



ASHBROOK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

To Challenge and Nurture Academically Capable Students

From the Office of the Head of School, Dr. Christopher A. Schoberl

Is it Monday Yet? 3/31/25



Community Through Service

I was recently approached by a parent who shared that she has been asked the following question by other parents: “What happens if we don’t meet Ashbrook’s family service hours requirements?” To this question, I would answer simply, “we are diminished as a community.” That’s it. No consequences, per se, except maybe an implicit request to recall that Ashbrook is Ashbrook, the school your family chose, in large part, because of the strong family-school partnership that is part and parcel of our family service hours requirement.

As a point of reference, and to get a sense of how we have evolved, according to the original policy, 28 years ago when Ashbrook first opened its doors, families that did not meet their service hours obligation were charged a certain amount of money which, more or less, functioned as a fine (\$20./hour for unfulfilled hours). These were the days when Ashbrook required 36 hours/year from our families, compared to the current 20 hours/year, and [this policy](#) was on the books until relatively recently. Over time, given changes in the economy, the needs of the school, and family dynamics, neither of these seemed fair, practical, or sustainable, hence a more manageable number of hours and eliminating the fine.

In response to someone who asks about consequences of not meeting the School’s expectations regarding family service hours, I would invite them to share their sense of the barriers to doing so, and encourage them *to do what they can vs. an all or nothing approach*, or to bump into Lexie Elliott for some ideas beyond the [Family Volunteer](#)

[Opportunities](#) list she publishes periodically via FACTS (aside from being an awesome Third Grade Teacher, Lexie is also our Community Partnership and Service Coordinator), or m , or their classroom teacher(s) for ideas that might seem more doable.

Our intention with the family service hours requirement is, foremost, to build community, so the last thing we want to do is drive a wedge between the School and any family, or make anyone feel uncomfortable by “enforcing” this policy. In a healthy community like Ashbrook School, when all is said and done, we believe that everyone is working hard to be a part of our community, and that if someone cannot meet this requirement, it is because extenuating circumstances prevent it, in which case fining them or making them feel *less than*, is not our way. In such cases, we are more inclined to reach out and offer a helping hand, should they need it; this is the response of a healthy community.

Ultimately, a strong and connected community is not an accidental byproduct of what we do at Ashbrook School, but a deliberate and defining part of who we are. One of the most meaningful ways this vision comes to life is through the school’s expectation that families contribute volunteer hours (and, related, that students engage in volunteer community service). Yes, there is something paradoxical about requiring volunteer hours, but there is also something special that results, beyond simply completing logistical tasks or checking boxes; when Explorer families volunteer, they are woven into the fabric of school life leading to a culture where everyone feels seen, valued, and involved.

When families give their time, whether by helping at events, supporting faculty, or participating in school projects, they are doing more than completing a task. They are stepping into a shared commitment to the school’s mission and values, and expressing their role as a part of the “coalition of the willing.” Volunteering in this way creates opportunities for families to get to know one another, to partner with teachers and staff, and to show children by example that education is a collective endeavor. These hours of presence and participation nurture the kind of school culture where every family feels they belong, where connections flourish across grade levels, and where a sense of ownership and pride in the school community deepens.

Likewise, student community service hours are not merely an academic requirement, they are a vital part of how Ashbrook helps students grow into compassionate, civic-minded individuals. By encouraging students to serve their school or the broader community, Ashbrook is inviting them to see themselves as contributors with something to offer. Whether it’s mentoring younger students, helping with school maintenance or arts productions, or volunteering in the larger community, these acts of service cultivate empathy, responsibility, and a sense of purpose. As a result, students

come to understand that their efforts matter, not just to the success of an event or defined task, but to the health and vitality of their community as a whole.

Of course, volunteer hours also fulfill practical needs. Events need staffing, classrooms need support, field trips need chaperones and drivers, and projects need many hands to bring to fruition. But the deeper value lies in the mindset that grows when service is seen not as an obligation, but as a shared investment in the life of the school. It is this mindset that helps students and families alike develop a lifelong orientation toward generosity, cooperation, and mutual care.

In a culture increasingly marked by individualism and transactional encounters, Ashbrook's commitment to community service and family engagement is countercultural in the best of ways. It sends a clear message: everyone has something to contribute, and our school is stronger when we all take part. The culture that results, a culture of belonging, service, and shared purpose, is not just a nice extra, but is central to what makes Ashbrook such a special place to learn and grow.

By emphasizing service as an integral part of school life, Ashbrook Independent School is not only getting things done, it's building a legacy of community-minded leaders, connected families, and a school environment where everyone has a role and every role matters