

Senior

LIFE



Project Handbook



"Do something that your future self will thank you for."

2017-2018



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FOCUS

What are my talents, and how can I help the world?

PURPOSE OF THE SENIOR LIFE PROJECT

Completed under the direction of your English teacher, the Senior LIFE Project is intended to showcase your strengths, skills, and interests in a particular topic and should demonstrate your ability to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and communicate significant knowledge and understanding to a particular audience. Further, it should apply learning to real life situations and should be an experience above and beyond the state's curriculum. Throughout this opportunity to explore knowledge in an area of specific interest, you will understand the concept of "life-long learning."

Basically, The Senior LIFE Project gives you a chance to learn what you want to learn and improve your ability to manage yourself. It is more than the typical senior research paper. It incorporates choice and self-discovery. In a sense, this is your entry into adulthood – you can learn to accomplish your goals in your way. Helping you learn to manage your own goals is the best gift we can give you before you graduate.

Senior LIFE Projects have shown us that asking you to select, plan, implement, document, evaluate, and present a project of your own design is an excellent way to prepare you for the world outside of high school.

You will learn:

- about your project topic and gain skills relevant to it
- how to solve real-life problems
- to deal with adults you do not know well
- how to recover from setbacks, and how valuable good communication skills are
- about yourself...just to name a few

Through this process, you may

- discover that you have found your path in life
- find that the path you thought you would take isn't right for you
- find a new hobby
- develop a talent or hobby
- try something you never thought you would try

Project Phases:

- Phase 1- Introduction/Permission/Proposal/Mentor Letter
- Phase 2- Research paper
- Phase 3- Project (including required 20 hours, time log, and reflection)
- Phase 4- Presentation including product

SENIOR LIFE PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

To pass the senior project students must:

- identify a viable project focused on learning goals intended to promote personal growth
- obtain parent permission to pursue the proposed project
- obtain the approval of the Senior Project Committee for the proposed project
- complete **research paper** requirements on chosen topic (first semester)
- establish relations in the community to gain help (formal or informal mentorships)
- complete a **minimum of 20 hours** of documented work on the chosen topic (second semester)
- submit all required documentation including **reflections and time logs** (second semester)
- produce a **product** showing evidence of your work (second semester)
- make a passing **presentation** to the assigned panel of judges (second semester)
- be honest in all work and documentation

A NOTE ON 'NEW LEARNING'

The Senior LIFE Project is about more than writing a research paper and putting in 20 hours on a task or series of tasks. You must identify specific learning goals that identify skills, knowledge and mental habits that you do not have or have not developed extensively. Many students wish to extend their skills and knowledge about a topic in which they already have experience. This is fine, but you must demonstrate to your panel HOW your project will challenge you to learn enough *new* skills and knowledge to justify 20 hours of work.

We understand that it is sometimes difficult to identify what you do not know and what you will learn. Do your best, and ask for help!

HOW TO CHOOSE A PROJECT

Choose a project that you WANT to do – because you love it, because it will be helpful for your next stage of life, or because it sounds so interesting that you just have to do it. This is a great opportunity for you to stretch yourself, grow, and think OUTSIDE of the school building. Show who you are.

Don't choose a project because it sounds easy or because other people tell you that you should do it.

More specifically, select a Senior LIFE Project that requires you to:

- network in the community outside of school and family (mentors, agencies, businesses)
- explore a passion that connects to your future
- apply academic learning to a vocational, academic, or community interest
- extend your learning in way that classroom instruction cannot
- develop personal initiative, intrinsic motivation, and resourcefulness
- work for a minimum of 20 hours to achieve your goal(s)
- serve the community (optional)

Must students have a Mentor?

Students must establish contact with at least one expert in their field of choice. Most students prefer to find an expert who can advise them throughout the project, in other words, a “mentor.” However, this is not possible in all cases. **Five** hours of the required time should include contact with a mentor or individual or group instruction by an expert. It is recommended that students have at least two contacts with the mentor/expert. This person may also serve as the interviewed source for the research paper.

Partnerships are not allowed. This project is meant to be a culmination of your thirteen years of school, and it must be a reflection of your individual accomplishments. Students wishing to work on similar projects with a friend must develop individual goals and outcomes, must document all project work separately, and must gain the approval of the Senior Project Committee prior to the approval of the project plan. Exceptions may be made on a pre-approved, limited basis with written permission from the committee.

COST-SAVING PROJECT IDEAS

Senior LIFE Projects don't have to cost a thing! Below are a few topic possibilities for low or no-cost senior projects. Please note that all proposed projects must meet guidelines for approval.

- Serve your community
- Highlight film for sports team
- Peer Tutor/Teaching
- Career internship/Extensive job shadow
- Writing projects
- Working with local government or other organization
- Conduct research for established agency or campaign
- Coach for an existing organization
- Work with non-profit organization or charity
- Plan events for existing organization
- Ask for help with other ideas!

HOW TO GET YOUR PROJECT PLAN APPROVED THE FIRST TIME

Follow these steps toward an approvable Project Plan:

1. Read the entire handbook. Understand it. Ask questions if you don't understand it.
2. Have the parent letter signed.
3. Complete your project proposal thoroughly.
4. Submit your project proposal on time.
5. Be prepared to answer questions on your chosen topic.
6. All district policies must be followed.

Changing your project: All major changes to the project must be approved by the Senior Project Committee. Students who change their projects run a significant risk of falling behind. It is highly unlikely that change will be allowed. The purpose is to learn about yourself; that isn't always neat and doesn't always mean your will get the outcome you originally intended to have.

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION OVERVIEW

The Senior LIFE Project has several written components, all necessary because we cannot watch you work or test your learning in the same way we do in the classroom. Also, it is quite common in the working world to have to prove to your boss or supervisor that you have a feasible plan for your work and can justify the expense and time that will accrue. Thus it is up to you to propose, plan, implement, reflect on, and present your work and learning in ways that justify your project's rigor and depth.

The Research Paper component and requirements will be explained by your English teacher. All reflections and time logs must be submitted before you can be cleared to present your project information and product to the panel of judges.

COLLECTING TANGIBLE EVIDENCE: THE PRODUCT

The evidence or product you collect during your senior project can be physical or abstract and has two purposes. It provides verification that you did the work you claimed to do. It also helps you demonstrate your progress *throughout* the project, so that in case you are unable to reach your stated goals you can still show that you learned new skills and gained new knowledge.

Read the table below to identify the evidence that will serve your project best. Each project is unique, so please ask questions if you are uncertain how to demonstrate the quality of your effort and work throughout the project.

General Guidelines

- Plan ways to collect and store evidence *before* you begin your project.
- Backup electronic evidence in at least two places so that it's impossible to lose all of it.
- Discuss your evidence collection and display plans with the Senior Project Committee.
- If problems arise, contact your English teacher immediately.

Examples: See your teacher for examples of products. However, they could include

- A physical product: painting, scientific model, fashion outfit, computer program, rebuilt engine
- A written product: short story, book of poetry, novelette, newspaper articles
- A performance: dance or singing recital, theatrical production, video creation, produce a fashion show
- A teaching or leadership experience: teach junior high health classes about teen alcoholism, coach a junior basketball team
- A physical experience: learn to scuba dive, run a marathon, start a fitness program
- A career related project: investigate a career by working in the field with someone who is currently employed in the area and produce a document related to that field (brochure, guide, pamphlet, video)
- A technology project: develop a home page, create an app, create a video game, build a robot, draw blueprints

PROJECT EVALUATION

STAGE ONE

You will submit your proposal/plan to a committee of teachers (Senior Project Committee). The committee will respond to your plan and will likely ask you to make revisions prior to the approval of your project. Once the plan has been approved, any major changes to the project **MUST** be approved by the Committee. You will begin seeking out at least one mentor. You will write a business letter stating your goal for your project and how the mentor can help.

STAGE TWO

The research paper will require you to use specific skills such as research, organization, and time management. MLA format will be required. Please see your English teacher for other information specific to the research paper requirements.

STAGE THREE

Each project, including a product and presentation, will be evaluated by a panel of judges from the community.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

It is essential to the success of your project that you establish and maintain good communication with the Senior Project Committee. To do this you should:

- Conduct and document your work according to your approved plan.
- Follow all documentation guidelines that will be provided.
- Meet ALL scheduled due dates for project components.
- Attend ALL required meetings. Inform your panel of any conflict ahead of time.
- Immediately inform the panel of any significant change to your project. The panel will determine if a new plan is required.
- Locate a mentor/expert to assist you with your learning.

SENIOR PROJECT BEST PRACTICES

The most successful senior projects grow out of the student's commitment to the project goals and to the learning process. Taking the following actions will help ensure that your project succeeds:

- **Commit to doing your best work, regardless of minor frustrations**
 - As with many milestones in life, the senior project contains "hoops" you have to jump through. The most successful students are those who refuse to let the frustrations of the project get in the way of their experience and learning.
- **Identify specific learning goals for your project**
- **Figure out tangible ways to measure or validate your progress**
- **Meet deadlines**
- **Keep a daily/weekly log of your project work**
 - Making even brief notes on a daily or even weekly basis will save you tons of stress and time when Reflections and Time Logs are due. It's tough to remember what you did and thought a month ago, but it's fairly easy to recall what you did and thought yesterday.
- **Get pictures of yourself *working on your project* at stages along the way**
 - Pictures of equipment or other people tell a limited story. Get pictures of yourself, engaged in the work. If that's not possible, work out with your panel other means of proving your involvement.
- **Keep ALL drafts, sketches, first attempts, mistakes, practice recordings, etc.**
 - Evidence of your progress is required AND should be presented in the presentation. Build a collection of evidence as you go.
- **Ask for help *before* problems become catastrophes**
 - Asking for help is a sign of strength and wisdom, not weakness or failure. The senior project is supposed to challenge you; you'll need help. Ask for it.
- **Communicate with the Senior Project Committee and/or your English teacher throughout the process**
- **Be honest with your parents, English teacher, panel, etc. about project progress**
 - Academic honesty applies to the Senior LIFE Project. If you fake any aspect of your project, you will not receive credit. This may affect your status in graduation ceremonies and even graduation.

GRADING

Each component of this project is important to your semester and overall average. Many major grades will be earned throughout this project. All components should be uploaded to the digital portfolio.

IMPORTANT DATES

FALL SEMESTER:

1st 9 Weeks:

Wednesday, August 16 – Students receive packet and parent letter

Monday, August 21 – Signed Parent Letter (Quiz)

Friday, September 15 – Project Proposal (Major)

Wed, Thurs, & Fri, September 27-29 – Senior Project Committee Review of Proposal

Thursday, October 12- Business Letter to Mentor (Major)

2nd 9 Weeks:

Monday, November 27 – Rough Draft of Research Paper (Major)

Friday, December 8 – Students receive RD with rubric and teacher revision notes

Monday, December 18 – Final Draft of Research Paper (revisions should be evident)
(Semester Exam)

SPRING SEMESTER:

3rd 9 Weeks:

Friday, January 19 – Resume' Due

Wednesday, January 31 – Reflection #1, Time Log, & Class Discussion (Quiz)

Monday, February 26 – Interview Questions (Major)

Wednesday, February 28 – Reflection #2, Time Log, & Class Discussion (Quiz)

4th 9 Weeks:

Tuesday, March 20 – Transcript of Interview (Major)

Wednesday, March 28 – Reflection #3, Time Log, & Class Discussion (Quiz)

Friday, April 20 – Reflection #4, Time Log, & Class Discussion (Quiz)

April 23-27 – Practice Presentations in class (Major)

May 7-11 – Presentations and Products presented before judging panel (revisions should be evident) (Final Exam)

*Bold dates are DUE dates. Something is to be turned in to your English teacher.

**Due dates are subject to change

***Additional due dates may be assigned by the English teacher