

2023-2024

**WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE
HIGH SCHOOL
SENIOR PROJECT HANDBOOK**



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CLASS PURPOSE & CALENDAR

The purpose of the Senior Project is to fulfill the *WLC Vision of the Graduate* – an effective communicator, a strong collaborator, a creative problem solver, a self-directed learner, and a responsible citizen – by applying all of the skills you have developed during your high school career towards a project of your own choosing.

Completing the Senior Project

To complete the Senior Project, you must fulfill the following tasks:

	Task	Format	Due Date	Points (Late)
1	Mentor Selection	Google Form	Thursday, 9/7	5 (3)
2	Topic Selection	Google Form	Thursday, 9/21	3 (2)
3	Essential Question Selection	Google Form	Thursday, 10/5	3 (2)
	Research Check-In 1 (2 pages)	Google Doc	Thursday, 10/26	1
4	Outside Expert Selection	Google Form	Thursday, 11/2	5 (3)
5	3-4 Sub-EQs	Google Form	Thursday, 11/16	3 (2)
6	Applied Piece Brainstorm	Google Form	Thursday, 11/16	3 (2)
	Research Check-In 2 (4 pages)	Google Doc	Thursday, 11/30	1
7	Applied Piece Plan	Google Sheet	Thursday, 12/14	3 (2)
	Research Check-In 3 (6 pages)	Google Doc	Thursday, 12/14	1
	Research Check-In 4 (8 pages)	Google Doc	Thursday, 1/18	1
	Research Check-In 5 (10 pages)	Google Doc	Thursday, 2/15	1
8	Completed Research (12 pages)	Google Doc	Thursday, 3/21	20

9	Completed Applied Piece		Thursday, 5/9	20
10	Completed Presentation Slide Deck / Outline	Google Slides	Thursday, 5/16	5 (3)
11	Presentation!		TBD	20
12	Reflection Essay	Google Doc	Thursday, 5/30	10 (7)
			Total:	100

Grading Notes:

- All 12 tasks must be fulfilled in order to complete your Senior Project!
- Extra credit (up to 5 points) can be earned by meeting the Research Check-In deadlines. *(Note: all 12 pages of research must still be completed if you miss the deadlines!)*
- Students who earn an A+ for their final grade will be presented with a Senior Project High Distinction Award at Senior Awards night
- Rubrics for the following assignments are on the following pages: Completed Research, Completed Applied Piece, Presentation, and Reflection Essay.

MENTOR SELECTION

- Your mentor will be your guide through the Senior Project process, so it is important to select someone you trust and work well with. It may also be worth considering if your mentor has any experience/expertise in your topic.
- Your mentor **must be a WLC staff member**.
- It is important for you to meet regularly with your mentor, even if for a few minutes. This will give them an opportunity to check in on your progress, answer any questions you have, and offer any advice. You should decide on a weekly meeting plan as soon as your mentor agrees to work with you!

TOPIC SELECTION

There are two basic paths you can take when deciding on a topic: **Free-Choice** or **Community Project**.

- **Option 1: Free-Choice**
 - Choose any topic area that interests you! This may include:
 - **Learning about something that you've always wanted to**, but have never had the time to, such as welding, dress-making, or fishing, to name just a few.
 - **Exploring a potential career**. Are you wondering if you'll enjoy a certain job? Senior Project is the perfect opportunity to learn as much about it as you can! In the past, students have

learned about becoming lawyers, doctors, mechanics, cooks, investors and more. Some discovered that they had a true passion for the profession...others not so much. Either way, their experiences helped them make important decisions about their future.

- **Diving deeper into a current hobby.** Do you have a current hobby that you participate in, but would love to learn more about it? Senior project is the perfect excuse to do so!

Warning! Every year, someone chooses to dive deeper into a current hobby...and ends up regretting it because they feel like they turned their personal escape into a job. So make sure you think carefully about your topic selection if you are worried that this might happen to you.

- **Option 2: Community Project**

- If you're struggling to think of a free-choice topic -- or you're worried about turning your personal passion into a job -- you can complete a community project. This may include volunteering at the library, interning at a local business, or developing a neighborhood beautification program! The trick is to find a community member or organization that needs help...and then help them!

ESSENTIAL QUESTION (and SUB-EQs) SELECTION

- Your **Essential Question** is the BIG question that will set the course for your entire project and all of your research. A good Essential Question:
 - Is INTERESTING and NEW to you
 - Requires SIGNIFICANT THINKING and RESEARCH to answer (i.e. it doesn't have a simple yes/no answer)
 - Is NOT A THESIS. The best essential questions are ones that you explore with an open and curious mind -- not ones that you take a side to argue
- Your **Sub-Essential Questions** (or Sub-EQs) should support and add depth to your Essential Question.
 - You may not know what Sub-EQs to ask at the start, and that is ok! Most students end up changing or tweaking their Sub-EQs along the way anyway. A good idea is to get started with your research and develop your sub-EQs as you go.
 - **3-4 Sub-EQs are required**
- **EQ and Sub-EQ Example:**
 - EQ: What is life like through the eyes of a child with autism?
 - What is autism?
 - What causes autism?
 - What does a child with autism's day look like?
 - How does a child with autism communicate his experience?

RESEARCH JOURNAL & EXPERIENTIAL RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

The Senior Project is, first and foremost, a research project. The quality of your research will have a direct impact not only on your Applied Piece and Final Presentation, but maybe more importantly, on how much you take away from the experience.

- **Research Requirements**
 - Your **Research Journal** must:
 - Include **10+ pages of notes**, *excluding images and diagrams*
 - Be double-spaced, and use size 12 font
 - Be summarized in your own words! (You may link to articles, videos, etc., but you **cannot copy and paste text from another source**).
 - Include **10 strong sources**
 - Sources must include a mix of print and video/audio (a minimum of 3 each)
 - A strong source has expertise in the area you are researching
 - Include a complete **Works Cited** in MLA format
- **Experiential Research Requirements**
 - In addition to the 10+ pages of media-based research, you must log **30+ hours** of experiential research
 - This includes, but is not limited to, interviews, internships, apprenticeships, site visits, observations, and experiments, as well as time spent communicating with your outside expert *and time spent working on your applied piece*
 - All time must be logged in your **Experiential Research Tracker**

OUTSIDE EXPERT SELECTION

Finding an outside expert serves three purposes: First, it gives you an opportunity to practice asking someone you don't know for something, which is a critical life skill (think applying for a new job). Second, getting feedback from someone who has more experience and expertise on a topic than you do is often the fastest way to learn, particularly about more obscure topics. Third, it embodies the Strong-Collaborator element of the WLC Vision of the Graduate.

- **Who Qualifies As An Outside Expert?**
 - Cannot be a relative or a WLC Staff Member
 - Must be an *expert with credentials* in the area that you are researching
 - Must be available and willing to answer your questions as needed *for the duration of your project*
 - Does not need to be local – you may communicate by phone or online
- **Do I Need to Track Correspondence With My Outside Expert?**

- Yes! You are expected to correspond with your Outside Expert on a regular basis for the duration of your project.
- You will track your correspondence in your **Experiential Research Tracker**.

APPLIED PIECE

- You will have a lot of flexibility in determining what to do for your Applied Piece, but it must meet the following requirement:
 - It must **APPLY YOUR NEW LEARNING** to make an **ORIGINAL CREATION** or solve an **UNFAMILIAR CHALLENGE** (in other words, it can't be something that you could complete without conducting research).
- Before you start your Applied Piece, you will first work with your mentor and outside expert to come up with three potential ideas (aka, your **Applied Piece Brainstorm**).
- Once you decide on an Applied Piece, you will need to fill out the **Applied Piece Plan**. This is simply a week-by-week plan that you will write to make sure you can realistically finish your Applied Piece on time.
- Finally, while working on your Applied Piece, you must log your hours in your **Experiential Research Tracker**.

Previous Applied Piece Examples

- Having researched the impact of the meat industry on the environment, you could write a vegan cookbook that outlines its environmental benefits.
- Having researched the history and design of motorcycles, you could faithfully restore an old motorcycle.
- Having researched principles and techniques of forensic science, you might write a story in which a crime was investigated using those techniques and publish the story to share with a wide audience.

The Following Are NOT Acceptable:

- Testing on humans or animals
- Putting a person's well-being at risk
- Brochures or letters to the editor
- Being paid, earning school credit, or earning community service hours for the work you put into your Applied Piece
- Using school facilities without first meeting with Linda Draper

PRESENTATION

The presentation is the culmination of all of the work you will put in over the course of your Senior Project: the research, meetings, Applied Piece, and so on. It is your opportunity to share what you've learned with your community and peers, and to demonstrate that you are an Effective Communicator – one of the pillars of the WLC Vision of the Graduate.

Presentation Requirements:

- Must answer your Essential Question and Sub-Essential Questions **through evidence of research**
- Must have effective supporting materials (e.g. graphs, diagrams, stats, visuals)
- Must describe your learning process
- Must explain your Applied Piece plan and outcome in detail, as well as the challenges you were (or weren't) able to overcome
- Must be well organized (most students use Google Slides or PowerPoint to organize their presentation)
- Must include a complete Works Cited slide
- Must be between 20 - 25 minutes in length
 - Audio/video clips must not exceed 3 minutes in total
 - Q&A does not count towards 20 - 25 minutes
- Must successfully address audience questions

Other Presentation Considerations:

- You should **practice practice practice** your presentation prior to your presentation date!
- You should dress professionally for your presentation

REFLECTION ESSAY

The Reflection Essay is the final task of your Senior Project. The purpose of this assignment is to think back on your experiences over the course of the semester and how they have exemplified your growth in each of the areas of the WLC Vision of the Graduate.

Essay Structure:

- Your essay will be 7 paragraphs long
- Paragraph 1: Introduction
 - Provide a brief overview of your project (including your Essential Question)
 - Explain why you chose your project and how you believe it fulfilled the WLC Vision of the Graduate
- Paragraphs 2 - 6: Your Growth
 - For each of the 5 pillars of the WLC Vision of the Graduate (Effective Communicator, Strong Collaborator, Creative Problem Solver, Self-Directed Learner, Responsible Citizen):
 - You must: explain how your project and presentation demonstrate your progress in this area
 - You might: discuss your growth in each area by comparing your work on this project to work you've done previously at WLC that wasn't as successful – and highlighting the key insights or experiences that helped lead to this growth
- Paragraph 7: Conclusion
 - What are the key takeaways/insights/lessons that you will remember from this experience and will take with you beyond WLC?
 - Overall, are you satisfied with your project and the growth that it showed in the five areas outlined in the WLC Vision of the graduate?
 - Are there any areas that you are particularly proud of?
 - Are there any areas that you feel you still need to work on and why? Are there any areas of your project that you would do differently a second time around and why?

GRADING RUBRICS

Research Journal Grading Rubric									
Quantity of Research:									
<i>1 point per page; must be double-spaced, size 12, written in own words; max of 10</i>									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Quality of Research:									
Research lacks depth and/or breadth			Researched EQ and SOME of the Sub-EQs in depth			Thoroughly researched EQ and ALL Sub-EQs			
0	1	2	3	4	5				
Quantity, Quality/Variety of Sources:									
Fewer than 5 sources		5-9 Sources and Quality/Variety is Lacking		5-9 Sources; Quality/Variety is Sufficient		10+ Sources; Quality/Variety is Sufficient		10+ Sources; Quality/Variety is Excellent	
0	1	2	3	4	5				
Total Points (out of 20):									

Applied Piece Grading Rubric									
Applies New Learning:									
Little to no new learning applied			Some new learning applied			Significant new learning applied			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Synthesizes with Research:									
<i>Minimal</i> connection to research		Demonstrates <i>some</i> connection to research			Demonstrates <i>significant</i> connection to research				
1		2		3		4		5	
Overall Quality (5 points):									
Low quality; appears rushed and lacks attention to detail					High quality			Highest quality	
1		2		3		4		5	
Total Points (out of 20):									

Presentation Grading Rubric					
Presentation Length:					
≤ 17 minutes = extension required	18-19 = 1 point	20-25 = 2 points	26 - 29 = 1 point	30 min. = cutoff	
Professional Attire:		Audio/Video Clips:		Works Cited Slide Included:	
No = 0 points	Yes = 1 point	> 3 min. = 0 points	≤ 3 min. = 1 point	No = 0 points	Yes = 1 point
Organization:	Logical and effective				2
	Logical but could be more effective				1
	Haphazard and/or confusing				0
Supporting Media:	Highly impactful				2
	Somewhat impactful				1
	Lacks impact				0
Evidence of Research:	Extensive and relevant to EQ				2
	Apparent but not always relevant to EQ				1
	Minimal and/or not relevant to EQ				0
Applied Piece:	Process thoroughly explained and strong synthesis with EQ				2
	Process thoroughly explained, but lacking synthesis with EQ				1
	Process incompletely explained and connection to EQ is minimal				0
Reflects on Learning Process:	Highlights extensive new learning				2
	Highlights some new learning				1
	Highlights little to no new learning				0
Answers Essential Question:	Thoroughly answers EQ				2
	Partially answers EQ				1
	Does not answer EQ				0
Overall Presence:	High audience engagement; speaks with appropriate pace, volume and tone				2
	Minimal audience engagement and/or speaks too quickly/slowly/quietly				1
	No audience engagement and reads off of slides				0
Q & A:	Audience questions are thoroughly answered				1
	Audience questions are minimally answered				0
Total Points (out of 20):					

Reflection Essay Grading Rubric		
Completed on time:	Yes	3
	No	0
Written in Essay Format:	Yes	1
	No	0
Writing Quality:	Excellent	3
	Good	2
	Poor	1
Analysis of Personal Growth at WLC:	Thorough and insightful analysis	3
	Decent analysis	2
	Minimal analysis	1
Total Points (out of 10):		