Student Service Educates the Heart @ Dunham

Reflecting on Student Service

Dunham School, a preK-12 Christian school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has a total of 679 students with 280 students in the Upper School. Dunham personalizes learning with 1:1 devices, and has recently added new technology to ease management of its ambitious student community service program.

At Dunham, service is a graduation requirement. The school mission is to educate the mind and build a Christ-like heart including giving of self to help others. Students not only take a school community service pledge, but service fulfills college admission prerequisites. To ease student service tracking and data recording and to produce the reports needed for college documentation; Dunham has chosen x2VOL, which is an award winning service tracking and reporting system.

Before x2VOL, community service administrators had difficulty keeping track of student service, because students had to fill out all the paperwork by hand. Collecting documentation from each student was more than difficult. Service sites had to be contacted each time a student volunteered to verify the work was completed. And the school's goal of students reflecting on their

community service—an important part of Dunham's goal to educate the heart—took even more time. Before x2VOL, every task was completed, recorded and filed manually, inviting error and sometimes, frustration. That all changed with x2VOL.

No More Spreadsheets

Curtis Tupper, Dean of Students at Dunham School, knows first-hand how difficult keeping track of thousands of student volunteer hours can be for a year, and over the four years leading up to high school graduation. "About 5 years ago our volunteer program became mandatory as a graduation requirement. We'd been recording our services hours for several years, and I was one of the leads in doing that. The paperwork kept us from getting to the point where students could reflect on their community and school service."

"Before x2VOL, we kept all that service information for 280 students in bulky binders. Trying to track the number of service hours for each student from freshman to graduation took a lot of my time. That's one of the reasons I'm so excited to have x2VOL. It's quick, easy, and frees me up to do my job," added Tupper.

Tupper heard about x2VOL when Dunham's college counselor suggested he look into it. He had already been reporting student service hours through an improvised spreadsheet stored on their college readiness program, Naviance, but only those students applying to colleges where service was required were in the makeshift system. Tupper wanted to do more. He checked out x2VOL and immediately saw the possibilities. Today, Dunham is well into its second year using x2VOL which is integrated into the school's license with Naviance.

Students collected over 500 pairs of shoes which were sent to Haiti and other Baton Rouge charities including Hope House supporting women escaping human trafficking.

x2VOL
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Recognizing students mid-year

Using x2VOL has opened new possibilities for Dunham School in how they recognize service including honoring those students who have attained a certain number of service hours even during the middle of the year. **"Recognition is good for the person being honored, but is also *great* motivation for others. That kind of thing was impossible before x2VOL,"** says Tupper.

Mobile app keeps students up-to-date and fits their style

Being current is important and the mobile x2VOL app appeals to students' preference to use smartphones for *every*thing. According to Curtis Tupper, tracking service electronically is so much better, especially with the student app on their smartphones. "Students just log in their hours at the project they're working on. It has taken all the extra paperwork out of [our processing]."

Community service is an important part of Dunham's culture. Students participate in hundreds of hours each year.

x2VOL

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Focusing on What's Important

100 hours for graduation

Dunham students are required to volunteer 25 hours/year to reach 100 service hours by graduation. Service hours can be out in the community or as service to fellow students. "Our student government, in helping to promote academics in our school, will team students up with those needing learning help, and those students give tutoring for service hours," says Tupper. The school has expanded the range of options to include summer service as well.

Meeting community needs

"What I like about x2VOL is that I can post a new project, with all the information—day and time—and easily e-mail it to all students. If students choose to take part in the project, they can work and record it themselves online in x2VOL. Furthermore, when our service prefect (student leader) hears about community needs for student volunteers, we can react to those requests immediately with x2VOL," says Tupper.

Students taking responsibility

Dunham students can choose from many projects. "I tell students that filing papers at your father's business isn't community service, it has to be one-to-one, or one-to-a-group, something for the benefit of others," says Tupper. "Our students can also serve during their breaks and vacations."

Students get automated reminders when x2VOL sends an e-mail verification about a student's service work. No one has to track down students or bug them to describe the type of service or where it was done. "Students can do whatever they believe to be a good community service project," says Tupper. And they are the ones being responsible for keeping good records and recording reflections.

Student reflection, inspiration, meaning

Dunham students must reflect on their service, its meaning and how it affects others, as well as themselves. **"For us, at Dunham, it is important for our students not only to record their service hours, but also to reflect on that work. They begin to think beyond this service as simply a requirement for graduation and more as a positive way to impact their community.** For example, when a student works at a food bank, we want to know what kind of effect it has on that student, and the people working around that student. In four years at Dunham, we see a lot of growth. Our goal is to have students thinking beyond self," says Tupper.

Every year, the school holds a Day of Service and Caroline McKowen fondly recalls her senior class' Service Day for Hope Academy where all the students have some sort of disability. This didn't stop the fun, however. McKowen smiles when she relates how football players swung kids around cones on a relay race. "Not only was this the best service day by far, but watching Hope Academy students tell their parents about their exciting day and their new friends at Dunham made the 100 hours of planning work worth it. I can say with confidence that my senior class left a lasting impact at Dunham for years to come."

Writing down service in their x2VOL reflections helps students remember their favorite moments like the football players' spontaneity at Hope Academy, adds McKowen. She says, "Helping others not only creates a positive effect on your community and your school, but shows others how you are as a person."

One student was so affected by his service that he wrote four pages of reflections. The essay so moved Dean Tupper that he saved it, "just because it struck my heart." The student, Brian, wrote about how required service suddenly became a joy when he immersed himself in a 30-hour service mission over vacation. "The types of service that opened my eyes were the random acts of kindness we performed. The exhilaration I experience from these kindhearted acts left an imprint on my heart."

Such transformative experiences are why service is a focus at Dunham as the school strives to build well-rounded individuals who seek to live as Christ lived and envision new possibilities for their life's path they might not have considered.

"x2VOL just saves so much time."

As the dean of students, Curtis Tupper looks at the big picture not only for students but for administration. He says that x2VOL allows him to get more of a handle on the many activities, hours and verifications of service for all his students. "[x2VOL] has revolutionized Dunham's ability to track the number of service hours students are giving. It has helped me be more efficient in my job. I would love for others, who may be doing this by hand, to try x2VOL. It just saves so much time! It's like going from a flip phone to the newest smartphone! It's that great," concludes Tupper.