

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL GROWTH AND SCHOOL/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

At Gaston Day School, we strive to provide opportunities for our students to grow academically and socially. Citizenship, respect/responsibility, and accountability are important community values that we strive to recognize school-wide. The following programs allow students to foster habits and dispositions that lead to responsible adulthood.

Character Development

Gaston Day School prepares our students to successfully handle the complexities of society and to enhance their self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem by integrating these attributes into our curriculum. Developing strong character is a partnership between parents, students, and school. Discussing social issues, contemplating decisions, and dealing with consequences enable our students to develop life-long skills that result in ethical behavior. In taking the time to encourage “healthy habits,” our school, community, and greater society become enriched.

Sunship Earth and the Peer Mentoring Program

The Gaston Day School Peer Mentoring Program begins with the Sunship Earth Experience. During several days in the fall semester, selected juniors and seniors accompany the fourth-grade class to the mountains. The Upper School students lead the fourth graders in activities that encourage each student to contemplate the relationship between the environment and the human race. During this time, our Upper School students forge relationships with the Lower School students. This relationship develops into a mentoring program when the Sunship Earth Experience ends. Each eleventh and twelfth-grade student continues to meet and work with their fourth-grade mentee throughout the school year.

Student Government

Gaston Day School students are actively involved in school life and leadership through elected student government offices. Their function is to provide a representative voice to school administration and faculty, serve as advocates for the student body, plan and implement school functions for the betterment of the school and enjoyment of the student body, and reach out into the greater community as student leaders. Upper School Student Government meets regularly throughout the school year.

Upper School Student Government officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary) and grade senators are elected in the spring of each year and may meet over the summer to plan for the upcoming year. Homeroom representatives are elected in the fall of each year.

Candidates for Upper School Student Government must have a minimum cumulative weighted GPA of 3.0, endorsement by two teachers, and no honor code violations or major disciplinary infractions within the last calendar year. Members of the student government are expected to lead by example. Student Government members who violate Gaston Day School's Student Code of Conduct or Honor Code may be asked to resign from their position.

Senior Class Officers

In the fall, seniors elect the following officers: President and Vice-President. These officers plan and organize important events that are hallmarks of the senior year, including planning for a class gift to the school, which the Senior Class President will present at the graduation ceremony. Candidates for class officers must have a minimum cumulative, weighted GPA of 3.0, endorsement by two teachers, and no honor code violations or major disciplinary infractions within the last calendar year.

Blue Key Society

The Blue Key Society is a group of students who have been selected to play a major role in the success of the Admissions Office and Gaston Day School by serving as ambassadors and tour guides to visitors. These students represent the school at open houses and other school-related events both on and off-campus.

Clubs

Gaston Day School offers Upper School students the opportunity for leadership and involvement in a variety of clubs. Involvement in clubs is optional but recommended for all students. To encourage participation, most clubs meet during the clubs/meetings period during the school day. Some clubs require a greater commitment and may also meet before or after school, during lunch, break, or other common times. All students are expected to participate in a club for each of the three groups: blue, silver, and gold.

Clubs are student-driven and can be formed by any student by expressing interest to the Dean of Students. Clubs must be supported by a faculty advisor and have a minimum of five members. Clubs will be evaluated at the beginning of each school year by the Dean of Students, and a presentation to all Upper School students will be made about offerings for the upcoming school year. In an effort to provide all clubs adequate meeting times throughout the year, clubs are divided into three groups: blue, silver, and gold. Students are able to join one club from each of the three groups.

Community Service

Community service is an important component of the educational mission at Gaston Day School. Involvement in service activities enables students to learn about the needs of individuals and our community while instilling a sense of personal responsibility and commitment to others.

Students must complete a minimum of 25 hours of community service each year they are enrolled as Upper School students at Gaston Day School. Such service must meet the following requirements:

- The activity must be voluntary and unpaid, not a disciplinary/legal consequence or class obligation.

- The activity must have as its primary purpose the betterment of some person or group other than the student or the student's family.
- Career shadowing/internships do not constitute community service.
- Any single activity resulting in more than 25 hours of service must be approved in advance by a student's advisor.
- Reported service hours should only include the time spent *working*. Hours spent traveling, sleeping, eating, etc., should not be reported.

Verification of service must be submitted using the designated online system. Advisors will monitor student progress throughout the year. Opportunities for participation in service projects abound through school clubs/organizations, the network of Gaston Day School families, and local business/community organizations. All Upper School students are required to serve at least 5 of their required hours in service to Gaston Day School and at least 5 of their required hours in service to a community not affiliated with Gaston Day School. Students not meeting the community service requirement will have their failure to meet the obligation clearly documented on their official transcript.

Students struggling to meet the community service requirement are encouraged to reach out to their advisor or the Dean of Students for ideas on how to earn hours in a safe environment.

Spartan Strong Volunteer Service Award

Students at Gaston Day School are encouraged to extend themselves and actively serve as volunteers in the larger community. The Spartan Strong Volunteer Service Award recognizes Upper School students completing 100 or more hours within a one-year period. These awards are presented at the Upper School Awards Ceremony and Senior Awards Ceremony each spring.

College Counseling Opportunities

The Office of College Counseling provides ongoing workshops and programs for students in grades nine through twelve in the following areas: course selection and registration, navigating SCOIR, exploring college options, summer enrichment opportunities, interview preparation, college information sessions, financial aid workshops, college application, and essay assistance workshops, etc. Students are required to attend scheduled group meetings with College Counseling.

The end result of the Gaston Day School experience is college exploration, application, and admission. Juniors, seniors, and their families are encouraged to arrange multiple college visits during their final years in the Upper School. These visits should be coordinated around school breaks whenever possible. **Absences earned due to college visits are excused but count towards the maximum of ten absences allowed per year for any student.**

Advisory Programs

The primary purpose of the Gaston Day School Advisory Programs is to provide every student with an adult role model who will:

- (1) supervise academic progress,
- (2) monitor social development and behavior,
- (3) alert school and/or parents when serious academic or personal concerns arise,
- (4) maintain community service records,
- (5) provide an attentive, responsible audience for students' questions and concerns.

Upper School students are assigned an advisor from a team of designated faculty. 9th and 10th grade advisories and 11th and 12th grade students are mixed by grade levels. Advisory groups meet once or twice a rotation to cover topics decided upon by the advisory team and grade-level deans, with student input, as well. Advisors provide adult guidance in the academic, social, and emotional life of each Gaston Day student.

Jr/Sr Retreat

The Junior-Senior Retreat provides a unique opportunity to address important eleventh and twelfth-grade issues, participate in team-building activities, and develop leadership skills. This annual tradition consists of a two-day overnight trip that typically takes place the first Sunday to Monday after school begins in August. The retreat is coordinated by Grade Level Deans and the Dean of Students and is required for all 11th and 12th-grade students.

Junior Service Day

During the spring semester, all 11th-grade students will participate in a half-day of service, contributing their time to a local organization in need. The students will work together as a grade to research, plan, and execute all elements of the service activity, including contacting organizations, arranging transportation, and gathering supplies. Advisors will support the planning stages of the service day and will chaperone all activities.

9th/10th Leadership Day

The purpose of this event is to help prepare the underclassmen at Gaston Day School for leadership opportunities they will take on in the future at the School. During this half-day event, Gaston Day partners with Gaston Day Alumni to provide meaningful presentations and discussions that will help students understand what it means to be a leader and the characteristics that are needed to be successful. The retreat is coordinated by Grade Level Deans and the Dean of Students and is required for all 9th and 10th-grade students.

Senior Class Trip

This optional trip is offered annually to students in the senior class. Due to the demands of the senior year, such as college applications, visitations and interviews, and rigorous coursework, this trip will be scheduled to interfere with as little class time as possible. In order to guarantee travel accommodations, a minimum of ten students must submit their trip deposit on/before a designated due date as determined by the senior trip coordinator.

Field Trips

Experiential education provides both an extension of classroom learning and an opportunity for students and teachers to spend time getting to know each other outside the confines of a normal classroom setting. Students will often participate in field trips for their individual classes, coordinated by the course instructor.

Experiential Education

Several local and international opportunities are available to Gaston Day students during the summer and provide a hands-on link to the classroom curriculum. Many of these opportunities will be posted to a designated College Counseling Website. Upper School students should begin investigating with the Office of College Counseling in the fall to explore what opportunities are available the following summer.