



SOTA/SAMI/IDEA

Varsity Letter in Community Service Requirements

The mission of our schools is to partner with community resources to change public education, emphasizing creativity, and utilizing a fully inclusive model that educates the whole student through core values. At Sota, Sami and Idea, we believe helping those who are in need is central to those core values. We are providing this opportunity for our students to engage in the greater Tacoma community through service learning.

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

In order to earn the varsity letter in community service, you must meet all of the following requirements.

1. **100 hours of unpaid volunteer service:** completed between June 15 and May 1 of the current school year. Days off from school and district vacation breaks are opportunities to fulfill these hours.
 - a. ****At least 50 hours must be completed through one local non-profit agency** or for one local cause. No more than 30 hours can be from school related clubs or earned during the summer months. The intention is to ensure understanding and sustain a meaningful commitment to a selected social issue that is personally relevant to the student (e.g. homelessness, elderly, poverty, equity, literacy, faith organizations, environment, health care, justice, and community).
2. **Completed Hours stored in Career Cruising:** Documentation of all service hours verified by an adult supervisor at the site or agency. (phone number/email)
3. **4 digital photos** of you involved in or doing the service work. The photos will tell the story of your overall work. Please honor the photo policy of the agency.
4. **Focus Issue Reflection Piece:** - A short reflection: journal writing, video, song, visual art piece, children’s book, presentation or other project based on your sustained service with one agency or in one area of need. See **guiding questions in FAQ's**.
5. **Submit Online Hours, Reflection and Digital Photos by May 15** of the current school year to the Community Service Coordinator, Debbie Shapiro for verification to receive the Varsity letter.

Students who meet criteria will be awarded their letter at a celebratory school event during the month of October the following year. Students who earn the letter during their senior year will be honored before graduation.

Questions about the requirements can be directed to Debbie Shapiro: dshapir@tacoma.k12.wa.us

Varsity Letter for Community Service

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can participate? All current SOTA, SAMI & IDEA students in grades 9 – 12.

Varsity Letter Application: Complete your school's Varsity Letter application and submit it with a verified record through Career Cruising of your hours served, written reflection and 4 digital photos the service work when you have completed all requirements.

Where can I volunteer? Visit United Way of Pierce County's website to find current youth volunteer opportunities with area organizations. There are many ways to volunteer in your community through school, faith-based organizations, hospitals, non-profit agencies, nursing homes, and parks.

How are hours spent volunteering on a mission trip, as a camp counselor or on a volunteer vacation counted? Volunteers should count hours actually spent doing service up to 8 hours per day for mission trips, camp counseling or volunteer vacations. If you have documentation proving you have served more than 8 hours, you may submit it for consideration.

Can I count hours from club meetings? If you participate in a school club, youth group, scouts, etc. you may count hours spent at meetings organizing and implementing a service project. Only hours spent planning and participating in a service project will count as community service hours.

What else doesn't count?

- Travel time to and from service activities
- Hours spent sleeping during overnight service trips or events
- Unpaid internships with for-profit organizations and volunteer hours that apply towards another Varsity Letter (i.e., sports team managers, participants in theatre or choir performances)
- Court mandated community service or volunteer service required for a class

How do I record my Community Service Hours? Use the online Volunteer section of Career Cruising to track your hours. Students who are also tracking hours for the President's Volunteer Service Award may track their hours online and submit that spreadsheet as well.

You are encouraged to contact Debbie Shapiro dshapir@tacoma.k12.wa.us if you have questions or wish to review your reflection before submitting it.

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Focus Issue Reflection Requirements

Focus Issue Reflection: The purpose of the Reflection is to demonstrate your understanding of the agency or issue of interest by answering the following questions either in written format, orally through an MP4 video, visual art piece, song, children's book, or other project based on your sustained service with one agency or in one area of need. The reflection may be shared at the award ceremony.

Introduction

- What is the organization, need or issue selected? What are the reasons you chose it?
- Why does this issue exist and who is affected? Who are the public and private organizations working on this issue and what is being done to address it? How are they succeeding and what are their limitations?

Body

- What skills, strengths or areas of expertise did you offer?
- What did you expect to experience before you began volunteering in this area and how did your expectations differ from your actual experiences?
- How did you serve? Describe your thoughts and feelings at specific times as you served.
- Were there ethical issues that you encountered?

Conclusion

- What new skills, knowledge and/or understanding have you gained?
- What words of advice would you give someone who might be their next volunteer?