

DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION RULES
GOVERNING COMMUNITY SERVICE AND DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS

Effective date:

1.0 AUTHORITY

1.1 The State Board of Education enacted these rules pursuant to its authority as set forth in Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-11-105, 6-16-120, 6-16-1901 et seq. and 25-15-201 et seq.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

~~2.1 “Activity” is the service done by the student through school programs or partnering organizations.~~

~~2.2 “Certify” means the process of a partnering organization verifying and submitting to a school appropriate documentation that a student successfully completed the community service required, and the student has submitted to the school appropriate documentation documenting their experience performing community service.~~

~~2.03.1 Community hours may be certified if also used for part of a grade or for club or honor requirements~~

2.1 “Certify” means the process of a service agency or organization, and a student, verifying and submitting documentation required by a public school district to show that the student successfully completed community service hours.

2.2 “Community Service” means work that is done for the benefit and betterment of the community.

2.3 “Division” means the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education within the Arkansas Department of Education.

2.4 “Grade 9” as it relates to community service learning, begins on the first day after the last day of a student’s 8th grade year to include the summer immediately preceding the school year.

~~2.04 “Partnering organization” is a entity or community organization that receives local school board approval to verify community service hours. School districts are automatically approved partnering organizations. Partnering organizations include but are not limited to 501(c)(3) nonprofit entities.~~

2.05 “Public school” and “public school district” includes a traditional public

~~school district or an open enrollment public charter school.~~

3.00 COMMUNITY SERVICE REQUIREMENT

~~3.01 Beginning with the graduating class of 2026-2027, a public high school student shall complete a minimum of seventy-five (75) clock hours of documented community service in grades nine through twelve (9-12), as certified by the partnering organization with which the public school student volunteers, in order to graduate.~~

~~3.02 The community service required under this rule shall:~~

~~3.02.1 Be in programs or activities, either in Arkansas or outside of Arkansas, before, during, or after school hours, that meet the requirements established by these rules;~~

~~3.0.1 Be completed in accordance with the public school district board of directors adopted policy on community service credit;~~

~~3.0.1.1 The school district policy in Section 3.02.2 must: (a) require an adult to sign off on the student's community service hours; (b) be posted on the school district's website; and (c) include preparation, action, and reflection components required for a student to receive community service credit.~~

~~3.0.2 When designing community service programs or activities, a public school district shall explicitly address student safety and ensure that any partnering organization has the infrastructure to accommodate students, including that the partnering organization an:~~

~~3.0.2.1 Ensure student safety and privacy, which may include background checks and ethical conduct protocols; and~~

~~3.0.2.2 Provide any necessary equipment, training, or both.~~

~~3.02.1.1 Community service hours completed, voluntarily or as required, for a grade, as part of a club or organization, or for honors or other recognition, without limitation, may also count for community service hours required for graduation, pursuant to these rules.~~

~~3.02.1 Be certified by the service agency, entity, or organization with which the student volunteers; and~~

~~3.02.2 Be completed in accordance with the policy adopted by the public school district board of directors or the governing body of an open~~

enrollment public charter school regarding community service.

3.02.2.1 The school district policy in Section 3.02.2 must include:

3.02.2.1.a The process or criteria for determining whether community service counts towards the seventy-five (75) hours required;

3.02.2.1.b A process for student waivers; and

3.02.2.1.c Any preparation, action, or reflection components the board requires for a student to count community service toward the required hours.

3.02.2.2 Public school districts may allow students to count community service hours completed as a singular organized community service opportunity and routinely scheduled community service opportunities.

3.03 Community service organizations may include, without limitation:

3.03.1.1 Schools;

3.03.1.1 Churches;

3.03.1.2 Non-profit organizations;

3.03.1.3 Government offices; and

3.03.1.4 Other entities recognized by the public school district board of directors or open enrollment public charter school governing body.

3.04 Students transferring into a public school district after grade nine (9) or students graduating early may receive a diploma provided that the minimum requirement for each year they attend the public school district is met.

3.04.1 The minimum number of community service hours for each grade level for transferring students shall be:

3.04.1.1 Fifteen (15) hours for students in grade nine (9);

3.04.1.2 Twenty (20) hours for students in grade ten (10);

3.04.1.3 Twenty (20) hours for students in grade eleven (11); and

3.04.1.4 Twenty (20) hours for students in grade twelve (12).

3.05 A public school district board of directors or the governing body of an open enrollment public charter school may grant a waiver of this requirement for extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis to individual students for extenuating circumstances, pursuant to its policy.

3.04.1 The parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis of a public school student, or the public school student if the student is eighteen (18) years of age, may petition the public school district board of directors or the governing body of an open enrollment public charter school for a waiver of this requirement in writing.

3.4.1.1 The public school district board of directors shall take up the waiver request at its next board meeting and determine whether a waiver should be granted via board vote;

3.4.1.2 The chief executive official of an open enrollment public charter school, or his or her designee, shall take up the waiver request within fifteen (15) days of receipt and determine whether a waiver should be granted in writing.

3.05.1 Extenuating circumstances justifying the need for a waiver may include, without limitation:

3.05.1.1 A major illness associated with a student or a family member of a student;

3.05.1.2 A student who is medically fragile or has a disability under the IDEA that prevents them from completing the required number of hours;

3.05.1.3 Student homelessness or housing insecurity; and

3.05.1.4 Notice to the public school district board of directors if the student is a major contributor to family income; or

3.05.1.5 Documentation, including without limitation an Individualized Education Program (IEP), that the student has extenuating circumstances that will prevent them from meeting the full community service requirements.

3.05.2 A public school district board of directors or the governing body of an open enrollment public charter school may consider paid employment and work-based service as community service hours for purposes of these rules, in lieu of granting a waiver to a student who is unable to complete the required community service hours.

3.06 School districts are responsible for maintaining a system to record student community service hours.

3.06.1 A public school district shall report to the Division annually, through the State's electronic transcript system, the number of community service hours obtained by each student and if a student was granted a waiver and the reason for the waiver.

4.0 ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

4.1 Ending with the graduating class of 2025-2026, a student who has completed a minimum of seventy-five (75) clock hours of documented community service in grades nine through twelve (9-12), as certified by the service agency or organization to the school, shall be eligible to receive one (1) academic credit that may be applied toward graduation.

4.2 The community service shall be in programs or activities approved by the local school district board of directors and shall include preparation, action, and reflection components that may occur in or out of school campuses and during or after school hours.

4.3 School districts are responsible for maintaining a system to record student community service hours.

1 State of Arkansas
2 94th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2023
4

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1489

5 By: Representatives D. Garner, Achor, Breaux, M. Brown, Joey Carr, Crawford, Gramlich, Hudson,
6 McAlindon, McCullough, J. Moore, D. Whitaker, Wing, Wooten
7 By: Senators J. Dotson, J. Bryant, G. Leding
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For An Act To Be Entitled

9
10 AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW CONCERNING PROGRAMS AND
11 ACTIVITIES APPROVED FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR COMMUNITY
12 SERVICE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.
13
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Subtitle

15
16 TO AMEND THE LAW CONCERNING PROGRAMS AND
17 ACTIVITIES APPROVED FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT
18 FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE.
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20

21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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23 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-120(b), concerning programs and
24 activities approved for academic credit for community service, is amended to
25 read as follows:

26 (b) The community service shall be in programs or activities approved
27 by the ~~State Board of Education and the~~ local school district board of
28 directors and shall include preparation, action, and reflection components
29 that:

30 (1) Are federally or state-approved;

31 (2) Have tax-exempt status under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3), as it
32 existed on January 1, 2023; and

33 (3) Are vetted and approved by a public school student's parent,
34 legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis.

35 APPROVED: 4/12/23
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