



Montrose Area School District
GRADUATION PROJECT

**INFORMATIONAL PACKET AND RESOURCES
FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS**

2008 – 2009

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WHY A GRADUATION PROJECT?

The mandate for the Graduation Project (also referred to as the Senior Project) may be found in Chapter 4 Section 4.24 of the P.D.E. curriculum regulations. Specifically, as required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, each student is required to complete a project in one or more areas of concentrated study in order to graduate from public high school. The purpose of the project, which includes research, writing, and an appropriate form of demonstration, is to assure that the student is able to apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information and effectively communicate significant knowledge and understanding.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Each project will include: an original written component, evidence of appropriate research, observation or activity as required, a log of activities and contacts, an oral presentation, and a written self-reflection. The project may take the form of community service, career exploration with job shadowing, a demonstration of skills evidencing superior knowledge, or some other approved, original endeavor.

Deadlines for the completion and submission of required project elements to the student's assigned faculty advisor(s) and/or the Senior Project Coordinator will be strictly enforced. Students should be aware that by missing a deadline they are placing their opportunity to graduate in jeopardy. Students are required to schedule conferences with their faculty advisor(s) at a mutually convenient time as well as illustrate adequate progress, responsibility and maturity throughout the year by meeting project deadlines.

To encourage teamwork and those skills necessary to work effectively alongside colleagues in a work environment, students may collaborate on a common senior project, providing that the group does not exceed four students. Each group member must be an integral part of the project's planning, organization and implementation, and is required to adhere to all project guidelines to the same degree as a student working individually. It is important to note that individuals working within a group may fail to successfully meet the graduation requirement even if the rest of the group is successful if they do not meet all project guidelines. Individuals may, and are encouraged to enlist the assistance of their classmates for projects involving clinics, performances, workshops, etc., regardless of whether or not those classmates are receiving credit toward their own graduation requirement.

ROLE OF THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

The parent/guardian's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, reviewing the Graduation Project handbook and reading and signing the parent acknowledgement form, which will be placed on file at the high school. Parents are expected to take a proactive approach in monitoring their students' progress and adherence to project guidelines and deadlines. While the project is the student's responsibility, the most successful students are generally those with parents who are encouraging but firm when it comes to meeting project deadlines in a timely manner. It is also recommended that parents meet with their students' Faculty Advisors during the annual Parent-Teacher Conferences in November and maintain contact with Faculty Advisors and Senior Project Coordinator as the necessity arises.

ROLE OF A RESOURCE PERSON/MENTOR

Resource persons/mentors are best described as *content experts* in the field of study the student has chosen for his/her project. They lend their experience and knowledge in helping students reach their projects' goals. It must be clearly understood that a resource person serves only as a consultant. It is the student's responsibility to do all of the work required to successfully complete the Graduation Project. Resource persons, not faculty advisors, help students conduct research, seek out information, and provide expertise. More than one resource person/mentor may be utilized for a single project. For example, someone job shadowing in a legal firm may shadow a lawyer, paralegal and secretary; someone shadowing a cosmetologist may observe each employee in a salon, especially if each employee has an area of specialization. Teachers may be used as mentors providing they are not advisor and mentor for the same project. Parents, legal guardians and half or full siblings may not be used as mentors for their own family members. It is acceptable for students to be mentored by other individuals in a family member's place of employment.

Students are responsible for contacting prospective resource people/mentors and asking for their assistance, being sure to explain the goal and scope of the project. If the prospective mentor agrees to help, the student must then provide the person's name and contact information on the Project Proposal Form and Mentor Information Sheet for the Project Coordinator's approval. Resource persons may be referenced in the self-reflection essay of the project, and research paper.

Resource persons/mentors should review the project guidelines carefully. In addition, each mentor will be required to complete and sign a Mentor Information and Acknowledgement Sheet prior to the start of the project. As the project progresses, each mentor will be required to validate the logbook hours submitted by the student(s) they work with, by signing each logbook entry.

Resource persons/mentors are a mandatory part of the graduation project. Refer to the Project Options information to see the specific requirements for working with a resource person/mentor.

PROJECT OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Please note that requirements may be adapted by Special Education staff to accommodate for Individualized Education or 504 Plans, so long as no project requirements are deleted.

1. The *community service* option requires

1. a properly completed and returned Parent Acknowledgement Form.
2. a properly completed and returned Mentor Information and Acknowledgement Form.
3. a properly completed and returned Project Proposal Form.
4. a minimum of 24 hours of documented service under the supervision of one or more resource persons/mentors (30 hours for Highly Successful evaluation). Documentation will consist of the following:
 - a log detailing each activity or service performed. The log must include a specific and detailed explanation of each activity or service including the time, date, duration, and signature of verification by the appropriate supervising resource person/mentor. Seniors are required to provide a minimum of **four** different logbook entries from at least four different days. No more than 8 hours will be credited per day. Logbook sheets will be provided. It is recommended but not required for seniors to use these logbook sheets (See rubric).
5. a typed research paper a minimum of four pages in length (approximately 1000 words) focusing on the an appropriate, related and pre-approved topic (See rubric).
6. an oral presentation 5-12 minutes in length incorporating at least one audio/visual aid per group member. Presentations will be viewed and evaluated by a team of teachers. (See rubric).

Assortment of possible local community service opportunities

(This is not intended to be an all inclusive list)

There must be a resource person/mentor who will supervise and direct your community service volunteer experience. This person must be able to authenticate your time spent and activities completed if contacted by the Senior Project Coordinator.

American Red Cross (Montrose Chapter) – Mrs. Becky Naylor 278-1427

Susquehanna County Soil & Water Conservation Office 278-4600

Interfaith Charities- Mrs. Brenda Loubet 278-1776

American Cancer Society (Montrose Office) 278-1694

Old Mill Village 465-3448

Salt Springs State Park 967-7275

Humane Society of Susquehanna County 278-1228

Susquehanna County Literacy Program 278-9027 (including the Apple Festival)

Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library Assn 278-1881

American Lung Association of Northeast Pa 346-1784

Susquehanna County Recycling 278-3589

Meadowview Senior Living Center 278-3836

Gracious Living Estates 278-3414

Habitat for Humanity (Susquehanna County) – 278-4102 Julie Gaines 278-2342

Lathrop Street After-School Program – Kathy Parks

CVYAA – Kelly Davis ksdavis@epix.net 553-2291

Susquehanna Recycling Center – 278-3509

Montrose Campsites – 278-9999

Rails to Trails, Muscular Dystrophy, Ronald McDonald House, American Heart Association

AND MANY OTHERS!



2. The career exploration option requires

1. a properly completed and returned Parent Acknowledgement Form.
2. a properly completed and returned Mentor Information and Acknowledgement Form.
3. a properly completed and returned Project Proposal Form.
4. a minimum of 24 hours of documented job shadowing under the supervision of one or more resource persons/mentors (30 hours for Highly Successful evaluation).

Documentation will consist of the following:

- a. a log detailing each activity or service performed. The log must include a specific and detailed explanation of each activity or service including the time, date, duration, and signature of verification by the appropriate supervising resource person/mentor. Seniors are required to provide a minimum of **three** different logbook entries from at least three different days. No more than 8 hours will be credited per day. Logbook sheets will be provided. It is recommended but not required for seniors to use these logbook sheets (See rubric).
5. a typed research paper a minimum of four pages in length (approximately 1000 words) focusing on the an appropriate, related and pre-approved topic (See rubric).
 6. an oral presentation 5-12 minutes in length incorporating at least one audio/visual aid per group member. Presentations will be viewed and evaluated by a team of teachers. (See rubric).

3. The superior skills and/or original endeavor options require

1. a properly completed and returned Parent Acknowledgement Form.
2. a properly completed and returned Mentor Information and Acknowledgement Form.
3. a properly completed and returned Project Proposal Form.
4. a performance, workshop, clinic, benefit drive, or other endeavor for a public audience or for public benefit/gain. This option requires photographic and /or video documentation to serve as evidence of the project's execution and must occur under the supervision of a resource person/mentor.
5. a log detailing all phases of the project, from start to finish. The log must document at least 24 hours of time spent on the project (30 hours for Highly Successful evaluation), and the majority of time spent must be verified by a resource person/mentor. At least half of the total hours must be verified by a mentor's signature. In addition, seniors are required to provide a minimum of **five** different logbook entries from at least five different days.

The journal must consist of: A complete overview of the activity, from the earliest brainstorming sessions through its completion. All steps in planning, preparation and implementation must be discussed, including a detailed list of all contacts and arrangements made, including date, time, topic, etc. Individuals working within a group are each responsible for their own log. The signature of your resource person/mentor must accompany at least 12 hours worth of documented time, and your mentor is expected to attend your performance, workshop, clinic, benefit drive, etc.
6. a typed research paper a minimum of four full pages in length (approximately 1000 words) focusing on an appropriate, related and pre-approved topic (See rubric).
7. an oral presentation 5-12 minutes in length incorporating at least one audio/visual aid per group member. Presentations will be viewed and evaluated by a team of teachers. (See rubric).

Frequently Asked Questions

- Can a family member be my mentor?

Yes and no. Parents, Legal Guardians and Siblings may NOT be mentors, although extended family members may (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandparents, etc.). This is an attempt to protect you from claims of nepotism.

- Can I have more than one mentor?

Yes. Multiple mentors at the same facility can provide all appropriate contact information on a single Mentor Information Sheet. Mentors from two different places will each have to provide a separate information sheet. If a student needs to add or change mentors part way through the project, he or she should see Mr. Powers to obtain an additional information sheet, or can print them from the school web site.

- Can I get paid while I job-shadow?

No. Students may be able to job-shadow where they currently work if they come in for unpaid hours and if they shadow someone in a more advanced position than the one they currently hold. Proposals requesting career exploration at a place of employment will be analyzed much more stringently than others.

- Can I use my vo-tech or co-op experience for my project?

While you may certainly refer to those experiences as part of your reflection essay or to aid in your research, you may not log those hours as part of your 24-30 hour requirement. Co-op students should refer to the previous question.

- What if I get done with my project early? Can I present early?

Yes. Juniors who finish their hours in the spring will be able to do a formal presentation and submit logbooks and self-reflection essays by the end of the school year. Additional presentation days will be scheduled as the need arises. Students generally have opportunity to present on all in-service days, parent-teacher conference days and even during or right after the school day. It is the goal of the Project Coordinator to make the entire process more streamlined and student-friendly, encouraging seniors to complete tasks according to their own schedules ahead of final deadlines.

- What happens if I don't do my project?

You don't receive a diploma or get to participate in graduation procedures. There will be a summer school session for seniors who wish to make up their senior project then. ALL components of the project must be completed according to the established guidelines.

- Is there any reason to really try to get a "Highly Successful" evaluation on my work?

Personal pride and satisfaction in doing your best should be enough to motivate all students to aim toward being "Highly Successful" on the project, but the school would also like to reward and recognize those students who meet all requirements while demonstrating academic excellence. Students receiving a "Highly Successful" overall evaluation will be recognized during the presentation of senior awards and scholarships, and may receive further awards or acknowledgement as the administration and staff sees appropriate.

- What happens when work is graded ‘Not Yet Successful?’

All graded components must be resubmitted with corrections by the deadlines provided on the timeline. Work must be resubmitted until it receives a ‘Successful’ evaluation. Students generally have two weeks from when “Not Yet Successful” work is returned to them before it is due with corrections.

- What happens if I turn in senior project assignments late?

Completing things on time is an important part of this process. Paperwork and written portions must be turned in by each deadline to be given full credit. Late paperwork, inadequate progress, etc. may result in an “Incomplete” being given for a core-class grade, such as English, Social Studies or Math, depending on which class is responsible for checking logbook progress, etc.

- I moved into the district as a senior. Do I still need to do a project?

Yes, if you have not completed a confirmed graduation project in another school. All students in PA public schools are required to do some sort of graduation/senior project, but not all schools must follow the same format or deadlines. Schools in other states often have their own graduation requirements as well. Every effort will be made to give equitable credit when it is due. Seniors new to the school may have their requirements (including deadlines) altered by the Project Coordinator depending on a variety of factors.

- I didn’t complete my Research Paper in another class. Now what?

Each senior must complete a research paper. Students not taking the PSSA Prep course may be at a disadvantage when it comes time to submit a Senior Project Research Paper, but it does not change the fact that a paper must be submitted which A) has a link to the student’s senior project topic and B) meets the standards of the research paper rubric. All effort will be made to assist seniors who haven’t completed their paper by the start of their senior year. All research papers must be submitted prior to Christmas break. Students not receiving a Satisfactory grade by the end of the 2nd quarter will receive an incomplete for their English class grade until the paper is submitted and meets the minimum standard.

- Can I miss school to complete my logbook hours?

Yes, to a degree. Students who have not had excessive absence from school may request administrative permission for several school-related excused absences. The days must be pre-approved. A request form is available in the front office. Students may not generally take multiple days in a single week.

- Who checks my logbook?

Being a transition year with an evolving project, that depends on what grade the student is in. Seniors will show and submit logbooks to their English teachers. Juniors will show and submit logbooks to their Math teachers.

- Can I work in a group?

Yes. Students may work in groups of 2-4, providing each student completes his or her own logbook. These groups are expecting to present together, each group member being graded independently of one another. Presentation lengths vary according to group size as follows: Group of 2 = 10-24 minutes; group of 3 = 15-36 minutes; group of 4 = 20-48 minutes.

PROJECT TIMELINE

In the event of a non scheduled school closing (snow day, etc.) the work is due the next day that school is in session. In the event of a school closing on a presentation day, presentations will be rescheduled for a mutually convenient time.

SENIORS:

Presentations will be scheduled as-needed throughout the year. If your logbook is complete by October 1st, you **MUST** present on the October 10th in-service. Similar deadlines will be established with additional presentation days scheduled throughout late fall and early-mid winter. **ALL** logbooks must be completed by March 2nd with the final round of presentations to take place in March, during PSSA test week and potentially the March teacher in-service day.

See the FAQ's section for information regarding research papers that have not been completed.

JUNIORS:

Paperwork deadlines: October 3rd for the Parent Acknowledgement Letters and October 30th for the Mentor Information Sheet and Proposal form. They should be submitted to Mr. Powers or your Social Studies Teacher.

All effort will be made to accommodate students who wish to complete their hours early and present prior to the end of the Junior year. Logbooks **MUST** be completed and submitted by June 1st unless pre-approval has been granted to complete hours over the summer. Most Juniors will complete their formal presentations in October of their Senior Year.

Please adhere to all deadlines established by your English teachers regarding the Research paper.

MATERIALS ARE ONLINE:

www.masd.info → Jr/Sr High School → Senior Project Icon

