

CAREER READY **SD**

Capstone Experiences: Senior Experience

A Project of:



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Capstone Experiences

Capstone experiences allow students the opportunity to consolidate and apply learning from their high school coursework into a meaningful and relevant career-related experience. This student-driven experience is based on the student's chosen career cluster or pathway and designed to help increase college and career readiness.

Getting Started

Use this Senior Experience Framework as a starting point for designing a local program. Feel encouraged to adapt, modify, and tailor the program and documents to fit your district's specific needs. Flexibility is intentionally built into the program.

Students participating in the Capstone Course: Senior Experience (80019) will...

- Create a research component related to a chosen topic of study
- Incorporate an "experience" with the help of a business/industry mentor
- Develop a project or product connected to their research
- Create and present a professional portfolio documenting and reflecting on the experience

Recommended course credit offered: .5-1.0

Prerequisite recommendation: Foundational CTE Course

For More Information on CTE Capstones:

- CTE: Capstone Experiences <https://doe.sd.gov/cte/capstone.aspx>
- CTE: Senior Experience Standards <https://doe.sd.gov/cte/documents/Senior-Experience.pdf>

Senior Experience Capstone Overview

The Senior Experience Capstone is a high school capstone experience that requires students to demonstrate not only what they know, but what they can do in the form of a mastery project.

The Senior Experience Capstone allows students to see the connections between what they are learning now and the application to post-secondary education and careers. Students will be expected to conceive a plan of action that incorporates the following four elements:

- A project/product
- A research component
- A portfolio
- A presentation

The Senior Experience Capstone calls upon students to become an expert in their chosen topic area and showcase the skills and abilities they have gained through their high school career. It will stretch the students' skills and prepare them for life beyond high school.

The Senior Experience Capstone allows students the opportunity to connect with a mentor from business or industry, conduct research on a carefully chosen topic, then consolidate and showcase their learning into a meaningful and relevant experience. It is a way for students to connect with the world outside of school and to demonstrate the skills, abilities, and knowledge they have developed to help prepare them for their post-secondary education and the workforce.

The Senior Experience Capstone allows schools an avenue to a relevant and rigorous career-connected learning opportunity that also connects to their high school experience. Senior Experience Capstone encourages students to see the connections between what they have learned in school and how this learning can apply to their future plans. They become an "expert" in their chosen topic area and showcase the skills and abilities they have gained through the experience.

Finally, the Senior Experience Capstone provides students with a focused and structured learning experience that helps them develop important workplace skills like meeting timelines, making decisions, conducting research, and preparing for and presenting to others. Senior Experience Capstone provides an opportunity for students to model the 3 R's for schools – rigor, relevance, and relationships!

Elements Of a High-Quality CTE Capstone Experience

1. **Clear & Aligned Purpose** - Learning outcomes are aligned with school, district, and student-specific goals.
2. **Student-Driven** - The student takes leadership for selecting, planning, and implementing the experience.
3. **Career Exploration & Skills Development** - Students participate in career exploration and employability skills training prior to the experience.
4. **Career-Connected** - Students apply academic learning to the experience.
5. **Community Mentors** - Business, industry, and community partners serve as experience mentors.
6. **School Advisors** - Students have access to advisors to help support the experience.
7. **Training & Support** - Students, advisors, and community partners are provided with continued training to support the experience.
8. **Safe & Age-Appropriate Partnerships** - Experiences take place in a safe environment and age-appropriate environment.
9. **Reflection & Recognition** - Students, advisors, and mentors reflect on the experience and recognize the work of all involved.



Capstone Experience Implementation Checklist

The implementation checklist should be used to help prepare for and begin offering a Capstone Experience. This is a general guide to help determine the necessary and suggested activities required to implement a high-quality Capstone Experience in your district.

1. Organize

- Confirm there is support from administration, faculty, and the school board for offering the Capstone Experience.
- Assign Capstone Experience Coordinator(s)/Advisors(s).
- Designate a budget (if applicable).
- Determine a suggested timeline for offering the proposed Capstone Experience(s).

2. Plan

- Seek input from students, staff, and community members to determine which of the Capstone Experiences will be offered.
- Review the State provided resources and standards for Capstone Experiences to become familiar with each [experience's components](#).
- Visit with other schools who have implemented a Capstone Experience to gain insight and feedback.
- Review and refine the suggested timeline for offering the proposed Capstone Experience(s).

3. Design

- Identify components from the provided resources and standards to include in your program.
- Download and revise templates and resources you plan to include in your program from the provided resources.
- Determine the logistics of how the Capstone Experience will be offered as a part of your district's schedule/calendar (ex. Semester or year-long, .5 or 1 credit, completed as a part of a designated class period or self-directed by the student)
- Determine if successful completion of the Capstone Experience is required for high school graduation.
- Identify any prerequisites needed by a student prior to completing the Capstone Experience (ex. Career exploration, employability, soft skills training, prior work-based learning experience)
- Determine the criteria and the grading scale for successful complete of the Capstone Experience (ex. pass/fail or assigned a letter grade).
- Identify roles and responsibilities of the Experience Coordinator/Advisor(s), students, administration, community members, and any others involved in the program
- Create course syllabi and description(s) for district course guidebook
- Gain final approval from administration and school board for offering the course(s)

4. Implement

- Communicate the Capstone Experience program to staff and students.
- Ensure professional development is provided to staff if necessary.
- Ensure any prerequisites are provided to students prior to registering for the experience.
- Initiate the Capstone Experience course if this is part of your program design.
- Review progress regularly, adjusting expectations and plans as needed.

5. Evaluate

- Identify goals for the Capstone Experience program.
- Identify student outcomes.
- Analyze program and student results.
- Recommend program modifications based upon results.

Senior Experience Capstone Components

Topic Selection: The topic can be developed around a career cluster focus and student interests.

Component #1: Research Paper

The research paper is a formal document that encourages the student to develop and demonstrate proficiency in conducting research and writing. The following are suggested criteria for the paper:

- Research-based with a variety of credible sources including one source being an interview from the student's Experience Mentor.
- The paper should conform to school and district standards for Senior Level research and writing. Capstone Coordinators/Advisors are encouraged to work with the school faculty from the English Language Arts Department to determine appropriate guidelines and requirements for the research component of the Senior Experience Capstone.

Component #2: Product or Project

This is a tangible creation based on choosing, designing, and developing a product related to the research topic. Product/project guideline recommendations include:

- A recommended minimum of 15 hours dedicated to completing the project.
- A student should have pre-approval from their Capstone Coordinator/Advisor before proceeding.
- Student's mentor and/or Capstone Coordinator/advisor may assist with the project if necessary.

Component #3: Portfolio

The portfolio is a professional compilation of the student's work, documentation, and required criteria for their Senior Experience. The following are suggested components that may be included:

- Cover Page and/or Title Page
- Table of Contents or Menu
- Resume
- Cover letter
- List of references
- Letter of intent
- Reflection on the experience
- Thank you emails/notes
- Documentation of any professional correspondence
- Documentation of time spent with mentor
- Relevant career and schoolwork samples
- Research component
- Presentation component

Component #4: Presentation

The formal presentation is the final, culminating component of the Senior Experience Capstone and allows for students to showcase their experience to an audience or panel. It is recommended that the presentation follow district approved criteria for senior level speeches and/or presentations. The following is suggested criteria to include as a part of the presentation:

- An analysis/summary of the entire Capstone Experience
- Visual aids and/or artifacts from the experience
- Explanation of the relationship between the project/product and the research components
- Reflection on the impact the experience had on the student's post-secondary and career plans

Senior Experience Capstone Roles & Responsibilities

Role and Responsibilities of the Student

It is the responsibility of the student to meet all guidelines and timelines for the Senior Experience Capstone.

- Complete any prerequisites requirements of the experience in accordance with school and/or district policy.
- Select a Senior Experience Capstone Mentor and arrange for approved time to work with your mentor to complete the experience.
- Maintain documentation of all work in progress, rough drafts, final draft, etc.
- Submit Senior Capstone course requirements in accordance with course syllabus and school district policy.
- Maintain regular and professional communication with Capstone Mentor and Capstone Coordinator/Advisor throughout the experience.

Role and Responsibilities of the Capstone Coordinator/Advisor

Any 7-12 Certified Teacher, Certified School Counselor, or Certified Administrator can serve as a Senior Experience Capstone Coordinator/Advisor. Additional school staff may be asked to help support the student at various stages of the experience as well.

- Serve as a student advisor helping with selection and approval of the Senior Experience topic and project/product.
- Serve as a resource to the student in all stages of the experience.
- Assist and advise the student throughout the experience as needed. This may include assistance with:
 - Finding a mentor
 - Senior Experience research, project development, or portfolio support
 - Monitoring student progress and entering grades Communicating with students regularly to ensure they are staying on pace and completing all Senior Experience requirements
 - Assisting with coordination of final presentations
- Serve as the school liaison for the business/industry or community mentor. This includes communicating with the mentor throughout the experience as necessary.

Role and Responsibilities of Senior Experience Capstone Mentor

The role of the Experience Mentor is essential to the success of the Senior Experience Capstone. Each student must have a mentor who has expertise/experience related to their chosen research topic. The mentor should:

- Serve as an industry expert and resource to the student throughout their Capstone Experience
- Allocate time and plan to work with the student one-on-one as a part of their Capstone Experience.
- Complete any necessary documentation and return to the student's Capstone Coordinator/Advisor.
- If a mentor is willing and able, they may also help by:
 - reviewing student research materials
 - evaluating the product/product
 - advising the student in planning the presentation and attending the presentation

Changing the Senior Experience Capstone

As sometimes happens, a student may need to modify the original Senior Experience Capstone. Make sure that any requirements or policies for changing a Senior Experience Capstone topic, project, mentor, or portfolio requirements is outlined in the course syllabus and students understand this policy at the beginning of the experience.

Consider the following questions when determining if a student can or should make a change to the experience.

- 1.** What does the student plan to change about their Senior Experience Capstone?
 - The research topic
 - The product/project
 - The mentor
 - The portfolio
 - The presentation
- 2.** Why are these changes necessary?
- 3.** How will these changes help to improve the experience outcomes?
- 4.** Have the proposed changes been discussed with others, such as parents or the experience mentor?
- 5.** How will these changes affect the experience timeline?

Senior Experience Capstone Research Paper Guidelines

Because one of the core components of the Senior Experience Capstone is a professionally prepared research paper, it is important that students continue to practice and implement the rigorous guidelines laid out for them by the school's Senior Level English Language Arts Department. Make sure that these guidelines are clearly detailed in the course syllabus.

Guidance for the proper formatting and organization of academic research

- [Research and Citation – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)
- [Writing a Research Paper – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)
- [MLA Style Introduction – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)
- [APA Style Introduction – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)

Collaboration with the student's English Language Arts Instructors is highly recommended for this component of the experience. These instructors can support the research component of the Senior Experience Capstone by:

- Instructing the student in proper research paper guidelines and procedures.
- Review the rough draft of the research paper and advise the student as to where revisions may be necessary.
- Evaluate the final draft of the research paper.
- Discuss with the Capstone Coordinator/Advisor the content of the research paper and provide an evaluation of the final paper for the Capstone Experience grade.
- Coach the student in appropriate methods of giving a presentation and public speaking.
- Conduct a post presentation evaluation with the student.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very real and prevalent issues in academics and the career world. Make sure that all school and/or district policies related to plagiarism are outlined in the Senior Experience Capstone course syllabus and students fully understand the ramification of cheating or stealing another's work or achievements, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI) generated content.

Avoiding Plagiarism Resources for Educators

- [Avoiding Plagiarism – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)
- [Resources for Teachers: How to Detect Plagiarism – MIT Comparative Media Studies/ Writing](#)

Avoid Plagiarism Resources for Students

- [Plagiarism FAQs – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)
- [Best Practices for Writers – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)
- [Avoiding Plagiarism Guide, APA Style 7th Edition](#)

Guidelines For the Product/Project

The product/project component of the Senior Experience Capstone provides a tangible creation, by the student, that connects to both their research and their post-secondary and career interests. Often, student will be able to easily choose a topic for their research, but they struggle with coming up with an idea for a product/project. The Experience Mentor can be a great resource for students to help gain feedback and insight into this component of the Capstone Experience.

General Guidelines for the Product/Project:

1. The product must be student-generated. It must be a showcase of the student's skills – not a parent's, friend's, or the mentor's.
2. The product should be tangible evidence that reflects the academic learning the student experienced during completion of the experience. It may include:
 - Audio/visual aid – audio, visual or video artifacts
 - Charts/graphs - visual graph of surveys, experiment results, etc.
 - Video of process – video steps to final product
 - How-to demonstration – step-by-step video of product/project
 - Visual product – showing the final creation of a physical creation
 - PowerPoint/I-Movies – physical record of an experiment
 - Other – as approved by the Capstone Coordinator/Advisor
3. Students are not expected to spend money to complete the experience. Expenditures will not enhance the evaluation of the experience.
4. The product can be community service oriented if a group or the community can benefit from the product.
5. Students cannot create a product/project in partnership with another student. The Senior Experience Capstone Coordinator/Advisor must approve the product.
6. The product should be related to the student's chosen career cluster and connected to their research component.

Senior Experience Capstone Portfolio Guidelines

The portfolio is the third component of the Senior Experience Capstone. The portfolio is a professional compilation of the student's work, documentation, and includes all required criteria for the Senior Experience Capstone. The following are suggested components to be included in the portfolio.

Suggested Portfolio Components

1. Cover or Title Page

- Experience title, student name, school and Capstone Coordinator/Advisor information, presentation, or experience date
- Table of Contents/Menu – there should be any easy way for the Capstone Coordinator/Advisor, mentor, and any experience judges to be able to review the student's portfolio

2. Experience Summary

- A summary of the entire experience including visual artifacts and evidence of the product/project.

3. Professional Documents Section

- Resume, cover letter, references

4. Experience Documents Section

- Copies of all required forms from the experience – letter of intent, experience approvals, change of experience form, permission to participate, planning checklists, timesheets, professional correspondence (emails) with advisor or mentor, any other documents required by the school

5. Experience Reflection & Evaluations Section

- Any required written or recorded journals, reflections, or weekly summaries of the experience, experience evaluations (self) or by the advisor or mentor

Senior Experience Capstone Reflection Guidelines

An important aspect of the learning process is reflection, so students it is highly recommended that students be required to submit reflections both during their experience and a more detailed reflection summarizing the experience. Make sure the reflection guidelines required of the student are clearly identified in the Capstone Experience syllabus.

Guidelines for Student Reflection

- Timely and frequent reflections should be required of students participating in the Capstone Experience. This can be weekly, bi-weekly, or after certain required activities.
- Reflections can be either written or recorded, but there should be a minimum length assigned regardless of the medium being used.
- Students reflections should be written or created in a professional manner.

Suggestions for Weekly Student Reflection

1. What progress have you made on your Senior Experience Capstone this week/during _____time?
2. Describe what you did during your experience this week/during ____time?
3. What new information or skill have you acquired? What have you learned from this experience?
4. What did you like the most about your experience this week/during _____time?
5. What did you not enjoy about your experience this week/during ____time?
6. What barriers or challenges have you faced with your experience so far?
7. What assumptions did you have going into this experience and how have those assumptions changed?
8. If you could go back and start the experience over, would you change anything? Explain why or why not.
9. What advice do you have for other students interested in the Senior Experience Capstone?

Guidelines for the Presentation

The formal presentation is the fourth and final component of the Senior Experience Capstone and allows for students to showcase their experience to an audience or panel. It should reflect and include elements from the three other components: the research, the product/project, and the portfolio. It is recommended that the presentation follow district-approved criteria for senior level speeches and/or presentations.

Capstone Coordinator/Advisor Guidelines for Senior Experience Presentations

- Capstone Coordinators/Advisors should NOT be the sole evaluator of the presentations.
- Establish a panel of Capstone judges to help evaluate the student's presentation. This can include other teachers/advisors, school and district administrators, school board members, community members, and even Experience Mentors.
 - Schedule the Senior Experience presentations at a time and place that will enable the greatest support from these individuals. This might mean presentations happen after school, during school board meetings, or during carefully selected times during the school day.
- Hold a brief judges meeting prior to the presentations where you can answer any questions and provide a clear and understandable rubric for Capstone judges to help them evaluate the presentations.
- Ask the judges to ask questions of the students. If they are unsure of what to ask, have prepared questions ready for them.
- Send thank you notes/emails to judges for participating and supporting the program.

Guidelines for Grading/Assessing Senior Capstone Experience

The Senior Experience Capstone is designed to be a semester or even a year-long course for students and should be a largely self-directed endeavor; however, it is important to ensure that regular check-ins and submission of evidence/artifacts is happening so students can ensure they are staying on pace, meeting all required deadlines, and completing all the required tasks and components of the experience. The Capstone Coordinator/Advisor should outline all graded submission and their proposed deadlines in the course syllabus and communicate any necessary submission deadlines to the Experience Mentor or additional support staff (English Language Arts teacher) if needed.

Senior Experience Appendix

This section of the framework provides example documents, templates, and additional resources for implementing a Capstone Experience. Feel free to use any information from this section as guidance to help, implement, execute, and assess a Capstone Experience in your district.

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Research Paper Rubric

Category	Mastery	Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing
Header & MLA	Title, Your Name, Teacher's Name, Course Period, Date, Page #	Evidence of four	Evidence of 3	Evidence of 2 or less
Thesis Statement	Clearly and concisely states paper's purpose in a single sentence, is engaging, and/ or thought provoking.	Clearly states the paper's purpose in a single sentence, more than just a topic sentence.	States the paper's purpose in a topic sentence not a thesis.	Incomplete and/or unfocused. No thesis statement present.
Introduction	The introduction is engaging, includes attention grabber, thesis, and preview of main points.	Introduction contains a thesis statement and at least 1 other required element.	Introduction is missing some of the required elements.	There is no clear intro or main topic and the structure of the paper is missing.
Body	Each paragraph has thoughtful, supporting detail sentences that develop the main idea. Transitions help the information flow.	Each paragraph has sufficient supporting detail sentences that develop the main idea. There are some transitions.	Paragraphs lack supporting details and /or transitions. Information is "listed" instead of developed. Not enough facts.	Each paragraph fails to develop the main idea. Transitions are missing. Facts are missing. Information is "listed".
Organization & Structural Development of the Idea	Writer demonstrates logical, subtle sequencing of ideas through developed paragraphs; info is organized in a way that makes sense.	Paragraph development present but some organization is missing.	Information is lacking an organization throughout the paper. Proper paragraph structures are not followed most times.	No evidence of structure or organization.
Conclusion	The conclusion is engaging (clincher), brings closure and reviews main points without repeating facts.	The conclusion brings closure but may be lacking review of main points or has repeated information.	Conclusion does not bring closure, does not review facts, or repeats information.	Incomplete and/or unfocused. No review of main points. May be missing completely.
Mechanics	Paper is free of errors in punctuation, capitalization and spelling.	Almost no errors in punctuation, spelling and capitalization.	Noticeable errors in punctuation, spelling and capitalization.	Many errors in punctuation, spelling and capitalization.
Usage	No errors in sentence structure and word usage.	Almost no errors in sentence structure and word usage.	Noticeable errors in sentence structure and word usage.	Numerous and distracting errors in both.
Citation	All cited works, both text and visual, are done in the correct format with no errors.	Some cited works, both text and visual, are done in the correct format. Inconsistencies are evident.	Few cited works, both text and visual, are done in the correct format.	Absent or mostly absent from the paper.
Bibliography	Done in the correct format with no errors. Includes required number of references.	Done in the correct format with few errors. Included the required number of references.	Done in the correct format, noticeable errors. Not enough references.	Works cited page missing or contains many, distracting errors.

Topic Categories Student Handout

While all Senior Experience Capstones must include the required four components (research, product/project, portfolio, and presentation), you can choose the type or category your experience will be. Choose one of the categories below to help guide your Senior Experience Capstone.

Career Exploration

- Your experience will focus on learning more about a chosen career field you are interested in and what it would take to successfully enter this field someday.

Product, System or Service Design

- Your experience will focus on learning about a product, system, or service that currently exist and addressing how it can either be improved or how it currently solves a need or problem.

Event or Activity Plan

- Your experience will focus on learning more about a specific event or activity including the need that it addresses or the purpose it serves.

Investigation

- Your experience will focus on posing a central investigative research question, then researching, gathering data, observing, and reporting the results of your investigation.

Skills Development

- Your experience will focus on learning a new skill and acquiring the knowledge needed to continue to develop this skill beyond the experience.

Personalized Topic

- This topic allows for you to work with your Capstone Coordinator/Advisor to develop a category focus that suits your learning interests.

Parent Permission Form

This Senior Experience Capstone is comprised of several components, including research, a project/product proposal, a mentorship experience, and a final presentation. Participating in the Senior Experience Capstone will provide enormous benefits for your child both now and in the future. To fully understand what this course entails, please read the included Senior Experience Syllabus then sign and return this form to your child's Capstone Coordinator/Advisor.

As the parent or guardian of _____ who is a student enrolled at _____, I have reviewed the Senior Experience Capstone course syllabus and fully understand the requirements of this course. I understand that my child must complete all Senior Experience Capstone requirements with a passing grade to receive credit for the course. I also understand that my child may need to complete some of their experience criteria outside of regular school hours.

Parent or Guardian's name: _____

Parent or Guardian's signature: _____

Date: _____

Choosing A Mentor Student Handout

A Senior Experience Capstone Mentor is someone who has experience and an understanding of the topic you chose and will take a sincere interest in helping you successful complete your mentorship hours and other project requirements.

Mentors:

- Provide expertise in the product area
- Give suggestions and advice
- Support your efforts
- Give you feedback

Preparation to share with the perspective Mentor:

- Clearly defined product
- Specific expectations from the Mentor, including time commitments
- Mentor's benefits in assisting the student

Choosing a Mentor:

- Brainstorm possible experts within your chosen field of study
- Talk to parents, friends, and teachers about possibilities
- Look for someone who has the expertise and is interested in mentoring you through completion of your product/project

Next steps after the mentor is identified:

- Meet with your Mentor
- Determine how often you will meet with your Mentor
- Decide what areas of your experience the Mentor will assist with (e.g., project details, review speech, etc.)
- Ask the Mentor to be part of your review team

Mentorship Agreement Form

This document should be signed by your mentor at the time you discuss with them what their role will be in your Senior Experience. Be sure that your Mentor reads your finished written proposal and understands the commitment before signing the proposal.

The role of the Senior Experience Mentor is essential to the success of the Senior Experience Capstone at _____ High School. As responsible individuals in the community, the Experience Mentors play an active part in the students' learning experience.

As Senior Experience Mentor, you will be asked to accept the following responsibilities:

1. Serve as an industry expert and resource to the student throughout their Senior Experience Capstone.
2. Allocate time and plan to work with the student one-on-one as a part of their Capstone Experience.
3. Complete any necessary documentation and return to the student's Capstone Coordinator/Advisor. This may include:
 - Documentation of time the student spent with the mentor
 - Evaluation of the student's finished experience
4. Ensure the supervision and safety of the student while on a worksite (if applicable)

Additional useful information:

1. The Senior Experience Capstone will begin on _____ and continue through _____. Students are expected to meet with their mentor a minimum of _____ contact hours.
2. An immediate relative may NOT be in a direct line of supervision for the student.
3. Each student is assigned a Capstone Coordinator/Advisor who will act as a liaison and school contact for the mentor. You should expect to receive communication throughout the experience from this advisor. Because the school Advisor may or may not have expertise in the experience area, your assistance is especially important to the student.

Students have been asked to provide information to their mentors regarding the guidelines and requirements of the Senior Experience Capstone at _____ High School. If the student has not done so, please ask them to clarify these items for you.

We trust that the student's work will be beneficial not only to them, but also to you as the Senior Experience Mentor. Thank you for your interest in the Senior Experience Capstone program. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to the Capstone Coordinator/Advisor listed on the following page.

Student Name: _____

For students to complete the Senior Experience Capstone course, they must work with a Mentor who has expertise in the area they are researching. The Mentor must be willing to verify the student’s efforts and time spent and assist the student as they complete their experience. If you are willing to serve as this student’s Mentor, please complete the form below.

Neither the School District nor the training station employer shall discriminate against any student or employee based on race, color, national origin, sex, marital status, parental status, or handicap in employment practices or on-the-job training experiences.

I agree to serve as a Mentor for the above named student for their Senior Experience Capstone

Mentor Name: _____

Business Name & Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Relationship to Student (if any):

Capstone Coordinator/Advisor Name & Signature **Date**

Student Name & Signature **Date**

Parent/Guardian Name & Signature **Date**

Senior Experience Mentor Name & Signature **Date**

Mentoring Communication Log

Student Name: _____

Capstone Coordinator/Advisor: _____

Mentor Name: _____

Use this form to keep a record of your meetings with the Senior student. This will serve as documentation of the time spent in consultation on the Senior Experience Capstone. Please note and initial any time spent with your Advisee in any aspect of the written or physical project, including travel time, phone, and other correspondence.

If you have questions regarding this form, please call the high school at _____ and ask for the student’s Senior Experience Capstone Coordinator/Advisor (indicated above).

DATE	TOTAL HOURS	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

 Mentor Signature Date

Mentor Evaluation Questions

Student Name: _____

As a Senior Experience Capstone Mentor, you were chosen to support this student's efforts on the Senior Experience Capstone. Please answer the following questions to help us evaluate and document the required hours and activities completed as a part of the experience.

Describe some of the activities or topics of discussion that the student was engaged in related to their research topic and/or the project component of their Senior Experience.

What specific problems did this student encounter and need to overcome?

What successes have you seen this student achieve?

Is there anything that would have made this experience better for you as a mentor?

Is there any other information about the experience or the student that you would like to share with their Capstone Coordinator/Advisor?

Mentor Signature

Date

We appreciate your support and contribution to the student.

Topic & Product/Project Selection Guidelines

Student Handout

A Senior Experience Capstone is about doing and learning! Choose a topic that will be interesting and worthwhile, and will extend your knowledge. However, making the decision may not be easy. Consult with your Capstone Coordinator/Advisor and remember to keep your Senior Experience manageable.

Guidelines to help guide the topic selection:

1. The research topic should be one that you are interested in, but not already an expert.

For example, if a student has been a diabetic for ten years, worked closely with the Juvenile Diabetes Association, and has been a volunteer in the children's diabetic ward in a local hospital, he or she probably knows a great deal about the subject juvenile diabetes. Unless that student pursues a new approach to diabetes, that topic may not yield much new learning.

2. The research topic is challenging both academically and creatively.

Take care not to choose a topic that is limited to relatively simple ideas or one that has little application or extension possibilities. The topic should require new academic learning and/or skills development.

3. Preliminary research may be helpful.

By reading about a certain topic, you may expand your areas of interest. Possibilities for new areas of exploration may surface. It may be wise, therefore, to explore the possibilities for personal interviews, informal surveys, empirical observation, etc., before making a final topic selection.

4. You should avoid choosing topics that might involve expenses.

For example, if the research involves travel you may want to make another choice. If the product/project component will require materials, you may want to develop a preliminary budget before making their choice. Students should not be required, encouraged, or advised to spend money to complete their Senior Experience Capstone.

5. You should avoid choosing topics that require dangerous or unsafe activities.

For example, experiments which are potentially explosive or activities that are restricted under federal youth labor laws may not be appropriate.

6. The research topic should be one that is broad enough to allow the you access to enough information yet narrow enough to make the research meaningful and personalized.

For example, choosing the career cluster Health Science would find it impossible to include everything about health sciences in a well-researched paper. On the other hand, choosing to research Medical Laboratory Technology will have a much more focused topic for their research.

7. The research topic should be related to the student's interests and future post-secondary education and/or career plans.

Utilize career interest assessments, career exploration tools, and other college and career planning resources to help determine a career cluster focus for your research. The following are resources available to help narrow and align your research topic to your college and career plans:

- SD MyLife - sdmylife.com
- Career Ready SD - careerreadydev.sd.gov
- SD Week of Work - weekofwork.sd.gov

South Dakota has adopted the following 16 career clusters. To learn more about these career cluster and pathways, visit: <https://doe.sd.gov/cte/careerclusters.aspx>

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts, A/V Technology and Communications
- Business Management and Administration
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics

Example Topics by Career Cluster

The following list is a sampling of topics that could be used for Senior Experience Capstone. It is not an all-inclusive list and is intended to serve as a starting place when beginning the process of topic selection.

Career Cluster	Example Research Topic	Example Experience Mentor
Agricultural and Natural Resources	Animal Welfare	Humane Society or Animal Clinic
	Precision Agriculture Practices	Local Farmer or Precision Agriculture Industry Partner
	Managing Wildlife Populations	Game, Fish, and Parks or University Researcher
	Horse Training	Local Stable or Training Industry Partner
	Veterinary Medicine	Local Vet Clinic
Architecture and Construction	3-D Printing Home Building	Local Architecture or Home Building Industry Partner
	Construction Industry Trends	Home Builders Association Industry Partner
	Building Homes in Extreme Conditions	Local Architecture or Home Building Industry Partner
Arts, A/V Technology and Communications	Commercial Art Industry	Local Graphic Design Industry Partner
	Independent Film Making	South Dakota Public Broadcasting or Local Independent Film Company
	Behind the Scenes of Film and TV	Local Television Studio or Independent Film Company
Business Management & Administration	Employee Rights	Local Department of Labor or business partner
	E-Commerce	Local Department of Labor or e-commerce business partner
	Small Business Ownership	SBA of South Dakota or Local Business Partner
Education & Training	Program for Transitioning Veterans	Local Adult Education Organization or Local Law Enforcement Agency
	Trends in Teacher Recruitment and Retention	Local school district or College/University training program
	Corporate Training	Local Business or Industry Partner Human Resource Department

Finance	The Stock Market	Local Financial Advisor Industry Partner
	Personal Finances and Credit Scores	Local Financial Advisor Industry Partner
Government & Public Administration	Community and Regional Planning	Local Planning and Zoning office or Community Planner
	History and Purpose of the National Guard	Local National Guard Recruiter or Representative
Health Science	Emergency Medicine in Rural Areas	Local Emergency Room or EMT Provider
	Robotics in Surgery	Local Medical Facility or College/University Health Science Training Facility
	Advances in Medical Laboratory Technologies	Local Medical Facility or College/University Health Science Training Facility
	Identification of Diseases	Local CDC, Medical Lab, or College/University Training Facility
Hospitality and Tourism	Agritourism	South Dakota Department of Tourism, Local City or Regional Tourism Organization, or local Business Partner
	Food Nutrition and Science	Local industry partner working in nutrition and wellness, College/University Training Program
	Elderly Care and Hospice Care	Local Retirement or Nursing Home
	History of the Catering Industry	Local Catering Company or event center/hotel catering department
Human Services	Early Education Programs (Daycare-PK)	Local Childcare Provider
	Mental Health Issues in Teens	Mental Health Coordinator, Counselor, or SD Department of Human Services Office
	Homelessness	Local Community Organization (ex. Habitat for Humanity) or SD Department of Human Services
Information Technology	Importance of Cybersecurity	Local Industry Partner working for a Cyber Security firm or as a part of an organization's IT department.
	Artificial Intelligence	Local Industry Partner working with AI in their organization
	Computer/IT Literacy and the Elderly	Retirement Community or local Community Programming Director

Law, Public Safety & Security	Community Safety	Local community support organizations or law enforcement agencies.
	Consumer Rights	Local Law Office Industry Partner or local public defender's office
Manufacturing	Automation in Manufacturing	Local Manufacturing Industry Partner
	Green Manufacturing	Local Manufacturing Industry Partner
Marketing	Social Media Marketing	Local Marketing Firm industry partner
	History of Advertising	Local Marketing Firm industry partner
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)	Alternative Energy and Power	Local Energy Cooperative or Organization
	Robotics in (insert area of interest)	Local Business Partner with experience in chosen area of interest
	Advances in Commercial Aviation	Local Industry Partner, Pilot, or local Aviation Training Facility
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	Car Restoration	Local Industry Partner specializing in car restoration or servicing antique cars
	Electric Vehicles	Local Car Dealership or industry partner specializing in electric vehicles

Letter of Intent Guidelines

The letter of intent is professional written declaration of what the student's research and product/project will be. This letter formally announces to parents, the Capstone Coordinator or Advisor, and potential mentors the student's plan for their Capstone Experience.

Knowing how to write a formal business letter is an important communication tool used to help a student establish a professional image of themselves. The following is suggested information to include in the Letter of Intent.

- What is the topic or area of study that will be the focus of the Senior Experience Capstone? Why did the student choose this topic? What previous knowledge or experience in this area does the student have?
- What will be the focus of the student's research paper? Describe the topic, discussing any preliminary areas of exploration or questions identified.
- Who can serve as a mentor to help the student complete the Senior Experience and what is their experience or expertise related to the student's chosen topic?
- What resources (time and/or money) does the student anticipate they will require?

For additional guidance on creating and formatting professional letters, visit [The Basic Business Letter – Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#).

Senior Experience Capstone Student Planning

Use the following checklist to help you plan your Senior Experience Capstone.

What is the topic or area of study for your research?

Why did you choose this topic?

What previous knowledge or experience in this area do you have?

What is the product/project you plan to complete?

What resources will you need to create a tangible artifact?

What is the connection between the research component and the product/project component?

Who can serve as a potential mentor and what is their experience in the field related to your topic?

Student Reflection Questions

Congratulations on almost completing your Senior Experience! Answer the following questions to help you reflect on your experience.

Student Name: _____

Experience Wrap-up Reflection Questions

1. How many total hours (outside of class time) did you spend on the Senior Experience?
2. What issues or problems arose as you worked on the Senior Experience?
3. How did you organize and manage your time?
4. What was your favorite part of the experience?
5. Briefly describe any new learning that happened and provide at least one example of when you went outside of your comfort zone during the experience.
6. Detail any changes that occurred from your original plan to your completed experience.
7. Describe what you learned during the product/project stage of your experience.
8. What did you learn about yourself during this experience (think about skills like organization, communication, working with others)
9. If you could go back and start at the beginning, what would you do differently?

Use the following rubric to reflect on your Senior Experience Capstone.

	Mastery	Proficient	Progressing
Research	My research was thorough, professionally written, and included all requirements.	My research was mostly complete with few issues with grammar and formatting; most requirements were included.	My research was not fully completed, it contained grammar and formatting issues; not all requirements were included.
Product or Project	I had a completed product/project that easily connected to the learning from the rest of the experience.	My product/project was done but unrefined; there was a basic connection the rest of the experience.	My product/project was incomplete or needed additional work to connect to the rest of the experience.
Portfolio	My portfolio was well-organized, presented in a professional way, and contained all requirements.	My portfolio utilized some organizational techniques; was mostly professional and contained most requirements.	My portfolio needed more organization and could have been more professionally presented. Some requirements may be missing.
Presentation	I presented my experience professionally and confidently and included all requirements.	I felt mostly prepared for my presentation and addressed nearly all requirements.	My presentation could have used additional practice and refinement in both the content and my delivery.
Participation	I was highly motivated and self-directed throughout the experience, stayed on task, met deadlines, and asked for help when I felt I needed it.	I was mostly self-directed throughout the experience and required few Advisor-initiated check-ins to stay on task or meet deadlines. I asked for help when I felt I needed it.	I needed additional support throughout the experience which was usually Advisor-initiated to help me stay on task and meet my deadlines.

Semester Grading and Pacing Guide

Week	Graded Evidence/Artifact	Points
Week 1	Career Interest Inventories, Topic Category Brainstorming, Overview of Requirements	
Week 2	Professional Document Submitted – Resume, Cover Letter, References, etc., Parent Permission Form	
Week 3	Planning Document, Letter of Intent, Initial Mentor Communication for Placement	
Week 4	Complete Initial Research Paper –Mentor Agreement Form, Weekly Reflection	
Week 5	Complete Initial Research Paper – Schedule Mentor Hours, Weekly Reflection	
Week 6	Rough Draft of Research Due to ELA Teacher for Feedback, Project/Product Approval Form; Weekly Reflection	
Week 7	Product/Project Worktime, Begin Mentorship Hours (off-site), Weekly Reflection	
Week 8	Product/Project Worktime, Begin Mentorship Hours (off-site)Weekly Reflection	
Week 9	Product/Project Worktime, Begin Mentorship Hours (off-site)Weekly Reflection, Quarterly Check-in with Capstone Coordinator/Advisor	
Week 10	Revisions to Research Paper Rough Draft, Submit Final Draft to ELA Teacher, Weekly Reflection	
Week 11	Initial Portfolio Development and Organization, Finalize Product/Project and Mentorship Hours if needed, Mentor Evaluation and Log, Weekly Reflection	
Week 12	Portfolio Development and Organization, 2nd Revision to Final Research Paper if Necessary, Weekly Reflection, Thank you Communication to Mentor	
Week 13	Finalize Portfolio and Presentations; Presentations to Audience/Panel of Judges	
Week 14	Finalize Portfolio and Presentations; Presentations to Audience/Panel of Judges	
Week 15	Final Self-Reflections and Assessment, Thank You Emails	
Week 16	Finalize and Turn-in any Experience Components that were Incomplete or Needed Fixed	
Week 17	Finalize and Turn-in any Experience Components that were Incomplete or Needed Fixed	
Week 18	Final Grades Posted by Capstone Coordinator/Advisor	
TOTAL POINTS		

This is just an example of a possible pacing guide and grading tasks. Feel free to use or edit this as best fits your needs as the Capstone Coordinator/Advisor.

Guidelines for the Presentation Student Handout

The formal presentation is the fourth and final component of the Senior Experience Capstone. It is a way for you to showcase your experience to an audience or panel. It should reflect and include all required elements from the other three components: the research, the product/project, and the portfolio.

Student Guidelines for Presentations

1. Prior to your presentation, confirm the time and place.
2. Ensure the presentation meets all the district/course requirements for presentations or speeches. Practice your presentation several times to help ensure you are meeting the time requirements and you are not simply “reading” from your presentation materials.
3. Arrive EARLY for your presentation time.
4. Keep these tips in mind when answering questions following your presentation:
 - Answer with confidence
 - Request clarification when necessary
 - Admit when you don’t know the answer
 - Pack up and remove product/presentation materials
5. Thank the judges for their time at the end of your presentation.
6. Dress professionally and in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Capstone Experience syllabus. If you are not sure what constitutes appropriate dress, consult with your Advisor.

Judge Interest Form

The following is an example of a Judge Interest Form that can be used as a template for creating a digital form, or modified, printed, and handed out at school functions, community events, or shared with industry partners.

Judge Information:

Name: _____

Business/Organization: _____

Phone Number(s): _____ E-mail: _____

Please check the career cluster you have the most expertise in (choose all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality and Tourism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture and Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts, A/V Tech. and Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management and Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education and Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government and Public Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation, Distribution and Logistics |

Please indicate which day(s) and time(s) you work best for your schedule.

	8 a.m. to 10 a.m.	10 a.m. to Noon	1 p.m. to 3 p.m.	3 p.m. to 5 p.m.	5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					

Guidelines For Judges

Thank you for volunteering your time as a judge for the Senior Experience Capstone. You have been asked to evaluate the presentation component of their experience, which is the final piece of the semester/year-long Senior Experience Capstone.

Please review the following guidelines to help you prepare for your role as a Capstone Judge.

- 1.** Please introduce yourself to the student prior to the start of the student's presentation.
- 2.** Students are required to speak for _____ to _____ minutes to receive credit for their presentation. Please indicate on the provided scoring rubric if they did not meet this requirement.
- 3.** Students should NOT be simply reading from their notes or the presentation materials. They should be attempting to make eye-contact with the audience (you).
- 4.** Students are required to answer from the judges. Please try to ask the student at least one question at the end of their presentation. Please refrain from asking any questions until the end of the presentation.
- 5.** Be mindful of your body language and expressions as students may pick up on any of these nonverbal cues during their presentation.
- 6.** Feel free to write notes on the provided evaluation form as needed.

Judges Presentation Evaluation

Student Name: _____ Experience: _____

Content	Points
Personal introduction; reason for choosing topic; product/project clearly identified	
Body Information – clear summary of the main points and supporting details provided	
Organization – logical flow of ideas	
Conclusion – summarizes; reflects personal growth/learning	
Language Usage – transitions; avoids slang; appropriate word choice	
Relation to Learning – relates research to project and product to presentation	
TOTAL	

Delivery of Speech	Points
Non-verbal – eye contact, poise, posture, appropriate/natural gestures	
Verbal – volume, rate, clarity of speech	
Dress/Appearance/Demeanor – neat, appropriate dress; courteous, and prepared	
Audio/Visual Aids – support speech and enhance presentation; limited use of information on note cards	
TOTAL	

Question and Answer Session	Points
Impromptu Skills – fluent, confident; answers questions easily	
Quality of Responses – evidence of knowledge; responds directly to questions	
TOTAL	

Idea/Product	Points
Well-Constructed – shows evidence of time spent in production in written, model, or visual form	
Evidence of Research – product relates to research and to presentation	
IF NO PRODUCT EVIDENT – give 0 if product is missing, or 1-4 for an unclear or poorly defined product. Do not mark any points in the first two criteria above.	
TOTAL	

Total Points:

Research Paper Student Editing Checklist

Name: _____

Thesis Statement:

1. Content/Organization

- Appropriate length
- All sections support thesis
- Clearly written
- Well-phrased sentences
- Good transitions
- Conclusion restates thesis
- Conclusion offers solution

2. Use of Sources

- Correct number of sources
- How many:
- Works cited _____
- Works consulted _____
- Paraphrased information correctly documented
- No paragraph citations
- Number of citations in paper

3. Mechanics

- Underlined publication titles
- Quotation marks around quotes
- Parentheses around citations
- Periods follow parenthesis
- End punctuation mark before closing quotation marks in a direct quote
- Corrected all spelling errors
- Eliminated fragments
- Eliminated run-on sentences
- Eliminated contractions
- Mechanical/grammatical errors

Portfolio Table of Contents Example

Senior Experience Summary.....	Section 1
Professional Documents	Section 2
Letter of Intent	Section 2
Experience Proposal.....	Section 3
- Senior Experience Capstone Overview	
- Expected Expenses	
- Time Expenditure Sheet	
- Mentor and Resource Information Sheet	
- Question and Parent Signature Sheet	
Research Paper	Section 4
Presentation.....	Section 5
Experience Reflections	Section 6
Experience Evaluations.....	Section 7
Evidence of Experience Documents	Section 8
Additional Artifacts	Section 9