



Senior Project Guidelines

Purpose

The Senior Project is the culmination of your Valley New School career, a part of your academic and/or personal journey. It should demonstrate a mastery of the project process as well as the thinking skills you have developed. A successful Senior Project justifies your readiness to graduate from VNS.

Overview

VNS Senior Projects are required to:

- Propose a minimum of three credits. The breadth and depth of thought and quality of work should, therefore, be high. (See Senior Project Rubrics for specific benchmarks of quality.)
- Demonstrate detailed completion and documentation of all steps of the VNS project process (proposal, research, planning, production).
- Have a strong focus on research. A wide variety of sources must be used; primary resources and firsthand experiences are mandatory.
- Result in multiple products, including one (or more) that is written.
- Include a professional oral presentation of the project to the VNS student body, advisors, your parents, and primary resources/community experts in your chosen topic.

Due Dates

1 st Evaluation Day	Proposal meeting must be scheduled, and a copy of your proposal must be submitted to each advisor.
November 1	Senior Projects must be proposed and approved.
November 2	Group Meeting: Research Expectations (10:45 a.m.)
Nov - Jan	Mandatory monthly check-ins with your advisor take place. **Dates must be scheduled in advance and included in your proposal.

January 26 (10:30 a.m.)	Group Meeting: Research Check-in; Production Expectations
February – May	Mandatory bi-weekly or weekly check-ins with your advisor take place.
March 24 Expectations	Group Meeting: Production Check-in; Oral Presentation (10:45 a.m.)
May 1	<i>Optional:</i> Earn an extra .25 credit if project is assessed before this date.
June 1	Oral presentation of project and assessment must be completed.

Format

Proposal

As Sean Covey recommends, begin with the end in mind. A well planned proposal will serve to guide the entire project. Thus, the VNS Senior Project Proposal should look less like a typical project proposal and more like a written product. Use the Senior Project Proposal Guide to create a detailed, descriptive, and well-written packet of information about your project. A proposal form that is merely filled out or handwritten will not be accepted. Do thorough preliminary research to narrow your focus and acquire background knowledge of your topic. Be able to speak about this research and your topic at the proposal meeting.

All four advisors participate in all Senior Project proposals and assessments. Students must, therefore, schedule proposal meetings at a mutually convenient time. Setting an appointment during Reading Time or after school is recommended; allow for 30 to 60 minutes. Proposal meetings must be *scheduled* by 3:00 p.m. on the first Evaluation Day of the school year (the end of the first six-week block); the actual meeting may take place any time before November 1. Proposals must also be *approved* by that date, so schedule early to allow time to complete any necessary revisions. Each advisor should receive a full copy of your proposal by the first Evaluation Day, so he/she has time to read it prior to the meeting.

Research

At least half of the time put into a Senior Project should be spent on research. The goal is to become an *expert* on the topic. (An expert should have a base of general knowledge that extends beyond the project's narrow focus as well as an understanding of and ability to explain very specific information.) Senior Project research must include primary resources (people, organizations, archives, etc.) and firsthand experiences (field trips, internships, apprenticeships, etc.) Seek out and take advantage of any and all opportunities to *observe/participate in* your project topic in person.

Citation of sources is a must. Plan to document sources immediately upon acquisition, and record a page number(s) for every note taken. Parenthetical documentation in all products is a *must*; a VNS Senior has no excuse for missing information. Save time and increase efficiency by properly documenting all research from the start.

Products

VNS Senior Projects must include multiple products, at least one of which must be written. Writing skills are emphasized on the Production Rubric. Allow time for *many* revisions of *all* products. Plan ahead to have parents, advisors, project mentors/experts, and other adults provide suggestions for revision and editing. Professional layout (12-point, Arial or Times New Roman font, double-spaced, cover page, page numbering) is required.

Products should apply depth and breadth of knowledge as well as demonstrate analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Utilize advisors and project mentors during the planning phase to assure that product ideas will incorporate and maximize the potential for these higher thinking skills. Design products that exhibit skills developed during your career at VNS, but aim to further develop them during the Senior Project.

Oral Presentation & Assessment

Evaluation of the Senior Project is divided into two steps: a formal oral presentation of project purpose, topic, and process, and an assessment meeting at which rubric marks and credit are determined. Both steps must be completed by June 1. Presentations should be scheduled during Reading Time two days prior to the assessment meeting. Assessment meetings should be scheduled after school; alternate meeting times will be considered if required by parents or project mentors/experts who wish to attend. Allow at least an hour for each meeting. Submit to each advisor copies of products, End-of-Project Analysis, Senior Project rubrics, and any other pertinent information *at least two days prior* to the presentation.

Senior Project Oral Presentations include a formal speech and a question-and-answer session. Presented to the VNS student body, advisors, parents, project mentors, and interested community members, the speech should extensively cover the project's purpose, topic, and process. Professional presentations will be written well in advance, revised several times, and thoroughly rehearsed. Use of a visual aid is expected as it increases audience understanding.

Following the speech portion, seniors will take questions from audience members. Listen carefully, repeat the question to ensure that the entire audience has heard it, and answer candidly. Additional information/charts/data may be brought to the podium to aid in answering. While general audience members will only ask about information in the speech, advisors will ask questions regarding both the oral presentation and products. Prepare for the question-and-answer session by reviewing research ahead of time. Have parents and peers ask questions after listening to speech rehearsals. Make a list of questions that the audience might ask. Practice repeating the question for the audience before giving your response.

At the assessment meeting, advisors and student will evaluate all aspects of the Senior Project using three rubrics: Project Process, Production, and Oral Presentation. Parents and project mentors are encouraged to attend. Advisors may invite and consult a community expert if the project topic is outside their realm of expertise. Prepare for the assessment meeting by determining preliminary marks on the rubrics in each category. Be ready to verbally support the marks with examples and evidence.

Credit

Like other projects at Valley New School, credit for the Senior Project is determined by examining *quality and quantity*. Marks on the rubric display the *quality* of the work. If the quality of the work warrants credit (i.e., the majority of the marks are on the left half of the rubrics), then the amount of credit is determined by the *quantity* of work. The more time *and* effort put into the project, the more credit will be earned. Senior Projects should earn three or more credits.

Senior Project Proposal Guide

Quality Senior Project Proposals will include all ten of the items below. Please word-process your proposal, using double spacing and 12-point, Arial or Times New Roman font. Include a cover page or header with name, project title, and date. Edit and revise this proposal as you would any written product. To aid in this endeavor, read proposals submitted in past years and discuss with your advisor.

1. Create a project title.
2. Write a project thesis statement: an abstract or brief summary of the topic and purpose of the project.
3. List research subtopics.
4. List questions that will guide research.
5. Include an essay (200+ words) explaining and defending why/how this project is important or beneficial to you and/or the larger community.
6. Conduct thorough preliminary research, including contacting primary resources. Attach a preliminary Works Cited in MLA format, and bring resources to the proposal meeting.
7. List a variety of activities that will be part of the project process.
8. List standards (type out subject area, standard, and benchmark) that will be achieved upon completion of the project.
9. Include the following time management milestones:

Proposal Meeting:	/ /	Time: _____
Research Completed	/ /	
Planning Completed	/ /	
Production Completed	/ /	
Oral Project Presentation	/ /	Time: _____
Assessment Meeting	/ /	Time: _____

← Must be completed by
November 1

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June 1

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10. Provide space for student, parent, and four advisor signatures and date.