STUDENT SERVICE-LEARNING IN MARYLAND: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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Introduction

The state of Maryland requires all public-school students to complete at least 75 hours of service-learning to graduate from high school beginning with the graduating class of 1997. Each local education agency (LEA), also referred to as public agencies in COMAR, decides how the required hours will be completed by students, whether infused into the curriculum or done independently by students or a combination of both. In 2022, Maryland had twenty-eight LEAs that were required to meet the service-learning requirement: twenty-four countywide school districts and four specialized schools (Juvenile Services Education Program, Maryland School for the Blind, Maryland School for the Deaf, and the SEED School of Maryland). Although each LEA is required to submit an implementation plan to the state periodically, each plan is organized differently and submitted at different times, and there is currently not a way to see all of the plans or data in one place. This report aims to provide an overview of how public schools and students across the state are meeting the service-learning graduation requirement.

Key Findings

- 68% of LEAs infuse 75 or more hours into their curriculum and about 82% infuse 60 or more hours
- Middle school is when the majority of LEAs begin meeting the service-learning graduation requirement.
- The mean infused hours in middle school is 41.5 hours; the mean in high school is 24.4 hours.
- About 93% of LEAs infuse service-learning hours into at least one science course and about 89% infuse service-learning hours into at least one social studies class.

Methods

We began by reviewing the publicly-available implementation plans and websites in the fall of 2021. If we were unable to find the Implementation Plan for an LEA, we emailed the Student Service-Learning (SSL) Coordinator for that LEA. With feedback from SSL Coordinators and the MSDE Service-Learning Specialist, we decided to focus on a few questions, namely:

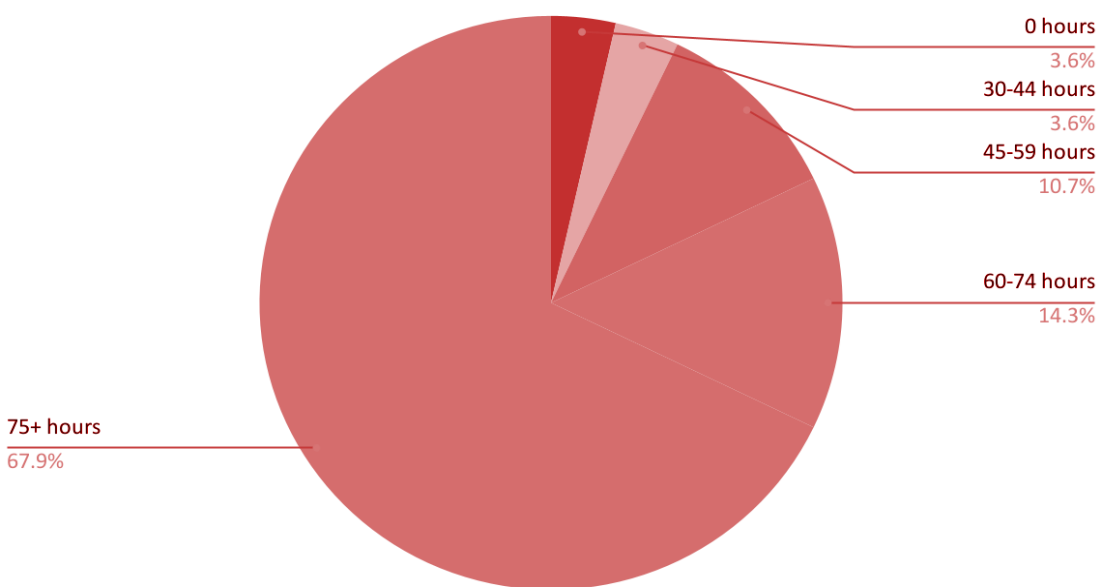- how many service-learning hours are infused in the curriculum;

- at what grade-level and in which classes hours are infused; and

- how districts recognize exemplary service.

In January of 2023, we compiled the information we gathered from each of the implementation plans and LEA websites. We sent it to SSL Coordinators for each public agency and to the Service-Learning Specialist at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), to invite them to update or correct the data before we analyzed it. While we have some data from each of the twenty-eight LEAs, we do not have a complete data set from each of the twenty-eight LEAs in Maryland. Descriptive statistics include only the LEAs for which we have data. The data set, including missing information, is shown in the appendix.
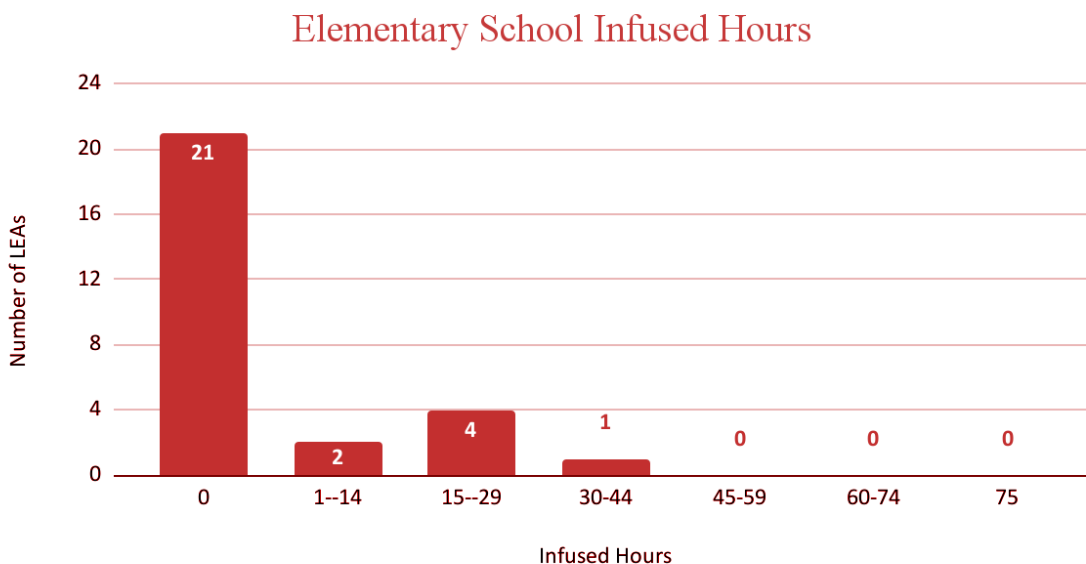
Infused and Independent Hours

To meet the 75-hour service-learning graduation requirement, LEAs can decide to infuse some or all of the hours into their curriculum, meaning hours are completed by students in a class under the supervision of the teacher(s) as part of the regular class curriculum. The number of infused hours between the LEAs range from 0 to over 75 hours. One LEA does not infuse any hours into the curriculum, 68% (or 19 LEAs) infuse 75 or more hours into the curriculum. The remaining eight LEAs (or 29%) infuse between 30 and 74 hours into the curriculum, with four LEAs infusing 60-74 hours. In addition to hours infused into required courses, some public agencies choose to infuse service-learning hours into elective courses. To see the infused hours for each LEA, please see Table 1 in the appendix.

Number of Infused Hours by LEA

0 hours
3.6%

30-44 hours
3.6%

45-59 hours
10.7%

60-74 hours
14.3%

75+ hours
67.9%

Grade-levels with Infused Hours

While service-learning hours are infused beginning in elementary school for seven of the LEAs, many students in Maryland first experience infused service-learning hours in middle school. Middle schools also tend to have the most infused hours with a mean of 41.7 hours, and with seventeen LEAs infusing 45 hours or more. Many LEAs also infuse service-learning into high school courses, although often for less hours than middle school. At least twenty-five LEAs infuse service-learning hours in high school, although only three infuse 45 or more hours. The mean for infused service-learning hours in high school is 24.4 hours.

Elementary School Infused Hours

Middle School Infused Hours

Number of LEAs

Infused Hours	Number of LEAs
0	2
1--14	0
15--29	2
30-44	5
45-59	11
60-74	5
75	1

High School Infused Hours

Number of LEAs

Infused Hours	Number of LEAs
0	2
1--14	3
15--29	14
30-44	4
45-59	1
60-74	0
75	2
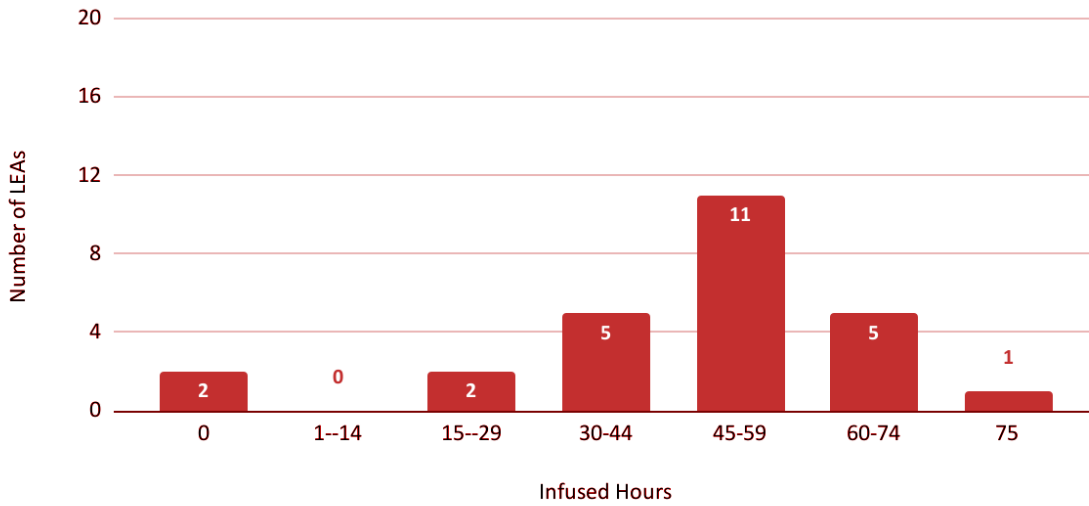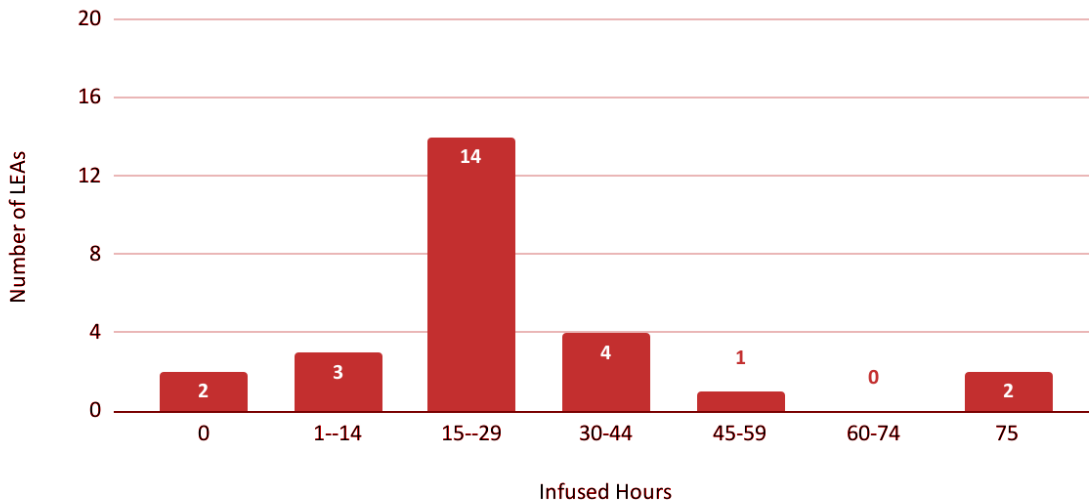
Infused Classes

Science and social studies classes are the most likely to have infused hours. Twenty-five LEAs infuse service-learning hours into at least one science class, with twenty-two LEAs infusing hours into middle school science and sixteen into high school science. Twenty-four LEAs infuse hours into at least one social studies, with

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eighteen infusing hours into middle school social studies and twenty-one into high school social studies (including government courses). English (ELA) classes and health classes are two other courses that often have service-learning hours infused into the curriculum. In addition to infusing hours into required courses, several LEAs infuse hours into elective courses. For a list of courses by LEA, please see Table 2 in the appendix.
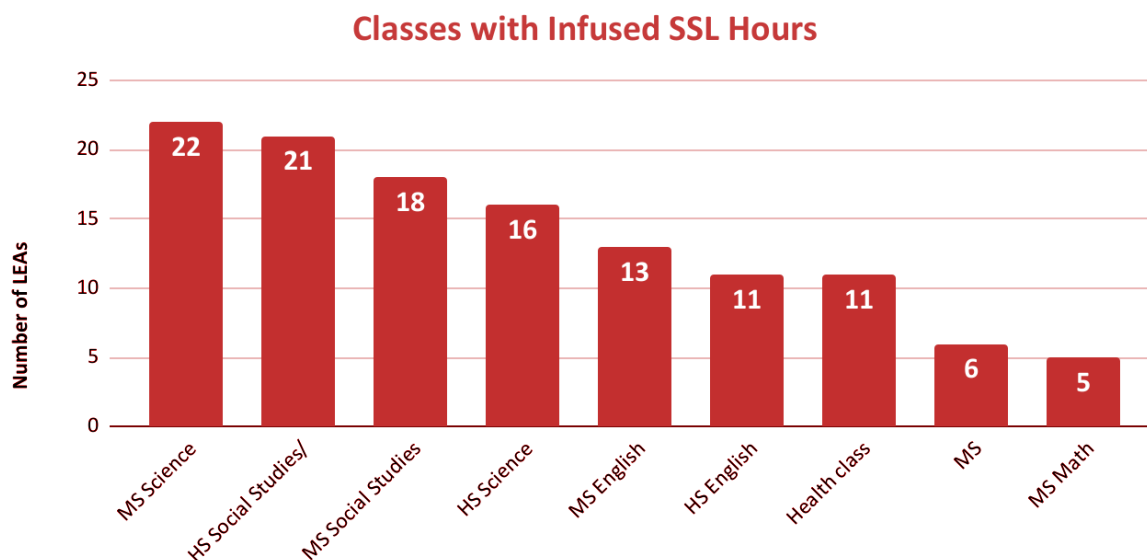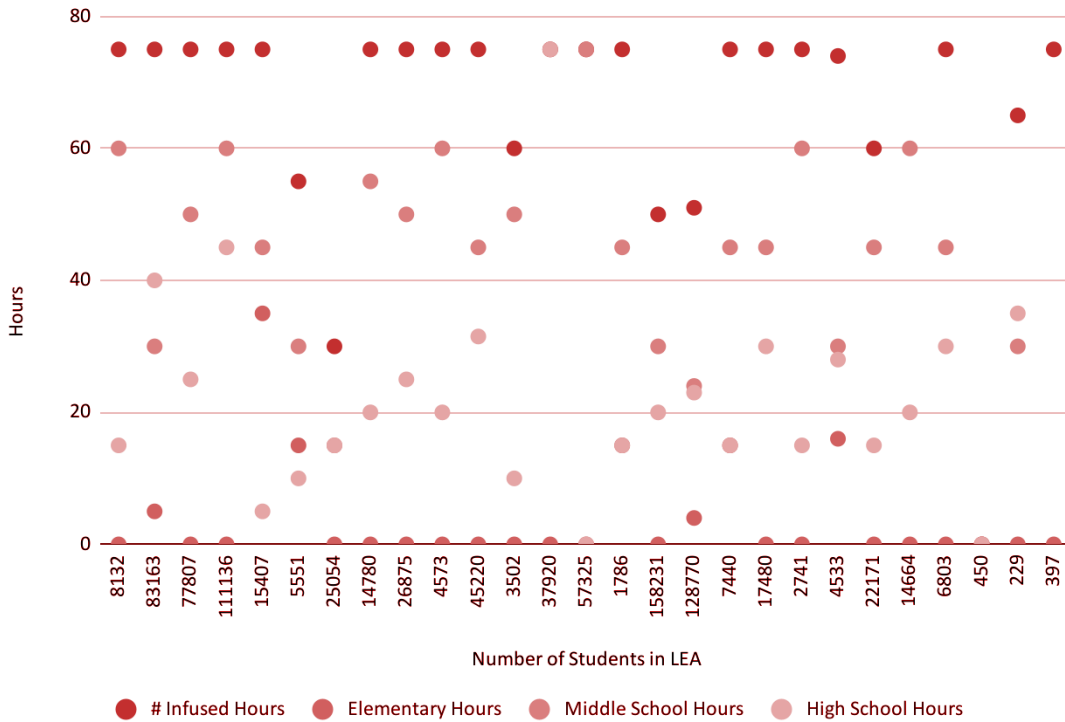
Classes with Infused SSL Hours

Trends by LEA Size

We found no trends in the number of infused hours or grade-level with infused hours (elementary, middle, or high school) by the size of the LEA. As shown below, the number of hours infused in the curriculum (darkest red) appears to vary randomly across LEA size. Similarly, how many hours a particular LEA infuses into elementary, middle, and high school appears to be randomly distributed without relationship to LEA size.

Infused SSL Hours by LEA Size

Legend: # Infused Hours · Elementary Hours · Middle School Hours · High School Hours

X-axis (Number of Students in LEA): 8132, 83163, 77807, 111136, 15407, 5551, 25054, 14780, 26875, 4573, 45220, 3502, 37920, 57325, 1786, 158231, 128770, 7440, 17480, 2741, 4533, 22171, 14664, 6803, 450, 229, 397

Y-axis (Hours): 0, 20, 40, 60, 80

Recognition of Exemplary Service-Learning

While many LEAs or individual schools recognize exemplary service-learning, what qualifies as exemplary service-learning varies widely. Some LEAs recognize the top students in a graduating class at the completion of particular grade-levels, most commonly at high school graduation, though some also recognize students at the completion of middle school. Similarly, some LEAs recognize students who achieve a certain number of service-learning hours beyond the required 75 hours. For graduating seniors, this can vary from 50 hours to 225 hours beyond the requirement. Some countywide districts allow individual schools within the district to decide how to recognize exemplary service-learning. More information about how individual LEAs recognize service-learning can be found in Table 3 in the appendix.

Conclusion

While each LEA across Maryland can decide how their students complete the service-learning graduation requirement, there are some trends across the state. For example, all but one LEA infuse at least some of the required service-learning hours into their curriculum with over two-thirds infusing all 75 hours. Science and social studies are the most popular subjects into which to infuse service-learning hours. In addition to required

courses, some LEAs infuse service-learning hours into elective courses, allowing students to complete some or all of their independent hours at school. While there is variation in how LEAs meet the graduation requirement, the size of the LEA does not appear to affect those variations.

Future Research

While this report gives a brief overview of how LEAs are helping students meet the 75-hour service-learning graduation requirement, there are several avenues for future research that would allow a deeper understanding of service-learning in Maryland. First, the research in this report could be expanded, such as focusing more specifically on exactly which courses and even which units into which schools infuse service-learning hours. Research might also focus on how LEAs approve hours completed independently by students and how they partner with outside organizations where students complete their hours.

Another potential area for future research is to examine service-learning in Maryland through a lens of equity. As a baseline, this could include examining any differences that exist in how service-learning is implemented for students of different races, ethnicities, socio-economic status, gender identities, etc. This could also include an analysis of the support systems LEAs use for students who are struggling to meet the requirements and an analysis of how differences among implementation impact students who move between districts over the course of their K-12 experience. If differences exist, future research could examine their causes and explore ways to remove barriers so all students can access high-quality service-learning opportunities.

Finally, future research could focus on best practices across all aspects of service-learning. This could include examining how teachers are trained to infuse service-learning into their curriculum or how LEAs partner with community organizations to provide service-learning opportunities for students. Research could also examine the ways schools track and approve hours, looking for ways to reduce the administrative burden on schools and their employees. Researching best practices could provide valuable opportunities for LEAs to collaborate and share their expertise.

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Appendix

Countywide districts and the SEED School of Maryland enrollment data is from the National Center of Education Statistics for the 2021-2022 school year. Data for Maryland School for the Blind is from the 2021 Annual Report. Data for the Maryland School for the Deaf is from the school website.

Blank spaces in Tables 1 and 3 indicate missing data.

Table 1: Infused Hours by LEA

LEA (# of students)	# of Hours Infused in Curriculum	# of Required Independent Hours	# of Infused Hours Elementary	# of Infused Hours Middle School	# of Infused Hours High School
Allegany (8,132)	75	0	0	60	15
Anne Arundel (83,163)	75	0	5	30	40
Baltimore City (77,807)	75+	0	0	50	25 (plus electives)
Baltimore County (111,136)	75+	0	0	60 (more at some schools)	45
Calvert (15,407)	75+	0	35	45	5
Caroline (5,551)	55	20	15	30	10
Carroll (25,054)	30+ (*)	Varies*	0	15	15+ (*)
Cecil (14,780)	75	0	0	55	20
Charles (26,875)	75	0	0	50	25
Dorchester (4,573)	75+	0	0	60	20
Frederick (45,220)	75+	0	0	45	31.5
Garrett (3,502)	60	15	0	50	10
Harford (37,920)	75	0	0	**	75
Howard (57,325)	75	0	0	75	0
Kent (1,786)	75	0	15	45	15
Montgomery (158,231)	50	25	0	30	20
Prince George's (128,770)	51	24	4	24	23
Queen Anne's (7,440)	75	0	15	45	15
St. Mary's (17,480)	75	0	0	45	30
Somerset (2,741)	75	0	0	60	15
Talbot (4,533)	74	1	16	30	28
Washington (22,171)	60	15	0	45	15
Wicomico (14,664)	75+	0	0	60	20
Worcester (6,803)	75	0	0	45	30
Juvenile Services Education Program	75	0	0	0	75
Maryland School for the Deaf (approx. 450)	0	75	0	0	0

Maryland School for the Blind (229)	65	10	0	30	35					
SEED School of Maryland (397)	75+	0	0							

*Carroll County also infuses service-learning hours into elective courses, so the number of infused service-learning hours varies by student according to their course selection.

** In Harford County, middle schools begin the work of service-learning by selecting a school-wide or team-wide project(s). The district does not specifically count hours; however, schools are required to complete the above.

Table 2: Courses with Infused Service-Learning Hours

LEA (# of students)	MS SS	MS Sci	MS Eng	MS Math	MS Interdisciplinary	HS SS/Govt	HS Sci	HS Eng	MS/HS Health	Other
Allegany (8,132)	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		MS & HS Art, HS math
Anne Arundel (83,163)		Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Baltimore City (77,807)	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Comp Sci, ESOL, Spanish, French, Music, Art, Personal Fitness
Baltimore County (111,136)	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Tech Ed, Family Studies
Calvert (15,407)	Y	Y					Y			Elem Sci& SS
Caroline (5,551)	Y	Y				Y	Y		Y	Elem Sci, SS, Health & PE, MS PE
Carroll (25,054)		Y				Y	Y			MS Family & Consumer, HS Electives
Cecil (14,780)	Y	Y							Y	
Charles (26,875)		Y	Y			Y			Y	
Dorchester (4,573)	Y	Y				Y				
Frederick (45,220)	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		HS Math, MS English Language Learning

County (enrollment)										Notes
Garrett (3,502)			Y		Y	Y			Y	
Harford (37,920)						Y	Y	Y		HCPS concentrates 2-3 content areas for HS per year from a rotating matrix.
Howard (57,325)	Y	Y	Y		Health & PE					HS Leadership Course
Kent (1,786)		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		
Montgomery (158,231)	Y	Y	Y			Y			Y	HS Electives, English Language Development
Prince George's (128,770)	Y	Y				Y	Y			
Queen Anne's (7,440)	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	HS Art
St. Mary's (17,480)	Y	Y				Y				
Somerset (2,741)					Y		Y			
Talbot (4,533)	Y	Y				Y	Y	Y	Y	Elem Sci & ELA
Washington (22,171)	Y	Y	Y						Y	
Wicomico (14,664)	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		HS Math
Worcester (6,803)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				MS Varies by school and by year
Juvenile Services Education Program						Y	Y	Y		HS Math
Maryland School for the Deaf (approx. 450)										
Maryland School for the Blind (229)	Y	Y				Y				MS & HS Tech Ed

SEED School of Maryland (397)											

Table 3: Recognition for Exemplary Service

LEA (# of students)	Grade students can begin to accumulate independent hours (towards 75)	Grade students can begin to accumulate hours towards exemplary service	Honors for Exemplary Service
Allegany (8,132)	All required hours in the curriculum	6th	HS students can receive a credit on their transcript if they accumulate 132 hours beyond 75 required. Each school also nominates a student service star
Anne Arundel (83,163)	N/A	Summer after 8th grade	3 categories: notable (100+), meritorious (150+), and Superintendent (200+).
Baltimore City (77,807)	6th (piloting 5th grade currently)		Individual schools may acknowledge students for exemplary service but there is not a district-wide policy
Baltimore County (111,136)	6th	6th	Awards in grades 8 and grades 12 for top service hours
Calvert (15,407)	N/A		Awards for middle schoolers with 30 hours above 75 and for high schoolers with 260 hours by graduation
Caroline (5,551)			
Carroll (25,054)	5th	6th	Students with at least 300 service-learning hours receive an award
Cecil (14,780)	N/A		
Charles (26,875)	6th	6th	There are county-wide awards for grades 6,7,8, and 9
Dorchester (4,573)	6th	6th	The male and female student with the most accumulated service-learning hours in their class at HS matriculation are recognized
Frederick (45,220)	6th	6th	Recognition by home schools for qualifying students
Garrett (3,502)	Summer after 8th	6th	Students who earn 100 hours will get a certificate. Considering developing credit for an elective in the future
Harford (37,920)	N/A*		The district has a service-learning awards program where students are recognized for going above and beyond when working on SL projects i.e., a certificate for above and beyond
Howard (57,325)	6th		Exemplary service projects can be nominated for awards, recognized in assemblies or newspaper articles, etc.
Kent (1,786)	5th	9th/10th	Schools recognize students with exceptional service. Students who earn the most service hours get recognition at high school awards ceremony.
Montgomery (158,231)	6th	6th	Award for students who complete 75 hours in middle school, Award for students who complete 240 hours by HS graduation.

Prince George's (128,770)	6th	6th	Special school-based recognition
Queen Anne's (7,440)	4th	9th	
St. Mary's (17,480)	6th		
Somerset (2,741)	N/A		
Talbot (4,533)	6th	6th	Outstanding service recognized with school awards, newspaper articles, community organization end of year ceremonies, MSDE Service Stars and President's Volunteer Service award
Washington (22,171)	After completion of 7th grade	After completion of 7th grade	Students with 150 hours of service by the end of 1st semester senior year receive an award. This will be 300 hours for the 2023-24 school year.
Wicomico (14,664)	6th	6th	There are awards and scholarship opportunities for students with exemplary service. Students with over 200 hours of service are recognized in the graduation program
Worcester (6,803)	6th	6th	2 HS students are chosen as Service Learning Stars each year and receive a $2,000 scholarship funded by a local service organization. Middle school students with exemplary service are given "rising star" certificates at an awards assembly. Students also encourage to apply for Presidential Service award.
Juvenile Services Education Program	6th	N/A	This will vary by home district for the student.
Maryland School for the Deaf (approx. 450)	6th	6th	Students with 150 hours receive a meritorious service award and purple tassel for graduation
Maryland School for the Blind (229)			
SEED School of Maryland (397)	6th		

* In Harford County, all hours are infused unless the student is a transfer and does not meet the required hours. The student may be asked to do an independent project.