Frisco ISD Fosters a Service Leadership Culture with Help from x2VOL

Cared for. Connected. Capable.

Community service plays an important role in student growth

In the 50,000-student Frisco Independent School District in Texas, community service is a key part of the school district's fabric. High school students are encouraged to volunteer with local nonprofit organizations, and students logging at least 100 hours of community service receive special recognition when they graduate.

With at least half of the students at the district's seven high schools taking part in some form of community service, keeping track of all those hours was a real challenge for administrators. But a software program called x2VOL from intelliVOL has greatly simplified the process, says director of guidance and counseling services, Brenda Berry—while making it "much more accurate" as well.

Personal, social, & academic success

In Frisco, which is located about 30 miles north of Dallas, district leaders have committed to educating the whole child. And this commitment is reflected in the district's community service program, which is voluntary for high school students.

"Our guidance and counseling mantra is that every student needs to feel cared for, connected and capable," Berry says. "If the students feel connected to their school and

their community, they're going to do better personally, socially and academically."

Frisco ISD's community service program helps students forge this connection. Although the program is voluntary, participation is fairly high—and it falls to the counselors at each high school to keep track of their students' service hours.

Before x2VOL, this was a very cumbersome process.

"We had a form that the students had to fill out, and they could print it off of our website," says Kristy Phipps, a guidance counselor at Frisco ISD's Justin Wakeland High School. The students would describe their activities and how many hours they worked, and they would include the contact information for someone at the nonprofit organization who could verify their participation.

School officials would collect these forms and keep them in folders organized alphabetically by grade level. After April 1, the cutoff date for community service by seniors, Phipps and her colleagues would spend the next two weeks poring through the seniors' files and adding up their hours to determine which graduates had earned special recognition.

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At Wakeland alone, "most of our graduating classes are between 300 and 400 students, and while not every student does community service, most students were turning in some credit hours," Phipps says. "It was a tedious paper trail. You talk about adding that stuff up, and the errors that can occur—it was very, very crazy."

Easier tracking and reporting

For the past few years, Frisco ISD high schools have been using x2VOL, an award-winning software platform from the Texas-based firm intelliVOL, to simplify the tracking and reporting of students' service hours—and the results have been "fabulous," Phipps says.

With x2VOL, students log into the platform and record their community service activities using a secure online form. They can do this through any internet-connected computer or through a mobile app that is available for both Android and iOS devices. The system keeps a running tally of students' service hours, and it sends an automated message to the appropriate nonprofit contact, requesting verification.

"We no longer have to verify this for ourselves," Phipps says, which is a huge time saver for administrators. She estimates the software has cut the amount of time she spends on processing community service data by as much as 40%.

At Centennial High School, students give over 100 hours over four years to earn white cords at graduation. Roughly 300 seniors earn cords each year which requires a substantial amount of time in administration. Kathy Messer, a counseling secretary for Centennial, agrees that x2VOL has helped the district's community service program run more smoothly. "I would recommend x2VOL to anybody," she says. "It has been a great tool to have."

x2VOL also allows Frisco ISD officials to post new community service opportunities and generate detailed reports about their students' service trends.

"We can immediately pull data: How many seniors have participated? How many hours did the juniors give? We never did that before," Phipps says. "Now, we can compile data for each grade level. We can do more with community service."

For students, the software helps them track their progress toward service goals, encourages them to reflect on each of their activities and serves as a central repository for information about volunteering opportunities.

Students can also print official service transcripts to attach to college applications or resumes which gives additional validity for service hours.

Listing new opportunities within the platform "gives the students some options if they don't know where to go for volunteer hours," Berry says. "This is just one more way to make that information accessible. When they're logging into the system and adding their hours, they can see some other options for them to earn more hours."

Learning to help others

By making the process so much easier for students and administrators, x2VOL is supporting Frisco ISD in its mission to make community service an important part of students' educational experiences.

"The bottom line is, we want students to graduate and be productive citizens," Berry says. "But as research clearly shows, you have to take care of the social and emotional well-being of students for them to be academically successful. And learning to help others really makes them feel good about themselves."

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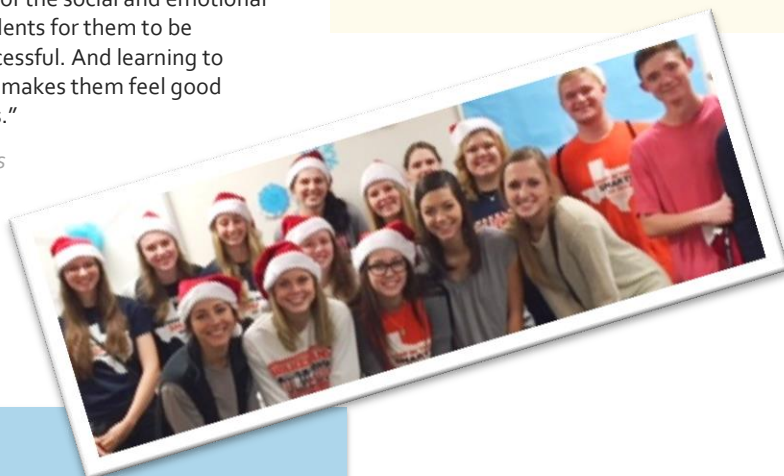
Key Points

The Frisco Independent School District in Texas is using x2VOL to support its community service program, which encourages students to volunteer with nonprofit organizations as a key part of their educational experience.

Students who volunteer at least 100 hours during high school receive special recognition when they graduate.

Before using x2VOL, tracking students' community service hours required a tedious paper trail which has been eliminated.

With x2VOL, administrators now have an easy way to keep track of hours, verify students' participation, post new community service opportunities, and more.

One school official estimates the software has cut her time processing community service data by up to 40%—while another says she would "recommend x2VOL to anybody."

Automatic Verification Process

Verification is important not only for tracking progress towards goals or earning cords as students do at Centennial High, but for college applications, too. "I like that x2VOL assures me the work was done through the verification button," says Ms. Messer. "At our Fish Camp for incoming freshman, we used to have a long list of student volunteers and we would have to check off each student manually and cross check with a list. Now the supervisor hits the 'verify' button for each student which assures me the work was done. No more cross checking is needed and we are confident in the reported hours."

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