



WDMCS
SILVER
CORD

Student Manual
<http://silvercord.wdmcs.org/>
Updated April 2018

Table of Contents

Silver Cord Program.....3

Guidelines.....4-5

Process Overview.....6

Signing Up and Acquiring an Online Account7

Log In to Your Account.....7

Student Dashboard.....8-9

Finding a Service Opportunity.....9

Requesting a Preapproval.....9-10

Participating in the Service Opportunity.....10

Submitting Hours for Approval11

Activity Report.....12

Changing or Resetting Your Password.....12

Things to Remember.....12

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What is the Silver Cord Program?

The Silver Cord Program began at Valley High School in the fall of 2001 as a graduation incentive program to promote a lifetime of community service. The award is a graduation award available to West Des Moines Community Schools (WDMCS) seniors who volunteer a minimum of 50 hours for three or more non-profits during every year of high school.

Today, WDMCS Community Education coordinates the program districtwide and over 800 students from Valley, Valley Southwoods, and Walnut Creek Campus earn this award by volunteering. All WDMCS high school students are encouraged to participate regardless of their GPA, rigor of course study, and artistic or athletic ability.

Why should a student participate?

The purpose of the Silver Cord program is to encourage volunteerism and allow students to experience the joy of giving back to the community. Volunteering can provide a constructive use of time, foster the exploration of career interests, support youth seeking employment and college admission, and give new graduates the confidence to serve in leadership roles after high school.

When can a student start volunteering to earn the award?

All WDMCS students are eligible to participate in the Silver Cord Program beginning the summer following eighth grade. To earn the Silver Cord Award, high school students must volunteer a minimum of 50 hours for three or more non-profits during every year of high school. The Silver Cord year runs from June 1-May 31.

How does a student sign-up?

Starting May 1, incoming freshman can complete the online form to set up their Silver Cord account. The form can be found on the WDMCS Community Education website (www.wdmcs.org/commed) and is located under 'Silver Cord.'

Once the form has been submitted, students will receive an email with information on how to log in to their online account.

Students can start volunteering and submitting hours online for credit for the next school year beginning June 1. Hours submitted before June 1 for the next school year will be denied.

Students that are not incoming freshman will need to contact the Silver Cord coordinator.

How does a student find out about volunteer opportunities?

The best place to find out about volunteer opportunities is on the WDMCS Community Education Silver Cord preapproved web page. New volunteer opportunities are posted several times a month and are well suited for students aged 14-18.

Guidelines

- The official Silver Cord calendar year runs from June 1 to May 31.
- Each student needs to volunteer a minimum of 50 hours per year.
- Each student must volunteer at three different non-profit organizations per year. Examples include but are not limited to: schools, local or state government, church, and community events.
- Hours are credited by 15 minute intervals, **with a limit of eight hours per day**. Submitted hours should not include time for travel, breaks, meals, recreation, or sleeping.
- Students have 30 days from last date of service to record hours.
- Ongoing opportunities are to be submitted monthly within 30 days of the last date of service that month. Hours are to be reported in the “description of service box” located on the online submission form. (See page 11 for details.)
- Hours submitted after 30 days are awarded at half credit.
- No credit will be given for hours that are submitted six months or more after the last day of service.
- It is each student’s responsibility to check their online account to view their status and messages from the Silver Cord coordinator. Messages will appear as blue links on the student’s dashboard.
- Students must document all service hours via the Silver Cord online system.
- Seniors must submit all requests for credit no later than May 1. Failure to do so will result in not receiving the Silver Cord award at Senior Honors Night.
- All of the service opportunities posted on the Silver Cord webpage have already been approved and will be listed (along with all prior preapproved activities) in the drop-down menu for the student to choose from when submitting their hours for credit online. If a service opportunity is **NOT** on the list, the activity must be preapproved before a request for credit can be submitted. This can be done by filling out a preapproval request through the student’s online account.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Hours

- Acceptable hours must provide a service or meet a clear need for a non-profit agency, church, school, park, senior living community, charity program, day care center, or community event. Please Note: If the student is a member of the organization, the service must be optional and not required to be accepted.
- Accepted religious activities include, but are not limited to: participating with Sunday/Wednesday school, Vacation Bible School, confirmation class, baby-sitting during religious services, working on a sound crew, recording/videotaping a service, or mission trips.

- Unacceptable hours are Valley High School and Valley Southwoods Freshman High School sport team managing or training, service work for a group as part of your membership obligation, rehearsing, working from home, walking/running/dancing/sleeping in a marathon or fundraiser, confirmation service, Boy Scout Advancement, and participating in a march, rally, or walkout. Please note that Valley High School Dance Marathon is exempt from this rule.
- Silver Cord hours may not be directly involved with rituals, services, or ceremonies of any specific religion. Examples of invalid activities include but are not limited to: singing in the choir, candle lighting, reading from religious texts, altar service, ushering, or passing out programs.
- Hours used for confirmation or other church membership requirements cannot also be used for Silver Cord credit.
- Silver Cord hours cannot be earned while working for a relative, neighbor, friend, country club, or while working for pay or compensation of any kind.
- Silver Cord site supervisors cannot be immediate family members.
- Silver Cord hours cannot be earned to satisfy a class requirement or obligation for an agency, program, or organization of which you are a member.

Process Overview

1. Student signs up and acquires an online account by filling out the online form. Once the account is created, the student is able to log in and start using the system immediately. The account is good for all four years of the program.
2. Student logs in to the application and can view their dashboard, update their profile, enter preapprovals, submit hours for credit, and read important messages.
3. Student views the preapproved service opportunity webpage or the 'organization-activity' drop-down menu located on the 'Submit Activity for Credit' form within their Silver Cord online account to select a service opportunity. If student is interested in a service opportunity that is not listed, the student requests a preapproval **BEFORE** they participate in the service opportunity. This step is required for every service opportunity that is **NOT** already on the online systems drop-down menu. **Student will not be able to submit their hours for credit if the service opportunity is not preapproved.**
4. Student participates in the service opportunity. At the end of their service, student acquires the site supervisor's name, email address, and phone number. It is imperative to the process that the correct contact information is obtained. Acquiring incorrect information will slow down the approval process and may prevent receiving credit for the hours completed.
5. Student submits hours for credit using the online system within 30 days from the last date of service. Once the form is submitted, an automatically generated email is sent to the site supervisor. The status of the student's service opportunity is marked pending in the system and will stay as pending until it is approved by **both** the site supervisor and the Silver Cord coordinator. This process is not immediate and may take several weeks.
6. Site supervisor approves or denies the student's request via the online form included in the email they receive. They have the option to leave comments. If an incorrect email is obtained, supervisors are unable to receive the approval request and approve the student's hours.
7. Silver Cord coordinator reviews the submission for credit and approves or denies the request and has the option to leave comments. If submission is denied, there will be a message with an explanation for the denial. The student has the option to resubmit with corrected or updated information. It is each student's responsibility to check their online account to view important account information, including messages from the Silver Cord coordinator.
8. The system automatically updates student's hours.
9. Once an activity has been submitted and is visible on the student dashboard, no additional action is needed. If an activity is still pending after four months, please contact the Silver Cord coordinator.

Signing Up and Acquiring an Online Account

Every Silver Cord student needs to fill out the online form to acquire an account with the online system. This account is good for all four years of high school.

The form is located on WDMCS Community Education’s website at www.wdmcs.org/commed under ‘Silver Cord.’

- All the information on the form is required.
- Choose an email address that is checked regularly. This email address will be associated with your student account and will be used to communicate with you throughout the duration of your four years. **Please note:** Each Silver Cord user account has to have a unique email address.
- Password – Remember this as you will need it in order to log in to the online system. Please note: your user name is created for you by the system, typically your last name and first initial.
- Freshman Starting Year
 - 2018 = graduation year 2022
 - 2019 = graduation year 2023
 - 2020 = graduation year 2024
 - 2021 = graduation year 2025
- Click the submit button once.
- You will receive an email confirmation with information on how to log in to your account including your system-generated user name.

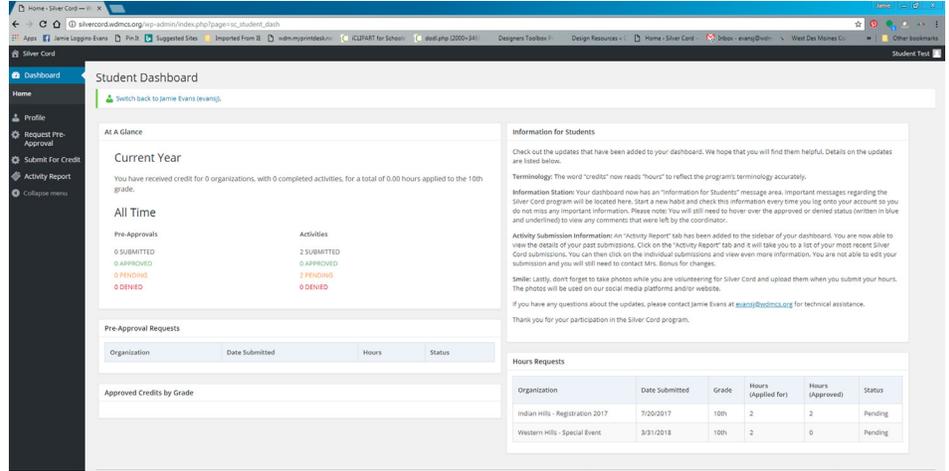
Log In To Your Account

Log in to the application at <http://silvercord.wdmcs.org/wp-login> or access it through the district website at www.wdmcs.org/commed, then click on ‘Silver Cord.’

- Username - Typically last name and first initial (the system generates this for you)
- Password – You determine this when you set up your account.

Student Dashboard

Take a glance at your status including your: current activity, current grade level information, credit requests, preapproval requests, total approved, credits by grade, and information for students.



Information for Students

Current information regarding the Silver Cord program will be located here. Check this information every time you log into your account.

Credit Requests

- Listed in chronological order by date with a status of pending, approved, or denied.
- You may hover the mouse over any status link in blue and underlined (i.e., approved or denied) to see Silver Cord Coordinator’s comments.

Hours Requests					
Organization	Date Submitted	Grade	Hours (Applied for)	Hours (Approved)	Status
Community Education - Website Assistant	6/6/2017	9th	1.5	1.5	Approved
Community Education - Website Assistant	6/20/2017	9th	2.5	2.5	Approved

- If you need to respond to the Silver Cord coordinator, you may do so through email or by stopping into the office.

Preapproval Requests

- Listed in chronological order by date.
- You may hover the mouse over any status link in blue and underlined (i.e., approved or denied) to see coordinator comments.

Approved Credits by Grades

View awarded credit activity per grade. You will see information that displays the remaining credit balance.

What status means!

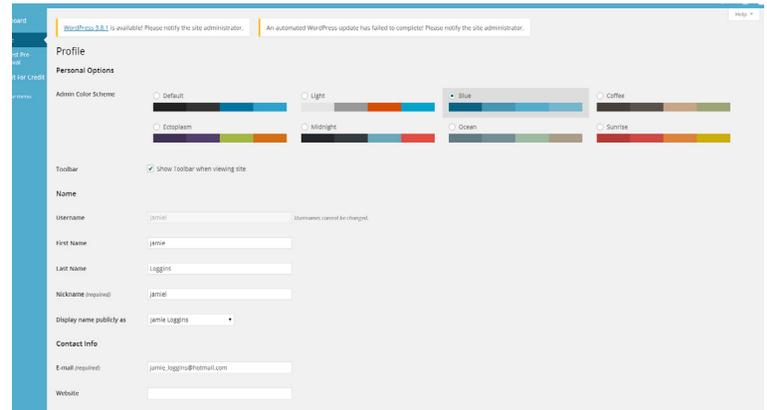
Approved - request is approved and there is nothing further to do

Denied - request is denied and student should see notes as to why and resubmit if applicable

Pending - submission is still being processed by either the activity site supervisor or the Silver Cord Coordinator

Profile – Here you can:

- Review and edit your basic profile and contact information
- Get creative and change the color scheme
- Change your freshman starting year *if entered incorrectly*
- Change your password



Finding a Service Opportunity

Students can find preapproved service opportunities at www.wdmcs.org/commed—‘Silver Cord,’ then either ‘Preapproved Activities’ or ‘Approved Organizations.’

The ‘Preapproved Activities’ page is a listing and descriptions of current service opportunities with contact information on how to sign up. All of these activities have been preapproved and **DO NOT** have to go through the preapproval process. All preapproved activities will automatically be found within the on-line system drop-down menu when submitting hours for credit. Please note: The activity listed has to be the **exact** service opportunity in which you are to participate. Not every opportunity at every organization has been preapproved. When in doubt, contact the Silver Cord coordinator.

If an activity that you are interested in is not listed on one of these two pages, you must submit a preapproval (see below).

Requesting a Preapproval

All service opportunities posted on the Silver Cord webpage have been approved and will be listed (along with all past preapproved activities) in the drop-down menu for you to choose from when submitting your hours for credit online. If a service opportunity is **NOT** on the drop-down list, the activity needs to go through the preapproval process. It is the student’s responsibility (not the organization’s) to submit a preapproval before participating in the activity, or you take the chance of having your hours denied. You will not be able to submit your hours for credit if your service opportunity has not been preapproved. It will not be a choice in the drop-down menu.

You only have to be preapproved for the service opportunity once. However, if you volunteer at the same organization with a different activity, you need to submit that service opportunity through the online preapproval process, if it has not already been approved.

Proceed **ONLY** if it has been determined that an activity is **NOT** preapproved on the Silver Cord webpage or listed in the 'Organization-Activity' drop-down menu of the 'Submit for Activity Credit' form located in your online account.

- Log in to the online system.
- Request a preapproval.
- Fill out the form, completing as much information as possible. The description of service opportunity should contain enough information that the Silver Cord Coordinator can make an informed decision.
- The request will default to a 'pending' status on your dashboard upon initial submission.
- The Silver Cord coordinator will review your request within three business days. The approved, pending, or denied status will automatically be updated on your dashboard. You may hover the mouse over any status link in blue and underlined (i.e., approved or denied) to read any comments that were left by the coordinator.
 - If any of your preapprovals are denied, you must create a new request with the updated or new information if requested by the Silver Cord coordinator.
 - If the Silver Cord coordinator has a question about the requested preapproved activity, you must submit the answer via email; you are not able to respond directly to a question within the online system. The Silver Cord coordinator will then approve or deny the requested preapproval.
 - If an issue cannot be dealt with in the system, please contact the Silver Cord coordinator by email, phone, or in person.
- Once the activity is approved, you may participate in the service opportunity.

Participating in the Service Opportunity

- When you volunteer, you must obtain the site coordinator's name, phone number, and email. Please note that this person might be different than the person you signed up with. If the correct email is not submitted, your supervisor will not receive the email approval request and cannot approve the hours.
- Students should tell the supervisor they will be receiving an email and will be asked to approve or deny the request. It is beneficial for the student to submit hours for credit shortly after the opportunity has taken place.

Submitting Hours for Approval

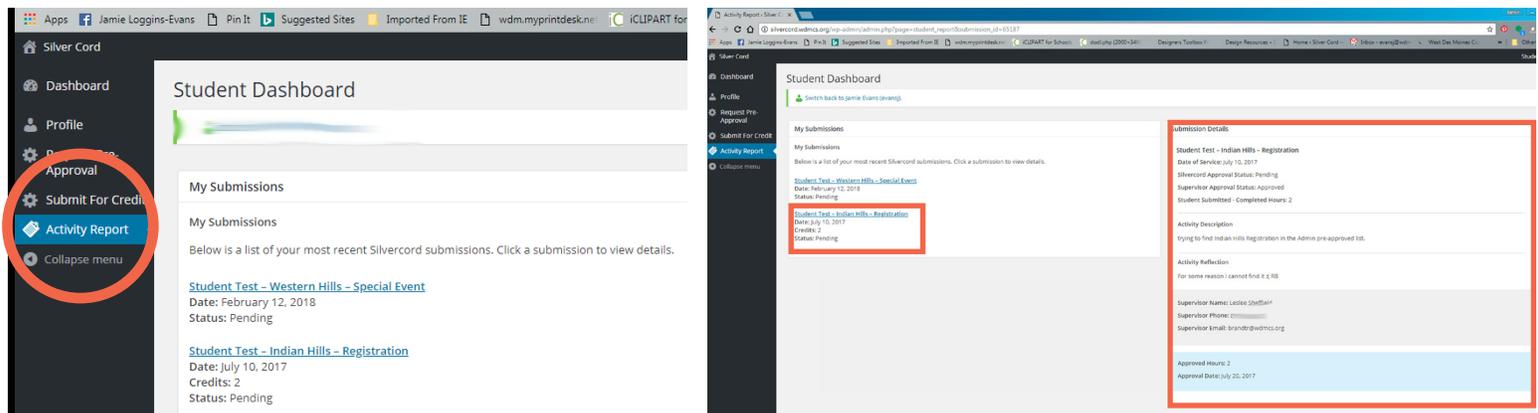
- Complete the ‘Submit for Credit’ form for service opportunities that you have completed.
- The drop-down will have your preapproved activities listed first under “Me” with all other activities listed under “All.” You must select the correct activity and not one that is similar. Failure to select the correct activity will result in a denial of request, and the hours submitted will not be counted. If you are not able to find the activity on the drop-down, you must submit a preapproval.
- All fields are required to be completed in order to submit for credit. It is important that all information is entered carefully to ensure that it is accurate.
- Smile—Take photos while you are volunteering and upload them when you submit your hours. The photos will be used on social media and/or website.
- All hours should be submitted within 30 days of service.
- **Ongoing opportunities** are to be submitted monthly within 30 days of the last date of service that month. The documentation of hours is to be reported in the ‘description of service’ box located on the online form. The information required is the date, time, and total hours. You may print off the ‘Documentation of Hours’ form located on the Silver Cord website to keep track of your hours throughout the month. However, you will then need to report that information through the ‘Submit for Credit’ online submission form as noted above.
- Once the hours have been submitted, an automatically generated email will be sent to the site supervisor. The system will default to a ‘pending’ status upon initial submission. The submission will stay at a pending status until the site supervisor and the Silver Cord coordinator have approved or denied the hours. If the supervisor’s email is incorrect, the hours will remain ‘pending’ until the correct email address is provided.
- Once the site supervisor approves or denies the request, the Silver Cord coordinator will be notified and your submission will be reviewed.
- As soon as the submission has been approved or denied by the Silver Cord coordinator, the status will automatically be updated on your dashboard. Hover the mouse over any definitive status link in blue and underlined (i.e., approved or denied) to see comments that were left by the coordinator.
 - If you are denied for your credit request, you may resubmit the request by hovering over the status, reading the Silver Cord coordinator’s comment, and clicking on the link to resubmit this activity. This will take you back to the original submission form where you can update the needed information.
 - If the issue cannot be dealt with in the system, please contact the Silver Cord coordinator by email, phone, or in person.

The screenshot shows the 'Submit Activity For Credit' form in the Silvercord system. The left sidebar contains navigation options: Dashboard, Profile, Request Pre-Approval, Submit For Credit (highlighted), and Collapse menu. The main form area includes the following sections:

- Submit Activity For Credit** (Section Header)
- Organization ***: A dropdown menu with the instruction '(Please make a selection)'.
- Date of Service (From) ***: Fields for Month, Day, and Year.
- Date of Service (To) ***: Fields for Month, Day, and Year.
- Completed Hours ***: A text input field.
- Enter in decimal values in quarter-hour increments.*
- Describe Service ***: A large text area for describing the service.
- Reflection ***: A text area for reflection.
- Site Supervisor** (Section Header)
- Name**: Fields for First and Last names.
- Phone**: A text input field.

Activity Report

The Activity Submission Information allows you to view some of your past submissions. Click on the 'Activity Report' tab and it will take you to a list of your most recent Silver Cord activity submissions. You can then click on the individual submissions and view even more information. Please note that you are not able to edit your submission, and you will need to contact the Silver Cord coordinator to make any updates.



Changing or Resetting Your Password

If you need to change your password, you should log in to your account and change it in the profile tab of the dashboard.

If you have forgotten your password and need it reset, please contact the Silver Cord coordinator via email to have your password reset. Once you receive confirmation that your password has been reset, you will need to log in to your account with the temporary password provided and change it to something you will remember. Do not keep the same password that was given to you.

Things to Remember

- The Silver Cord coordinator works 15 hours a week and even fewer in the summer months. Preapprovals will be reviewed within three business days, and credit for hours submitted will be reviewed and approved within two weeks.
- All service opportunities posted on the Silver Cord webpage have been approved and will be listed (along with all past preapproved activities) in the drop-down menu for you to choose from when submitting your hours for credit online. If a service opportunity is **NOT** on the drop-down list, the activity needs to go through the preapproval process. You will **NOT** be able to submit your hours for credit until the opportunity has been preapproved. This will also prevent any misunderstanding of qualifying hours.
- Do not just pick an activity from the drop-down list when submitting hours. The correct activity has to be chosen, or it will not be awarded credit.