



The Principals' Partnership
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Research Brief

Senior Projects

Question: What is known about implementing a Senior Project requirement?

Summary of Findings:

Senior Project is a culminating assessment for high school seniors. Requirements can vary by schools, but it often consists of a research paper on an approved topic of the student's choice, a product related to the paper, and a presentation before a review panel of judges made up of teachers, administrators, and community members. It might include a portfolio or the topic might come from their high school portfolio.

Senior projects seem to be gathering popularity. A Google search, using the keywords "Senior Project" and "high school" returned more than 570,000 results, most of which were high school web sites mentioning or describing their senior project requirements. One educator liked what she saw from her 25 students who went through the process of completing their Senior Project that she named her article about what she experienced "The Senior Project: The Best Idea I Ever Stole" (Lorenz, 1999)

Although there is a great deal of information available about individual school's Senior Project requirements, or discussing Senior Projects in general, there does not seem to be much research into the impact of a Senior Project requirement.

One study (Egelson, Harman, & Bond; 2002) compared students from 4 Senior Project schools and 4 control schools in rural and small-town North Carolina. Project students perceived greater emphasis on writing skills than did control students, but tests of global writing abilities showed no significant difference between project and control students. More than half of project school graduates felt that the project experience had influenced their future careers. About 75 percent of project graduates reported developing skills in public speaking, research, writing, interviewing, planning, organization, interpersonal, and work-related skills.

Online Resources:

(Note: ERIC documents can be found by going to <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> and entering the ERIC ID#)

The Senior Project: The Best Idea I Ever Stole.

Lorenz, Sarah L.

NASSP Bulletin; v83 n609 p77-85 Oct 1999

An English teacher at a Christian school describes the experience of watching 25 seniors present a semester's work. The senior project is one that demonstrates students' ability to research, write, interview, work with a mentor, produce a tangible product, present findings to an audience, and reflect on the experience.

ERIC #: EJ594848

The Senior Project Center

The Senior Project Center, home of "the Senior Project People," provides focused Senior Project research, technical assistance, and resources to high schools across the nation. Incorporating traditional and performance based teaching and curricula strategies that merge with a foundation of strong basic knowledge and skills requiring a real world application, Senior Project is a challenging student driven, teacher-guided culminating program. Senior Project High Schools require seniors competently to complete each of the following related 4 P's: 4 P's - Paper, Product, Portfolio, Presentation.

<http://www.seniorproject.net/index.php>



Research Brief

A Preliminary Study of Senior Project Programs in Selected Southeastern High Schools.

Egelson, Paula; Harman, Susan; Bond, Sally;
2002-04-04

Senior Project is a culminating assessment for high school seniors, involving planning, research, writing, and presentations. Characteristics and outcomes of the program were studied via surveys of 436 teachers, 422 students, and 163 graduates at 4 Senior Project schools and 4 control schools in rural and small-town North Carolina. Findings indicate that project teachers used rubrics and extended projects to assess student performance more often than control teachers did. Project English teachers were perceived by students to lecture more, assign more project-related work, and use more computer-based instruction than control teachers. In project schools, students devoted significant time to projects related to research papers that they wrote at the beginning of the course. Project English teachers used more performance-based assessment methods than did control English teachers. Concerning specific skills, project teachers reported greater emphasis on using reference materials, while control teachers emphasized responding to criticism and questions. Project students perceived greater emphasis on writing skills than did control students, but tests of global writing abilities showed no significant difference between project and control students. More than half of project school graduates felt that the project experience had influenced their future careers. About 75 percent of project graduates reported developing skills in public speaking, research, writing, interviewing, planning, organization, interpersonal, and work-related skills. It seems clear that the effects of the senior project were not realized until students were out of high school and interacting in the workplace or an institution of higher education.

ERIC #: ED466336

Information Literacy Skills and the Senior Project.

O'Grady, Alice;
Educational Leadership; v57 n2 p61-62 Oct 1999

The senior project, which allows students to select a topic, study it in depth, and produce a culminating exhibition, is one vehicle for promoting information literacy in high schools. Success means using the talents of the teacher and teacher-librarian to coordinate lessons, accomplish assessment, and arrange for use of school facilities.

ERIC #: EJ594879

The Senior Project and the English Curriculum of the Future.

Cowan, Sue; Carter, Duncan;
English Journal; v83 n4 p57-60 Apr 1994

Describes one Oregon high school's approach to the traditional senior project, including both a speech and a written research document. Outlines the steps by which students carry out the project. Claims that this project is a valuable and culminating educational experience for graduating seniors

ERIC #: EJ481028

The Senior Project: A Walkabout to Excellence.

Summers, Jane;
English Journal; v78 n4 p62-64 Apr 1989

Describes one high school's "senior project," a graduation requirement for all students which involves: (1) writing a research paper; (2) developing a project related to the paper; and (3) delivering an oral presentation to a panel of judges selected from faculty, administrators, classified staff, and community members.

ERIC #: EJ390447

Show What You Know.

Chadwell, Deana R.;
American School Board Journal; v178 n4 p34-35 Apr 1991

At South Medford High School, Oregon, all seniors must complete a senior project that requires the following: write a 10-page research paper on a topic of choice; carry out a project that relates to the research; and speak about what they learned from the project and answer questions before a board of judges. Offers tips for starting senior projects.

ERIC #: EJ424378



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The Senior Project and Gifted Education

Shaunessy, Elizabeth;

Gifted Child Today; v27 n3 p38-51 Sum 2004

In 1999-2000, a field study of eight North Carolina schools was conducted; four senior project schools and four control schools were selected. Researchers identified four treatment schools that had institutionalized senior projects for at least 4 years, with all seniors participating in senior projects and with all the program components (research paper, product, portfolio, presentation) in place. Control schools were selected to match each senior project school based on staff size, size of student body, percent of students in the federal free lunch program, percent of minority students enrolled at the school, overall performance in the state testing program, and urbanicity. A variety of measures, including focus groups, writing assessments, achievement test scores, and surveys, were used to examine possible differences between senior project and control schools.

ERIC #: EJ684154

Schools with a Senior Project Requirement:

Camas High School Senior Project

26900 SE 15th Street, Camas, Washington 98607

(360) 817-4441

http://www.camas.wednet.edu/chs/curric/sr_proj/srproj2.html

Nooksack Valley High School Editable Senior Project Documents

PO Box 4307, 3326 East Badger Road, Everson, WA 98247

Phone: (360) 988-2641; Facsimile: (360) 988-7058

Site includes the complete senior project manual

http://www.nv.k12.wa.us/hs/hs_senior_projects.htm

Barrington High School's Senior Project Website

220 Lincoln Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

Main Office 401.247.3150

<http://www.barringtonhigh.org/srproject/index.htm>

Randolph Union High School Senior Project

15 Forest Street, Randolph, Vermont 05060

802-728-3397

<http://www.randolphvt.com/ossu/ruhs/ruhssp.shtml>

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