

## Community Learning FAQ

### **Which students must participate in the Community Learning (CL) Program and how many hours are required?**

St. George's School of Montreal requires that all students in grades 7 to 10 complete a minimum of ten hours of Community Learning (CL) in at least three sessions of volunteering each year.

As part of their integrated project for their Contemporary World course, the Grade 11 students participate in 15 hours of CL. They also plan, implement and evaluate a personal project to help solve a community issue that they have chosen to work with.

### **Where do the students do their CL hours?**

The school nurtures relationships with dozens of community organizations where our students are welcomed to participate in volunteering. A Community Learning Fair is held early in the school year to help students identify and sign up for volunteering opportunities.

### **Do the students do their volunteering sessions on their own?**

The vast majority of students will be joining one of many CL pods led by parent volunteers. Each pod, or group, is connected with a community organization. Pod leaders accompany the students to every volunteering session.

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## **What is the role of a CL pod leader?**

The pod leader's role is crucial to our Community Learning program! She, or he, is the liaison between the community organization, the students and the parents. Pod leaders organize the calendar of volunteering sessions for the year, as well as the activities that the students will be responsible for in their pod. They contact all students and parents to keep them informed of upcoming activities and volunteering sessions. Acting as mentors, they prepare and guide students in meeting their responsibilities.

## **How can I become a pod leader?**

The generous and sustained involvement of parent volunteers is definitely a key to the success of this program. These are people who share their precious time to help design meaningful learning situations, facilitate dates and times, as well as transport or accompany your children to a community organization.

As we are always expanding this rich program, we welcome and eagerly invite the involvement of new volunteers. If you would like to participate as a parent volunteer in our Community Learning Program, please contact the CL Coordinator, Danielle Delhaes, at [danielle.delhaes@stgeorges.qc.ca](mailto:danielle.delhaes@stgeorges.qc.ca).

## **How do the students choose their Community Learning commitment?**

The school publishes a "Pod Catalogue" for students and parents with a description of all volunteering opportunities available. It includes information about the organization and its purpose, details about what the students will be doing and when the volunteering sessions are planned.

Please take the time to review the Pod Catalogue with your child before the Community Learning Fair.

After students have had a chance to ask questions, explore ideas, and research different organizations, they rank their top choices of volunteering opportunities so they can be assigned to a pod of their choice. Students will then join their pod and begin volunteering in small groups, accompanied by a parent volunteer.



## **Can students do their hours of CL independently, not as part of a pod?**

Students can choose to do their CL independently. They must respond to a series of questions in order to get their choice of independent volunteering commitment approved by the CL coordinator. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure meaningful engagement in the community for all our students as well as successful partnerships with organizations. At the end of the year, students must provide a formal attestation from the organization as to the number of hours worked.

## **When do students do their volunteering sessions?**

Depending on the pod, volunteering sessions can happen after school, on weekends or during dedicated days on the calendar that are earmarked for community work. This academic year, the dedicated days of service are November 9, January 4, January 5, January 21 and February 15, during which students will need to be available to spend the day volunteering in their pods. These are not “days off” for students, but mandatory school days, so please don’t book trips on those dates! Organizing 250 students to volunteer outside of school time is complex, and it can only be successful with your support.

## **How can I support my child and the pod leader to ensure a rich CL experience?**

Your support of your child’s commitment to the community is invaluable.

- Every pod will have a calendar published with all of the dates and times of volunteering opportunities. Please keep this calendar handy, enter the dates in your calendar and your child’s school agenda and let the parent pod leader know if your child will not be able to attend any event.
- As the pod leader and the school make a commitment to the community organization for providing volunteering time to support their activities, it is essential that they know how many students will be coming to each of the planned sessions. Imagine not having enough people to deliver meals to the elderly because the pod leader was not informed of the absence of students for a particular session!
- Parent pod leaders should always “CC” the parents of students on emails, or leave messages at home for the next volunteering session. Please ensure that you or your child responds to these important messages.



*You can also help in the following manner:*

- At the beginning of the year, review the “Pod Catalogue” with your child to help him or her select a commitment that meet his or her interest while fitting into your family schedule. For example, if your family goes to the cottage every weekend, it is best to chose a commitment that is scheduled afterschool or on CL designated days.
- Please remind your children about upcoming volunteering dates and check that they are organized to participate.
- Ask your children about their experiences volunteering. Are they having fun? What are they learning? Is anything surprising? Keeping volunteering ‘on the radar’ will keep the learning active and relevant, and demonstrate your support of this project.
- Help your child keep track of their volunteering hours throughout the year so they can make sure to meet their commitment.
- If you notice that your child is facing a challenge in their Community Learning commitment, please take the time to discuss it and, if necessary, contact me so I can help resolve the issue.
- If you have the time and inclination, please help out our parent volunteers. Find out if there is anything you can do to relieve them. Is an extra pair of hands needed for the big bake off on Sunday? Do any other students need a lift to TMR since you’re driving anyway?

Remember, your involvement reinforces the notion with your child that this experience is important, meaningful and valuable. Thank you so much for supporting this crucial educational project!

### **How is the CL program integrated in the curriculum?**

At school, the grade 7 to 10 student’s experiential learning is further explored and debriefed in their Ethics and Religious Cultures course. This approach provides the necessary support many students need to make meaning from their experiences in the community.

Grade 11 students will continue the integration of service and learning with their Contemporary World Course. Students will engage in a special project to better understand and advocate for a community issue of their choice and concurrently volunteering a minimum of 15 hours of service in the field. To learn more about this amazing curriculum please contact Brian Foote.



## **What is the “Certificat de mérite en français” and how does it relate to the CL program?**

The “Certificat de mérite en français” is a formal recognition awarded to students who meet the requirements of having developed their mastery of French through an authentic experience in the language and culture. Many of the pods offer the opportunity to work in French. Students who select these pods can qualify for the “Certificat de mérite en français”. Please contact Nathalie Bossé at [nathalie.bosse@stgeorges.qc.ca](mailto:nathalie.bosse@stgeorges.qc.ca) for further details.