

## High School Career-Related Capstone Project

In an effort to provide all students with an education that leads to being college and career ready, students will participate in a career-related capstone project. Reflecting on who they are and what they want to do, the Capstone project provides students with the opportunity to explore a career of personal or professional interest and address the latest trends or issues through focused study and applied research.

### What is the suggested timeline for students to complete the project?

Students typically participate in this career-related capstone project after a pathway has been completed, and this usually occurs before or during the senior year. The timeline may vary based on the school's outline for project completion. The project may be carried out over an entire year or be completed in a specified amount of time, such as a nine-week period or a semester. The recommendation is to carry the project out a minimum of one semester.

### Will the Capstone Project be graded?

The components that may be graded are the research paper, presentation, and the portfolio. A sample scoring rubric has been provided for each of the components. The local school determines weighting for the grades given (if applicable) to the research paper and portfolio. The local school will also determine the class for which the grade will be associated should the decision be made to assign a grade.

### What are the components of the Capstone Project?

**Research Paper:** The first component is a research paper documenting information on a subject of the student's choice – a subject demonstrating the student's career interest. The research must be a worthwhile stretch beyond what is already known. The research paper should include the following:

- Reasons for selecting the occupation in the specific career cluster/pathway
- Career goals, relevant career-related information that provides the reader some information about a specific occupation or current topics related to that occupation
- Research on job outlook and education and training needed
- Any current trends or changes in the future of the career field

Additionally, to enhance the research and expand learning, schools may require students to explore an aspect of the career in-depth that may be a "hot topic" in the field, i.e., latest research on a particular medicine used in treating certain diseases, genetic research or food insecurity in the area of Agriculture, or natural gas pipeline safety in the area of energy.

**Portfolio:** The second component of the project should be a portfolio. This portfolio may be in a notebook form or kept electronically. There is a sample checklist provided to local schools as a minimum of what is required, but may also contain any other information or documentation relative to the career area of interest. The portfolio provides physical documentation of the career-related capstone project journey.

**Mentor:** As part of a project, students must obtain a mentor to assist in learning more about the career area. The mentor must be knowledgeable in the chosen area of interest or someone working in the field. The students have a responsibility to obtain a mentor and then submit a

signed agreement between the school, the mentor, the student, and the parent. Virtual mentoring may be a consideration. Students should maintain a log of hours spent with the mentor and are required to spend a minimum of eight (8) hours with their mentor to complete the project.

**Student Presentation:** The final component is a formal presentation. The presentation can be done in a variety of formats, such as before a panel of community judges where the students present their research information and findings or before a group of interested students at another grade level, such as middle or elementary school. A student may share any tangible evidence/application of the skills and knowledge acquired from the project. Presentations would consist of the student's purpose and reasons for choosing the career area, new information gained about the career, and plans for pursuing additional information about the education and training needed for entering the chosen career area.