Senior Project Guide for Students
Senior Project Contact Information

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Overview

Why? The Senior Project will help to improve your written and oral communication skills, will help your ability to reason and respond intelligently to questions, and will help you make the transition from school to work/college/military service. Students will derive a sense of “ownership” of a body of work that is a reflection of personal interests and abilities. The Senior Project offers opportunities to expand individual knowledge, explore career paths, and apply learning to real-life situations that will serve to benefit the student’s growth and promote life-long learning.

What? The Senior Project includes: a written component, a Product (creative, academic, or service), a Presentation, and a Portfolio. The Senior Project is based on a pass/fail/incomplete grade scale. Passing grades are required in all components of the Senior Project for a student to earn the one-half credit and meet this graduation requirement.

Who? All Appoquinimink School District seniors are required to complete the Senior Project. Seniors enrolling after the 2nd marking period must meet with the Senior Project Coordinator in their school to discuss their Senior Project requirements.

When? The Senior Project is an ongoing process that starts at the end of your junior year and continues through your senior year.

How? The technical skills for the research paper are covered in the English curriculum in grades 9 – 11. While students will receive time during school to meet with advisors and/or readers occasionally, as well as lunch help sessions periodically, the majority of work on the project will be done outside of school. Each student is encouraged to work with a mentor who is an expert in his or her approved topic area.
### Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>What?</th>
<th>When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student, Parents, SP Coordinators</td>
<td>• Parent Letter</td>
<td>• September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student, Reader, Advisor, &amp; SP Coordinators</td>
<td>• Topic Approval Form Meeting &amp; Submission</td>
<td>• September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student &amp; SP Coordinators</td>
<td>• Topic Approval Form Returned to Student</td>
<td>• September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student, Advisor, Reader, &amp; SP Coordinator</td>
<td>• Letter of Intent Meeting &amp; Submission</td>
<td>• October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student &amp; Reader</td>
<td>• Letter of Intent Returned to Student</td>
<td>• October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student, Advisor, Reader &amp; SP Coordinators</td>
<td>• Written Component Submission</td>
<td>• December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student &amp; Reader</td>
<td>• Written Component Returned to Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students &amp; Readers</td>
<td>• Revisions Due (if necessary)</td>
<td>• January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students, Readers, &amp; Staff/Faculty</td>
<td>• Presentation, Product, &amp; Portfolio Submission</td>
<td>• March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students/Readers</td>
<td>• Final steps of Written Component</td>
<td>• March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you would like to submit any part of your project early, please see your Senior Project Coordinators.
Parent Notification and Approval

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Appoquinimink School District would like to introduce you to the Senior Project. This project will be a link between the classroom and your child’s post-secondary experiences. We encourage students to select a topic that both interests them and represents a unique learning opportunity. The Senior Project is important for our seniors because those seniors who do make the most of their senior year are more likely to have a positive experience in college or on the job. In addition, completing detailed work in an area of interest will provide students with valuable information about potential careers or courses of post-secondary study. The components of the project will cross curricular boundaries and enable students to integrate reading, writing, presentation, and communication skills.

The Senior Project is also a graduation requirement for all seniors. In order for a senior to graduate, he or she must satisfy the requirements set forth by the Appoquinimink School District. The project requirements include a written component, a product (creative, academic, or community service), an oral presentation tying the entire project together, and a portfolio including evidentiary documentation of the process. Schools may give students marking period grades that reflect their completion of senior project components, although the overall requirement is graded on a pass/fail scale.

Please be aware that students and guardians will assume all financial responsibility for any cost incurred during the project. If cost does become an issue, please alert a member of your schools’ administration immediately and we will mediate the conflict. We thank you in advance for your support of this project, and we look forward to an enriched senior year.

Please submit a signed copy of this letter to your Homeroom / Advisory teacher.

Students who violate academic expectations regarding plagiarism may not pass the Senior Project and may not be able to graduate with their class.

My signature below acknowledges that I have read and understand the contents of the Appoquinimink School District Senior Project Manual:

_________________________________                 _____________________________
Student’s name (Printed)                     Guardian’s name (Printed)

_________________________________                  _____________________________
Student’s signature                         Guardian’s signature
**Staff Roles & Responsibilities**

- The ADVISORY TEACHER - Every student’s advisor is responsible for monitoring students’ progress and assigning marking period grades reflecting this progress on his or her Senior Project.

- The READER – Every student will have a staff member reading the Letter of Intent and the drafts of the written component.

- The SENIOR PROJECT COORDINATOR – The Senior Project Coordinator will oversee the entire project process including scheduling of the final presentations.

- ENGLISH/VOCATIONAL/OTHER FACULTY – Students are encouraged to seek out and utilize the talent and expertise of the entire building staff.

- MENTOR – While working with a mentor is not mandatory, students are strongly encouraged to seek and work with a mentor who possesses specific knowledge/experience of the approved topic.

**Student Responsibilities**

STUDENTS – Students will complete each component of the Senior Project before they graduate. Each student will be responsible for:

1. meeting with their advisors and readers by the designated time,
2. keeping copies of all work completed,
3. participating in the help sessions if needed, and;
4. maintaining a positive attitude throughout the process.
**Topic Selection and Approval**

Topic selection for the senior project is critical. Students should select a topic of personal interest, as well as one that is well suited to all requirements. Topics and research for the senior project cannot be combined with any other assignment or project (i.e. a student may **not** “Double Dip”). For example using credit earned for both their Eagle Scout and Senior Project requirements.

**How Do I Choose a Topic?**

The question of how to choose a topic is a common one, but does not need to be a difficult decision. There are many options to choose from. See the list of suggested topics that are included in the handbook.

- **The very first step in choosing a topic is to ask yourself about your interests.** What do you like to do? Do you have any hobbies? Passions? What do you plan to do when you graduate high school? Once you have chosen a few areas of interest, the next questions to ask are *which one of these topics can I turn into a project? Which topic can I truly learn from?* Choose the topic that will challenge you; the one that will become a life-altering experience.

- **Make sure to also consider the cost of your Senior Project.** Senior year is filled with fun activities that can become costly. You do not want your Senior Project to become a financial burden. Choose a project that you will enjoy, but one that will not *break the bank*. Remember that it is your responsibility to complete the project. The Appoquinimink School District wants to make sure that you consider all your options before you sign your proposal and contract with your school.

- **Think about the logistics.** Do I wish to work individually or collaboratively on this project? What is my timeframe to complete this project? Can I adequately structure my time to accomplish the goals I’ve set for myself? Perhaps you want to plan with the end in mind; create yourself a calendar that works backwards from the presentations in March to ensure that you manage your time most effectively.

- **Finally, when choosing a topic, consider the different components needed to complete the project, and make sure that you can complete every single one.** If your topic fulfills the criteria below, then your idea may be a good choice for your Senior Project.
  - Fits into one of the three project categories (Creative, Academic Growth, or Community Service)
  - Includes an experience that will challenge you
  - Represents the culminating intellectual activity of your ASD educational experience
How are Topics Approved

✔ Topics must be submitted to and approved by Senior Project Coordinator(s). Each student must submit a Topic Approval Form to the Senior Project Coordinator(s) at his/her high school; Topic Approval Forms will be returned to students through their Homeroom Advisor. The student can submit the Topic Approval Form electronically through email. The student will receive confirmation when the topic has been approved and use that response as verification of topic approval for their portfolio.

✔ Each student is then required to submit a Letter of Intent that formalizes the topic selection. This will be submitted to the Advisor and the Reader. See due date in the Calendar on page 5.

What Happens If My Topic Isn’t Approved?

If your topic is not approved you must revise it and resubmit your Topic Approval Form. In the event the topic cannot be modified you will need to select another topic. Reconsider the questions above when revising your topic; often the main issue is that a topic is not research based and therefore will give the student difficulty in finding reliable, academic research. Other issues could include a topic being too narrow or too broad or not having a practical product idea. If you have questions about how to revise your topic or how to choose a new topic, please see your reader for more feedback before resubmitting a new form.
Thesis Statements

A critical question in the topic selection process is, “What is my Thesis?” This question can be restated as, “What conclusion or conclusions will I derive from my research?” A thesis statement should not be something that can be answered with a list or can be answered with a simple yes or no.

A thesis is an idea:
- An idea answers a question; it explains something that needs to be explained.
- An idea usually starts with an observation that is puzzling; with something that you want to figure out rather than something that you think you already understand.
- An idea may be the discovery of a question where there seemed not to be one.
- An idea may make explicit and explore the meaning of something implicit—an unstated assumption upon which an argument rests, or a logical consequence of a given position.
- An idea may connect elements of a subject and explain the significance of that connection.
- An idea often accounts for some dissonance—that is, something that seems not to fit together.

The first step in writing a thesis statement is to consider your main research question(s); you can have one general question or several minor questions. Suppose you wanted to research baseball. Your advisor or reader might ask you what you would like to prove or show your audience about baseball. Your brainstorming might lead you to questions such as “What is the history of baseball?” or “What is the evolution of the baseball bat (or glove? Or rules? Etc.)?”; however, you would simply be informing your audience about these topics and not necessarily exploring an argument that could lead to an effective thesis and later a strong product.

Instead you could certainly write about the evolution of the baseball bat, create bats out a variety of materials, and study which performed the best; or you could discuss the social implications of steroids and other performance enhancement drugs in baseball; or you could discuss the various methods of pitching and how they can lead to a strike out.

Think about the following steps in order to write your own research questions:

- First, consider all of the factors that you want to research.
- Next, determine whether they all fit under one overarching question or if they do not relate to each other at all (you might have to reduce your questions to make them connect more).
- Last, establish your main argument and how that could relate to a product in the end of your research.

Once you have selected your main research question, consider the following: Can the question be easily and fully researched? What type of information do I need to answer the research question? Is the scope of this information reasonable? Given the type and scope of the information that I need, is my question too broad or too narrow? What sources will have the type of information that I need to answer the research question (journals, books, internet resources, government documents, people) and can I access these sources? Given my answers to the above questions, do I have a good quality research question that I actually will be able to answer by doing research?
Written Component

Each senior will complete a written component utilizing research writing skills attained in Grades 9 – 11 and materials found in your school library. It is your responsibility to make sure that your Advisor and Reader each receive a copy of your written component by December 2011.

Plagiarism

Every research paper is examined to determine if the work is original and to see if the citations are accurate. Any student found to have plagiarized any part of the Senior Project will be required to repeat every step of the process with a new topic. Any student found to have plagiarized a second time will be required to complete the Senior Project in the summer term and will not graduate with the class. Failure to properly cite within the research paper is plagiarism.

Specific Requirements

1. **Project Introduction** – ½ page review of project. Tell the audience about the topic you chose and why. This introduction is to familiarize your audience with the whole project, not just the writing component.

2. **Background Research** – 3-5 pages. The section will explain your topic using the sources on your reference page (minimum of five sources).

3. **Experience/Results** – 2-3 pages. This section is the story of what you did and your outcome.

4. **Reflection** – 3-5 pages. This section addresses your experiences throughout the Senior Project process. Refer to the questions/statements below, as well as those found on page 17 of this manual.

   1. Skills you improved upon and skills you discovered lacking in yourself.
   2. The high and low points of the experience.
   3. Changes in your assumptions, perceptions, and attitudes.
   4. Primary ways in which you helped others.
   5. What you planned to do, but never quite pulled together
   6. What your performance on the project has to say about your fears, hopes, social skills, dreams, plans, knowledge, etc.
   7. How has this project influenced possible career/post-secondary education choices/opportunities?
   8. How you would do the same project differently next time?

5. **References**: 5 sources in APA format. At least four sources need to be formal (encyclopedia, magazine, newspaper, journal article, book, etc.) and one can be informal (blog, interview, etc.).
Product

The Senior Project requires that students develop a product based on their initial research. Products are not required to be tangible, but must stand as both the focus of academic research and the centerpiece of your presentation. It is important to note that the product should be linked directly to the research. In addition, the presentation is a way to talk about the product. The presentation will not be accepted as the product.

There are three different products that you can develop. First, you may produce a creative product based on the background information you found for the written component. If you follow the baseball topic, the creative product could be a new helmet design. If you follow the Research Paper Product, you could research the shifting changes in rules and/or game play or the history of women’s baseball. And if you follow the Community Service Product, you could coach a little league team or volunteer as a little league official. A few other examples are listed below.

Creative Product

The Creative Product is a creation based on your background research. Typically the product is a tangible object, such as a model of the effects of seizures on the brain; but the product can be an event as well, such as establishing a 5K event for a specific cause.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD EXAMPLES</th>
<th>BAD EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ A cookbook that includes original recipes based on a specific diet</td>
<td>✓ A cookbook that includes copies of recipes from the internet, cookbooks, or magazines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Build an automated robot that can perform a specific task</td>
<td>✓ Build a robot from a pre-fabricated kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Play or perform an original piece of music</td>
<td>✓ Play or perform someone else's music to represent different musical genres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Create your own line of fashion, including producing actual clothing of your own design</td>
<td>✓ Putting together different fashion styles from purchased items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Conducting survey research in which you create your own surveys, form a hypothesis, and prove it through the data from the surveys.</td>
<td>✓ A pamphlet restating highlights from the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ A poster/display board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ A power point presentation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Research Paper Product

Your research paper will be completed utilizing research writing skills attained in Grades 9 - 11.

Plagiarism

Every research paper is examined to determine if the work is original and to see if the citations are accurate. Any student found to have plagiarized any part of the Senior Project research paper will be required to repeat every step of the Senior Project with a new topic. Any student found to have plagiarized a second time will be required to complete the Senior Project in the summer term and will not graduate with the class. Failure to properly cite within the research paper is plagiarism.

Specific Requirements

- 9-12 pages in length
- Double-spaced, typed
- 12 point typed font, Times New Roman. 1” margins on all sides.
- APA format for source citations and reference page – see owl.english.purdue.edu.
  - Abstract is not required.
- Cover page with student’s name, title of paper, date submitted in APA format
- Internal sub-headings within the paper optional
- No report covers
- No Footnotes

References

Each source you cite in the paper must appear in your reference list; likewise, each entry in the reference list must be cited in your text. You need nine sources minimum, accurately cited in APA format. At least six sources need to be “print” sources; these include electronic print sources and texts. An electronic print source is a source that at one time could have been or currently could be in print, i.e. magazine, newspaper, or journal articles or e-texts. The other three sources can be web based sources, i.e. .com's, .gov’s, .edu’s, .org’s, etc. Personal interviews/personal communications are only cited within the body of the paper (internal citation) and not on the reference page, but count as part of your nine sources; you may only have two interviews count as part of your nine (minimum) required sources.

Community Service Product

Students have the option to complete a Service Learning Project in lieu of a creative or research paper product. By participating in Service Learning students have the opportunity to explore the impact that individuals can make through community service and volunteerism.
Requirements for Community Service

Students must have a minimum of 50 documented hours of service to a single non-profit organization or agency. These hours must be documented by the supervising agency. These hours must be focused on a single specific project that addresses a community need (e.g. The American Cancer Society Relay for Life, The MS Society Bike to the Bay).

Students must complete all four aspects of the Senior Project, including the written component, the presentation, and the portfolio. In the presentation, students should detail their specific role, responsibilities, and impact. Students must present tangible evidence of their involvement, such as a portfolio detailing all work on their service project, which may include photos at work with the organization, and/or any products they created for the organization (e.g. signs, flyer, publications created for an event).

***Students cannot use volunteer hours associated with clubs or activities that require their own community service, such as National Honor Society or Boy Scouts.***

Possible organizations (include but are not limited to the following):
- American Cancer Society
- MS Society
- Boys & Girls Club
- Faithful Friends
- Special Olympics
- Delaware State Parks
- Habitat for Humanity
- Easter Seals
Presentation

The presentation is your opportunity to tell others about your experiences in completing the Senior Project. This is done through a formal presentation of your project. As a mandatory component of the Senior Project, each student will explain how the academic research contributed to the product and discuss lessons learned as a result of doing the Senior Project. The complete presentation must not exceed 20 minutes. The format for your presentation should be: development of your topic, presentation of your product, and a Questions & Answers session.

Expectations

Part 1  The Four-Year Journey (3-6 minutes)

A.  Academic Growth (1-2 minutes)

In the “Academic Growth” section of the presentation, students should use their transcript to highlight growth. This does NOT mean that they need to show their transcript. In addition, students can give any other examples of academic growth that have occurred in their four years of high school to satisfy this requirement.

B.  Personal Growth (1-2 minutes)

In the “Personal Growth” section of the presentation, students should highlight after school and/or community-based activities in which they have been involved. Examples should be specific. Students should include why they chose to participate in these activities and how they have grown from these experiences. They can include ANY area of personal growth, it does NOT have to be limited to after school or community-based activities.

C.  Connection to Future (1-2 minutes)

Students share how Appoquinimink School District has prepared them for their future. They should consider, given the opportunity to experience their high school years over, what would they have done differently? Identify how their academic and personal growth can be successfully applied to their post high school plans.

Part 2  Introduction (1-2) minutes

Students will introduce their project by describing why they chose this topic and why it was important to them.

Part 3  The Body (7-10 minutes)

The body should focus upon the product of the Senior Project. Students will discuss their learning experiences throughout the development of the project using their portfolio, an “experience log,” etc. These descriptions/understandings may be described in sequence, i.e. from day one to day two, etc. Another choice might be to prioritize by
describing the most to the least valuable learning experience. In either case, students must provide authentic reflections from their work.

Part 4 Conclusion (1-2 minutes)

Students will summarize what they have learned and comment about the worth of the project and the value of the Senior Project requirement.

Presentation Expectations

Students are expected to be on time, be properly attired (business dress), and be prepared to speak. Students who need special accommodations (such as a special location for their presentation or extended set-up time), are responsible for submitting a written request to the Senior Project Coordinator by February 2011.

Scheduling

Each senior is assigned a presentation date and time that is communicated to them in the beginning of their senior year. Any student who requires an extension must fill out the extension request form and submit it to the Senior Project Coordinator at least four weeks prior to their presentation date. Students who have not completed the formal topic selection and approval process will not be permitted to present.

Any student who would like to present early must have all stages of the Senior Project completed prior to the presentation, i.e. students must complete the Topic Approval Form, Parent Letter, Letter of Intent, First Draft, and Final Draft (and pass all rubrics) in order to present; the earliest students can present is after September 30, 2011. You will need to select three panel members, including your Reader, and a day to present and provide a detailed explanation as to why you want to present early. The request form must be filled out completely and turned in at least one week prior to the early presentation to be approved. You, and your panel, will receive a copy of the request back before the presentation date.
Portfolio

The purpose of the Portfolio is to enable the student to showcase the best of their completed Senior Project work. The contents will serve as evidentiary documentation of the process. The portfolio is a required part of your product.

**Suggested Format**

1. Table of Contents
2. Topic Approval Form
3. Parent Letter
4. Letter of Intent
5. Draft of Written Component
6. Final written Component (corrected)-including any outlines, source & note cards, etc.
7. Reflection Piece - **Mandatory**
   a. What I hoped to gain/learn from the project
   b. What I actually learned from the project
   c. How it will impact my education/career choices

Refer to the appropriate questions below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What did you learn about your topic that you didn't know before your research and does it support your thesis statement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did your research help you to draw certain conclusions regarding your thesis statement? Support your conclusions by quoting from your research using parenthetical documentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What did you learn about yourself? Did your research journey help you to have a better understanding or change your opinion and/or beliefs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What aspect of your paper makes you feel most satisfied and/or proud? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What was the most challenging part of completing your research paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What helpful and realistic tip or bit of advice would you give someone who is going to be writing his/her Senior Project paper next year? Why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Were you able to find enough print and electronic information on your topic? How did you evaluate those sources for relevancy and authenticity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Were you able to extract the information you needed without plagiarizing, through careful note taking and citing of sources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. After using multiple sources of information, how did you decide what to keep and what to discard so that your research paper supported your thesis statement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How was your time management for the research paper? Were you able to stay on the time schedule suggested for your senior project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In what ways have your research skills grown? What do you think you did well? What do you think you could have done better?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exemplar Senior Projects

Appoquinimink School District high schools recognize Senior Projects that rise to an exemplary level with the possibility of earning a financial award. These awards are called a WOW award at Middletown High School and a Platinum award at Appoquinimink High School. Students qualifying for this award are invited to present to a second review committee if each individual component of their Senior Project earns a qualifying scores as noted below:

a. Written Component 54/60
b. Portfolio – 9/9
c. Presentation – 19/21
d. Product (service learning, research paper, created product)

In order to be eligible for the scholarship school exemplar award, a Senior Project must meet the following criteria:

- All components of the Senior Project must be completed on time.
  - This means that the final draft of the written component, the product and presentation, and the portfolio must be submitted no later than the published due date.
- The evaluation panel of the product and presentation must all agree on the exemplar status of the product and presentation.
- The presentation must be fully completed within the allotted time frame of 20 minutes.
- All candidates for the award must present before the School’s Exemplar Committee (WOW or Platinum).
  - Save all information (paper, product, presentation, and portfolio) for the scholarship presentation.
  - The presentations/products will be evaluated using the same rubrics as the regular presentations/products.
  - Students will be notified of eligibility for the school exemplar following the original presentation as determined by the individual school.
On-line Resources

APA Format Questions:  www.owl.english.purdue.edu

School Website Resources – See Senior Project Rubrics and Forms

Rubrics Include:                      Forms Include:
✓ Written Component Rubric          ✓ Topic Approval Form
✓ Research Paper Rubric             ✓ Service Learning Permission
✓ Product Rubric                    ✓ Request to Present Early
✓ Presentation Rubric               ✓ Request to Reschedule
✓ Portfolio Rubric                  Presentation

✓ Request for Special Location      ✓ Request for Special Location
   or Equipment