

Mentor Handbook



Columbia High School
1009 Broad Street
Columbia, MS 39439
601-736-5334
chs@columbiaschools.org



Section I--Summary

This Mentoring Handbook is a guide for you as a mentor in assisting a student that is participating in a Senior Project.

Columbia High School seniors have been participating in the Senior Project for several years. Passing the five components of the project is part of the Senior Project requirement, and Senior Project is a requirement for graduation.

These are the goals for the completion of the Senior Project:

- Students will think analytically, logically and creatively and will integrate experience and knowledge to solve problems.
- Students will explore a topic in which they have a great interest.
- Students will apply their learning in a "real world" way.

As part of the Senior Project, each student will demonstrate essential skills through reading, writing, speaking, production and/or performance. To complete the project, students are required to write a research paper, work with a **mentor** in the community, present to a panel of judges composed of community members, organize a portfolio of work and develop a multi-media presentation.

Developing a quality Senior Project is not an easy task; and since the faculty at CHS can not possibly embody the expertise to help each student, mentors from the community are necessary to help students accomplish such complex and varied topics. **We are pleased and grateful that you would consider giving of your time to help a future productive citizen. We are especially pleased that, by your liaison, a student will forge new and positive connections in the community.**

This handbook will guide you through the mentoring process--what it means to be a mentor, the roles and responsibilities during your tutelage, time commitments, definition of the student project, best practices and how to get started.

Are you ready to make a difference in a young person's life and have a rewarding experience through the process?

With our sincere appreciation,

**Diane Gammill
Olivia Jarman
Senior Project Coordinators
(601) 736-5334**

The Mentor has the option to view the student's final presentation. Any mentor who wishes to attend the final presentation should contact Emily Rayborn no later than 3:30 on the day of the student's scheduled presentation. (601) 736-5334 or erayborn@columbiaschools.org

Section II-Role of the Mentor

A. WHAT IS MENTORING?

For the purposes of this program, mentoring is defined as a relationship between a student and an adult in which the adult offers support, guidance, and assistance with a project essential for completion of English IV (a course required for graduation).

The mentoring assistance is a planned process, using a structured program that provides a context for mentor and student to interact within the framework of producing a senior project.

B. WHY ARE MENTORING PROGRAMS SO POPULAR?

The number of mentoring programs has grown dramatically in recent years. This popularity results in part from compelling testimonials by people – youth and adults alike – who have themselves benefited from the positive influence of an older person who helped them endure social, academic, career, or personal crises.

C. HOW DO THEY WORK?

Mentoring programs are established to match a suitable adult – the mentor – with a younger person. Potential mentors are recruited from various sources including corporate, professional, and cultural communities, as well as neighborhood citizens. This program encourages the student to seek out and locate a mentor in an area of interest to the student.

D. WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN THIS PROCESS?

As a mentor, you will work with and/or supervise the student on a product, will monitor the student's progress on the product, and will evaluate the student's product upon completion. You are responsible for assisting the student in your particular area of expertise and provide advice, assistance, and your time.

E. WHAT ARE THE MENTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

The mentor is responsible for these:

- Working closely with the student regarding the PRODUCT phase of the Senior Project. As a Product Mentor you are a resource who has experience in the field of study chosen by the student.
- Providing encouragement, expertise, advice, and guidance in critical thinking.
- Verifying hours the student dedicates to the Product and assisting in preparation needed for the Presentation.
- Evaluating the final Product with the student.

Section III-Graduation Project Requirements

- Overview
 - The Senior Project includes a product, paper, portfolio, community service, and a presentation.
 - The Project must fall within the law, be approved by the student's parents, and must not jeopardize anyone's safety.
 - **Product** is defined as a tangible or intangible item that has a minimum of 8 hours of work documented by the **mentor**. There are four categories a product must fall into:
 1. Design – an item that is created, built, or prepared; for example, woodworking, art form, or jewelry.
 2. Service – volunteer in community (hospital, food bank, schools, nursing homes, etc.) Prepare a scrapbook, video, or written guide to volunteering.
 3. Learning Experience – class to take, i.e., scuba diving, cooking, etc.
 - The **mentor** will work with and/or supervise the student on the product, will monitor the student's progress on the product, and will evaluate the student's product upon completion. The total time requirement for the product is a minimum of 8 hours.
 - The student will keep a product journal during this 18 week course. There are due dates throughout the course requiring the mentor's signature which includes the total of all the hours spent on the student project product, as well as verification forms.
- Mentor responsible for these:
 - Working closely with the student regarding the PRODUCT phase of the Senior Project. As a mentor, you are a resource person who has experience in the field of study chosen by the student.
 - Providing encouragement, expertise, and advice.
 - Verifying hours the student dedicates to the Product and completion of Product.
 - Evaluating the final product with the student.
 - If the student is not coming to you for verification, or you feel the student is not working up to his or her ability, you should immediately contact the **Senior Project Coordinators, Diane Gammill or Olivia Jarman at 601-736-5334.**

Section IV-Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the time commitment?

Commonly, the time commitment lies between 8 and 15 hours per student. At least 8 hours are required.

2. What can you expect to gain from this experience?

You will stand to benefit from positive experiences with the youth of today, assisting with projects designed to explore career opportunities and community connections. You will be giving back to the community and assisting in the development of those who may be your future colleagues. If you are challenged in the right way, you also may stand to learn something about your own field of expertise as well.

3. What are mentors?

Mentors are people who apply the value of their skills and talents in a specific area to provide guidance to one who is yet learning the ropes. This may be provided by way of relating real job experiences, known best practices, or suggestions about unconsidered alternatives and resources. A mentor is a light ahead on the road, not a signpost telling how many miles are still to go.

4. What is the end product of the process?

The product of the Senior Project includes a tangible or intangible item that has a minimum of 8 hours of work documented by the mentor. The product must fall in one of four following categories. The product categories are discussed in depth in Section III.

5. What is your ongoing commitment to the program?

Mentors are often gratified by their contribution and remain in the active mentor pool for two to three years. That said, your commitment is required to last only for the duration of the individual Senior Project period. The mentor commitment to an individual senior and his project runs from August through December. To ensure clarity regarding the time commitment and the mentoring expectations, you will be asked to enter into a Commitment Agreement with the senior you have agreed to mentor. A copy of this agreement can be found with the accompanying forms.

6. Are there specific mentor qualifications?

The mentor must comply with the following guidelines:

- May not be a relative (although exceptions can be made, see instructor for approval).
- Must be an expert in his field, or have adequate knowledge to guide a student in a special-interest area, e.g., avocations and hobbies.
- Must be able to commit to the time requirements.
- Must be at least 25 years of age.
- Must be pre-approved by senior's parents.

7. Are there expectations for mentors beyond a time commitment?

- Be consistent: Make a time commitment that is really workable for you
- Be timely: Remember that the student expects you, and the school district is depending on you for the success of the Senior Project program.
- Respect confidentiality: students and their specific projects or problems should not be discussed outside of school. Be professionally discreet.
- Respect different cultures and beliefs: please don't bring personal, religious or political agendas with you to your mentoring role.
- Remain patient and flexible and keep a positive attitude.

8. What is not mentoring?

Mentoring is not problem solving on behalf of the student; it is not tutoring, and it is not counseling. Mentoring is not judgmental, and it is not an internship. Friendship is not required, but mutual respect, empathy, confidentiality, and professionalism are all part of it.

9. What happens if things don't seem to be working out?

You should immediately contact a **Senior Project Coordinator- Diane Gammill or Olivia Jarman at 601-736-5334** and explain the situation. This individual will see that the concern(s) raised are appropriately addressed. If a student obtains your agreement to be mentor, then you do not see or hear from that senior for several weeks, please inform one of the teachers above.

10. I am unable to participate or complete the mentoring experience with senior?

Please assist us with any referrals you may be able to provide. Referrals are often as valuable as direct participation and help us keep the program a vibrant entity for assisting school districts.

11. What happens when I have completed my commitment?

First and foremost, you have our gratitude for your assistance. We ask that you complete the short survey form with your feedback about the process, especially with any input on things that went well or things that need further refinement.

Section V-Increasing Your Success

A. Expectations and Best Practices

As a mentor, it is important that you and your student understand and communicate the expectations of your partnership. This discussion should take place during the initial contact and allow for easy dialogue and questioning so you both feel you understand the project's desired outcome and that there is value you can add.

Following are some suggested topics: frequency of meetings, length of meetings, meeting site convenient to both, understanding of the project ideas, project deadlines, and establishment of checkpoints along the way. Let your student start with his/her expectations and see how they fit with your ideas and then work together to put in writing the conclusions.

B. Initial Contact

Your student will contact you based on his/her interest that appears to match your area of expertise or experience. This first contact is a big step for many students and your help in putting them at ease by reassuring them through positive and helpful discussion of your willingness to help will go a long way. Since initial contact will most likely be by phone or e-mail, your first step is to set up an in-person meeting. Start with identifying a convenient public location, exchange phone numbers for home, business, and possibly cell phones, and confirm e-mail addresses. This information will be critical for future and ongoing contact.

The initial contact will also act as a screening process for both you and the student. Through this preliminary discussion, it may become apparent that the area of interest sought by the student is not your area of expertise or experience. Perhaps due to changed circumstances, you are not available at this time to serve as a mentor. As much as possible, this screening should be determined up front so that new arrangements can be made and the project is not delayed, or so that the student can seek out an alternate resource if needed.

C. Importance of Commitment

Once you are matched with a student interested in your field of expertise, it is important that you make yourself available on a regular basis for scheduled meetings, e-mail, and other contacts that may include onsite visits to your workplace (e.g., the mentor is providing a job-shadow experience). The Senior Project is a big commitment for every student and each will be anxious and excited to see it completed. **In the unfortunate event you are unable to commit to helping the student through completion, please inform the student and the coordinator as soon as possible so other arrangements can be made.**

D. Addressing Problems

In any partnership, conflicts may arise, and it is important that they are addressed upfront and as quickly as possible. Potential problems could be consistently missed meetings, poor attitude, or inappropriate language and/or behavior.

As a mentor, use one-on-one discussions of your concerns with the student as the first step. Explain the impact of the project as well as the future of the partnership. There may be outside influences causing this behavior and while it is not your role to probe or interfere, the student may volunteer the cause and this may allow the two of you to work out alternatives.

If the situation does not improve, further conversation with the SP Coordinator is warranted, and a determination will be made as to whether or not to continue the partnership.

E. Key Points to Remember

- Respond to all e-mails or phone calls within 24 hours if possible.
- Notify the student ahead of time regarding periods of time you will be unavailable, i.e. vacation, business trips, etc.
- Share experiences, both successes and failures.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Develop a professional friendship based on honesty, trust, and respect.
- Be patient, and remember you are dealing with a teenager!
- Be positive and helpful, but don't do the work.
- Challenge, discuss alternatives, and add perspective.
- Ask for feedback and receive it with openness.
- Monitor progress and satisfaction throughout the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MENTOR MEETINGS

Five meetings are required between student and mentor. These are suggested topics for each meeting. Please feel free to schedule more meetings as necessary.

Meeting # 1:

- Share mentor handbook
- Develop short-term and long-term goals
- Discuss how the product will benefit others
- Discuss how the product will be a *stretch* for the student
- Discuss general timelines, create calendar
- Discuss your expectations with the students and have student share their expectations with you
- Exchange email/phone numbers
- Complete any necessary paperwork (ex: log, mentor agreement)
- Set next meeting time/date/location

Meeting # 2:

- Give suggestions for sources for the research paper (if possible)
- Continue planning for the product
- Focus on necessary steps and more detailed product timelines
- Complete mentor log and schedule the next meeting

Meeting # 3:

- Read rough draft and offer suggestions to the student regarding content-related information and vocabulary (if possible)
- Check progress on product
- Discuss any changes or revisions
- Problem-solve any upcoming issues
- Complete mentor log and schedule next meeting

Meeting # 4:

- Plan for completion of product
- Complete mentor log and schedule next meeting

Meeting # 5:

- Share completed product
- Discuss and evaluate process and product
- Discuss the challenges of completing the product
- Discuss the *stretch* factor
- Share student reflections
- Discuss how the product will be shared during the oral presentation
- Complete final log entry
- Place completed product rubric and meeting log in sealed envelope with the mentor's signature over the seal. Please use the school provided envelope with student/teacher label (student will deliver envelopes to you and back to the school)
- Celebration

Mentor Checklist

The following questions may be useful for mentors, primarily, as well as for seniors to use when periodically evaluating their readiness to proceed.

- Am I providing adequate support to facilitate the learning of my senior?
- Have we identified sufficient and varied opportunities for learning?
- Are we continuing to build and maintain a productive relationship?
- Is the quality of our mentoring interaction satisfactory?
- Are we continuously working on improving the quality of the mentoring interaction?
- Have we put in place a variety of mechanisms to ensure feedback?
- Is the feedback I am giving thoughtful, candid, and constructive?
- Do we make time to evaluate our partnership regularly?