

Senior Thesis Project

Handbook

2019-2020



The Senior Thesis Project: A Definition

The Senior Thesis Project consists of a written piece of research students will complete by the spring of their senior year, and a presentation to the Manlius Pebble Hill School community about their research experience and findings. Students will complete the written research and prepare the presentation through one of two English classes, English 12 or Advanced Placement English Language and Composition. Besides reporting to the teacher of those classes, students will work with a mentor and another teacher to identify and take advantage of resources in the community, meet their deadlines, and complete their STP. Work for the Senior Thesis Project begins in the second semester of junior year, continues through the summer, and is completed by May of the senior year.

The Purpose of the Senior Thesis Project

The purpose of the Senior Thesis Project is to culminate the academic experience of Manlius Pebble Hill School students in a manner that advances the School's mission and its core values. Manlius Pebble Hill School's mission is "to inspire our students to think critically, act responsibly, and discover a passion for lifelong learning." Included among the School's core values are pursuing academic excellence; cultivating inquisitive and independent learning; building self-confidence, respect, responsibility, and strength of character; stimulating intellectual development; fostering a love of learning through creative problem-solving and critical thinking; and contributing to the local and global communities. The Senior Thesis Project allows students to practice the School's core values and fulfill the School's mission.

Completing the STP

In the senior-year English class, students who are not completing an eMPHasis will have to reach certain stages of the STP each month. Students completing an STP are expected to meet all requirements as indicated in this handbook and their English class. Since MPH students cannot graduate without completing either an eMPHasis or a Senior Thesis Project, all seniors must complete their research writing and present their findings to an audience.

Choosing a Topic

Choosing an appropriate topic for the STP can be challenging, as the possibilities might appear to be nearly endless. Consider the following while deciding on a topic:

- The topic must be of interest to the student.
- The project must have personal meaning.
- The project must have lasting continuity and is not limited to one weekend, week, or month.
- The project can develop or extend a pre-existing commitment.
- The project must present new challenges and opportunities for learning.

Senior Thesis Project Categories

The categories below are provided to help students envision their STP topic. If a student has an idea for an STP that doesn't appear to fit in one of these areas, he or she should approach Mr. Montas or another teacher to discuss it. Fundraising is not allowed for any STP.

1. *Academic Research:* A student investigates a topic in history, English, science, math, language, technology, performing arts, visual arts, or another field of interest. This research will lead to a 15-20 page paper.
2. *Action Research:* A student investigates a social or community problem and produces a research paper that will propose a solution or solutions to that problem. Action research is very specific and proposing a solution to a problem can bring much satisfaction. This research will lead to a 15-20 page paper.
3. *Entrepreneurial Research:* A student investigates and develops an entrepreneurial idea and produces a 15-20 page business plan. The student does not have to produce a product, but the presentation could take the form of a kind of pitch meeting.

4. *STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Research:* A student conducts an experiment, designs a model, develops a new code, or pursues some other kind of extensive and original work in STEM. In addition, the student presents the research related to the STEM work that will lead to a 12-15 page paper, which often takes the form of lab report.
5. *Community Service Research:* A student engages in at least 30 hours of community service by March 1 of the Senior year. In addition, the student conducts research about the area of community service. If research hasn't been conducted on the student's area of study, then the student may conduct participant-observer research, which the senior-year English class will address. This research will lead to a 12-15 page paper.
6. *Career Internship Research:* A student engages in at least 30 hours of an internship by March 1 of their Senior year. In addition, the student conducts research about the area of interest by advancing knowledge about the field or gathering more information about it. This research will lead to a 12-15 page paper.
7. *Performing Arts Research:* A student performs a recital in dance or music toward the end of the senior year. In addition, the student conducts research in the area of performance. For example, a student performing a piano recital may conduct research related to the music that will be performed. This research may lead to a 12-15 page paper, or the equivalent length of program notes for the pieces performed in recital. Ideally, the public presentation will serve as an introduction to the performance.
8. *Art Portfolio:* A student develops a portfolio of original artwork and conducts research on the traditions, styles, forms, media, techniques, and methods of his or her artistic influences. This research will lead to 12-15 pages of reflection and analysis of selected portfolio pieces. In addition, this research will be condensed to produce exhibition labels for the student's pieces in the All School Art Exhibit.

Alternatives to a Research Paper

The following options are alternatives to writing a research paper; see Mr. Montas to discuss their suitability for your topic. You do not need to decide on one of these for your STP proposal, but if you are especially excited about pursuing one of them, you should indicate that in your proposal and discuss it during your proposal meeting.

1. *Website Design*: A student produces a website devoted to their topic. The content for the website emerges from the student's research, and must be equivalent to 12-15 pages of research writing.
2. *Documentary Film*: A student produces and directs a short documentary film (six-to-nine minutes in length) on their topic of research. The research writing consists of the script for the documentary, which must be equivalent to 12-15 pages of research writing.
3. *TED Talk*: A student gives a talk following the format of TED conferences: no notes, at least twenty minutes long, before a large audience. The written text of the talk will constitute the research writing, so it will cite sources, provide a list of references, and have other features of documented research writing. The written text will be in the neighborhood of 12-15 pages in length.
4. *Museum Exhibition*: A student prepares a space devoted to display his or her topic. The student's research will constitute a 12-15 pages of research writing that will be condensed to produce labels for the exhibition.

The Senior Thesis Proposal: Draft due Monday, May 13, 2019

This proposal is not an essay, but a statement on how the student conceptualizes the project in its beginning phases. Each section below should be a paragraph in length; each paragraph must be identified with headings in italics, as below. Use the checklist on p. 10 of this Handbook to make sure each section of the proposal receives sufficient attention.

Introduction: This identifies the topic of the STP and the kind of research (see pp. 3-4 of this Handbook) the student will pursue. The introduction must also describe the STP's personal meaning to the student.

Statement of the Topic: This elaborates on the content of the topic and focus of the research area. It should describe the main issues of interest and how the student anticipates learning more about the topic.

Prior Knowledge: This explains what the student already knows about the research area.

Benefit to the Public: This explains what the broader MPH or Syracuse community will gain from this Senior Thesis Project. This benefit can simply involve the community seeing or learning something they haven't previously seen, known, or understood.

Potential Mentors: This identifies potential mentors who may have expertise in the topic and can provide guidance throughout the course of the project. Mentors may not be family members and must be at least 23 years of age.

Roles of People Involved in the Senior Thesis Project

Each student must take ownership of the Senior Thesis Project, but no student will go through it alone. Each student will have support from several people in completing the STP.

The Teachers: Through either AP English Language and Composition or English 12 (also known as The Senior Seminar), you will complete the research writing for the STP and prepare for the public presentation. Regular assignments in your English class will keep you on track to complete the research paper. Your English teacher can also assist with finding community resources, provide guidance when meeting any obstacles in your project, and act as a liaison between you and your mentor if needed. Other teachers will be available in different capacities in the fall and spring semesters, possibly to assist with the writing of the paper, the project itself, your mentor, the presentation, or other aspects of the STP.

The Mentor: This person has expertise in the area of the Senior Thesis Project or in the kind of STP you are completing. This person may be an MPH faculty member, administrator, or staff member, or may come from the broader Central New York community. The mentor must be at least 23 years old and may not be a family member. The student will meet with this person at least once a month to review the STP's progress. Mentors are limited to three (preferably two) students.

The Family: Your family may be an essential part of your support network, especially if the STP requires transportation on a regular basis or other resources.

The Senior Thesis Research Writing

All students must complete a written research assignment, but this writing can take different forms and will be determined by their type of STP. More details of this paper's requirements will be given through your English classes, beginning with the summer assignment.

The Senior Thesis Presentation

The STP concludes with a public presentation that, for the last two years, has been given at MPH on the evening of the last Friday in April. Students have the option of presenting to a specific audience in a specific location, at MPH or off campus. Regardless of the presentation's arrangement, students will determine the details of their public presentation before the February break.

Junior Year Calendar

March: Introduction to the Senior Thesis Project.

April: Reflect on potential STP topics and consider possible mentors. Talk to people you trust about these possibilities. Ask Mr. Montas, your advisor, or other teachers questions about the STP.

May: Proposal draft due Monday, May 13; feedback given by Friday, May 17.
Committee meetings on Thursday, May 23; feedback given by Friday, May 31.

Summer: Work on the Action and Research Plan as part of the summer assignment for your English class. Identify possible mentors and communicate with them about the possibility of serving as a mentor.

Senior Year Calendar

September: Turn in Action Plan, including mentor commitment letter at beginning of school year; meet with mentor. Perform community service or work at career internship. Research writing assignment.

October: Meet with mentor and additional STP teacher. Perform community service or work at career internship. Research writing assignment.

November: Meet with mentor and additional STP teacher. Perform community service or work at career internship. Research writing assignment.

December: Meet with mentor and additional STP teacher. Perform community service or work at career internship. Research writing assignment.

January: Meet with mentor and additional STP teacher. Perform community service or work at career internship. Research writing assignment.

February: Meet with mentor and additional STP teacher. Complete 30 community service or internship hours by the end of February. Decide details of public presentation. Research writing assignment.

March: Last required meeting with mentor and additional STP teacher. Research writing assignment.

April: A draft of the research paper is completed by the first week in April; the presentation is completed by the end of April.

May: The revision of the research paper is completed by the end of the AP exams.

Senior Thesis Committee Meeting Preparation

Thursday, May 23, 2019

The purpose of the Committee Meeting is to give you the support of the community as you launch your project toward success. During the meeting you will talk about your project for five-to-seven minutes and explain how it meets the project criteria. This meeting is less a presentation and more a conversation about your STP.

Please bring five (5) copies of your proposal to hand out to the faculty facilitator, community members, and sophomores.

Essential components of the conversation:

- Practice and prepare ahead of time
- Present basic information about yourself – name, mentor(s), title of the project
- Dress at the higher end of the dress code
- Make eye contact
- Speak clearly and address your audience
- Keep track of time

Students will receive written feedback based on the proposal by Friday, May 31.

STP Proposal Checklist

Use the checklist below to make sure your proposal addresses everything it needs to.

Introduction:

- Does your introduction identify the topic of the STP?
- Does the introduction mention the kind of research you will or might pursue?
- Does the introduction describe the STP's personal meaning?

Statement of the Topic:

- Does this paragraph elaborate on the content of the topic?
- Does this paragraph explain why this topic is being pursued in a particular research area?
- Does this paragraph describe the main issues that interest you and how you anticipate learning more about the topic?

Prior Knowledge:

- Does this paragraph explain what you already know about the topic and how you learned it?

Benefit to the Public:

- Does this paragraph explain what the broader MPH or Syracuse community will gain from this STP? (This benefit can simply involve the community seeing or learning something they haven't previously seen, known, or understood.)

Potential Mentors:

- Does this paragraph identify potential mentors who may have expertise in the area of interest or can provide guidance throughout the course of the project?
- Does this paragraph explain why this potential mentor would be a good fit for you and this STP? (Once again, mentors may not be family members and must be at least 23 years of age.)