

Graham Local Schools Service Learning Policy



Introduction

Graham Local Schools is undertaking an ambitious plan to develop and set a clear Vision for the school district. A major part of the plan, **Graham 2020**, is to cultivate a positive culture through experiential learning. As one element of our Career Gears system, we have created an intentional practice of teaching students about leadership development and service to others to ensure **Success Today, Prepared for Tomorrow**.

To accomplish this goal, Graham has developed a strategic policy that enables it to inform stakeholders about transforming the district to one that:

Champions literacy as a foundation for all learning

Promotes experiential learning environments for all students

Promotes career pathways and college readiness for all learners

Engages our community partners in education

What we know

- Studies show that engaging students in service learning exponentially increases participation in other school activities. This policy is a key part of the district's broader plan. It will increase the impact that Graham Local Schools has on our students and throughout our community while improving public perception of our commitment to community agencies.
- When a district's staff knows that there is board policy encouraging the integration of service-learning into the course curriculum, the school is three times more likely to have service-learning activities than a school without a policy in support of service-learning.
- Schools in low-income areas are significantly less likely to have service-learning activities than other schools.
- Ohio Revised Code 3301 provides for special recognition of students who successfully complete an approved community service learning project.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, PBIS

Definition of positive youth development: intentional process of providing supports through relationships, experiences, resources, and opportunities that promote positive outcomes for young people.

As a part of our PBIS system at Graham, we take community service learning and leadership development seriously. Using evidence-based approaches, we provide programming for youth to address the universal goals of risk reduction and protective factors for youth.

Adult responsibilities for PBIS include providing opportunities to belong and reinforces positive social norms through appropriate structures that are safe. Efficacy develops through supportive relationships and integrating family, school, and community efforts.



Service Learning

Service learning is a teaching method designed to involve students in authentic and meaningful service to their communities. Service learning makes connections between the classroom and the community and provides structured time for students to reflect on their service experiences. It is intended to instill a sense of civic responsibility by encouraging students to assess their impact on the community as active contributors to society. Students can engage in a variety of activities.

When it comes to service, our philosophy of activities is student-centered with adult guidance and support, not the other way around. We wish to provide students the opportunity to select activities that:

- Provide meaningful roles
- Integrate with partners' programs
- Model diversity

How do we sustain service learning passion in our learners? They select activities that:

- Make a difference in community
- Are safe and nurturing
- Are fun

Service learning is different than community service in several key ways:

- Service learning includes student leadership
- Service Learning incorporates both reflective and academic components
- Service Learning provides chances for celebration once the service activity has been successfully completed.
- Students reflect on: community needs, ways to help, and once their service has been completed, they can internalize how their efforts have helped, while learning more about academics such as geography, math, or science.

Beginning with the Class of 2018, students will be required to accumulate 60 hours of service learning prior to graduation. The superintendent, principals, and staff of the Graham Local Schools will assist all students to ensure that this requirement is met.

Appropriate methods and activities that teach students about leadership and service learning have been vetted through research, and in partnership with community agencies. The various levels of service range from individual projects to grade level projects to whole school events. These experiences, working with both internal and external partners in our community, will encourage students to take pride and ownership in their district and the surrounding communities.

Efforts to teach leadership development should not be considered separate from the district's broader academic plan. Learning Standards in service learning are directly linked to the district's academic expectations.



Additional notes

The policy will be reviewed with data annually by the Board and Superintendent.

The policy will also create a more systemic, long-term approach to personalized learning in the district. This plan will focus on intentional time for personalized student experiences, at various grade levels, with celebrations of the completion of service activities, some of which may lead to student recognition.

Our students will learn to be reflective, make decisions, and connect with their community through empowerment.

Graham Local Schools plans to embed leadership development and character education to expand and enhance the experiences we provide for our students.

Providing experiences:

GLS will document the successful completion of service learning projects for students as they complete grades 5, 8, and 12.

Students may also accumulate additional service hours leading to special recognition at graduation (i.e., service learning cord or Ohio diploma seal of excellence in civics). Opportunities for earning service hours will be made available throughout their education careers at Graham Local Schools. (i.e the annual United Service Day-Champaign County event will provide 5 hours for all student participants.)

- By the end of Grade 5: 5 hours
- By the end of Grade 8: 15 hours
- Grades 9–12: Students should complete 10 service hours per year for a total of 40 hours.
- Students who complete 50+ hours qualify for the Ohio Board of Education diploma certificate. *See Ohio Department of Education website for criteria.
- Students may accrue hours and complete their graduation requirement at any time prior to the completion of 12th Grade.

Students may use the Volunteers United Site to find, track, and verify service hours, or log them in Naviance. Guidance Counselors will verify and report individual hours upon graduation at GHS.

United Way: Use the county's online volunteer system: www.uwccmc.org/volunteer

Naviance: www.naviance.com

Audiences

To achieve its goals, this policy must focus on several audiences and stakeholders both inside and outside of our school district.

Internal audiences

- Students
- Administrators
- Certificated staff
- Support staff

External audiences

- Students
- Former students
- Parents
- PTA
- Education partners (Hi-Point)
- Business/Governmental leaders
- Opinion leaders
- Agencies
- Potential funding sources
- Potential employers

Desired goals

The behaviors and outcomes we hope to cultivate in relation to these audiences include:

Internal audiences

- Exhibit the district's vision and values
- Student pride and ownership in our community
- Students become informed of community issues
- Students develop leadership and character skills
- Students work individually, and as parts of a team, to build our culture

External audiences

- Support of Graham Local Schools
- Build community pride and increase trust
- Generate community involvement and feelings of engagement with schools

- Potential community partnerships with agencies and businesses
- Additional funding to support district programs and activities

Planned approach



Change agents are leaders

There are 2 strategies we will embrace:

1. *Service Learning Philosophy: Taking learning outside the classroom and improving our community.*
2. *Leadership Development: intentionally teaching leadership skills*

Strategy one: Service Learning

Taking Learning outside the classroom and improving our community

The Graham Local Schools must counter misconceptions and misperceptions regarding the quality of our district by improving how it connects our learners to the community. People often base their opinions on generalized information or news they receive about children, rather than seeing the actions of our students first hand. The information they receive may or may not be factual. Working alongside our learners helps us provide context and tell our stories through student celebrations.

The district will put in place a process that encourages students to invest more time and energy to engage community partners. The best way to do that is to require learning experiences that become a part of who we are.

We must also be transparent with the policy so it is consistent for all students involved.

We also want to improve the efficiency of connecting to our community, so we will partner with the United Way and others to help students find, select, and complete service learning activities that interest them.



Graham Students

United Way: Use the county's online volunteer system: www.uwccmc.org/volunteer

Naviance: www.naviance.com

Important Dates

Student Documentation Deadlines:

- **September 30, 2017:**
Documentation of service performed from June 1, 2017 through the summer is due to the school-based guidance counselor.
- **January 12, 2018:**
Documentation of service performed during the first semester is due to the school-based guidance counselor.
- **May 18, 2018 (Seniors), June 1, 2018 (others):**
Documentation of all service performed during the second semester is due to the school-based guidance counselor.
- **June 5, 2018 Counselors forward documented hours to principals/state.**

Service Learning Award Timelines:

- **April 6, 2018:**
Documentation that qualifies seniors for Certificates of Meritorious Service is due to the school-based guidance counselor.
- **April 6, 2018:**
Documentation that qualifies middle school students for the Superintendent's Service Learning Award is due to the school-based guidance counselor. This award is given to students who meet the 60 hour graduation requirement by the completion of middle school. (It is only awarded once.)

Summer Pre-Approval Requests

Service for non-profit organizations that are not identified with the GLS approved United Way CCM County Volunteer Center website requires pre-approval by the building principal. Faith-based activities, that are not routine, will be approved as a part of student activities. There may be administrative discretion/restrictions for students based on the timing of the activity if it conflicts with normal school hours.

The GLS Form called "Student Service Learning Request" must be submitted and approved by the building principal in advance of service. All pre-approval requests must be submitted in a timely manner. There is a one week allowance for principal review and approval/denial based on compliance with the program.

Strategy two

Leadership Education: Training the next generation of leaders now

Utilizing both character education vehicles and standalone activities, GLS staff will work to embed leadership training opportunities into the programming of our district.

While not new to GLS, the latest means of fostering leadership through training may come from external partners as well as our traditional internal stakeholders. This requires networking to meet the needs of our surrounding communities and improving student connections to area agencies and sites where they can explore their interests, and learn to lead.

Our students have some unique leadership training opportunities:

- *Key Club and/or Leo Club*
- *Student Councils, Student Senate, Leadership Retreats*
- *Students Making a Difference*
- *Team, Club, Activity leadership roles*
- *Student Interns*
- *Project MORE*
- *United Service Day*

Evaluation of new experiences will come from periodic staff reviews, group meetings with students, individual student input and feedback, as well as partner perceptions of our students.



**Reaching for new heights
requires training**

New Policy

Distribute policy: Students will review the new policy at orientation events. New staff will be exposed to the policy upon hiring. The policy will be communicated to the community upon approval and annually thereafter.

Selecting Activities: Students will learn to find and select activities with staff assistance and through the resource portals. The administrative team and our community partners will provide training for whole-school events.

Student Agreement Form: Students will be introduced to this form prior to beginning a new experience. A guidance counselor will meet with the student and review the steps at intervals. A tour of the project site may be provided. Select staff members may assist a student for some activities.

Student Service Learning Request Form: Students will be asked to complete this form for specific individual projects, and to submit it to their counselor prior to beginning an experience. A tour of the project site may be approved. Start-up supplies may be approved.

Work with New Students: New students will be given resources on leadership and service learning to foster their experiences. The team will work with administration to adjust their graduation requirements based on grade level, prior experiences, and time enrolled in this district.

Orientation Meetings: Students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 will take part in planned orientation meetings to introduce service learning and leadership training ideas annually. Orientation meetings will review: student activity selections, the student agreement form, and an overview of the policy.

Advisory Committee: Student activities will be reviewed annually for additions/modifications by community partners who commit to serve as advisory committee members for the calendar year.

Superintendent's Service Learning Award: The Superintendent will recognize those students who have completed their 60-hour requirement prior to completion

of 8th Grade. This recognition will take place annually at the regular Board of Education meeting in June.

Resources for educators and families:

Research White Paper: www.Forumfyi.org/Files/StateYouthPolicy.pdf

ODE's K-12 Service Learning Project Planning Toolkit

https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Miscellaneous/Community-Service-Learning/CSL-Resources/8542_K-12_SL_Toolkit_UPDATED.pdf.aspx

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse www.servicelearning.org

The Clearinghouse is a repository for books, research, tools, program descriptions, and many other ideas for planning and implementing your service learning project.

The National Service-Learning Partnership (NSLP),

www.servicelearningpartnership.org

A network of teachers, administrators, students, and policymakers committed to expanding service-learning nationwide, NSLP's website offers resources on planning, reflection, assessment, standards, student voice, funding, and other topics of interest for teachers at varying levels of expertise.

National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), www.nylc.org

NYLC, one of the most well-established organizations in K-12 service-learning, offers many types of training, books, and technical assistance opportunities to teachers, including an annual conference called the National Service-Learning Conference. The NYLC website includes project ideas searchable by academic subject, grade level, project topic, and keyword.

*This plan will be reviewed annually in April for updates.