

Graduation Project Student/Parent Handbook



Columbus County Schools

Revised 2010

What is the Graduation Project?

The Graduation Project is one component of Columbus County Schools' exit standards. It is a performance-based assessment and must be successfully completed in order to graduate from high school. This project empowers seniors to utilize their talents, skills and creativity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do as they prepare to graduate from high school. Although each student selects a topic, an Advisory Board at each school approves topics and is the governing body settling any dilemmas that might arise.

The Graduation Project consists of four components:

- 1) Writing a **research paper**. It is centered on a student-chosen topic and demonstrates research skills as well as writing skills.
- 2) Developing a **product** related to the research paper. It is a showcase of the application of life, personal and interpersonal, academic and problem-solving skills.
- 3) Compiling a **portfolio**. The portfolio is designed to reflect the student's journey through the Graduation Project process.
- 4) Delivering an **oral presentation**. This speech is delivered to a panel of judges selected from faculty and community members.

NOTE: Students must successfully complete all four components in order to fulfill Columbus County Schools' high school exit standards to graduate. Scoring rubrics for each of the four components are provided on pages 11 through 18 in this handbook.

Component 1: The Research Paper

Each student will write a research paper based upon the following criteria:

1) Format

- MLA (Modern Language Association)

2) Length

- 5-10 pages, typed, double-spaced
- 12 point font, 1-inch margins

3) Sources

- 1 primary
- 1 internet
- 4 additional sources

4) Plagiarism

- If evidenced, the student will receive a zero on his/her research paper.

***See the research Graduation Paper Rubric, pages 11, 12, and 13 in this handbook for details.

***See the Columbus County Schools Research Paper Scoring Rubric on page 8 and the “Yes” Test Rubric on page 9 in this handbook.

NOTE: Any modifications and deadline extensions will be determined by the Advisory Board at each school.

Research Paper Recovery Process

This process is only used when a student does not successfully complete the research paper during the first attempt.

Qualifications for Participation

The student:

- 1) must have scored a sixty-nine or below on the final draft of his/her research paper.
- 2) must submit a participation form signed by the student, his/her parent/guardian and his/her English teacher.
- 3) must revise his/her paper and return this revision to the English teacher within **ten school days** of having received the final graded paper.
- 4) must submit the first draft, final graded research paper and the revised draft.
- 5) must write a reflective statement concerning the revisions.
- 6) may recover a maximum grade of seventy.

*** See page 10 in this handbook for form.

Component 2: The Product

Each student will create a product. A **minimum** of fifteen hours outside of regular school hours is required.

The product:

- 1) should be student-generated and should be based on the research paper.
- 2) should provide tangible evidence reflecting the “academic learning stretch” experienced by the student.
- 3) can be oriented around the performance of a skill, the creation of a product, the study of a profession or a project/experiment conducted.

NOTE: During phases of construction, students should photograph their products to document their creation. Performances must be evaluated by an audience before Graduation Project presentations occur. Other fields of study must be documented appropriately.

***See the Product Rubric on pages 14 and 15 of this handbook for details.

Component 3: The Portfolio

Each student will document his/her journey through the Graduation Project process in a portfolio. Panel judges will be given an opportunity to review the portfolio prior to hearing the oral presentation.

Students are required to include the following:

- Cover Page
- Table of Contents
- Professional Section
- Research Paper
- Physical Product/Logs
- Dated Journal/Reflection Entries
- Reflection Statement

***See the Portfolio Rubric on page 16 of this handbook for details.

Component 4: The Presentation

Each student will deliver an oral presentation to a panel of judges selected from faculty and community members.

The entire presentation process will:

- 1) focus on the research, the product, reflection and self-evaluation.
- 2) include visual aid/s focusing on the graduation project topic and process.
- 3) include an interactive question/answer session with the panel of judges
- 4) be a minimum of 12 minutes, not to exceed 15 minutes.

***See the Presentation Rubric on pages 17 and 18 of this handbook for details.

Graduation Project Assessment

To ensure fairness and consistency to the scoring process in Columbus County high schools, the four components of the graduation project will be scored using rubrics. These state-endorsed rubrics provide an objective method for evaluating each project. In order to successfully fulfill the Columbus County Schools' graduation requirements, each descriptor in the rubric must be met at a minimum of Satisfactory score.

These rubrics may be found on the pages 11 through 18 in this handbook or at the following website:

www.columbus.k12.nc.us.

NOTE: Specific questions may be directed to the principal, guidance counselor or Project Graduation Coordinator at your student's high school. Additional information and resources may be obtained from your student's English IV teacher.