

Burke County Public Schools

Graduation Project Handbook



BURKE COUNTY Public Schools

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The mission of Burke County Public Schools is to educate diverse learners, nurture their potentials, and empower them to be competitive, successful, and productive citizens.

Burke County Public Schools, a world-class model of exemplary education, inspires students to be life-long learners who can compete successfully on the global stage and contribute to their community as productive citizens.

Revised Fall 2015

Graduation Project Mission Statement and Goals

The purpose of the Graduation Project is to give students an opportunity to exhibit the skills they have acquired during their school years and to provide an avenue for students to pursue interests outside the classroom. Successful completion of the Graduation Project is a Burke County requirement for passing English IV and for graduation.

Over the course of the Graduation Project, seniors will

- continue to develop a life-long approach to learning.
- increase their knowledge in particular areas of interest.
- develop, practice, and demonstrate effective communication skills.
- experience self-directed learning.
- utilize 21st Century Skills, which correlate directly to Common Core Standards.

Additionally, community members will have increased opportunities for positive school involvement through mentoring and judging.

Graduation Project: A Four-Part Process

Requirement Guidelines: Paper, Project, Portfolio, and Presentation

Research Paper

- Argumentative or informative topic chosen by student, guided by teacher, and approved by committee
- Topic relates to project
- Each step acceptably completed before advancing to the next
- MLA format (MLA 7)
- 4-6 typed pages of text (does not include Works Cited Page or Title Page); doubled spaced; Times New Roman, 12 point font; one-inch margins.
- Works Cited page
- A minimum of four cited sources including the interview
- Should be written with a mixture of writer's words and source quotes, summaries, and paraphrases (no more than 10% of paper should be quoted material)
- Internal MLA documentation
- Plagiarism will result in automatic zero.

Portfolio

- Compilation of research paper and project process documentation
- Contents:
 - Title Page
 - Table of Contents
 - Letter to the Judges (optional)
 - Project Plan
 - Research Paper (complete, revised final draft)
 - Project Journal (signed by mentor)
 - Mentor Project Verification (completed by mentor)
 - Mentor Log (signed by mentor)
 - Picture Verification
 - Student Self-Evaluation Form
 - Additional Documentation of Project
 - Interview (typed)
 - Flyers, brochures, lesson plans, receipts, etc. (as applicable)
 - Thank you note or receipt from agency/group if project included a fundraiser
 - Any other artifacts gathered or created

Project

- Minimum hours spent working directly on the project: 15 hours
- Shadowing (which is simply following someone around) is not enough to constitute a project. Each student will work actively and/or create a product (see teacher for more details).
- Approved by committee
- Project must be related to research paper topic
- Mentor to guide process:
 - Age 21 or older and not related to student (nor a boy/girlfriend)
 - Expert in the field of study
 - Spend 8 of the total hours directly with mentor and/or under mentor's direct instruction – document on Mentor Log
 - Mentor completes a Mentor Verification and offers a suggested grade at end of process
- Document full project process with pictures: minimum 12 – 24 pictures (of student working) and at least one with mentor.
- Document full project process with journal entries

Presentation

- 8 – 11 minutes
- Visual aid (emphasizing the use technology)
- Judged on content, delivery, professional appearance, and visual aid
- Appropriate professional dress
- Portfolio will be shared with judges prior to presentation
- Acceptable class presentation (dress rehearsal)

Graduation Project will be at least 25% of the student's class grade in English IV. Failure to acceptably complete the Graduation Project will result in failure of English IV.

Dear Parents/Guardians of Seniors:

The Burke County Public Schools System requires that all seniors complete a Graduation Project, which is a culmination of twelve years of education. The project is chosen by the student and must pass school and parent approval. The project can be any idea the student chooses from a career, to a hobby, to a life skill—as long as the project provides a learning stretch for the student. The learning stretch is accomplished when the student has significantly progressed from being a novice in the project area to becoming at least competent. The project has four major components: a research paper, an acceptable project with a mentor, a portfolio that documents the student’s project, and a final oral presentation. Each portion of the Graduation Project is required for successful completion of the overall project.

The primary objectives of the Graduation Project are to teach students responsibility in the following ways:

1. Students must learn to prioritize their time in order to meet deadlines.
2. Students must engage in self-directed learning and engage with community members.

The student’s research paper will require the use of research skills and will lay the groundwork for the project hours. The paper must be four to six (4-6) typed pages. The second part of the Graduation Project is a hands-on experience with a qualified mentor. The mentor must be at least twenty-one years old and pass both parent approval and district approval through a criminal background check. Additionally, a student cannot use a mentor who is a family member. After the minimum project hours have been completed, the student will compile a portfolio with the revised paper, journal logs, photographic evidence of the project, and all other paperwork associated with the Graduation Project. The Graduation Project culminates in an eight- to eleven-minute speech in front of a panel of teachers and community members. In sum, the work of the Graduation Project will constitute twenty-five (25%) percent of the total term grade for English IV.

Successful Graduation Projects require student dedication, focus, organization, self-discipline, and adherence to calendar requirements. Parents, teachers, and students should collaborate to support student needs, concerns, fears, and interests. Parents, teachers, and students **MUST** remember that in order for a student to graduate from BCPS, all four components must be successfully completed. Parents are encouraged to contact their children’s English teachers with any questions or concerns throughout the term. BCPS hopes this project will be an enriching experience for each student and will help bridge his or her high school experience and career or college pursuits.

I, the parent/guardian of _____, have read this parent letter and understand the requirements of the Graduation Project.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

As a senior in BCPS, I have read and understand the requirements of Graduation Project.

Student Signature _____ Date: _____

Graduation Project Plan

General Directions: For each of the sections below, provide answers in *complete, declarative sentences with sufficient detail* to clearly define your project. Please proof and edit prior to handing in; this is the first step of your graduation project.

Name:

Date:

Current English Teacher:

School:

Overview

- Project title--short, pertinent, and descriptive.
- Project overview--clearly describe what you want to accomplish and necessary stages.

Learning Goals/Plan/ Learning Stretch

- Intended new learning--What do you intend to gain and learn from your paper and project? Consider both subject-related and personal knowledge gained; **be specific**.
- Connecting activities to learning--How will your activities provide new skills or knowledge?
- Evidence of new learning--How will you demonstrate what you've learned? How will you prove and present this later?

Preparation for Project Success

- Mentor --Who is your mentor, and how is he/she qualified? Provide specifics here.
- Project feasibility--What steps will you take to ensure project completion in accordance with the calendar?
- Possible problem areas--What potential issues do you foresee? Explain how you plan to deal with these if they occur.
- Budget--What expenses do you anticipate? Consider location of mentor, possible supplies, equipment, etc...

Graduation Project Calendar

- See the attached Graduation Project calendar.
- Reference this calendar as you complete your plan *and* as you progress through this semester.

Points to remember:

- The Graduation Project is not designed to be a high-budget process. An outstanding Project can be completed with little to no expense on the part of the student.
- As you complete your plan, please keep in mind overall student safety and well-being. A project that is too dangerous or high-risk will not be approved by the Graduation Project Committee.

Graduation Project Plan

General Directions: For each of the sections below, provide answers in *complete sentences* with *sufficient detail* to clearly define your project. Please proof and edit prior to handing in; this is the first step of your graduation project.

Name:

Overview

- General area of interest:
- Experience/background knowledge in this area:

Research Paper

- Informative or argumentative paper?
- What will you inform/prove in your paper?

Project

- Overview of project:
- Step-by-step plan:
 - *
 - *
 - *
- What I will learn:
- Learning stretch:
- Mentor and qualifications:
- Possible problem areas:
- Budget:

Letter to the Judges

Student Address Here

Date Here

Judges, Graduation Project Board

School Address Here

Dear Judges:

I would like to take the time to tell you a couple of things that I have learned this year. I learned that it is important to be confident and that you have to work to be able to reach your goals. I can accomplish a whole lot more than what I thought I could if I put my mind into it. What I have learned during my project will be very helpful to me in the future, because it has so many things to do with the career I plan to pursue.

After going through rough times throughout my life, I have reached my goal. My family has supported me, and helped me throughout the years. Being the first in my family to have a baby before graduation was a big hit towards my life and my family. I now have a bigger responsibility on me. Having a baby my senior year showed me the hard work that I must accomplish to have a better life for me and my baby. When my baby grows older he will see how hard it is to becoming a teen parent while still in high school, and will know the importance of having a good education before starting a family. Having him has helped me mature faster and take more responsibility of my actions. I played soccer when I was in middle school. I was involved in Army JROTC for four years which has helped me learn discipline, responsibility, courage, leadership, and respect. I am currently a member of the Spanish National Honors Society. Going to school and graduating was a really important goal for me as well as my family.

The choice of my graduation project on pediatrics relates to the career I plan on attending in the future. I want to become a registered nurse. I love working with people, especially when it comes to babies. There have been more and more people becoming registered nurses because they see the importance on helping peoples' health. My family likes the decision of my choice of career. If I make it to the career I would like, then I will be the first to go on to a college or university, and to go into the medical field.

Despite having some complications of completing my hours like not having a car, finding a babysitter, as well as a job, I have met my goals. I am proud of myself for what I have accomplished on my own. I now have an idea of the career I want to attend.

Thank you for your time to read my portfolio and for listening to my presentation. I hope you have found them interesting.

Sincerely,

Interviewing Tips

1. Telephone or write for an appointment.
2. Prepare intelligent questions in advance, but be ready to change them as the interview progresses.
3. Practice the following rules of courtesy:
 - Be on time.
 - Introduce yourself and shake hands.
 - Remind the interviewee of your purpose.
 - Adopt a friendly attitude.
 - Express your appreciation at the beginning and end of the interview.
 - Keep the interview within a reasonable time limit.
4. Ask permission to take notes, to quote, or to tape the interview.
5. Phrase questions so that they are easily understood.
6. Ask opinion-provoking questions to stimulate discussion.
7. Do not be afraid to ask questions, if uncertain about the subject or just curious.
8. Maintain a business-like demeanor, but personalize the interview with light conversation.
9. Create a climate conducive to the interchange of fundamental, not superficial, information.
10. Present a neat and clean appearance. Follow school dress policies.
11. Do not fidget.
12. Maintain good eye contact.
13. Be confident.
14. Do not use “ums” or “ahs” as fillers.
15. Use correct grammar.
16. Stay focused (do not get off the subject).
17. Do not wear too much cologne/perfume.
18. Maintain good posture.
19. Send a courteous thank-you note after the initial interview.

Research Paper Interview

Student Name: _____

Name and signature of person to be interviewed:

How does this person qualify as an “expert” in your research area? _____

Type of interview: Face-To-Face _____ Phone _____ Skype _____ Other (specify) _____

Note: Questions must be direct and open-ended. No “Yes” or “No” answers. Answers must be in complete and detailed sentences.

Question 1:

Answer:

Question 2:

Answer:

Question 3:

Answer:

Question 4:

Answer:

Question 5:

Answer:

Question 6:

Answer:

Question 7:

Answer:

Question 8:

Answer:

Question 9:

Answer:

Question 10:

Answer:

Graduation Project Parent Consent Form

As the parent/guardian of _____, a senior in Burke County Public Schools, I am aware that my child is working on a Graduation Project as part of the requirements for English IV. I understand that my child must complete all four (4) parts of the project (the research paper, the project hours, the portfolio, and the presentation) successfully in order to pass English IV.

For the project hours, my child has decided to use _____ as his/her mentor because _____. I understand that the mentor must complete and pass a criminal background check before working with my student. I understand that my child will be working with this mentor, or his designee, to complete the project hours, and I approve of this choice.

While studying with this mentor, my child will _____

_____.

_____ has my permission to complete this project with the mentor listed above (or his designee), and I agree that I will not hold the school, the school district, and its employees responsible for any financial obligations, damages, injuries, or accidents incurred while my child participates in his/her project.

Student's Name _____	Date _____
Parent's Name _____	Date _____
Parent's Signature _____	Date _____

Mentor Guidelines

The purpose of a mentor is to serve as an expert in the field a student is exploring during his/her graduation project. The following guidelines have been set for the selection of a mentor and to detail the role a mentor is expected to serve.

No parents, relatives, or persons under age 21 are allowed to serve as Graduation Project Mentors. Mentors should be obtained as soon as possible. One person can mentor several students at the same time, but each student will complete an individual Graduation Project.

Mentor Duties

- * The mentor must fill out the mentor information sheet and the BCPS Volunteer Form. This indicates his willingness to serve as a Graduation Project mentor and indicates acceptance of the background check.
 - * The mentor must approve the project for the subject he is mentoring. If the mentor does not approve the project, he may suggest revisions.
 - * The mentor should be aware of any confidentiality issues, privacy issues, or legal restrictions the student may encounter. He should help the student work with these possible obstacles.
 - * The mentor should be able to help the student with the technical aspects of the project and advise the student if there are obstacles.
 - * The mentor should be available to the student on a regular basis.
 - * The student should be in contact with the mentor at least once a week during the allotted project time.
 - * The mentor should teach the student new skills or information related to the project topic.
- ** *It is not the mentor's responsibility to complete the project for the student.* **
- * At each project meeting, the student will complete a project log/ journal detailing what was accomplished that day. The mentor must sign each of these logs for the student to get credit.
 - *The mentor will be asked to evaluate the student's completed project on the Mentor Confirmation Form.

** Please remember that the Graduation Project is NOT simply a shadowing project; students should be *actively involved* in their chosen areas. **

Dear Graduation Project Mentor:

As members of the Graduation Project Committee, we wish to express our appreciation for your willingness to serve as a mentor. Your help and expertise will enable the student to complete a major requirement for graduation.

In order for you to mentor this student effectively, we request your presence at the following orientation session:

If it is not possible for you to attend the session, please call your student's teacher during school hours to set up an individual appointment as soon as possible.

Teacher Name: _____

School Number: _____ **Teacher Extension:** _____

Teacher E-mail: _____

At this meeting, you will receive a mentor packet which will outline your responsibilities as a mentor, the student's responsibilities concerning the project, and samples of forms you will encounter during the project process.

Again, thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

The Graduation Project Steering Committees
Burke County Public Schools

Mentor Information Consent Form

MENTOR INFORMATION:

Mentor Name: _____

Phone Number (Work): _____ (Home): _____

(Cell): _____

Address: _____

Occupation, Position, or Title: _____

Years of Experience in Project Area: _____

Mentor Age: 21-35 _____ 36-50 _____ Over 50 _____

Have you served as a mentor in Burke County in the past 3 years? YES NO

When: _____

Where: _____

Would you be willing to mentor a Graduation Project student in the future? YES NO

STUDENT INFORMATION:

Student Name: _____

Graduation Project Teacher: _____

Project Topic/ Title: _____

How did you find this mentor?

SIGNATURES:

Mentor: _____ DATE: _____

Student: _____ DATE: _____

Mentor Log

Please keep a record of your student's progress during the course of the Graduation Project hours. Remember the student must accumulate a minimum number of hours to successfully move on to the next phase of the project. Eight of these hours must be under your direct supervision. The remaining hours may be compiled with you, or the student may work independently on a mentor-directed task.

Each entry must include:

1. The date and time spent on the project that day
2. The nature of the activity
3. The persons involved

Please use the appropriate chart below.

DIRECT HOURS

Date and Hours	Activity and Purpose	Persons Involved

INDIRECT HOURS

Date and Hours	Activity and Purpose	Persons Involved

Total Hours on this log: _____ Student Signature: _____

Mentor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mentor Project Confirmation Form

Student Name: _____ Project: _____

As a project mentor, please confirm this student's work on his/her Graduation Project. Since the project hours occurred outside of class under your advisement, it is necessary for you to verify this student's work during the course of the project. Please answer the following questions as thoroughly as possible, giving at least a 2-3 sentence response. Remember, your confirmation of this project strongly affects the student's grade.

1. Did this student spend the minimum hours working on his/her project?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. Have you supervised the project work at various stages?

_____ Yes _____ No

3. Please rate the student by the following standards on a scale of 1 to 5

(1= little to no effort, 2=some effort, 3= good effort, 4= strong effort, 5=outstanding effort)

* Time Management:	1	2	3	4	5
* Initiative:	1	2	3	4	5
* Evidence of Learning:	1	2	3	4	5
* Professionalism	1	2	3	4	5
* Appropriate Attitude	1	2	3	4	5

4. Based upon your experience with this student during the graduation project, would you provide this student with a professional recommendation? Why or why not?

Mentor Signature _____

Date _____

Phone Number _____

Project Self-Evaluation

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

I. Written Summation and Analysis of Project:

Give a brief overview of what you did during your project hours. Describe the actions you took and what you achieved in the various stages of your Graduation Project. Emphasize the extent of your “learning stretch,” and discuss the resources you used to complete your project.

II. Time Frame:

Date you began project hours: _____

Date you completed project hours: _____

Total hours completed: _____

III. Challenges Faced:

A. How did you manage your time and school/work schedule in order to successfully complete your project?

B. What challenges and/or risks did you face in completing this project? Consider emotional, intellectual, and physical challenges.

IV. Growth:

A. List at least three things you learned while completing the project.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. What did you learn about yourself while completing your project? What do you see as the most important benefit from this project? What personal satisfaction did you gain from this project experience?

V. Evaluation of Achievements:

A. What were your impressions or ideas of the project topic when you started? Did these ideas match the actual outcome you have now experienced? Explain.

B. If you were to begin the project again, what would you do differently?

C. What grade would you give your project?

Justify the evaluation of your grade using AT LEAST 25 words.

My grade: A+ A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D+ D D- F

Graduation Project Presentation Dress Code

The Graduation Project Presentation is an integral part of your Senior English grade. Also, the Graduation Project Judges will consist of teachers, area business leaders, professional personnel, and community volunteers.

Since this 8-11 minute presentation is a graduation requirement, you must make the best impression possible. The best way to make a good first impression is by the way you dress. Below are some guidelines that you **MUST** follow for your Graduation Project Presentation:

- Clothes should be clean, neat, and pressed.
- Neat and well-groomed hairstyles are important.
- Good personal hygiene is expected, which means conservative use of make-up, colognes, perfumes, body lotions, after-shave lotion, etc.
- Wear conservative jewelry (careful of dangling earrings, clanging bracelets, and other distracting accessories).
- Cover up any and all tattoos!
- NO eating, drinking or chewing gum!

What should you wear?

- The most professional attire possible.
- Young men should wear dress pants, long-sleeved dress shirts, ties, and dress shoes.
TIES ARE REQUIRED!
- **NO TENNIS SHOES.** Shoes should be consistent with your clothing!
- Young women should wear dresses, suits, skirts and blouses, sweaters, or jackets.
- **Dresses and skirts must be no more than two inches above the knee.** Avoid slits in skirts and dresses!
- Shoes should be consistent with the outfit. No tennis shoes or casual sandals!
- Clothing **MUST**, of course, meet the school dress code.
- **NO** knit pants, denim, jeans, short skirts, ragged jeans, tank tops, or t-shirts.
- **NO** sun dresses, bareback, sleeveless tops, strapless tops or dresses, or low necklines.
- **NO** tight fitting sweaters or see-through clothing of any kind.
- **NO** casual shoes or cowboy boots.

Note: The only exception to the dress rules is if you are dressed to coordinate with your topic/speech (i.e., you are dressed in a uniform appropriate for your project area – however, something as casual as scrubs do not count). Such exceptions must be approved by your teacher prior to the presentation.

RULE OF THUMB: When in doubt, **DON'T!**

Always remember: First impressions count and are made within the first three seconds of an introduction. Dress is an important part of how the panel perceives you. Your attire can have a very positive effect on your presentation grade!

Presentation Preview

Name: _____

Project Title: _____

Research Paper Synopsis:

Project Description:

Relationship between Project and Paper:

Background Experience in Area:

Graduation Project Presentation Evaluation Form

SCALE:

Student Name _____
 Project Topic _____
 Total Time _____

- 5 Exceptional evidence of item**
- 4 Above average evidence of item**
- 3 Average evidence of item**
- 2 Below average evidence of item**
- 1 Little or no evidence of item**

I. Portfolio	5	4	3	2	1
Organization					
Overall Professionalism					
II. Speech Content					
Introduction captures attention					
Main ideas and points accurately supported by details					
Conclusion; appropriate and memorable					
Integration of paper and project					
Collaboration with mentor and/or community					
Reflection and learning					
III. Speech Delivery					
Voice (volume, rate, enunciation, expression)					
Language (transitions, avoids slang, appropriate word choice, grammar)					
Preparation; does not read speech, smooth and appropriate rate, evidence of practice					
Nonverbal (body language, poise, appropriate gestures, eye contact)					
Appropriate dress (neat, professional)					
Overall effectiveness of presentation					
IV. Visual Aid					
Applicable to speech					
Appropriate use during presentation					
Effectively enhances presentation					
V. Time					
8-11 min.= 5, 7-8 or 12-13 min.= 4, 6-7 or 14+ min.= 3, 5-6 min.= 2, 0-5 min.=1					
VI. Judges' Questions					
Answers questions smoothly and confidently					
Demonstrates expertise and knowledge of subject					

TOTAL OF ALL 5 COLUMNS _____ **(out of 100 possible points)**

COMMENTS: