



Community Service Requirement

A Guide for School Personnel

Revised January 2009

Board of Trustees

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Sweetwater Union High School District programs and activities shall be free from discrimination based on gender, sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, marital or parental status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or the perception of one or more of such characteristics. SUHSD board Policy 0410.

Community Service Overview

Community Service is defined by this Task Force as “volunteer service beyond the traditional classroom that fosters civic and social responsibility for the benefit of the community that is neither paid for, graded, nor punitive.”

The Community Service Task Force is comprised of a mixture of social science teachers, counselors, and administrators from the district who meet regularly to review and revise the SUHSD community service requirement.

The Task Force agrees that the intent of the requirement is to encourage students to be active and engaged members of their communities and to address important community issues. Service can unite neighbors, mobilize volunteers and encourage a lifelong ethic of public participation, and is best performed in conjunction with a reputable public service organization. This Task Force would encourage students to volunteer more than the 30 hour minimum graduation requirement.

To these ends, the new guidelines (Revised 1/2009) for what qualifies as community service for the district graduation requirement have become more explicit. However, it is impossible to develop a list of acceptable and unacceptable activities that is all inclusive. Therefore, it is imperative that the requirement for all activities to be approved in advance by the Social Science teacher and parent be followed explicitly. Credit for service hours will be denied if the student fails to get an activity approved in advance.

Community Service Requirement

SUHSD Administrative Regulation 6146.1(a) requires that a minimum of 30 hours of non-paid community service to be performed by students as part of their graduation requirements.

SUGGESTED schedule for completion:

9th Grade: 6 hours
10th Grade: 8 hours
11th Grade: 8 hours
12th Grade: 8 hours

- Students are encouraged to complete the required 30 hours early.
- New students who enroll from out of the district will be required to meet only the hours suggested for the grade(s) they need to complete. For example, a student entering as a 10th grader will need to complete 24 hours, the suggested hours for grades 10-12.
- To ensure all students and parents are aware of this requirement, it is the responsibility of the site to send a parent letter home (see enclosed sample) and to make arrangements for ninth graders to receive this information during the fall of their ninth grade year.
- Social Science teachers at each grade level will be responsible for monitoring and verifying that the community service hours have been completed for each of their students. Social Science teachers must also remind students of the pre-approval requirement for activities. Teachers will

post those hours completed on the District's student information system (Chancery). Recorded forms will then be stored in the student's cum folder for future reference.

- Principals at each school site will determine the final cut off date for senior community service hours to be completed to participate in graduation.
- The UC system gives additional points toward admission for students who complete 100 or more hours of community service.

Community Service Guidelines

Criteria

Is the activity in question servicing the community in which the student lives and works (or goes to school), and not simply servicing the school or a class or an individual related to that school? Is the student really doing community service, or is the student doing 'school service' camouflaged as community service? How exactly is the student helping said community?

Guideline

When a student does something for a school band, for example, in a parade on Saturday, and it seems to NOT violate any of the NO's (not graded, off-campus, not during school hours), the question to ask is, **"Does the student have the option of not going and saying, 'I don't feel like performing today in the parade, or I don't care to go to this event?'"** If the student HAS the explicit freedom (with no repercussion or pressure) to NOT participate, then it IS voluntary. However, if a student MUST be there (even though it is not graded, etc., or mandated), then it is NOT voluntary. VOLUNTEERism is the core element.

Examples of what IS community service

- Volunteering with a non-profit community service organization
- Community service club activities (not meetings)
- Assisting at Boys or Girls Clubs
- Helping at a hospital, convalescent home, or orphanage
- Peer tutoring after school hours or on weekends
- Weekend campus clean-up, beautification activities
- Helping with a community team such as AYSO soccer or Little League (helping with sports events of younger children, refereeing, etc.)
- Volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, locally or abroad.
- Giving blood (2 hours of community service allowed and OK to be done during school hours if it is a school sponsored blood drive)
- Donating hair to an organization that makes wigs for cancer victims (2 hours of community service allowed)

Examples of what is NOT community service

- Work often done by student aides, such as office, teacher, or library aides
- Service performed for a profit-making organization
- Work during regular school hours (Exceptions: School sponsored blood drive, unpaid poll worker)
- Service done without getting prior approval from both parent/guardian and social science teacher

- What would usually be considered normal extracurricular (or co-curricular) activities, such as sports and sports related activities (managers), cheerleading, participating in school performance activities that are related to a class, ASB activities, etc.
- Working for an individual teacher (or teachers) such as grading papers
- Service where the recipient is a family member or where a family member supervises the service
- Related to a class, credit for a class, or the making of profit, defraying costs of trips, etc.
- Receiving pay for the service
- Credit for the number of cans collected for a food drive, toys given, money collected, etc

Volunteer Guidelines

Choose an Organization: Choosing the right service organization is very important to having a positive experience with respect to your community service. Visit the District website (suhsd.k12.ca.us) to find **Schedule a Visit**. Making a visit to an organization that you are interested in volunteering for will give you valuable first-hand information on the type of services they offer and the environment you will be working in.

Estimate a Realistic Time Commitment. Take all of your schoolwork and other activities into account before scheduling the time you can give to the volunteer organization. Remember, it is easier to start small and add hours later than to have to break a commitment for hours that you cannot fulfill because your schedule is too impacted.

Understand the Organization's Mission. This will help clarify the goals of the organization and put into perspective the work you will be doing and help illustrate how even the smallest tasks help progress toward the organization's success.

Request a Job Description. This will clarify your responsibilities and the tasks expected of you as a volunteer and give you a clear understanding of what you can expect.

Discuss Training and Supervision. Find out how the organization will support the tasks and responsibilities of its volunteers by offering training and supervision. **Seek Feedback.** Volunteering is a great opportunity for personal growth and will be valuable for job and college applications. Ask for a written letter of recommendation or evaluation.

Expect Respect. The success of many service organizations lies in their dependence on volunteer work and they highly value their volunteers. If, for some reason, you feel you are having a problem or are not being shown respect as a volunteer, please contact your counselor or supervisor.

Be Enthusiastic. Find an organization in a field that is of interest to you. This will make your volunteer work enjoyable and personally rewarding. Your social science teacher and/or your counselor can assist you.

Keep Records. Volunteers should keep photocopies of all Verification of Community Service forms for their own records during their four years of high school.



SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

1130 Fifth Avenue
Chula Vista, California 91911
Office of Curriculum and Instruction
(619) 691-5586

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

The Board of Trustees of the Sweetwater Union High School District has approved a 30-hour community service graduation requirement. Community Service is defined as volunteer service beyond the confines of the traditional classroom that fosters civic responsibility for the benefit of the community. This service is **non-paid, non-graded and non-punitive**. Through this service, students will develop skills, career awareness, and self-esteem. The intent of the requirement is to encourage students to be active and engaged members of their communities and to address important community issues. Service can unite neighbors, mobilize volunteers and encourage a lifelong ethic of public participation and is best performed in conjunction with a reputable public service organization. To this end, the new guidelines for what qualifies as community service for the district graduation requirement have become more explicit.

Examples of what IS community service

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- Receiving pay for the service
- Credit for the number of cans collected for a food drive, toys given, money collected, etc.

Opportunities for community service can be found on the District website at suhisd.k12.ca.us. Students will be required to complete a minimum of thirty hours of community service before graduation. Counselors and social science teachers will discuss the guidelines, student responsibilities and verify completion of the community service requirement. It is recommended that students begin completing their community service requirement in the ninth grade by completing 6 hours of community service; a tenth grade student 8 hours; an eleventh grade student 8 hours; and a twelfth grade student 8 hours plus twelfth graders are encouraged to complete hours required as per the university or college of their choice.

Students must not start any community service activity prior to receiving written approval from their Social Science teacher. Parents are also required to sign their student's community service forms before the activity is started as permission to participate in the activity AND after their student has completed the community service as verification and validation that the activity was completed. Failure to receive the required signature prior to the start of the activity WILL cause the hours to be disallowed.

Please contact the Counseling Office at _____ if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Principal