

**Puget
Sound
Skills Center**



Preparing Students for College & Career

Senior Culminating Project Handbook
2009-2010

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Dear PSSC Student:

The state of Washington requires that all students must complete a Culminating Project (CP) in their senior year of high school in order to graduate. You have chosen PSSC to oversee your project work, and we will submit all project evaluations to your home school.

The Culminating Project you choose has the potential to yield a number of benefits for you. The project requirements are designed to:

- give you the opportunity to explore a possible career path
- make connections with community members
- encourage independent problem-solving and achievement
- practice writing and presentation skills
- create a self-directed, authentic project that challenges you in a meaningful way

You are in charge of the process, but your advisor will be there to help you every step of the way. You will also be working with a community mentor of your choice to give you expert, real-world advice in creating your product. Most importantly, the CP includes a product, a reflection paper, and finally, an oral presentation to a panel of school personnel and community members who will evaluate and celebrate your achievements.

In this handbook, you will find important information as well as various forms needed to complete your project. Please read it carefully to ensure that you completely understand the requirements. The Culminating Project ensures that you will graduate having applied your skills and knowledge in a real-world experience. Take this opportunity to challenge yourself!

Please give the entire project serious thought and consideration. It will become a major portion of your life over the next seven to eight months, and the benefits can last a lifetime. Although your project may seem overwhelming at some points, if you meet deadlines, give it your best effort, enjoy the process, and risk a little, you will graduate knowing that you have accomplished something important.

Sincerely,

PSSC Staff

THE CULMINATING PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Culminating Project is a graduation requirement. The project will provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mastery of the following Assessment of Washington State Learning Goals:

The Student will...

- Goal 3: Think analytically, logically and creatively, and integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems (Project)
- Goal 4: Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities (Pathway, Plan, and Portfolio)

Purpose:

The purpose of the culminating project is to provide you an opportunity to test yourself – to see for yourself as well as to demonstrate and communicate to others that you can apply your knowledge and skills in important and practical situations, to solve problems, and achieve goals.

Definition:

The Culminating Project is a relevant, challenging project with a written and oral presentation. It is an independently conceived and managed piece of work, most often done outside the school, which shows the student's ability to:

- design his/her own learning experiences
- use knowledge and skills to solve problems
- independently manage a complex, multi-stage project
- connect with the community

Goals:

Goals of Project: The Culminating Project will...

- Create students who will be independent and lifelong learners
- Create an environment that fosters cross-curricular mentorship and resources
- Invite community involvement with the school in the form of mentorship, resources, and student recognition
- Provide a venue for students to connect learning, life, and work



Total project = Process/Product + Presentation + Community Connection

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Student:

The culminating project is self-directed. **You are responsible** for managing all aspects of the project. This includes:

- Finding and using good resources and models
- Solving practical problems and making decisions
- Persevering through difficulties and making adjustments in plans to complete the project
- Following the timeline and meeting deadlines
- Communicating with Advisor and Mentor
- Challenging yourself

Mentor:

The proposed mentor for the project should be chosen with great care. The choice of mentor should be directly influenced by the selection criteria of your project. Your mentor could be:

- A project coordinator for a proposed community service
- A business supervisor for a proposed career related experience
- An adult with experience in your area of interest

Mentor's role:

- Help you to locate and, where possible, provide resources to support the your project and written component
- Communicate his/her time and skill limitations with you
- Work with you to set up at least four meetings so they can help facilitate your work
- Help you set up realistic learning goals and hands on experiences.

Before you begin, you need to have parents/guardians and your PSSC advisor review and approve project activities in the community. For safety reasons, students should always stay alert to inappropriate behaviors or communications. They should discontinue contact immediately if they are uncomfortable with ANYTHING being said, done, suggested, or implied.

When working in the community students should always notify their parents/guardians:

- where they are meeting (if off campus, a public place or place of business is advised)
- with whom they are meeting
- how long they plan to meet and when they will return
- of the purpose for the meeting
- what transportation they plan to use

To establish a good working relationship with others, students should:

- set up meetings well ahead of time and then call to confirm immediately before the planned date
- clearly state purpose when requesting a meeting date/time and always respect others' busy schedules
- be sure when communicating by email or voice mail to leave complete information
- give people time to respond to messages but follow up when necessary
- be accommodating, polite, and flexible

PSSC Advisor:

Your Advisor will:

- Meet with you to check progress of your project
- Collect all aspects of the Project on or before their due dates
- Provide opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation
- Assist in modifying or adjusting your plans
- Provide opportunities for you to practice and refine your presentation skills
- Arrange evaluation panel, location, and presentation date
- Communicate all evaluations to your home school
- Notify home school of any problems or concerns

It can't be stressed enough that this is an independent project, done outside of the classroom and not a regular class assignment. As a graduating senior, this is your opportunity to show off your ability to function in the "real world" as a responsible adult. Your project experience should be a chance to demonstrate your strengths as a learner, as a worker, and as a community member.

Even though this is independent work, you have a team of people ready to support you and guide you: your advisor, your mentor, and your teachers at PSSC and your home school. If you seek help when needed and stay on top of your deadlines, your Culminating Project should be a challenging and gratifying experience.

CULMINATING PROJECT REQUIREMENTS and COMPONENTS

STEP ONE: Contract signed and submitted

Read your handbook carefully and go over it with a parent or guardian. You must both sign the contract acknowledging that this is a requirement for graduation.

STEP TWO: Project Proposal

*After you have brainstormed an idea for your project, you need to get formal approval for your idea from your advisor. There are two documents for this: the planning form outline and the narrative proposal. You do not officially begin your project or get credit for time spent on it until you have **both documents accepted**.*

▪ **Planning Form**

- *Outline* of project goals, needs, steps, and purpose
- Must meet standards (see rubric) for acceptance
- Must be accepted before you write the narrative essay proposal

▪ **Narrative Essay Proposal**

- The *purpose* of the *project*
 - This is a defense of why the project is worth your time and effort. Good projects are interesting and worthwhile – and even better ones are significant and challenging.
 - The “So what?” of the project
- A *description* of what you bring to the project: your personal background knowledge
- A *description* of any *background research* that has been completed
- The *rationale* for why this project is a learning challenge for you
 - Does it truly stretch your learning or incorporate new learning outside of the classroom?
 - Will it require you to make judgments and use analytical, logical, and creative thinking?
 - Does your project meet the “*interdisciplinary*” requirement (content from two or more academic disciplines or an academic discipline plus one or more career areas (for example: language arts + history; math + foreign language; science + Culinary Arts; or history + Construction Technology)?
- An *overview* of the *process* that will occur
 - This explains the “big picture:” how you expect to achieve your goals. What is your plan of action, the steps you’ll take to work through your project?
 - This describes the resources and materials you’ll require and any budget concerns/needs.
- An *explanation* of the *community connection*
 - Explains how your project benefits our community (directly or indirectly) or involves community participation
- A *discussion* of the intended *outcome* or final *product*

STEP THREE: Mentor Form

Now that you have an accepted proposal, you need to find a mentor (field expert) from the community who is willing and able to provide feedback, guidance, and possible hands-on experiences as you work through your culminating project. Be sure the mentor fits the district guidelines. Submit the mentor contract to your advisor.

STEP FOUR: Project Work

- Be sure to meet all deadlines
- Work on a regular basis throughout the year; last-minute efforts simply won't meet the standards for graduation
- Keep bibliographic information for all resources (people, books, articles, etc)
- Be sure to arrange for regular progress checks with your advisor
 - Try to check in every 7-10 days
 - Submit your CP journals and share any other documentation of work
 - Time and budget records
- Journals and visual documentation are **crucial!**
 - Prove progress
 - Provide "meat" for final reflection and presentation

STEP FIVE: Final Reflective Essay with bibliography

As you finish your project work, you need to reflect back on the whole process. Before presenting your project to the evaluation panel, you need to write a 3-5 page first-person narrative essay that summarizes your whole process and results and attach a bibliography. This is your chance to evaluate your work, describing what went well and what you would do differently if you were to do this again.

- Introduction
 - Describes in depth
 - The prior knowledge, expected learning goals, and essential purpose of project.
 - How the project extended previous knowledge and why it was chosen.
- Body
 - Explains in depth the details of
 - your project process
 - your growth in organizational and workplace skills
 - your strengths and weaknesses as a learner
 - your views on how your project connects to your future goals
- Conclusion
 - Describes in depth
 - What was actually learned
 - What went well
 - What could be improved
- Bibliography
 - Follows district standards for form and style
 - Includes all sources of information and/or help

STEP SIX: Oral Presentation

As you near the end of the second semester of your senior year, you will make a formal presentation of your CP work to a panel of evaluators. Plan on at least a 10-15 minute presentation plus additional time for questions. The project dictates the final format, but it must include visual aids (i.e. a product or object, a film or slide show, a demonstration, a performance, art work, etc) that support your speech.

- Arrange your presentation date through your advisor
 - Practice, practice, practice! Begin preparing a month in advance
1. You should be prepared to speak for about 10 -15 minutes with 5 – 10 minutes additional for questions from the panel. Make certain that you are prepared to answer questions in a way that reveals your understanding of your topic, what new learning occurred, and a reflection of the process as well as the project itself.
 2. Dress – come dressed professionally.
 3. Visuals – your presentation must include a visual. This could be a PowerPoint, poster, product, etc. Be sure you are using this as an aid to your presentation rather than an add on. Used properly, your visual aid will reinforce and clarify; used incorrectly it will distract.
 4. Supplies – sign up for easels, PowerPoint, and audio players in advance. (Or plan to bring your own.)
 5. Project/paper – this should be used as part of the presentation and will be returned to you.

Oral Presentation Guidelines

- I. Introduction (see your plan)
 - What is it?
 - Why did you choose it?
 - What is your background with this topic?
- II. Body
 - What did you learn from the community connection?
 - What did you learn from the research?
 - What skills does the project demonstrate that you have mastered?
- III. Conclusion
 - What new knowledge or skills did you acquire?
 - What were your expectations when you began?
 - How could your project have been improved, or made more meaningful?
 - Is self-directing learning important? Why? What does that say about your future learning?
 - What have you learned about yourself as a learner?
 - Do you see any similarities between strengths or challenges with this project and strengths or challenges you encounter in your daily life.

PROJECT PLAN RUBRIC				
	Advanced 4	Competent 3	Needs Improvement 2	Limited 1
Project steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal defines a detailed and efficient sequence of steps to implement all aspects of the project, including gathering information about quality and monitoring and adjusting the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal defines a sequence of steps for implementing the project including gathering information about quality and monitoring and adjusting the plan; there may be minor problems in the definition or sequence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal attempts to describe project implementation steps, but has missing or problematic elements and needs refinement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The steps described are very general or vague and do not reflect sufficient planning.
Resource planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal defines a detailed set of resources needed to implement the project and explains logical and thorough steps used to determine the resource list. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal defines a set of resources needed to implement the project and explains logical steps used to determine the resource list. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal lists some needed resources and how the set was determined, but the list may be incomplete or the process used to develop the list seems to have missed important steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal fails to identify resources needed or does not explain how the set was determined.

FINAL PROJECT REFLECTION ESSAY RUBRIC

	Advanced 4	Competent 3	Needs Improvement 2	Limited 1
Introduction (summarizing the initial proposal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection describes with depth and elaboration the prior knowledge, expected learning goals, and essential purpose of project. ▪ Reflection explains with depth and elaboration how the project extended previous knowledge and why it was chosen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection describes prior knowledge, expected learning goals, and essential purpose of project. ▪ Reflection explains with depth and elaboration how the project extended previous knowledge and why it was chosen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection introduction is incomplete and/or somewhat vague, or based on less than useful details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection introduction is missing or lacks key details.
Body (reflecting on the process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection explains with depth and elaboration the details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -how project was done -knowledge learned -personal growth in organization and implementation of a project -how project connected to at least two areas of study -how project connects to future goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection explains the details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -how project was done -knowledge learned -personal growth in organization and implementation of a project -how project connected to at least two areas of study -how project connects to future goals ▪ .. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process evaluation is incomplete and/or somewhat vague, or based on less than useful details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process evaluation is missing or lacks key details.
Conclusion (summary of process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection describes with depth and elaboration what was actually learned ▪ Reflection identifies and describes with depth and elaboration what went well. ▪ Reflection identifies and describes with depth and elaboration what could be improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection describes what was actually learned ▪ Reflection identifies and describes what went well. ▪ Reflection identifies and describes what could be improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection offers vague generalities about what was learned. ▪ Reflection offers vague generalities about what was learned or is unrealistic. ▪ Reflection offers vague generalities about what could be improved or is unrealistic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little or no reflection on learning, personal growth, or value of project.

Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bibliography is complete and in ink using proper form and style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bibliography is complete but does not follow proper form and style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bibliographic information is incomplete ▪ Lack of form and style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little or no bibliographic information
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ORAL PRESENTATION RUBRIC

	Advanced 4	Competent 3	Needs Improvement 2	Limited 1
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extremely well-rehearsed, practiced ▪ All presentation materials/technology prepared and readily available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rehearsed and practiced ▪ Presentation materials/technology prepared and available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not completely prepared ▪ Some presentation materials/technology missing or not available readily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unrehearsed, off-the-cuff ▪ Lack of presentation materials/technology
Presenter Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professionally/appropriately dressed ▪ Confident posture and stance; poised ▪ Appropriate language for audience/purpose ▪ Strong projection and delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appropriately dressed ▪ Confident ▪ Appropriate language for audience/purpose ▪ Good projection and delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some effort at appropriate dress for occasion ▪ Some slang or inappropriate usage for audience/purpose ▪ Lacks strength in projection/voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inappropriate dress ▪ Inappropriate language ▪ Little or no projection
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong, interesting and informative visuals—professional-looking and/or creative ▪ IN-depth, interesting, and understandable explanation of project ▪ Excellent project description with real clarity of challenges and growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interesting and informative visuals ▪ Interesting and understandable explanation of project ▪ Project description addresses challenges and growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visuals weak in creativity or professionalism ▪ Project explanation lacks depth and continuity ▪ Project description lacks details of challenges and growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little or no visual ▪ Little or no explanation of project ▪ Little or no description of challenges and growth

STUDENT JOURNAL

Name _____

Topic _____

Date	Activity / Reflection
Total time this page:	



Dear Community Member:

Every student in the Highline School District is given the opportunity to demonstrate their readiness for life after high school through the completion of a Culminating Project.

You are being approached by a student who wishes to complete his/her community experience with you. Because of your expertise in an area that this student is investigating, you are being asked to serve as their project mentor. Each student has been given the responsibility of becoming as actively involved in the community experience as is reasonably possible.

The role of the community mentor, should you choose to accept it, includes:

- Clarifying with the student what the experience will be including scope, timeline, learning goals, level of hands on experience, and expected outcomes
- Communicating clearly to the student what your role will be, when you can meet, and what your time and skill limitations are
- Meeting at least twice with the student during his/her work on the project to provide input, to make suggestions, to see how the student is applying your feedback, and to judge whether or not the student clearly understand your feedback
- Providing topic suggestions and resources to support the student's research paper

More details will be provided once the decision is made to accept this role. We at the Puget Sound Skills Center (PSSC) appreciate your consideration of this opportunity to support and contribute to the academic achievement of our students. If you have any questions, please call the PSSC office.

Sincerely,

PSSC students and staff

If you are willing to act as a mentor please complete the following:

Name:		Title:	
Address:		Phone:	
City, State, Zip		Fax	
Signature:		Email	

CULMINATING PROJECT PLANNING FORM

This form should be completed fully. Write clearly and neatly. You may type your work on a separate piece of paper if you prefer. Please see the rubrics for details on how your project will be assessed. When this form is accepted by your advisor, you will write up your narrative essay explaining your Culminating Project in detail.

Name: _____ Advisor: _____

1. Title of project: _____

2. Description of project: _____

3. What motivated you to pick this project? _____

4. What is your background knowledge? _____

5. In sequential order, outline your project by listing the steps you will need to perform in order to complete the project. Include your possible community mentors. In addition, list the possible visual aides you will need for your presentation. _____

6. What do you expect to learn from this project? _____

7. List the materials you will need to complete your project. Include the materials for your visual. Estimate the cost of these materials.

Materials	Estimated Cost

8. Explain why you believe this is a manageable project for you in terms of materials and time? _____

Accepted: _____ Not accepted _____

Modifications needed: _____

Approved by _____ Date _____



Dear Parent or Guardian

September, 2009

The state of Washington has recently added additional graduation requirements to help prepare students for life after high school. One of the additional requirements for the class of 2010 is the completion of a Culminating Project during his/her senior year. *It is important to note that in order for students to graduate and participate in the commencement exercises they must successfully complete all portions of this project.*

Students are required to address three components in the project:

1. Community Connection
2. Project – performance, product, research paper, exhibit, etc
3. Oral presentation

In an effort to insure that parents are aware of this requirement we ask that you read the statements below and sign where appropriate. Not all necessary forms are included in this packet. Your student's advisor will hand out some additional forms needed for each next step. Please call the PSSC office (206-433-2524) if you need further clarification on any of the information provided in this packet.

We, the student and parent or guardian, fully understand that the community connection and project topic selection is made independently of the staff and administration of the high school, but is subject to school approval. This experience, the project and approval is student and parent centered. We therefore assume all responsibility for any risks and costs which might be inherent in the chosen project. Finally, we understand that this must be authentic, student generated work, and that any plagiarizing will lead to failure of the entire project thus impacting graduation status.

Student_____	Date_____
Parent/Guardian_____	Date_____
Parent/Guardian_____	Date_____

Please return to your Advisor at Puget Sound Skills Center

Name: _____ Student # _____
 Advisor: _____