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COMMUNITY SERVICE AT MASS ACADEMY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of community service at Mass Academy is to prepare students to be active, engaged citizens by helping them develop a deeper awareness of their community and an understanding of their ability to improve the lives of others. Students will also learn more about themselves and foster meaningful relationships through their service to others.

At Mass Academy we believe we have an added responsibility to give back to our community. It is through the generous support of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and WPI that we have the privilege of learning and working at Mass Academy. Through our engagement in service to others, we demonstrate our appreciation for this opportunity.

Ideally, community service should be personal, meaningful, and fulfilling. If one considers community service to be a chore or an item to cross off a to-do list, this attitude will be felt by the people being served. Therefore, students should find an agency to work with or a project to do that matches their interests and skills. By keeping an open mind, the work can be very rewarding.

Authentic community service should involve activities in the public sector where the Mass Academy student works directly with those who are truly in need. We encourage students to leave their comfort zone and work with individuals and groups who can most benefit from their assistance.

II. REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of community service between the new student orientation and two weeks prior to graduation as outlined below. **At least 10 of these 100 hours must be direct service to others in a high need* area.**

Mass Academy juniors are required to complete at least 50 hours of community service. Hours may begin accruing after the new student orientation and may extend into the summer after junior year if needed.

Prior to the first day of senior year, students must submit a minimum of 50 hours and a written 1-page reflection. In addition, seniors must present a reflection on their first 50 hours of community service during the first few weeks of school.

Students are also required to complete at least 50 hours of community service as a senior. This obligation may be fulfilled in the summer before senior year or during the senior school year itself. Hours that occur outside this timeframe do not count toward the 50 hours for senior year.

- Before the start of C-term, seniors must submit at least 25 hours toward their senior year requirement along with a 1-page reflection.

- Proof of the remaining 25 hours must be submitted no later than two weeks prior to graduation.

All students should keep track of their own hours so they are aware of their progress toward meeting this requirement.

*High need organizations provide support and services to individuals and groups requiring considerable attention and resources. These organizations typically address issues including but not limited to food insecurity, housing, elderly services, disability services, low-income families, and immigration.

TIMELINE:



III. COMMUNITY SERVICE VS. VOLUNTEERING

While both community service and volunteering involve contributing time and effort for no financial or personal gain, community service has the specific purpose of helping those in need. Therefore, not all activities that are done without pay are considered community service. Students may participate in community service organized by Mass Academy or through another non-profit organization. All community service activities must receive prior approval from the Mass Academy director and be supervised by an adult. Students are strongly encouraged to engage in activities working directly with the citizens we are aiming to serve.

Community Service	Volunteering (NOT meeting the community service requirement)
Volunteering at a local food pantry	Answering phones in a doctor’s office
Participating in an organized community clean-up day	Doing yardwork for a neighbor
Tutoring children at a non-profit after school program	Tutoring a family friend
Planning and facilitating a group activity at a non-profit nursing home	Visiting a grandparent in a nursing home
Assisting with Special Olympics	Offering free tennis lessons in your town
Assisting with free STEM lessons at a local library	Assisting with classes at a for-profit program

IV. APPROVAL, REPORTING, AND TRACKING

All community service activities must receive prior approval from the Mass Academy director to count toward the graduation requirement. Students shall submit a proposal using the community service form, which is then reviewed by the director. At that time, the director will indicate if this activity meets the high needs criteria. Once the community service has been completed, the student must submit the updated form (including hours worked and adult supervisor signature) for the hours to be counted toward the school's requirement.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTION

Reflecting on the community service experience provides an important opportunity to think more deeply about the impact of the work accomplished. This includes both the way the work has benefited others as well as how the one doing the service has grown as a result. When writing a reflection, consider why you selected these activities, how your skills and interests aligned with this work, how this service benefited others, what it felt like to provide this service to others, and what you learned from the experience. Remember that one goal of community service is to broaden your awareness of the needs of others, so consider how this experience has helped you to do this.

At the start of senior year, students will present to the junior class about their community service experience. This is meant to inspire the juniors to think more broadly about service opportunities while giving the seniors the opportunity to showcase some of their major accomplishments. Seniors should be prepared to address the following:

- Name of agency
- Location
- Client(s) served
- Your role and/or main purpose
- How your service benefited your client
- How your service benefited you
- Share an anecdote/reflection
- Discuss one positive outcome of your community service
- Share one challenge you encountered during your experience
- Would you recommend this site/agency to someone else? Why or why not?

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Mass Academy regularly shares information about community service events that are offered by outside organizations. In addition, the Mass Academy Community Service club (MACS) frequently plans community service events hosted by Mass Academy students and faculty. The table below includes some of the other organizations with whom our students have volunteered in the past.

City View School	Audio Journal	Special Olympics	Habitat for Humanity
Worcester Refugee Assistance Project	Worcester County Food Bank	Abby's House	Special Olympics
Heifer International	Jeremiah's Inn	Loaves and Fishes	Mustard Seed
NEADS	Ecotarium	New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill	Veterans, Inc

Worcester Animal Rescue League	Seven Hills	You, Inc	African Community Education
Boys and Girls Club	Audubon Society	Community Harvest Food Project	Meals On Wheels