

# Honors Independent Graduation Pilot Project

## Introduction to Student

The Honors Independent Graduation Project program gives you an opportunity to explore an issue, question, or topic that is relevant and meaningful. The expectation is that you do extensive research, connect with the community outside of the school, and then make and/or do something that demonstrates your thinking and understanding. The program serves many purposes. Through the development of your project, you will make and deepen connections within the community, reflect on yourself as a learner and thinker, and prepare yourself for some of the challenges and opportunities that await you after you graduate. You will sharpen and deepen important 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as information synthesis, collaboration and communication, creativity and innovation, and project management.



## A Graduation Project includes:

- a **proposal** about what you plan to design, create, investigate or do
- a **community connection** that can take varied forms, but allows you to demonstrate that you have taken responsibility for your learning outside of the classroom
- on-going and final **reflections**
- a **technology/media** component
- a **portfolio** that contains documentation of the project and reflection components
- a final **presentation** of the project

Independent Graduation Projects are meant to highlight the knowledge and skills developed throughout your time at CRLS, but equally important are the demonstration of a “learning stretch” that takes place as a result of your participation in the project.

**Teacher Advisor:** Talk with a teacher who is willing to support you in your project and ask for their assistance. Work with this teacher to find a period that works for both of you so you can register for the course. This teacher will offer you guidance and advice but the project is an independent one. You are responsible for managing your time and completing the requirements.

**Additional Community Mentor (optional):** It will benefit you and your project to find someone to work with who is an expert in the field you are exploring. This can be someone you already know or someone you approach for the first time, based on their credentials. It is up to you to make this contact and to develop a plan for how you will work together. Your community mentor must be approved by the school.

## **Important Graduation Project Terms**

**Graduation Project:** The overall experience of proposing a project, completing a product with a community connection, reflecting on it, compiling your work in a portfolio, and presenting your work to a panel.

**Product:** This is what you will make or do, associated with your topic, which demonstrates your understanding. This is where you can be the most creative. Below are some acceptable products:

Physical: For example: design and build an architectural model, create a body of art, design a device to solve a problem

Intellectual: For example: develop a lesson plan, create an anti-bullying program for schools, produce a high quality research paper

Event-related: For example: create an assembly focused on an issue relevant to the community in which you are presenting it, hold a panel discussion on an issue you have been investigating, facilitate a focus group about an important community concern and present findings

**Proposal:** Your proposal is the plan for your project that you must submit to your for approval. It must include your ideas and initial thinking about your project.

**Learning Stretch:** This means that what you propose to do for your project should be a challenge for you—that you “stretch” your skills and knowledge in a particular area. The learning stretch is what you gain from this project. If you already have skills or experience in this topic, you will have to explore this subject in a genuinely new and challenging manner.

**Community Connection:** Your project and the product you create must somehow take you outside the walls of the classroom. Different projects and their products will require different kinds of community experiences. The idea is to develop skills through new experiences. You may consult with a scholar in the field you are studying and attend her lecture at a local university to inform your research paper; you may job-shadow an expert in the field you are studying and conduct an interview to help you build a design; you may volunteer at an organization that does work connected to your topic and then coordinate an event for the organization or the school; or you may design a service-learning project. You will work with your teacher and the Internship and Service-Learning Specialist to determine the possibilities and opportunities that are available to you.

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills:** These are the skills that are necessary to be successful in today’s world. They include working in teams and with diverse groups of people; being able to use and evaluate media and technology in smart ways; and being flexible, creative, and innovative with your thinking. Projects that incorporate technology and include the community help to build 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

**Media/Technology:** An important part of your project and/or the Graduation Project class will be the incorporation of a media or technology component. You will at least need to demonstrate

proficiency in a Web 2.0 tool, but we also encourage you to be creative in your use of technology for your product. For example, you could document some sort of your project or product on video, create a website, incorporate Moodle, create a blog, etc.

**Portfolio:** This is the documentation of your work throughout the process. It includes data, findings, writing related to the discipline in which you are working, and your reflections. It is a visual and written collection of your hard work and must be presented in a professional manner that you can be proud of. The work is collected throughout the entire process and presented at the end of the experience.

**Panel Presentation:** The final component of your Graduation Project is a presentation of your experience. This is a celebration of what you have accomplished and learned throughout the process and an opportunity for you to share your knowledge and skills with a small group of interested supporters from outside the classroom community.

## **Graduation Project Proposal Form**

Please type proposal and submit via email to Ms. FitzGerald (kfitzgerald@cpsd.us)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervising Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the topic of your Graduation Project?

Please share your current thinking about this topic. Include your experience with it thus far, your questions and wonderings about it, and why it interests you.

What are some of your goals for your Graduation Project?

How will you know that you have met your goals?

Describe what you plan to make or do. In what form will your final product be presented?  
(object, picture, CD, movie, etc.)

Describe the ways in which this project will be a learning stretch for you.

What ideas do you have about how your project will allow you to connect to the community?

What ideas do you have for using media or technology in your project?

What is your proposed timeline for completing your project?

What resources will you need to complete your project and how will you obtain them?

If you have a Community Mentor in mind, who is this person? If you would you like to try to find one, what kind of expert might you be looking for?

Is there anything else you want us to know?

**Honors Independent Graduation Project**  
**Permissions Form**

Please Submit Signed Form to Ms. FitzGerald (ROOM 1607)

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ HR \_\_\_\_\_ LC \_\_\_\_\_

Student SID# \_\_\_\_\_

Student E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Guidance Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Graduation \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of Supervising Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period \_\_\_\_\_ Semester \_\_\_\_\_

Class Room Location \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Community Mentor (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor E mail and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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**SIGNATURES**

**APPROVAL:**

**Counselor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dean of Curriculum:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNING BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND AGREE TO FOLLOW *THE HONORS INDEPENDENT GRADUATION PROJECT GUIDELINES*, AND THAT YOU APPROVE OF THE STUDENT'S *PROJECT PROPOSAL*.**

**Parent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervising Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Reflections**

**You are required to include *two* kinds of reflections in your portfolio.**

- 1) Formative (these are your reflections on the progress of your project *along the way*)
- 2) Summative (this is a *final* reflection that you will write at the end of the process)

### **1) Formative Reflections:**

#### **Documentation of your progress on the project:**

This is the first person account of your experiences throughout the process of completing your project.

- Keep a notebook to document the steps you take to complete your project. Include your thoughts on any difficulties or roadblocks you encounter as you go. Discuss how you tried to resolve the issue. Also include the successes and surprises you encounter. Describe the ideas, doubts, thoughts, and connections that arise while you are working on your project.
- Collect visual documentation of your project where possible to annotate for your portfolio. This can include photographs, drawings, graphs, etc.

#### **Documentation of your Community Connection:**

- Describe who you are working with and their professional qualifications in the field you are exploring.
- Give detailed accounts of meeting, interviews, or other contact with mentors or other community members connected to your project. Again, describe the ideas, thoughts, and connections that arise while you are working with the community.

*Always include dates, details, and descriptions to make your reflections clearer to the reader.*

### **2) Final Summative Reflection:**

This reflection will take the form of a letter that you write to the presentation panel after your project work is completed. It is an opportunity for you to evaluate your project as a whole and to reflect on what you have accomplished, learned, are most proud of, and perhaps what you may have done differently. This letter should also include reflections on any new questions about your topic that emerged for you in the process of completing your project and portfolio.

## **Portfolio**

Your project portfolio is the history of your Graduation Project and should tell the story of your learning, your accomplishments, and the challenges you encountered while engaging in your work. It is your opportunity to share your work with the broader community. Your portfolio will be viewed by the audience you present to and will be graded by your teacher. Written work must be typed and presented in a neat and professional format.

*Your portfolio must include:*

Cover Page

Table of Contents

Proposal Form

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Project Overview Form/Essay

- Description of completed project
- Description of Community Connection
- Description of Technology/Media Component
- Description of Learning Stretch

Supporting Documents that Tell the Story of Your Project

Copies of Thank You Letters to Community Members

Four Examples from Your Formative Reflection Journal

Three (at least) Annotated Photographs Depicting the Project Development

Final Summative Reflection Letter