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Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

One of the special things about a new school year is the incredible sense of possibility that all of us feel. Our principals, teachers and staff have been busy setting the tone, displaying the warmth and inclusiveness that create an environment for learning and growth. The core values at each school are front and center as rules are communicated and academic expectations are set. Every school opening has gone smoothly this month, with both students and teachers ready to move forward.

I am always impressed by the amount of work that goes on over the summer to get our schools ready to receive students. All the buildings are looking terrific, and we have numerous people to thank. In many cases, community volunteers have joined our administrators, teachers, custodians and food service workers in these efforts. One example is the work done in the gardens and surrounding areas of AHS. Over 100 volunteers from High Rock Church planted, mulched, and weeded the gardens and cleaned the athletics area. Another example of staff, student and community volunteer effort is the newly revamped AHS Fitness Room. This is explained in more detail in the **[Athletic Highlights](#)** section in the body of this newsletter. I want to thank everyone who came together to help create the warm and safe spaces that get the year off to a great start.

On September 12, I distributed a letter to inform the community that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will visit our district during the month of November to conduct a Coordinated Program Review. This review happens every five or six years, and the visitors will be looking at Special Education, English Language Learner Education and Civil Rights. Members of the community may request to be interviewed as part of this process. Please consult the [letter](#) for more information on the upcoming review and the process for requesting an interview.

You also should be aware that the [APS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#) was updated. The philosophy and actions described reflect the definition of bullying as defined by the state of Massachusetts. I invite you to review this plan so that you have an understanding of how we address this issue in our district.

As the year begins, it is a good time to remind everyone that respecting the differences among us is one of the core values of the Arlington Public Schools. Multiculturalism is embraced and celebrated. This month our sixth grade classrooms held forums where students shared stories about their family histories. Hundreds of OMS students have been taking part in the photo shoot for *Inside OUT Ottoson*, a global public art project that demonstrates how the school community is united against hateful words and actions. The project installation is planned for late October.

In closing, I would like to share the sign that greeted our high school students this year. I think it illustrates how strongly we feel about welcoming and accepting everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexuality or religion. Please click on this [link](#) to see the sign, and I hope you enjoy reading the following letter.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Department News

New Teachers, Staff and Administrators Welcomed as the Year Begins

As always, our new employees bring a range of expertise to our schools. New teachers, spanning all grades and disciplines, will be sharing their energy and enthusiasm throughout the district. New psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, learning specialists, tutors, substitutes, student teachers/interns and four administrators are among those joining us this year. [Read more>](#)

Building Plans Move Forward as APS Confronts Enrollment Challenges

Work continues as we address enrollment growth with possible construction at Thompson, renovation of the Gibbs to house the sixth grade and renovation/rebuilding of Arlington High School. We are grateful to Arlington voters for their overwhelming support of our efforts to accommodate the increasing number of students in our district. [Learn more>](#)

Bring Your Own Device Access Available for Grades 6-12

OMS and AHS students who wish to have the flexibility of using their own Chromebook, iPad Air, iPad 4 or MacBook on the school network can become part of the Bring Your Own Device Program. The program is voluntary, and departmental resources are available to answer questions and assist families who choose to participate. [Read more>](#)

Snacks are Available for All Students at All Schools Thanks to Arlington EATS

Hungry children cannot learn, and thanks to the efforts of [Arlington EATS](#), every child in our district can get snacks to supplement their breakfast or lunch. [Learn more>](#)

Professional Development

Summer Professional Development Key to Strengthening Teaching Skills and Subject Matter Knowledge

Summer working and learning sessions ranging from technology to new curriculum, addressing social and emotional needs, teacher leadership, planning and much, much more helped our teachers keep up with their ever-changing classrooms and get ready for another year of helping their students achieve academic excellence. [Learn more>](#)

Awards & Distinctions

New Rankings Place Arlington High School among the Best in Boston and the State

Recent high school evaluations in [Boston Magazine](#) and [Newsweek](#) illustrate once again that AHS delivers academic excellence. [Read more>](#)

Academic Highlights

Archaeology Excavations to Begin at AHS

As you pass by, look for the sign and QR code that takes you to a [webpage](#) describing the student archaeology excavations on the AHS lawn. [Learn more>](#)

Orientation Prepares AHS Internship Program Participants for Workplace Challenges

Workplace communication and the value of taking initiative were part of the curriculum as over 40 students in this year's program prepared to enter the working world of their semester-long placements. Host sites include a wide variety of business, research, non-profit and government organizations. [Read more>](#)

Creative Highlights

Music and Drama Programs Up and Running as the School Year Begins

The Performing Arts season in our schools got going quickly with performances and auditions this month. By participating in the program, our children derive a variety of benefits that support cognitive and academic success. We can look forward to a wonderful year of music and drama. [Read more>](#)

Athletic Highlights

Fall Season Opens with New Fitness Center and All-Athletics Night

Over 500 student athletes are off to a strong start in a fall season marked by the formal opening of the updated Fitness Room and an inspiring and informative All Athletics Night. Providence College Athletic Director [Bob Driscoll](#) asked students to have conversations with themselves about what they want their lives to look like, and led one of the breakout sessions open to attendees. [Learn more>](#)

Service

Database & Online Tool Help Students Find Volunteer Opportunities to Fulfill Service Requirement

Forty hours of nonprofit volunteer work is one of the AHS graduations requirements, and the Guidance Department suggests two ways that are helpful in finding such opportunities: The internal [Community Service Database](#) and the external tool, [GiveBackTime](#). [Read more>](#)

Continue to read the full September 2016 newsletter

Department News

New Teachers, Staff and Administrators Welcomed as the Year Begins

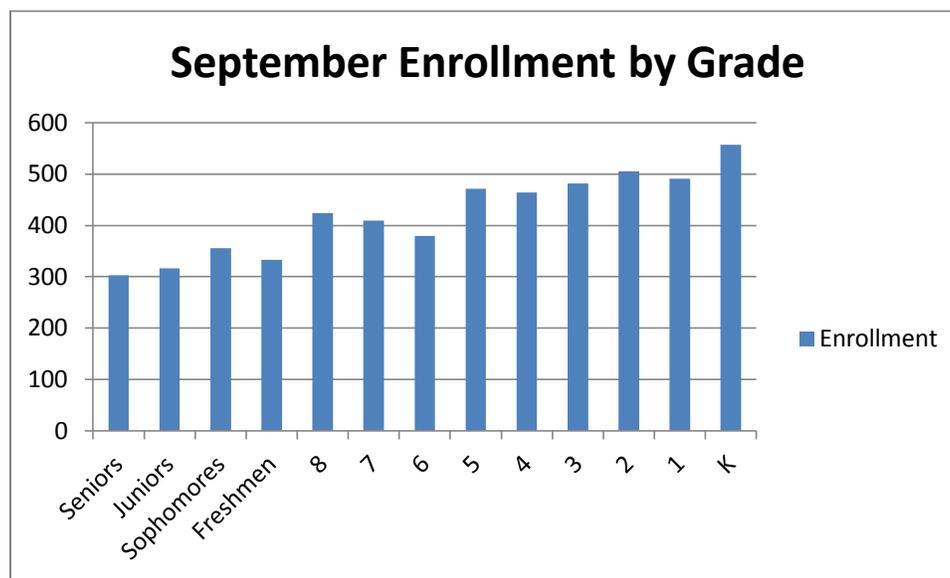
This month we welcomed over 130 new people to our district, and it is always impressive to see the range of skills that these individuals bring to us. Among this number are 23 new teachers and 30 teaching assistants. Most of these educators are joining us in elementary classrooms, but we are also welcoming new middle school and high school teachers into the History and Social Studies, Special Education, English, Mathematics and World Language Departments. New psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, learning specialists, tutors, and substitutes are becoming part of our educational community as well.

Fifty-two student teachers/interns will be with us this school year. Approximately half of these individuals will work only during the first semester with the other half remaining the entire year. We are pleased to welcome these rising educators who come from Lesley, Bay Path, Simmons, Boston University, Northeastern, Bridgewater State, Emerson, Brandeis, Wheelock, Tufts, Boston College, and Salem State. Their skill sets include elementary education, high school mathematics, social work, guidance, speech and language, after school education, special education, world language, science, social studies and English language arts.

Four new administrators are joining the district. Last month I introduced you to Dr. Eileen Driscoll Woods who is serving as the OMS Interim Principal. We also welcome the two new Elementary Special Education Coordinators, Craig Hass and Elizabeth Logue. Mr. Hass comes to us from the Boston Public Schools where he served as Special Education and Student Services Coordinator in Charlestown for seven years. His background also includes teaching Special Education in Charlestown and Weston. Ms. Logue has held Special Education leadership positions in Reading, Lexington, Stoneham, Sherborn, Burlington, and Melrose Public Schools. In addition, Stephanie Greiner has become the Middle School Special Education Coordinator, after serving as an Elementary Team Chair.

Building Plans Move Forward as APS Confronts Enrollment Challenges

Our work to house the growing number of students in our district continued during the summer, and we have made significant progress toward the changes that are required. The vibrancy of our town, its proximity to Boston and the strength of our schools are among the reasons that more young households and families are choosing Arlington. The following graph, using September 13 numbers, illustrates the enrollment growth we have seen over the last few years.



As illustrated, there are now between 303 and 356 students per grade at Arlington High School, yielding a total enrollment of 1,308. In contrast, the Ottoson Middle School has between 379 and 424 students per grade for 1,212 students. Our elementary grades are larger still, ranging from 464 students in Grade 4 to 557 in Kindergarten.

We are grateful to the voters of Arlington for giving us their overwhelming support to move forward with various proposals to accommodate this growth--construction at Thompson, renovation of the Gibbs to house the sixth grade and renovation/rebuilding of Arlington High School. Today, all fifth grade classes at Thompson are meeting in modular classrooms, and the Enrollment Task Force will be evaluating construction options that would need to begin in November. Final recommendations on how to move ahead will be made to Town Meeting in October.

The firm chosen to design the Gibbs renovations, [Finegold Alexander Architects](#), have gathered input from OMS teachers, staff, and community members that will enable them to work on an interior design that meets the priorities of all stakeholders within the constraints of the existing building and budget. Renovations must begin on July 1, 2017 in order to have the building ready to accept students at the start of the 2018-2019 school year.

In previous newsletters, I shared the fact that last May the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Board of Directors invited Arlington High School to commence the Eligibility Period in the process to rebuild or renovate the school. During this 270-day timeframe, we will be completing a variety of requirements that are described in the [MSBA Modules Overview](#). Four documents have been submitted: the AHS Building Committee; the Educational Profile Questionnaire, the Online Enrollment Projection and the Follow-Up Enrollment Questionnaire.

All Stratton students are currently attending classes in the modular building that was constructed over the summer and the renovation work on that school is well underway. This is a very exciting time for our

district, and I will continue to keep you updated on our progress of all these projects as the work continues.

Bring Your Own Device Access Available for Grades 6-12

It is not too late for students in grades 6-12 to become part of the Bring Your Own Device Program (BYOD). This voluntary program allows students to use their personal Chromebooks, iPad Airs, iPad 4s or MacBooks on the school network. School-owned devices are still available for use, but these cannot be taken back and forth between home and school. Approximately 300 middle school families are now part of BYOD, and others at OMS who wish to take part should contact Johanna Bradley at jbradley@arlington.k12.ma.us. Interested AHS students and their parents should contact Jeff Snyder at jsnyder@arlington.k12.ma.us. Ms. Bradley and Mr. Snyder will provide information and arrange for families to sign the BYOD Agreement and get set-up on the school network throughout the school year.

It is evident from the usage we are seeing that our students and teachers have embraced the philosophy that technology is an important means to learn and thrive in the 21st century. At one point this month, we had 7,000 devices on our network at the same time! The BYOD program provides our young people a more seamless access to educational resources. I am pleased that we are able to offer this extension to our robust technical capabilities.



Snacks are Available for All Students at All Schools Thanks to Arlington EATS

As you can see from the picture above, the snack table at Thompson is a very welcoming place. Centrally located in the entryway beside the main desk, it is both visible and accessible to all. On one Friday, students could choose from string cheese, applesauce, oranges, NutriGrain bars, bags of cheerios and apples. The message is clear--"no one needs to be hungry".

It is well understood that hungry children cannot learn. They struggle to concentrate in class and may act out. At Arlington Public Schools, we encourage families to send snacks with their children, but not every household is able to do this. Snacks may also be forgotten, or may not be sufficient to keep a child going through the morning or afternoon.

Thanks to [Arlington EATS](#), a volunteer organization founded in 2014, snacks are now available throughout our district. Each school chooses the distribution method that is best suited to its environment. Sometimes the snacks are located in the nurse's office or in certain classrooms or focal points. The PTO has accepted the responsibility for snack procurement and funding in a couple of schools. In most cases, however, schools buy the snacks and then submit receipts to Arlington EATS for reimbursement. The list of healthy snacks provided by APS Nursing Director Susan Franchi provides the guidelines for purchase.

Thompson Principal Karen Donato has seen the impact of having snacks available throughout the day. She reports that there has been a significant decrease in behavioral issues since the program began. Students feel secure that they do not need to be hungry. An atmosphere of acceptance surrounds the program. Any child can come independently to pick up a snack without fear of being embarrassed.

I want to thank the Arlington EATS co-founders, team and weekly volunteers as well as the individuals at each school who make sure no child needs to go through the school day hungry. Dedicated to assisting in the fight against food insecurity in our town, Arlington EATS also operates Weekend, Summer Lunch and school vacation lunch programs. I hope you will learn more about the organization by reviewing their website. Donations are welcome, either [online](#) or by check. Please contact your school office if you are unsure as to how your child can get a snack. If you are interested in helping with the snack program, please send an email to info@arlington-eats.org.

Professional Development

Summer Professional Development Key to Strengthening Teaching Skills and Subject Matter Knowledge

While the summer is a wonderful time to relax and rejuvenate, our teachers and administrators also use this time to learn new things and develop the skills they need to continue to offer the students an exceptional educational experience. This summer APS held 611 teacher-days of professional development, and the topics ranged from technology to new curriculum, report card standards, planning, teacher leadership, and addressing the social and emotional needs of students. Teachers and department heads worked together during late June and throughout August focusing on material that included the FOSS science curriculum, the core components of Investigations in Mathematics, reading and writing, world language curriculum development, and much more.

This work enables our teachers to keep up with an ever-changing classroom, and really hit the ground running on the first day of school. I am grateful that we are able to offer these opportunities. I want to thank Assistant Superintendent Laura Chesson and our Curriculum Directors Larry Weathers, Denny Conklin, Matthew Coleman, and Catherine Ritz and subject matter experts Linda Hanson, Tammy McBride, and Susan Bisson their hard work putting this summer's program together.

Awards & Distinctions

New Rankings Place Arlington High School among the Best in Boston and the State

It is always gratifying when external organizations recognize Arlington High School for its academic excellence, and we have two recent examples of this that I wish to report. *Boston Magazine* released their list of "[Best Public High Schools in Boston 2016](#)", and AHS placed 28th among 155 schools evaluated. *Newsweek* looked across the country to create their list of "[America's Top High Schools in 2016](#)", and in this evaluation, AHS ranked [10th in Massachusetts](#) and 248th in the nation. These new ratings stand with the 2016 [U.S. News and World Report High School Rankings](#) that I reported to you in April. In that listing, Arlington High School was ranked as 16th in Massachusetts.

It is important to remember that each of these organizations uses a slightly different methodology to come up with the final evaluation of school excellence. While all the evaluators include criteria such as standardized test scores, number of students taking the SAT or ACT, class size, and number of students per college counselor, each one has a different way of creating an aggregate score that may or may not control for elements such as poverty rates, for example. Regardless of the exact score or differences in methodology, it is clear that Arlington High School is among the top schools in Massachusetts.

These ratings also reflect the quality of the schools that come before high school. The academic excellence of our seven elementary schools and the Ottoson Middle School build the foundation that enables our high school students to excel. Our teachers and staff at all levels receive strong support from the community, and the gifts of time and money that are directed to our schools help us create a rich and

nurturing academic environment. I want to thank the many individuals and groups who contribute to the success of our schools and enable our district to perform at such a high level.

Academic Highlights



Archaeology Excavations to Begin at AHS

I want to alert you that AHS Science teacher Danielle Raad and the students in her *Introduction to Archaeology* class will be starting their excavations on the high school lawn soon, and she invites you to come and look. There will be a sign next to the site with a link and QR code that will take you to a [webpage](#) to get more information. I hope you will be able to stop by.

Orientation Prepares AHS Internship Program Participants for Workplace Challenges

"Through the orientation, I learned not be afraid to ask for more work if I am already finished with the given task. This internship is an opportunity for me to learn new things in computer science and decide if it's a right career path for me, so the more work I do, the more knowledge I will gain."

"I learned that eye contact is important. Eye contact is the most uncomfortable thing for me, I don't know how much eye contact is too much or too little, so I barely make eye contact. Now, I know what sort of eye contact to make and when to make it."

These quotes are from students who took part in the 4.5-hour orientation session designed to prepare them for their semester internships. The AHS Internship Program (AIP), coordinated by History and Social Studies teacher Melanie Konstandakis Schwartz, is an opportunity for students to understand and experience the working world. Participants receive elective credit and spend at least five hours each week at their host sites. The placements offer a way to explore possible careers, use the skills they have learned in school and give back to the community. This semester's internship group is the largest in the program's four-year history.

This is the first year that AIP has offered a training session to help students understand the workplace environment. The content was based on feedback received from former hosts and participants. Focal topics included workplace communication and the value of taking initiative. Lecture, role-play and conversations in professions were all part of the curriculum. Students left with a checklist of topics to discuss with their host site mentors during the first week to facilitate agreement on roles and expectations.

Placements for the over 40 students include a wide variety of business, research, non-profit and government organizations, reflecting the different interests among the group. The host organizations

include Radius Health, the Whitesides Research Group in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Harvard University, Lovelane Special Needs Horseback Riding Program, the Massachusetts State House, Mt. Auburn Hospital, the DevTech Research Group at Tufts University, and local businesses including Computer Cafe, Leader Bank, and Arlington town departments such as Public Health and Engineering.

The semester-long internships will close in January when students present their projects and describe their workplace experiences to the community and members of the AHS junior class. AIP is open to all seniors, and interested juniors are encouraged to attend the presentations and come to an information session on Tuesday, March 14 at 2:45 in AHS room 332.

I am delighted that we offered an orientation session this year to prepare the interns to hit the ground running as they begin their placements. I want to thank Ms. Konstandakis Schwartz for leading this program. AIP is an example of the APS commitment to ensure that our students are ready for life after AHS. The earlier student quotes, and the ones that follow, speak to the value of the orientation. I look forward to hearing the final presentations.

"The most valuable skill I learned was how to be a good listener. Being able to listen well is more important than I thought because it shows you are interested in what the other person is saying so you can develop a better relationship with him/her."

"Hearing from the professionals about their life paths made me realize that things might change in the future and that the internship is a great way to get a feeling of if this is something that I want to do."

Creative Highlights

Music and Drama Programs Up and Running as the School Year Begins

Our Performing Arts students waste no time getting started as the school year begins. With their first performances scheduled for Town Day on September 17, the AHS Madrigal Singers and Jazz Band had to act fast. You can read all about what having only nine days to get ready meant to Choral Director Madalyn Kitchen, Instrumental Music Director Sabato D'Agostino and members of both groups on [Your Arlington](#).

At Ottoson, September was audition time for all of the small ensembles and the fall play. OMS has a robust [Performing Arts](#) program, and students were able to try out for Chamber Orchestra, Jazz Band, A Capella, Show Choir, Girls' Ensemble, Select Chorus, and Boys' Chorus as well as audition for the fall drama. Programs are also getting underway at the elementary schools, with Peirce holding auditions for the February performance of the musical *Madagascar Jr.*

We are fortunate to have an active and dedicated Performing Arts faculty that has created a solid program for our students at all grade levels. The advantages of participating in music and the link to cognitive and academic success have been well documented. I would like to refer you to two articles that describe the benefits of music for our children. The first is [20 Important Benefits of Music In Our Schools](#), found on the [National Association for Music Education](#) website. The second is [WHY PLAY MUSIC-KIDS](#), published by the [NAMM Foundation](#). The latter article lists the citations for the research from which the numerous examples have been drawn. It is wonderful to see the performing arts season get underway at our schools. We can all look forward to sharing another wonderful year of music and drama with our children.

Athletic Highlights



Fall Season Opens with Updated Fitness Center and All-Athletics Night

The AHS athletes are off to a strong start, as the fall season got underway with over 500 participants. Athletic Director Melissa Dlugolecki is happy to report that Brianne Mansfield, former freshman field hockey coach, has stepped up to work with her in leading the varsity squad this year. The Department is also welcoming student intern Tenzin Dhasel, who is part of the AHS Internship Program. Tenzin will be exploring many facets of the department this semester as she works under the direction of Athletic Trainer Kierstin Merlino.

Captain's Council has been meeting, and the group is diving right in, bringing forward many ideas and working together well. This is the first group of captains who have worked with Ms. Dlugolecki, now in her fourth year heading our Department, throughout their AHS athletic careers.

Our teams have already been out and about doing service work and community outreach. The swim team volunteered at a race to benefit pancreatic cancer. Members of the football, girls soccer and girls volleyball teams were present at Town Day. On September 6, the girls field hockey team held a balloon release of messages to honor former teammate and captain Catherine Maletesta who succumbed to cancer in 2015.

Over 1,000 students and parents came together for All Athletics Night this month. The evening kicked-off with a ribbon cutting to formally open the revamped Fitness Room. Updating the equipment in the Fitness Room from outdated machinery to weight lifting platforms that are more effective in strengthening has been ongoing for the last two years. The Fitness Room is important not only for the physical benefits that can be gained. As a shared space, this is the one location where participants in all AHS sports come together. Ms. Dlugolecki believes that the Fitness Center now truly reflects the pride of the program, and is an area that strongly supports our athletes whether they working to improve, strengthen to prevent injury or recovering from one. I join Ms. Dlugolecki in thanking the many volunteers and donors who came together to make the upgraded facility a reality, including [The Touchdown Club](#) that donated some weight lifting platforms and Arlington's Sherwin-Williams store that donated the paint.

After the ribbon cutting, Providence College Athletic Director [Bob Driscoll](#) delivered the keynote speech. Mr. Driscoll has provided the leadership at Providence since 2001. The school competes in eight men's and 11 women's varsity sports at the Division 1 level and approximately 80 percent of students participate in varsity, club or intramural sports.

Mr. Driscoll gave a dynamic and engaging presentation, speaking about how important it is for student athletes to have conversations with themselves about what they want their lives to look like. While not every goal may be achieved, the pursuit of those aims is important. Ms. Dlugolecki likes to refer to athletics as having a "hidden curriculum"--that of life lessons and skill development. Individuals are drawn to a sport in order to play, but much more takes place in athletics than the game on the field. Leadership, commitment, resiliency, dedication, discipline and teamwork are just some of the skills that athletes develop by participating in sports.

Breakout sessions followed Mr. Driscoll's address, providing attendees opportunities to learn more about the dangers of sport specialization, nutrition that fuels the body for success, and the admission process for college athletics, among other topics. Mr. Driscoll led a session on leadership, and the [Concussion Legacy Foundation](#) was present to discuss prevention and treatment. The evening proved to be both inspirational and informative for all the students and their parents, and a great start to another successful season for our athletes.

Service



Database & Online Tool Help Students Find Volunteer Opportunities to Fulfill Service Requirement

Service to others is important to the wider Arlington community, and throughout the year, I will share many examples of projects our students, teachers and staff undertake. Giving back to others is a value that we nurture in our children from elementary grades through graduation. Each AHS student must complete 40 hours of community service, and register their work with the Guidance Department on a Community Service Verification form in order to graduate. The volunteer work must be nonprofit.

The Guidance Department suggests two ways that are helpful to students looking for meaningful community service opportunities. The first is the [Community Service Database](#) on the Guidance website that provides locations and contacts. The second is a tool called [GiveBackTime](#) offered by a nonprofit organization based in Arlington. Students may create an account and indicate the categories of service that interest them and the distance from home that they are willing or able to travel. This connects them to a list of live service opportunities and they can sign up to participate online. Once the activity is completed, a site supervisor certifies that the work has been done and the application keeps track of the hours. A new feature allows the students to have their completed service hours mailed directly to Nancy Caccavaro, Guidance Secretary. GiveBackTime is not restricted to students, and is a great tool for individuals of all ages who are looking for volunteer opportunities. Several corporations use it to track the volunteer work done by their employees.