



Graduation *Project*

Help Students Prepare for the Real World:
Volunteer for Graduation Projects

Volunteer



How can business and community members ensure that students graduating from our high schools have the skills they need to move ahead to college and work? By getting involved with the new North Carolina graduation projects!

Durham Public Schools is seeking graduation project mentors—about 2,500 of them—who can provide support and guidance to high school students as they develop new state-required graduation projects. DPS also needs community members to serve on review panels to hear the oral presentations of students' work.

Rationale

The State Board of Education approved new high school exit standards that include a graduation project so that students can demonstrate what they know and are able to do as a result of their cumulative education. The project requires students to apply concepts, knowledge and 21st-Century skills that are needed to be successful in post-secondary education and careers.

The new standards apply to the graduating class of 2009-10. Because most of the work with mentors is in the junior and senior years, Durham Public Schools needs some 2,500 business and community mentors to work with students beginning in fall 2008.

“The North Carolina graduation project represents the ‘first best chance’ for high school students to demonstrate competency in skills and knowledge that are in demand across the nation and around the world.”

—North Carolina Business Committee for Education, December 2006

Key Components of the New Graduation Project

- **Research Paper:** Students will choose a topic, conduct research and write an eight-to-10 page paper. The mentor may assist in research and reviewing the student's writing.
- **Product:** Students are required to create a product related to the research topic that reflects a minimum of 15 hours of work. Projects can be physical objects such as a display, a performance-based demonstration, service-oriented volunteering or job shadowing/apprenticeships for which students will document their experiences in a journal or in other ways.
- **Portfolio:** The record of the student's graduation project experience is demonstrated in a portfolio. The portfolio includes work samples, pictures, interviews, reflections and other evidence of the effort.
- **Oral Presentation:** The oral presentation gives students an opportunity to present information on the chosen topic to a review panel of school and community members. It is the culmination of the graduation project and will take place in the spring of a student's senior year.

Graduation Project Mentors

Anyone from the community who is 21 years of age or older and has expertise in the field a student is researching may serve as a graduation project mentor. DPS requires mentors, just as other volunteers, to complete a Volunteer Application Form and to undergo a criminal background check.

A graduation project mentor is a community and/or faculty member who has expertise and experience with the project topic and accepts the following responsibilities:

- Allocates time and makes arrangements to work with a high school junior (and then in senior year) on the project;
- Provides suggestions and advice to the student on applicable aspects of the research paper, product, portfolio and oral presentation;
- Provides accurate and honest verification of the student's work;
- Serves as a support and resource to the student in all stages of the process; and,
- Signs and returns all required forms.

Graduation Project Review Panel Members

Panels of school staff and community members will hear each student give an oral presentation on his/her project. These panels will then “grade” students on their work. Training is provided.

Review panel members commit to:

- Allocating time and arranging to attend oral presentations;
- Asking clarifying questions at the end of the presentation;
- Evaluating projects consistently and fairly;
- Evaluating projects in accordance with the state rubrics; and,
- Previewing/examining the student's portfolio to become familiar with the project.

Sign up to Help

Contact **Sheila Miglares**, DPS Volunteer Services Coordinator
919-560-3816 • Email: Sheila.miglares@dpsnc.net • Online at www.dpsnc.net/volunteers

Applicant's Name: _____

Please check your volunteer interest:

- Graduation Project Mentor:** *A person who has expertise and experience in a certain area and makes arrangements to work with a student on all phases of the project during the students' junior and senior years.*
- Graduation Project Review Panel Member:** *A person who sits on a panel to hear students give oral presentations on their projects and "grades" students on their work.*

Your Profession:

Hobbies/Skills (examples: woodwork, stained glass, gardening, scrapbooking, etc.)

Sports/Leisure (examples: backpacking, tennis, golf, sailing, cycling, etc.)

Performing Arts (examples: local theatre, piano, dance, jazz, etc.)

Social/Environmental (examples: recycling, homeless, animal welfare, etc.)

Civic/Community (examples: political campaigns, Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, Museum volunteer, etc.)

Other: *please provide contact information for organizations or individuals who may be interested in getting involved with graduation projects*

If you are already matched with a DPS student please complete the following:

Student Name: _____ High School: _____

Thank you for volunteering to be a Graduation Project Mentor for DPS. Following the processing of your application, your name will be added to the "mentor bank." If a student is interested in pursuing a topic in your area(s) of interest, he or she will contact you regarding a possible mentor match.

PLEASE READ AND CONSENT TO THE FOLLOWING:

- *I will hold in confidence any information revealed to me pertaining to my student.*
- *I will report any home or school concerns about a child to the school coordinator of volunteers, the manager of the program, the child's teacher, or directly to the principal before I leave for the day.*
- *I understand that I have a legal obligation to report any suspected abuse or neglect to the principal or designated person.*
- *I will not contact the child off campus or remove him/her from school at any time without written parental permission.*
- *I will not accompany the child into a restroom or be with the child in any secluded area.*
- *I will call the volunteer coordinator or manager when I have to be absent.*
- *I will sign in and out each day when I volunteer at the school.*
- *I will follow DPS and the Department of Community Education's policies and procedures.*
- *I understand the diversity in all students and believe in their ability to be successful.*

I also confirm that I have not been convicted of a felony or any offense involving drugs, alcohol, child abuse, sexual aberration or any moral turpitude. I hereby affirm that the above information is true and complete to my knowledge. By providing direct services to children, I authorize Durham Public Schools to conduct a criminal record check, which will be contingent upon my placement and or continuation with all programs.

Please return this form to: **Community Education in Durham Public Schools**

attn: Sheila Miglarese

P.O.Box 1967 Durham, NC 27702-1967 or 302 Morris St. Durham, NC 27701

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