|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | | Several charitable organizations in Pleasantville provide opportunities for teenagers to engage in community service. These organizations have a great need for volunteers, but in recent years, the number of teenage volunteers has significantly declined.  The Pleasantville School Board should take measures to increase the number of volunteers. Teachers, parents, and other community members agree that it is important for young people to learn the value of community service. Requiring high school students to engage in community service would provide much-needed assistance to worthy local charities and would also help young people understand the importance of giving back to their community. For this reason, the Pleasantville School Board should institute a program requiring students of Pleasantville High School to complete 40 hours of community service prior to graduation.  Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted. | |

The argument reaches the conclusion that the Pleasantville School Board should mandate students of the local high school to complete 40 hours of community service before graduation. The premise stated in the argument, in an attempt to back up this conclusion, is that the number of volunteers has decreased in recent years, and that high school students are morally obligated to understand the significance of community service, as agreed upon by various community members. However, the argument, in going from its premises to its conclusion, has made three unstated assumptions that must be addressed.

First, the argument assumes that there is no alternative method for increasing the number of teenage volunteers who engage in community service. What if the students could be encouraged, via an adult-organised charity drive, which may motivate more teens to volunteer? Can they be provided with any kind of minor incentives to atleast try out community service? If such incentives are effective, or if students are simply encouraged to 'try it out', then they may possibly be more likely to appreciate community service, than if it were forced upon them. The argument makes no indication of such non-mandatory methods being attempted. Even in the case where students may not be interested in community service, the argument fails to explain if they would appreciate it more after the mandated hours.

Second, the argument assumes that the teens of today and those of a few years ago are functionally the same; what if the current teen population is being given more coursework by the school, or if they are facing other issues impeding them from enrolling in charity work? The argument assumes that teens today are in the exact situation as those of years prior, and if evidence is presented to disprove this claim, perhaps via a comprehensive survey (that could detail what teens of Pleasantville do on an average week), then the assumption would prove unfounded.

Third, the argument also inadvertently makes the assumption that the teens of Pleasantville do not engage in charity work or volunteering elsewhere, outside of the district. It may be possible that the organizations in Pleasantville are not as effective or well-functioning as those of the adjoining district. In this case, students would be more inclined to go volunteer at a different district, that may volunteer for a different charity/cause, or for other things that teens may find meaningful, within the realm of community service. If the assumption made by the argument proves unwarranted, then the teens of Pleasantville would be doing double-volunteering. One may argue that this is not a bad thing, but it would increase the workload of the teens, and may cause them to have more negative opinions of their school board. In this case, the board would have to consider the number of teens who go elsewhere to do charitywork then overhaul the argument's proposal, to address this unstated assumption.

In conclusion, the argument, as it stands now, fails on multiple counts to address multiple unstated assumptions, and evidence that may arise against those assumptions would lead to the argument breaking down. To prevent these 'logic holes' from persisting, it must provide substantiative evidence to prove that mandatory community service is the only way for the school district to encourage volunteering, and that the teens are not currently already engaged in community work elsewhere. A comprehensive report could be drafted by the school board to gauge the status of the assumptions made, following which a more informed argument could be formulated.