubric is used throughout the year to offer assistance to coordinators, teachers and other stakeholders in the successful development and implementation of service-learning projects. As teachers complete the required infusion projects they must document successful implementation during final grade reporting for the course by recording the hours electronically through STARS, our online student records system. The collected information is then used to create an annual service-learning report which is shared with executive staff and curriculum offices as part of the annual the evaluation of the service-learning program. Curriculum office staff members work with department chairs throughout the year to assess the effectiveness of all course-based projects. The service-learning specialist also conducts periodic school visits to observe projects and to support teachers with direct implementation and reflection activities.

In addition to infused service-learning projects, all students may complete independent service-learning projects in their community and count those hours towards the state graduation requirement. All independent projects must be pre-approved by the school based service-learning coordinator, approved by a parent or guardian, and include appropriate preparation and reflection activities for students that are conducted by the service site. In addition to student-completed paperwork, school-based coordinators use the best practices as the quality assessment for pre-approval of each independent project along with the BCPS standards and guidelines. All

community-based organizations must complete a comprehensive pre-approval process to become approved as a service-learning site. Each organization must demonstrate written project alignment with the best practices to receive approval as a service site for BCPS students. Following the approval process, all approved organizations receive training on developing volunteer opportunities into service-learning activities and must continue to demonstrate high-quality experiences for students in order to remain an approved site for students.

The evaluation process of the service-learning program is ongoing and involves not only the service-learning specialist, but also includes content area offices, administrators, school-based coordinators, department chairs, teachers, students and community-based organizations. School-based service-learning coordinators continue to be a valuable part of the annual evaluation process of the service-learning program and the service-learning specialist will continue to train and work with all service-learning coordinators annually and request their participation in the evaluation process. School administrators, teachers and coordinators have on-going opportunities throughout the school year to participate in program evaluations and their input is incorporated into the annual service-learning report each June, which is required to be submitted by each secondary school. This information is collected and used during our systemwide program evaluation, which is completed by the service-learning specialist, the executive director of the Student Support Services, content area coordinators, teachers, and community-based organizations. Student input also continues to be very valuable in the assessment of the service-learning program and students have the opportunity to participate in this process through periodic student surveys.

Baltimore County Public Schools will also continue to conduct quality review visits with MSDE and the service-learning specialist will continue to conduct documented site visits throughout the school year to evaluate the effectiveness of infused projects as part of the on-going program evaluation process and to assist teachers with successful implementation on projects. BCPS will continue to invite MSDE specialists to be part of the annual program evaluation committee.

D. Transfer Policy

Baltimore County Public Schools will continue a pro-rated service-learning requirement for students who transfer into the school system during high school from home schooling, private school, or a school outside of Maryland. Students who transfer into Baltimore County at the middle school level are still required to complete 75 hours of service-learning prior to graduation. The pro-rated system is as follows:

<u>Time of transfer</u>	<u>Hours student must earn</u>
* Grade 9 student (either semester)	40
* Grade 10 student (either semester)	30
* Grade 11 student (first semester)	20
* Grade 11 student (second semester)	15
* Grade 12 student (first semester)	10
* Grade 12 student (second semester)	5

As students transfer from BCPS to other school systems, service-learning hours are reported to the new school system in several ways. First, all service-learning hours are documented on student report cards, which indicate the number of hours a student has earned and are recorded to date. Additionally, service-learning hours are sent by BCPS to the new school using the state transfer form included in the cumulative student file. Finally, all hours are recorded on each student transcript and are available to the new school as well as the student and their family.

#### E. Connections

All curriculum-based service-learning activities are developed through the curriculum offices as part of our ongoing curriculum development process and projects are directly aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum and Core Learning Goals in each subject area. The Office of Secondary Language Arts and the Office of Science are both currently updating their projects to align with the new Common Core standards. Systemic priorities such as character education, civic engagement, and the incorporation of differentiated instructional strategies are a significant part of the curriculum writing process and the development of infused service-learning projects reflects those priorities. Effective instructional models and relevant assessments are shared with teachers by content area specialists throughout the year and additional support is available for teachers through the Office of Service-Learning during the planning and implementation of projects.

The Office of Service-Learning continues to work with the Office of Science to increase curricular connections with the environmental science program in our high schools as well as the Environmental Literacy requirement. Through these connections, we intend to assist schools in meeting the qualifications necessary to become a certified Maryland Green School.

Service-learning continues to align with the vision and mission outlined in the systemic *Blueprint for Progress* which directly impacts the Master Plan for BCPS. The Office of Service-Learning will continue to align with both system documents and will continue to revise the activities and strategies of the office to ensure both direct and indirect inclusion in future drafts of the Master Plan.

#### **Infrastructure**

See attached Appendix A.

#### **Student Leadership**

All students are encouraged to assume leadership roles through their service-learning experiences. Infusion projects are written to align with course curriculum and also to allow flexibility in implementation so that students have an opportunity to choose the project focus and also work in coordination with their teachers and classmates to effectively address community issues they have identified as important. As project leaders, students have the ability to assign tasks, work with community members and organizations, and secure funding to successfully

implement their selected service project. The Office of Service-Learning also encourages teachers and students to submit project ideas that they have developed and implemented in their class so those opportunities can be evaluated and shared with staff throughout the school system. Students also have opportunities to express their feedback on the service-learning program through surveys and through the service-learning annual report completed by the school. This allows students to have a voice in the evaluation process of the program and help guide our central office staff to make changes that benefit all students.

In addition to leadership opportunities through classroom projects, students also have the same opportunities available through their independent service projects. While some independent projects are pre-designed by community organizations and offer limited student input, many others provide students with the opportunity to evaluate community issues as an individual or group and then organize projects so that they have an active role in making them successful. Additionally, students are given the flexibility to complete these projects in their own communities as well as traveling across the country to help with community projects outside of Maryland.

Students who complete exemplary service-learning projects are eligible to receive meritorious recognition by Baltimore County Public Schools as well as service awards through their home school. In addition to BCPS recognition, students are also eligible to receive state and national recognition annually. This includes student awards and scholarships through local community partners, MSDE, as well as state and national recognition through the Governors' Office on Service and Volunteerism and the Points of Light Foundation which oversees the Presidents' Volunteer Service Award.

### **Community Partnerships & Public Support and Involvement**

All community organizations that wish to offer service-learning experiences for our students must receive approval through the Office of Service-Learning and the executive director of the Student Support Services. Through the central pre-approval process, organizations are required to complete an application process and must demonstrate alignment with the Maryland seven best practices of service-learning and must also demonstrate that they offer a safe and quality educational experience that is open to all students. Through this pre-approval process, the Office of Service-Learning has approved over 100 community organizations that have been trained to offer all students quality service-learning experiences in the local community. BCPS will continue to work with pre-approved community organizations that offer high-quality service-learning experiences for all students and will continue to train those organizations on their role in educating our students through service experiences in the community. All approved organizations are also encouraged to partner with Baltimore County Volunteers, our county volunteer organization, and list project opportunities on their public calendar to help educate students, parents, and community members about available opportunities to serve in the local community.

Information about our approved community partners is shared with all program stakeholders through several avenues. First, all pre-approved organizations are included in the Service-

Learning Resource Directory (attached), which is updated annually and is available to all stakeholders on our school system Web site. Second, curriculum offices include information about relevant pre-approved organizations within the curriculum infusion projects to help teachers identify and make connections with potential community resources. The Office of Service-Learning continues to encourage participation by our community partners in the educational process as designated by the school system. Finally, schools are notified of upcoming opportunities on a weekly basis from the Office of Service-Learning through emails and systemwide announcements via the *Weekly Bulletin*. Schools are asked to share information on available opportunities through regular school announcements, service-learning bulletin boards, parent newsletters, school Web sites and other school based information systems such as Edline.

Students and parents are informed about the service-learning program in several ways. BCPS has a comprehensive school system Web site which allows parents to be connected with all schools and central offices. The Office of Service-Learning has a dedicated Web page to keep the community informed about our service-learning program and allows parents and students electronic access to all of our printed program materials. The school system Web site for the service-learning program can be found at [www.bcps.org/offices/service\\_learning](http://www.bcps.org/offices/service_learning).

Additionally, all schools receive a parent brochure about the service-learning program (attached) which educates parents about the program, the number of hours needed to meet the requirement, and describes how students can earn hours through infused and independent projects. This brochure is distributed annually by all middle and high schools to ensure that parents are knowledgeable about the expectations of the program. All new students entering our middle and high schools take part in new student orientation and a comprehensive review of the service-learning program is a part of the orientation process. Students are educated on the definition of service-learning and how they can earn hours towards the requirement. All coordinators are given copies of the *Service-Learning Standards & Guidelines* (attached), which is distributed to parents and students as needed and is also available on the school system Web site with all other service-learning materials and information that parents or students may need. Parents also are informed about the service-learning program through the school system calendar, which is distributed annually and is available to parents and community members.

Finally, parents are informed of their child's participation in service-learning experiences through parent newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, direct correspondence from the school, school Web sites, and other informal avenues throughout the year such as Edline. All schools are encouraged to promote their service-learning activities and keep parents informed of when infused projects are being completed. Additionally, all service-learning hours are noted on student report cards so that students and parents can easily monitor recorded service-learning hours throughout the school year.

### **Professional Development and Training**

Ongoing professional development opportunities are offered by the Office of Service-Learning throughout the school year as needed. This includes required orientation for all new service-learning coordinators, orientation meetings with new curriculum office heads, meetings with

administrators, formal trainings with community organizations, and formal trainings/review sessions with teachers required to complete curricular infused projects. All trainings are conducted by the service-learning specialist and/or MSDE service-learning fellows and are scheduled through the Office of Professional Development or conducted at staff meetings, central office meetings, or other designated times determined by the curriculum offices, school administration and the Office of Professional Development. All MSDE service-learning fellows receive formal training annually through MSDE and the BCPS service-learning specialist participates in annual professional development opportunities offered by MSDE and also participates in workshops and forums with selected fellows during the annual national service-learning conference.

Additional trainings for infusion teachers, coordinators, and curriculum writers are also periodically available during the summer through MSDE and BCPS. BCPS professional development opportunities are conducted by the service-learning specialist, MSDE fellows, and content area specialists to ensure a comprehensive training for teachers on service-learning best practices, successful implementation strategies, and also to provide a time for teachers to plan curriculum-aligned projects that can be implemented during the school year.

Training for other school staff, such as secretaries, is completed by the school-based service-learning coordinator as needed. Formal training is not conducted annually for other school-based staff since they do not have an on-going, active role in the implementation of the service-learning program. However, all school staff members, including teachers and administrators, are instructed by the central offices to direct all service-learning related questions to the appointed service-learning coordinator. This allows for consistent implementation within the school and ensures that the trained coordinators are sharing the same information with all stakeholders. In the absence of the trained school coordinator, such as during the summer, all school staff members are asked to direct all questions and requests for pre-approval to the Office of Service-Learning.

## **Accountability**

### **Record Keeping**

Teachers are required to document successful implementation of the course service-learning project in our online student records system, STARS, during final grade reporting. Teachers who complete the provided infusion projects are ensured alignment with the Maryland Seven Best Practices since they are used by the curriculum office to guide the development of each project. Teachers are also welcome to complete an alternate infused project; however, they are required to get pre-approval through the school-based service-learning coordinator prior to implementation to ensure that the project continues to align with the best practices and to ensure that the majority of the project will continue to be spent on the action phase where students are actively addressing a recognized community need. Teachers can manually record those projects via STARS as well.

While teachers directly document their course projects in STARS, our service-learning coordinators are ultimately responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the records for all students.



Coordinators are also responsible for recording all hours from independent student projects and all project information is included in the end of year service-learning report completed by the coordinator annually. This process allows each school coordinator direct oversight of student hours and ensures that students only earn credit for service they complete and document. Service-learning hours will continue to be noted on student report cards and coordinators will continue to service-learning reports as required. Additionally, the Office of Service-Learning will continue to require bi-weekly progress reports from the high schools in order document the progress of seniors in meeting the service-learning requirement in a timely manner.

**Funding and In-Kind Resources**

Baltimore County Public Schools will continue to allocate annual funding from the operating budget to support the service-learning program. The Office of Service-Learning will continue to apply for additional state or federal funding when available. While these funding sources are not always available, they have proven to be critical to the implementation and success of the service-learning program in BCPS. When additional funding is secured from external organizations or foundations, it will be directed to support the implementation of high-quality service-learning experiences in our classrooms.

Source	Amount	Purpose
BCPS Operating Budget	\$129,690	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% of time for Project Specialist</li> <li>• Middle and High School Service-Learning Coordinators Stipends</li> <li>• Office of Service-Learning Budget</li> </ul>