

Senior Project Mentor Handbook



Charles M. Russell High School



Choose your passion



Make the connection

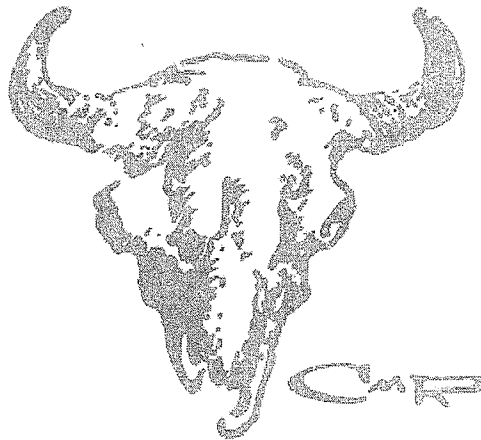


Realize your potential

Project Goals

As a result of the individualized nature of this project and potential for student growth, Charles M. Russell High School has enthusiastically adopted this project with the following goals. Upon graduation and completion of Senior Project, Seniors will:

- Demonstrate independent learning and problem solving skills
- Use effective self evaluation, time management, and communication skills
- Set goals, create a plan, and follow through
- Give back to the community and interact positively with a community mentor
- Feel empowered, valued, and capable.



We would like to acknowledge the following schools, whose programs were used as models for this handbook:

**Hellgate High School- Missoula, Montana
Big Sky High School- Missoula, Montana
Medford School District- Medford, Oregon
Rosemont High School- Sacramento, California
Webster Central School District- Webster, New York
New Trier Township High School- Winnetka, Illinois**

Project Overview

Charles M. Russell High School proudly presents Senior Project, a student centered exploratory which started in Medford Oregon in 1985. Since then, Senior Project has grown enthusiastically in high schools around the country, and in 2007, 23 states required Senior Projects for graduation in order to:

- personalize student learning with rigor and relevance
- foster social responsibility
- anchor Seniors in their final year of high school
- provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate 12 years of interdisciplinary growth
- meet 21st century learner and employer needs with increased creativity and critical thinking skills.

Traditionally Senior Projects are distributed in thirds: 1/3 of students will select a vocational or career based project, 1/3 of students will select a service based project, and 1/3 of students will select an extra-curricular or interest based project. However, regardless of the project type, each student will complete “The 4 P’s” and a community service component:

Paper-- Seniors will select an approved topic and write a *persuasive*, thesis driven research paper. The paper topic must address some controversy, within their field of study, which clearly has two positions; students will present both positions, refute the opposition, and affirm their position. During the product phase, students will also complete additional multi-genre writings specific to their work. For example: a letter to the editor, a newsletter, survey results, a public service announcement, blue prints, graphs, or an ad campaign are all possible writing ideas

Product-- With the assistance of a community mentor or internship preceptor, Seniors will apply research knowledge by defining, designing, and producing a related product that reflects a *learning stretch* and requires hands on learning, in a real world context. Med prep students' product will be their 45-90 hour internship.

Portfolio-- Seniors will create a portfolio collection of both *process and showcase* pieces, reflections, and artifact/pictures documenting their work throughout the year. Students must also take their learning and give back to the community with a required, minimum of 15 hour, community service component.

Presentation-- In May, Seniors will present their work at Senior Boards. This is a formal, judged speaking opportunity followed by an informal question and answer session.

Community Service-- Students must also take their learning and give back to the community with a required, minimum 15 hour community service component. Students' service must be related to their project topic.

To facilitate the completion of these four major components, each Senior will have a community mentor and a staff representative to guide them during this year long process.

Senior Students

The student is the person most active and responsible throughout this process. Each student is responsible for:

- Planning his/her project
- Finding his/her staff representative and community mentor. Med Prep students your staff representative is Ms.Virts and your community mentor is your internship preceptor.
- Researching his/her topic
- Writing his/her research paper
- Creating his/her product
- Reflecting on the process
- Completing a minimum of 15 community service hours
- Developing his/her portfolio- documenting the project process
- Presenting his/her project

Each student will have the help of the following people along the way: a community mentor, a staff representative or Med Prep Internship Coordinator, their English teacher, their Government teacher, and two Senior Project Coordinators.

Sample Senior Project Topic

Student Project “Fly Fishing: More Than Just Flex Rates”:

Research Paper Thesis Statement- As a result of rapid energy transfer and fast action flex rates, graphite fly rods are more accurate casting long distances than bamboo fly rods.

Product- Design and build a graphite fly rod with a professional mentor from the community.

Portfolio-

- Research paper
- Documentation- Contracts, Signature Forms, Time Logs
- Physics experiments analyzing energy transfer data with different rod mediums
- Experiment data and conservation data from the community service component

- Photographs of fly rod construction process

Presentation- Senior Boards

Community service- Volunteering with Trout Unlimited and Fish Wildlife and Parks tagging fish for data purposes.

General Timeline

First Semester

September- October

- Learn about Senior Project- Read handbook overview, complete web search
- Narrow Topic- Complete Brainstorming Form
- Select Topic- Complete Topic Proposal Form
- Read, Sign, Get Signatures, and Turn In:
 - Ethical Commitment Form
 - Parent Acknowledgement Form
 - Community Mentor Contract
 - Staff Representative Contract
 - Contact Information
- Draft, Write, Revise Letter of Intent
- Get Letter of Intent Approved by Senior Project Advisory Board

November-December

- Complete Research Process and Paper
- Portfolio Documentation (Reflections, Required Forms, and Final Graded Draft of Research Paper)

January- February

- Work on Community Service Hours
- Begin Working on Product with Community Mentor
- Continue Portfolio Documentation
- Portfolio Check

March-April

- Finish Product
 - Get Community Mentor's required evaluation form and optional/extra credit Letter of Recommendation
- Finish Service Hours
 - Complete Service Hours Documentation Form
- Finish Portfolio

May

- Prepare and Practice Presentation
- Present Dress Rehearsal to Senior English Teacher
- Complete Final Senior Project Presentation

Community Mentor/Internship Preceptor



The role of the Community Mentor/Internship Preceptor is essential to the success of the Senior Project at C.M. Russell High School. This is a unique opportunity for the larger community to assist and enlighten C.M.R. Seniors as they transition to the world after high school. Students will discuss the requirements of Senior Project with their Mentor, a community member chosen by the student or Med Prep Internship Coordinator with expertise related to the student's topic. Mentors and students will create project goals together and work together through the product phase of the project.

The Mentor will be asked to accept the following responsibilities:

- Completing a Mentor Contract
- Assisting the student in writing project goals
- Aiding and advising the student throughout the project
- Meeting with the student and supervising them during the product phase/internship
- Verifying the total hours of mentor/student interaction
- Completing the Mentor's Evaluation Form/Grading Rubric
- Writing a Letter of Recommendation for the student's portfolio (optional/extra credit)
- Contacting one of the C.M. Russell Senior Project Coordinators or Med Prep Internship Coordinator with any concerns during the project

Please note the following important information about Senior Project:

- A student may not be paid for work while completing their Senior Project.
- The Mentor may not be a relative or supervisor at a place where the student is currently employed.
- Students will also choose a C.M. Russell staff member or Ms. Virts who will serve as their Senior Project Staff Representative. The staff member will assist students as they develop, write, and implement their Projects.
- Community Mentors are invited and encouraged to attend the Senior Boards in May.

After students have narrowed their Senior Project topics, they may review the database of potential Community Mentors if they do not have an Internship Preceptor. Students can use this database in an attempt to match their project ideas with an interest area listed by potential mentors. After students select an interest area, they will then be given coordinating contact information for that community member. Students should then make an initial contact and politely request mentorship. This community member may accept or decline the student's request.

How to Choose a Community Mentor

Your mentor should be a person with expertise in your area of interest who can help and advise you during the product phase of your Senior Project. The mentor does not have to be present for all the hours you work on your project, but he/she has to be involved enough to verify the time you spent and be able to complete the Mentor's Evaluation Form/Grading Rubric describing and verifying what you did.

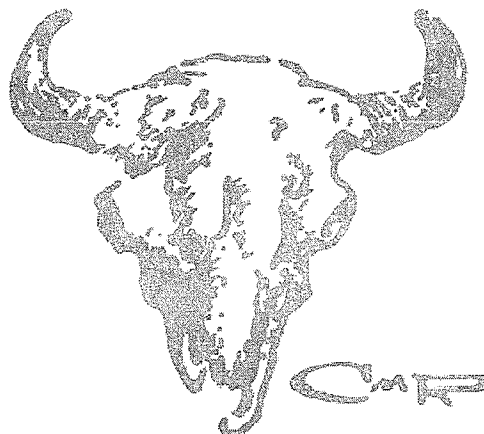
If you need help finding a community mentor, please consult the mentor database or the Senior Project Coordinators should be able to suggest some names. Please see Senior Project Web Page for the community mentor database information.

When you contact a community mentor, be sure they understand that this is a long-term project and you will be working on it throughout the entire school year. If a person travels a lot or is consistently unavailable, he/she is not a good candidate for a mentor.

At the end of the project, you will be required to send a thank-you note to your mentor.

Follow these guidelines when selecting a mentor:

- The mentor must have expertise in your topic area.
- The mentor can not be a family member of any type unless you have approval from the Senior Project Advisory board for this exception.
- The mentor must be at least 21 years of age.
- The mentor cannot be a high school student or recent graduate.
- The hours logged with you mentor cannot be from a paid position.



Community Mentor Contract

I have reviewed the senior project handbook and Med Prep Addendum and agree to serve as a community mentor for _____ during the product phase (primarily spring semester) of their following Senior Project topic:

I understand that I am responsible for monitoring the student's progress, meeting with him/her to discuss problems and necessary adjustments, and certifying the hours spent on the product phase of their project. I have the option to write a letter of recommendation for the student's portfolio explaining what the student has done under my direction and I will complete the Community Mentor Evaluation Form.

This is what the student will do under my supervision (to be filled out by the community mentor):

Thank you for serving as a Community Mentor!

Mentor Information (please print):

Name: _____

Profession or Place of Business: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers:

Home- _____

Work- _____

Cell- _____

Email: _____

Signatures:

Mentor: _____

Date: _____

Student: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Mentor Verification by Staff Representative:

Contact Date: _____

Verification Notes:

Staff Representative Signature: _____

Letter of Recommendation Format

Below is an optional format for a letter of recommendation if your Community Mentor needs it:

**(your address)
(current date)**

To Whom It May Concern:

Paragraph I: Identify the student and the capacity in which you came to know him/her. Be specific to the project they completed under your supervision.

Paragraph II: Give as much evidence as possible of the student's increased knowledge, maturity, and understanding of their project topic or other aspects of development during the time you worked with him or her.

Paragraph III: Give as much evidence as possible of any of the following attributes:

- Communication Skills (written and/or oral)
- Willingness to take initiative
- Level of motivation
- Planning and organizational skills- time management, self evaluation, goal setting
- Technical knowledge or skills
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Interpersonal skills
- Willingness to accept responsibility
- Willingness to demonstrate leadership and independent learning
- Analytical/problem-solving skills
- Group interaction and team work skills

Paragraph IV: Conclude the letter with your recommendation and accentuate the overall positive qualities you witnessed in this student.

Sincerely,

(your signature)

**(your name typed)
(your relevant title)**

Community Mentor Evaluation Form

Student's Name: _____

Mentor's Name: _____

1. Did you observe and evaluate his/her learning in the research paper? _____
2. Did you observe and evaluate his/her learning in the product? _____
3. Can you verify that the student spent at least 15 hours working on the product? _____
How many hours can you verify? _____ Explain: _____
4. Have you seen the product at different states of completion, not just the final phase?
_____ Explain: _____
5. What problems specifically did this student encounter, and what evidence of problem solving did you observe?

6. Have you seen any changes in skill or attitude over the time you observed the student working on their Senior Project?

7. What successes did you see this student achieve? What was the "best moment" for the student?

8. Based upon what you have observed during the paper and product phases, please rate the student's application of the criteria below using numbers 1-5 (5= highest, 1=lowest). Write N/A if not observed or not applicable to the project:
 - _____ Took a learning risk (went beyond their comfort level)
 - _____ Applied research knowledge to the product creation
 - _____ Utilized you as a resource
 - _____ Used a variety of resources
 - _____ Maintained balance and perspective
 - _____ Developed and stayed with a product, a plan, and timeline
 - _____ Strived to do his or her best
 - _____ Demonstrated initiative and responsibility
 - _____ Practiced courteous, mature behavior

Mentor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

In-Progress Senior Project Grading Rubric

To be completed by community mentor:

Please evaluate student's senior project performance on the grading rubric below. Please either email (jamie_mcgraw@gfps.k12.mt.us) or mail (C.M. Russell High School c/o Jamie McGraw 228 17th Ave. NW Great Falls MT, 59404) the completed form. Thank you!

Student's Name: _____

Component	Excellent 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Needs Improvement 1	Score
Punctuality	Arrives early or at designated time each day	Arrives 5-10 minutes late one time but notified mentor	Arrives 5-10 minutes late one time but did not notify mentor	Arrives 5-10 minutes late more than 2 times	____/4
Attitude	Cheerful, positive, and outgoing	Positive but reserved	Occasionally negative and somewhat inattentive	Frequently negative and/or unengaged	____/4
Enthusiasm/ Interest	Eager to learn, asks appropriate questions, researches additional information on own time	Shows desire to learn more about profession, occasionally researches additional information on own	Rarely asks questions regarding profession	Uninterested, little effort to interact	____/4
Courtesy	Consistently displays courteous and mature behavior	Frequently displays courteous behavior	Occasionally displays courteous behavior	Student lacks courteous behavior	____/4
Responsibility/ Professionalism	Submits paperwork and communicates in a timely manner. Properly dressed	Had to address one communication or attire item with the student	Had to address two communication or attire items with the student	Had to address three or more communication or attire items with the student	____/4
Participation	Eager to work with without being asked	Willing to work	Timid about work	Little participation (often stands or sits around)	____/4

TOTAL _____/24

Additional Comments:

Signature of Internship Supervisor: _____

Post Senior Project Grading Rubric

To be completed by community mentor:

Please evaluate student's senior project performance on the grading rubric below. Please either email (jamie_mcgraw@gfps.k12.mt.us) or mail (C.M. Russell High School c/o Jamie McGraw 228 17th Ave. NW Great Falls MT, 59404) the completed form. Thank you!

Student's Name: _____

Component	Excellent 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Needs Improvement 1	Score
Punctuality	Arrived early or at designated time each day	Arrived 5-10 minutes late one time but notified mentor	Arrived 5-10 minutes late one time but did not notify mentor	Arrived 5-10 minutes late more than 2 times	____/4
Attitude	Cheerful, positive, and outgoing	Positive but reserved	Occasionally negative and somewhat inattentive	Frequently negative and/or unengaged	____/4
Enthusiasm/ Interest	Eager to learn, asks appropriate questions, researches additional information on own time	Shows desire to learn more about profession, occasionally researches additional information on own	Rarely asks questions regarding profession	Uninterested, little effort to interact	____/4
Courtesy	Consistently displayed courteous and mature behavior	Frequently displayed courteous behavior	Occasionally displayed courteous behavior	Student lacks courteous behavior	____/4
Responsibility/ Professionalism	Submits paperwork and communicates in a timely manner. Properly dressed	Had to address one communication or attire item with the student	Had to address two communication or attire items with the student	Had to address three or more communication or attire items with the student	____/4
Participation	Eager to work with without being asked	Willing to work	Timid about work	Little participation (often stands or sits around)	____/4

TOTAL _____/24

Additional Comments:

Signature of Internship Supervisor: _____

Meeting Log

Students must document their Staff Representative and Community Mentor meetings.

11 Meeting Minimum:

- 3 meetings with your Staff Representative
- 3 meetings with your Community Mentor
- 5 additional meetings with either your Staff Representative or Community Mentor

Date	Time	Mentor Signature	Tasks Accomplished
1.			
2.			
3.			
Date	Time	Staff Rep. Signature	Tasks Accomplished
1.			
2.			
3.			
Additional Meetings:			
Date	Time	Signature	Tasks Accomplished
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
Beyond Minimum Meetings:			
Date	Time	Signature	Tasks Accomplished
1.			
2.			
3.			

Senior Project Coordinators, **Senior English Teacher,** **and Government Teacher**

Senior English teachers will be:

- Guiding students through topic brainstorming sessions
- Approving the Topic Proposal form
- Overseeing students as they write their Letter of Intent
- Teaching students the research process
- Guiding students as they write their research papers
- Assessing students' research papers (fall)
- Assessing students' presentation (spring)

Jamie McGraw 268-6174 [jamie mcgraw@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:jamie_mcgraw@gfps.k12.mt.us)

Senior Government teachers will be:

- Introducing the importance of community service
- Verifying and assessing students' community service proposal, hours, quality, and narrative
- Assessing students' project portfolios

Brian Halverson 268-6240 [brian halverson@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:brian_halverson@gfps.k12.mt.us)

Ed McNamee 268-6154 [edward mcnamee@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:edward_mcnamee@gfps.k12.mt.us)

Med Prep Internship Coordinator will:

- Placing student in internship location
- Overseeing and guiding students throughout the internship process
- Assessing student's internship reflections
- Assessing student's case studies
- Supporting Internship Preceptors throughout the internship process

Christi Virts 268-6226 christi_virts@gfps.k12.mt.us

Senior Project Coordinators will be:

- Verifying students' staff representative selection
- Supporting students throughout the project process
- Supporting Staff Representatives throughout the project process
- Supporting Community Mentors throughout the project process
- Planning and organizing Senior Board Presentations

Jamie McGraw 268-6174 [jamie mcgraw@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:jamie_mcgraw@gfps.k12.mt.us)

Ed McNamee 268-6154 [edward mcnamee@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:edward_mcnamee@gfps.k12.mt.us)