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Youth Capstone Overview

Process Overview:

The Youth Capstone Project begins with reflective and exploratory activities which help students to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their community. Through this process, students recognize and value others and their community. Building on these exercises, students will identify a community-based project to plan and carry out either individually or in small groups. Finally, students will present their projects at a celebratory culmination.

Step One: Introduce Capstone Project

Step Two: Learning—SELF

Step Three: Learning—SCHOOL

Step Four: Choosing a project

Step Five: Doing your project

Step Six: Celebratory Presentation

Ongoing Components:

- Mentors and adult advisors (adults from school or community, older students)
- Self-reflection exercises/journal log

Example Timeline

Week	Theme	Supporting Activities
Week 1	Introduce Capstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly or class meeting • Invite 1-2 older students to share examples of their projects and experience
Week 2	Learning—SELF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying Core Values Activity • Develop a personal mission statement
Week 3	Learning—SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circle of Concern Exercise • Interview Activity
Week 4	Choosing a project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Brainstorm Session • Planning Worksheet Part I
Week 5	Submit proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Proposal Worksheet
Week 6	Planning week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Worksheet Part II
Week 7	Project work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor or mentor meetings as needed
Week 8	Project work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midpoint Reflection • Advisor or mentor meetings as needed
Week 9	Project work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor or mentor meetings as needed
Week 10	Work on presentation Project wrap-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation planning
Week 11	Project Presentation	

Identifying Core Values

Explain that the Youth Capstone is an experience that helps guide students as they transition from being children to young adults. Engage students in discussions about what it means to be a young adult.

- ✓ Possible questions include:
 - *What are the roles and responsibilities see for yourself in adulthood?*
 - *What does it mean to be morally responsible for your actions?*
 - *What commitments to do you want to make to yourself? To your community?*
 - *What are your roles and responsibilities as a student?*
 - *How will your commitments and responsibilities change as you mature and become a self-dependent learner?*

- ✓ Shift the discussion to focus on the values of the school or community organization.
 - *What responsibilities and obligations do you have as students of this school?*
 - *What values do you think the school stands for?*
 - *What values would you like the school to stand for?*
 - *How do your personal values align with the values of the school?*
 - *How can you effectively support the shared values of your school?*

- ✓ Students will practice metacognitive skills throughout the experience by self-reflecting on how they are personally changing (with this activity, project, experience) and who they are becoming. Share with students the driving question that they will respond to in their final presentation:
 - *How have I changed, and who am I becoming?*

Develop a Personal Mission Statement

1. What do you hope to learn in high school?
2. What do you hope to accomplish?
3. Think of three characteristics or values that describe the person you are right now (For example: honest, kind, successful, etc.)
4. Think of three characteristics or values that describe the person you strive to be (For example: honest, kind, successful, etc.)
5. Why are these characteristics or values important to you?
6. What do you think you can do to embody these values?
7. How will these values change the way you think about yourself? About others?
8. What goals do you plan to work on in the coming year? How will you accomplish them?
Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Interview Someone: Getting to Know Others

This activity could be well suited to an English, Social Studies, or Civics class as an opportunity for students to develop interviewing and oral literacy skills. Advance preparation involves the Youth Capstone organizers surveying staff at the school to identify those who would be willing to be interviewed as part of the activity. Of those school staff who are willing to be interviewed, ask them to answer one general question that will break the ice and allow students to connect with them on a personal level. For example: *What is your favorite TV show?*

- Introduce the activity by asking students how many people work and learn in their school building. Before revealing the actual number, determine if any students get close to an accurate estimate. Then ask how many of those people students know. Encourage students to wonder about the roles of all the different people in the school.
- Give students a list of all staff who have agreed to be interviewed, revealing their names and their response to the generic question (e.g. favorite TV show). Allow students to choose a person to interview based only on this information.
- Explain to students that they are responsible for arranging a time and place to conduct the interview and for contacting their interviewee. A signup sheet or online collaborative document could be used to keep track of which students have arranged, and then completed, their interviews. Tell students the deadlines and suggest steps they can take if they have difficulty making arrangements or securing a response.
- Prepare students with methods to decide their questions, and then record, transcribe, and analyze their interview. Depending on the level of the class, students may be given more or less freedom on their questions.
- Remind students that the purpose of these interviews is to thoughtfully get to know a new individual. In order to do this they will need to ask a range of respectful questions. Below are some suggestions to get them started, but not an exhaustive list:
 - Where are you and your family from?
 - What do you like to do in your spare time?
 - Do you have a best friend? Who is that person and what makes them special?
 - What is a favorite experience that you remember from childhood?
 - What is an important piece of advice that you would give young people about growing up?
 - What does being responsible mean to you? Ethical?

Identifying Mentors

Mentors may be drawn from within the school, from school partners, or from students' individual networks. Schools may choose to facilitate a high- or low- engagement mentoring program. (See Step Two under *When to Conduct the Program*).

- ✓ Most of the Youth Capstone activities will take place in classrooms, yet the entirety of the project is considered to be a whole-school commitment to care and respect in which community members are engaged in ongoing partnerships. Thus, the Capstone experience is a partnership between classrooms, schools, and community members. It is vital to communicate the aims of the Capstone to these partners prior to the launch of the program.

- ✓ Peer mentoring is also an important part of the Capstone experience. Ideally, students will be provided with opportunities to engage in informal mentoring relationships with their peers as they work together on projects.

- ✓ It is recommended that the mentor be someone other than a parent, as one aim of the mentoring relationship is to develop a new bond with an adult.

Choosing mentors

- ✓ Ask students to think about the adults they know in their lives. Who do they look up to? This may be an adult inside or outside of the school.

- ✓ If schools are unable to support the mentoring aspect of the program, students can be encourage to reflect on their adult ideal by writing a 'biography of a role model.'

Identify Your Mentor

Please complete this form and return to your teacher.

Student Name: _____

Mentor Name: _____

Project Planning Worksheet I

Student Name: _____

Mentor Name: _____

Choosing a topic:

Think about what you have learned about yourself and others thus far. Is there a particular question or issue that comes to mind? Write down any ideas you have. Here are some additional questions to get you started:

- *What would you like to improve in your school community?*
- *Is there something you could do that could really make a difference? Is there something, someone, or some place you want to learn more about?*

Write your ideas here:

Do you have any specific goals for your project? (For example: to learn more about others, to contribute to the school community, to create something new, etc.)

Which of your ideas would be best suited to this project, keeping in mind the goals of the Capstone Project, your goals, and the time and resources you have? Why?

Project Planning Worksheet II

Student Name: _____

Mentor Name: _____

The topic/project I have chosen is: _____

What steps will I have to take to do this project? (use as many steps as you need)

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

What resources or materials will you need?

What kind of support or help from your teacher would be useful?

What kind of support or help from your mentor would be useful?

What kind of product do you imagine creating for your final presentation? (Examples include posters, artwork, videos, webpages, etc.)

Project Proposal Form

Student Name: _____

Mentor Name: _____

Project Title/Topic:

Brief description of the project activities and goals:

If you are working in a group, please write the names of the other student(s) in the group:

Student 1: _____

Student 2: _____

Student 3: _____

Progress Log

Date/Week	Current Project Step	What did you accomplish this week?	What needs to be done next?	Did you meet with your advisor this week?	Did you meet with your mentor this week?

Reflection Journal Questions

What did you accomplish this week?

Did you run into any obstacles?

How did you overcome these obstacles?

What did you learn about yourself and others this week?

What do you hope to accomplish next week?

Is your project going as planned? Why or why not?

What role have others played in the progress of your project?

Midpoint Reflection Questions

What have you learned about yourself or others during the project thus far?

What do you hope to learn in the coming weeks?

What would help to make this experience more valuable?

What has been challenging so far? How did you overcome any obstacles?

What kind of support have other students, advisors, or mentors provided? Do you need more or less support?

How can you access support?

Project Ideas and Resources

Project Examples:

- Creating a video game or board game that promotes perspective-taking and responsibility for others
- Creating a project that supports a group vulnerable to cruelty (For example, the “It Gets Better” video)
- Creating a video on how to prevent some form of cruelty, such as cyberbullying
- Creating a video comprised of interviews with members of your school community about their views on what constitutes a caring and just community
- Starting a new student group to connect incoming students with older students as mentors
- Developing activities, events, or programming that promote getting to know people at school in different grades, classes, etc.
- Initiating a kindness wall where school members can write positive messages or quotations to share with the school community
- A work of art for the school that is tied to the school mission, values, or the Youth Capstone experience

Project Example Resources:

- Expeditionary Learning
<http://elschools.org/>
- High Tech High Sample Projects
<http://www.hightechhigh.org/projects/>

MAKING
CARING
COMMON
PROJECT

