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“Making Education Work for All Georgians”

April 29, 2014 Version

Career-Related Capstone Project Guidance

**Georgia Department of Education
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Introduction

In an effort to provide all students with an education that leads them to being college and career ready, students will participate in work-based learning and/or develop a career-related capstone project. Indicator number 7 under Exceeding the Bar on the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), states “Percent of graduates completing a career-related Work-Based Learning Program or a career-related capstone project.” With this in mind, all students should be directed toward work-based learning or a capstone project as this indicator moves to the face of the CCRPI in 2016-2017. Students typically participate in this project after a pathway has been completed and this usually occurs before or during the students’ senior year. These projects are a way to allow students to uniquely show their talents related to their career area of interest. Reflecting on who they are while showing what they want to do, the project provides students with the opportunity to explore a career of personal or professional interest and to address the latest trends or issues through focused study and applied research. The project allows students to demonstrate their ability to synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills acquired in their academic program to real-world issues and problems. These final projects should affirm students' ability to think critically and creatively, to solve practical problems, to make reasoned and ethical decisions, and to communicate effectively. Students should devise a plan and submit a project proposal for approval (See Appendix A) prior to the start of their research and as one of the project requirements. To assist students in completion of this project, schools should develop a procedure that demonstrates cooperation and collaboration among faculty members to ensure students have the resources needed to complete the project; i.e. administrator, subject area teacher, counselor, media specialists, CTAE personnel, etc.

Timeline

The timeline may vary based on the school’s type of grading schedule, i.e. semester, year-long, or block. 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. Several components of the project may be conducted simultaneously while others are independent of each other. An example would be participating with the mentor while conducting research for the paper. However, the presentation, if applicable, should not be conducted until the research has been completed.

Implementation and Grading

Schools will have flexibility in the implementation of the capstone project. One suggestion would be a team approach so that one person would not have the sole responsibility of all pieces of the project. An example would be the Language Arts teacher assisting with the written component while the counselor or media specialist assists by taking classes into computer labs for research. Additionally, CTAE administrators or work-based learning coordinators can assist in locating possible mentors for students that are having difficulty locating a mentor. The media specialists, CTAE advisory councils, or the school council might also be beneficial in helping with the presentations. By taking this approach, students are exposed to multiple resources and there will be opportunities for involvement by all school personnel.

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The components that may be graded are the research paper, presentation, and the portfolio. A sample scoring rubric is provided for each of the components (see Appendices). The local schools will determine weighting for the grades given (if applicable) to the research paper and portfolio. Local systems will also determine the class for which the grade will be associated should the decision be made to assign a grade. A time log demonstrating completion will be required for the mentoring component.

Goals

The goals of the capstone project are as follows:

- To provide students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in their courses to research relating to a career interest area
- To allow students to extend their academic experience into areas of personal career interests, to include working with new ideas, organizations, and individuals
- To encourage students to think critically and creatively about academic, professional, and/or social issues and to further develop their analytical and ethical leadership skills
- To provide students with the opportunity to refine research skills and demonstrate their proficiency in written and/or oral communication skills

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, but not necessarily one for which they are an expert. The research must be a worthwhile stretch beyond what is already known. The project proposal would be approved prior to beginning this research. The length of the paper is determined by the local schools, with the understanding that certain information must be evident in the paper. This information includes, but is not limited to, 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, and any current trends or changes in the future of the career field. Additionally, to enhance the research and expand learning, systems 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 safety in the area of Agriculture, or natural gas pipeline safety in the area of energy. By adding this requirement, the student will be able to not only research the career area, but gain specific information that would help them in their preparation for entering the chosen career field. Formatting and any additional requirements are at the discretion of the local schools. A sample scoring rubric is attached for local school use (See Appendix B).

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Portfolio

The second component of the project should be a portfolio. This portfolio may be in a notebook form or kept electronically. The portfolio description and checklist are located in the Appendices (See Appendix C and Appendix D). The items listed in the checklist are 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 the project, students must obtain a mentor to assist in learning more about the career area. The mentor must be someone who is knowledgeable in the chosen area of interest or someone working in the field. The students have the responsibility to obtain a mentor and then submit a signed agreement (See Appendix E) between the school, the mentor, the student, and the parent. School personnel should assist with finding mentors, if necessary. If a mentor is not available in a nearby area and it would truly be a hardship on the student, virtual mentoring should be a consideration. An example would be Skype, email, Facebook, or any other electronic means of communication where a student and mentor could share questions and gain information related to the career field without face-to-face contact. Possible resources would be CTAE teachers in the Georgia Virtual School program or the local Chamber of Commerce. Students should maintain a log of hours (See Appendix F) spent with the mentor and are required to spend a minimum of eight (8) hours with their mentor to complete the project. If the circumstances warrant and time beyond the required number of hours is permitted, systems may ask students to spend more than the minimum of eight (8) hours with their mentor. This additional time is recommended for learning purposes and may be required based on the needs of the system or school. Schools and systems should follow and/or develop a procedure for the selection and approval of mentors.

Student Presentation

The fourth and final component of the project will be a presentation. A sample rubric is available (see Appendix G) to help in assessing the presentation and would be completed by a teacher or a panel of judges. This presentation could be a formal presentation before a panel of community judges where the students present their research information and findings or a presentation before a group of interested students at another grade level such as middle school or elementary school students. Classroom presentations are also acceptable. A student may share any tangible evidence/application of the skills and knowledge acquired from the project. The ideal panel would consist of community members arranged by the school to be held in the evening to accommodate work schedules for those outside of the school. 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. In addition, presentations could include any other pertinent information determined by the local system. Schools will have the flexibility of scheduling these presentations.

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This document is to serve as a guide for systems and schools to implement a plan for students to complete a career-related capstone project. While there is flexibility built in for systems to implement their plan, the intent is that the four components outlined in this document be included in a student's final capstone project.

If there are questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Myrel Seigler at mseigler@doe.k12.ga.us for further guidance and information.

DISCLAIMER

The sources and web links listed in the activities may be of help to you as you consider the career awareness activities. While these sources are provided to assist you in your search, it is your responsibility to investigate them to determine their value and appropriateness for your situation and needs. These sources are provided as a sample of available resources and are for informational purposes only. THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DOES NOT MONITOR, EVALUATE, OR ENDORSE THE CONTENT OR INFORMATION OF THESE RESOURCES. NONE OF THESE RESOURCES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED THE ADVICE OR GUIDANCE OF THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Project Proposal

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Career Interest Area: _____

Reason for choosing this career area (briefly explain why you chose this career and what you hope to learn from completing this project): _____

What prior knowledge (if any) do you already have which relates to this project? (Explain how this project will help you gain new knowledge or information) _____

How will completing this project help make the connection between your academic and career goals? _____

What type of mentor will you need to help you complete your work-based learning and/or career-related capstone project? (i.e. physician, police officer, teacher, etc.) _____

List any other related information that you feel should be included in the project proposal. _____

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

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**APPENDIX B, Part I
Research Paper Rubric**

Student Name _____

Date _____

Teaching Task Rubric (Informational or Explanatory)

Scoring Elements	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Development (2)	Ineffective (1)	Points
Focus	Addresses all aspects of topic appropriately and maintains a strongly-developed focus.	Addresses topic appropriately and maintain a clear, steady focus.	Addresses topic appropriately, but with a weak or uneven focus.	Attempts to address topic, but lacks focus or is off-task.	
Controlling Idea	Establishes a strong controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.	Establishes a controlling idea with a general purpose.	Establishes a controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.	Attempts to establish a controlling idea, but lacks a clear purpose.	
Reading/ Research	Accurately presents information relevant to all parts of the prompt with effective selection of sources and details from reading materials. (L2)	Presents information from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt with minor lapses in accuracy or completeness. (L2)	Presents information from reading materials relevant to the prompt with accuracy and sufficient detail. (L2)	Attempts to present information in response to the prompt, but lacks connections or relevance to the purpose of the prompt. (L2)	
Development	Presents thorough and detailed information to strongly support the focus and controlling idea. (L2) Thoroughly discusses relevant and salient implications or consequences and (L3) one or more significant gaps/unanswered questions.	Presents appropriate details to support the focus and controlling idea. (L2) Briefly notes a relevant implication or (L3) a relevant gap/unanswered question.	Presents appropriate and sufficient details to support the focus and controlling idea. (L2) Explains relevant and plausible implications and (L3) a relevant gap/unanswered question.	Attempts to provide details in response to the prompt, including retelling, but lacks sufficient development or relevancy. (L2) Implication is missing, irrelevant, or illogical. (L3)	

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**APPENDIX B, Part II
Research Paper Rubric**

Student Name _____

Date _____

Teaching Task Rubric (Informational or Explanatory)

Scoring Elements	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Development (2)	Ineffective (1)	Points
Organization	Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific topic.	Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address the specific requirements of the topic.	Uses an appropriate organizational structure to address the specific requirements of the prompt, with some lapses in coherence or awkward use of the organizational structure.	Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks control of structure.	
Conventions	Demonstrates and maintains a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone consistently appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Consistently cites sources using an appropriate format.	Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Cites sources using an appropriate format with only minor errors.	Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources.	Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions, but lacks cohesion and control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Sources are used without citation.	
Content Understanding	Integrates relevant and accurate disciplinary content with thorough explanations that demonstrate in-depth understanding.	Accurately presents disciplinary content relevant to the prompt with sufficient explanations that demonstrate understanding.	Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources.	Attempts to include disciplinary content in explanations, but understanding of content is weak; content is irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate.	

Scoring Scale (Grade Equivalent) 24-28 (90-100) 19-23 (80-89) 13-18 (70-79) 8-12 (60-69) 7-11 (Below 60) Total Points _____

Template Task Collection I | © Literacy Design Collaborative, November 2012

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APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT PORTFOLIO

A portfolio is required for all students enrolled in the work-based learning program or completing a career-related capstone project. In order to organize assignments and/or to showcase best work, obtain a three-ring binder at least one (1) inch in thickness to serve as the portfolio (Students may keep this portfolio electronically if local system allows this format). Students will be responsible for maintaining the portfolio and bringing it to the meetings. The portfolio may be used when applying for postsecondary schools, financial aid, and jobs; therefore, it should be kept in a professional manner with cover pages, dividers and tabs for all sections, etc. **All assignments must be typed and error-free.**

All late work will have penalties. Failure to complete a portfolio may result in credit not being awarded for the work-based learning enrollment.

The specifications and procedures will be specified by the Work-Based Learning coordinator and/or the Career-Related Capstone Project Advisor.

The portfolio is graded each nine weeks as part of the student's work-based learning evaluation.

What are the benefits of a portfolio?

The use of portfolios enables students to:

- Discover, document, and develop their employability skills;
- Reinforce integration of academic skills, course-specific skills, and employability skills;
- Reflect on their work and goal setting;
- Showcase their best work;
- Establish and strengthen their personal integrity;
- Become a self-directed, life-long learner; and
- Document achievements in a professional manner.

The portfolio is a “*work in progress*” and will chronicle the student's progress toward their career goal. The portfolio will include:

- Letter of introduction
- Materials from the student's application to the apprenticeship program
- Employability skills
- Work evaluations
- Work samples
- Post-secondary plans and documentation
- Verification of Hours
- Student achievement and awards
- Journal assignments
- Projects
- Other items deemed necessary

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APPENDIX C (continued)

SAMPLE PORTFOLIO OUTLINE/CHECKLIST

I. Cover Sheet for the front cover of the 3-ring binder (5 points)

- Graphic or Unique Design
- Name
- School
- Occupation or Career Pathway related to the Work-Based Learning/Career-Related Capstone Project Experience

II. Table of Contents (5 points)

III. Introduction (20 points)

• **Letter of Introduction**

This section is the major self-reflective piece in the portfolio and describes the qualities and goals of the individual. The letter also introduces the various parts of the portfolio, including the significance of the work included.

• **Work Philosophy**

Write a paper discussing the responsibilities, expectations, and work ethics you believe to be important for an outstanding employee. Include information about how your personal characteristics compare to those listed in your discussion.

• **Goals**

- May include two- to five-year goals for the student
- Goals should be measurable
- Goals are different from career objectives
- Include three to five goals
- Goals should not be too personal
- Include an academic plan of study

IV. Employability Skills (20 points)

- Resume
- Letters of references or recommendations
- Cover letter
- Follow-up letter/thank-you note for the job interview

APPENDIX C (continued)

V. Other Career-Related Education Experiences (25 points)

Choose five (5) topics below to be counted as five (5) points each.

(If a student has skills in more than one area of expertise, get them to make sections in the portfolio to indicate the different areas with information behind each divider)

- Job shadowing experiences
- Internships
- Photo journal (give explanations)
- Job descriptions and information about employment
- Employer/instructor evaluations with student analysis
- Seminars attended
- Training plans and mastery levels
- Work samples
- Glossary of terminology used at work
- Letters of commendation
- Work/wage records

VI. Work Samples/Achievements (15 points)

- Classroom projects
- Career Technical Student Organization projects/activities
- Real-life simulations
- Photo journals
- Research paper
- Scholastic/attendance records

VII. Activities/Honors (10 points)

- Extra-curricular activities (student organizations, church groups, community groups, sports, etc.)
- Honors/awards/recognition (certificates, newspaper articles, etc.)

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APPENDIX D

Capstone Project Checklist

Student Name _____

Advisor Name _____

	Advisor Signature	Date of Submission
1. Project Proposal		
2. Research Paper		
3. Mentor Agreement		
4. Mentor Log		
5. Presentation Evaluation		
6. Portfolio		

Date of Project Completion _____

Student Signature _____

Teacher/Advisor Signature _____

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APPENDIX E, Part I

Mentor/Mentee Agreement Form (School Letterhead)

Student/Mentee Name _____

Teacher/Advisor Name _____

Career Interest Area for Project _____

Project Description (not to exceed 100 words--use back, if necessary)

Goals of the Capstone Project

The goals of the capstone project:

- provide students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in their courses to do research relating to a career interest area
- allow students to extend their academic experience into areas of personal career interests, to include working with new ideas, issues, organizations, and individuals
- encourage students to think critically and creatively about academic, professional, and/or social issues and to further develop their analytical and ethical leadership skills
- provide students with the opportunity to refine research skills and demonstrate their proficiency in written and/or oral communication skills

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APPENDIX E, Part II

Mentor/Mentee Agreement Form (School Letterhead)

Mentor Name _____

Mentor Contact Information

Business Name or Occupation _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone # _____

Email address _____

Briefly describe the qualifications that you feel would make you suitable as a mentor for this student's capstone project: (not to exceed 100 words—use back if, necessary): _____

Agreement

I agree to serve as a mentor for the duration of this project. During this period, I will provide information and experiences that would assist the mentee in completion of the project requirements. However, as a volunteer mentor, I also understand that I will not be held responsible or liable for the outcome of the project. An evaluation will be completed at the end of the mentoring period of time by both the mentor and the mentee.

Signatures

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Teacher/Advisor Signature _____ Date _____

Mentor Signature _____ Date _____

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**Appendix G
Presentation Rubric**

Student Name _____

Date _____

Category	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Development (2)	Ineffective (1)	Points
Language/Grammar (Student speaks effectively and uses correct grammar)	Student uses a rich variety of words appropriate for context, has no grammatical errors, and uses excellent sentence structure	Student selects words appropriate for context, uses correct grammar and sentence structure	Student uses some words appropriate for the context, uses some correct grammar and sentence structure	Student uses words inappropriate for the context; uses little correct grammar and sentence structure	
Organization/Time (Student organizes ideas logically, connects key points, uses time effectively)	Student presents information clearly and creatively; connects all key points; completes presentation within allotted time	Student presents information clearly; connects some key points; completes presentation within 1-2 minutes of allotted time	Student introduces the topic; little evidence of connecting key points; completes presentation within 3-4 minutes of allotted time	Student has no introduction to the topic; no connecting of key points; completes presentation more than 5 minutes of allotted time	
Content/Career Knowledge Gained (Student presents information in a manner that represents understanding and knowledge of career)	Student presentation clearly defines the topic and the relation to the selected career; supports the topic with exceptional research and multiple resources; provides exceptional evidence of personal, academic, and career growth	Student presentation defines the topic and the relation to the selected career; supports the topic with research and some resources; provides some evidence of personal, academic, and career growth	Student presentation defines the topic but lacks a relation to the selected career; supports the topic with limited research and resources; provides little evidence of personal, academic, and career growth	Student presentation does not define the topic and lacks a relation to the selected career; supports the topic with no research and resources; provides no evidence of personal, academic, and career growth	
Delivery/Communication (Student speaks clearly, maintains eye contact and good posture, use of technology and focus on topic)	Student gains attention through enthusiastic use of voice, tone, and enunciation; maintains constant eye contact and stands straight; innovative use of technology to illustrate focus of topic	Student gains attention through use of voice, tone, and enunciation; maintains eye contact and stands straight most of the time; use of technology to illustrate focus of topic	Student gains attention through some use of voice, tone, and enunciation; limited eye contact and good posture; limited use of technology to illustrate focus of topic	Student does not gain attention through use of voice, tone, and enunciation; little or no eye contact and good posture; no use of technology to illustrate focus of topic	
Appearance (Student is dressed appropriately for the presentation)	Student dresses in appropriate and professional attire that is representative of the career area and articulates clearly why appropriate dress is important	Student dresses in appropriate and professional attire that is representative of the career area	Student dresses in somewhat appropriate and professional attire that is representative of the career area	Student does not dress in appropriate and professional attire that is representative of the career area	

Total Points _____

Scoring Scale (Grade Equivalent): 18-20 (90-100) 13-17 (80-89) 8-12 (70-79) 4-7 (60-69) 0-3 (Below 60)