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# Handbook

2007-2008

Everett Public Schools

# Culminating Exhibition

## Graduation Requirements

Argumentative Paper

Reflective Letter

Self-Directed Project

Culminating Presentation

A fundamental goal of public education is to develop lifelong learners who use their minds and skills well. The four components of Everett's Culminating Exhibition move students through challenging academic activities that develop and demonstrate their readiness to take responsibility for their own learning.

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## Overview

The Everett Public Schools' Culminating Exhibition (CE) established by the Everett Public Schools Board of Directors as a graduation requirement is a student performance assessment of the Washington State Learning Goals and the Everett Public Schools' Learning Standards. The Culminating Exhibition consists of four components: Argumentative Paper, Reflective Letter, Self-Directed Project, and Culminating Presentation. Each component integrates valuable skills and knowledge and allows students to demonstrate their readiness to graduate. The standards for each component are located in the Appendix and are published at the beginning of each year for the current senior class.

### Why Require the Culminating Exhibition?

Following the passage of state legislation (House Bill 1209) that initiated school reform efforts in Washington State, every school district was charged with helping all students achieve the four state learning goals. The Everett School District began with the class of 2001 requiring students to complete the Culminating Exhibition asking students to demonstrate reaching the four goals by applying their knowledge, solving problems, and demonstrating their learning. The components require students to take responsibility for demonstrating their ability to apply what they learn and show that they are prepared for work and/or further education. For all Washington State students in the Class of 2008 and beyond, school districts are required to have students complete a Culminating Project. Everett School District's Culminating Exhibition fulfills the state required Culminating Project and serves as a model for other districts.

The following page illustrates the relationship between the state learning goals and the components of the Culminating Exhibition.

## How the Culminating Exhibition Addresses WA State Learning Goals

### Learning Goals

1. **Read** with comprehension, **write** with skill, **and** communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings.
2. **Know and apply the core concepts and principles** of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness.
3. **Think** analytically, logically, and creatively, and integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems.
4. **Understand** the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect **future career and educational opportunities**.

### Culminating Exhibition

An opportunity for every student to demonstrate that they can think analytically, logically, and creatively, and can integrate experiences and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems.

The Culminating Exhibition will assess a broad range of skills in reading, writing, communication, technology, reasoning, problem solving, and research through **four distinct components** presented to an audience of staff and community members who will interact with, ask questions of, and require the student to defend their work.

#### ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER

Examines, investigates, or researches a topic resulting from an extension of classroom learning in mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; or health and fitness.

#### REFLECTIVE LETTER

Focuses on the students as learners and connects the knowledge and skills gained during their K-12 educational experience with their future career and educational goals.

#### SELF-DIRECTED PROJECT

Requires the use of knowledge and skills from the inception of an idea through the documentation and evaluation of students' learning.

#### CULMINATING PRESENTATION

Requires students to present their work and respond to questions in a way that demonstrates their readiness to take responsibility for their own learning.

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## **Timeline to Graduation**

Completing all the components of the Culminating Exhibition at standard is necessary for graduation from Everett Public Schools. Students must meet every standard of the Argumentative Paper, Reflective Letter, and Self-Directed Project before they are scheduled for their Culminating Presentation. A deadline for meeting standard on the first three CE components is established and published at each school in its CE Handbook. Meeting the deadline requires students to do more than simply turn work in on time; it also requires them to produce quality work that meets district standards. This deadline establishes a cutoff date to allow for timely preparation and scheduling of presentations. Successfully meeting all standards of the Culminating Presentation will allow students who have also met course credit requirements to participate in the current semester's commencement ceremony. Students whose work is not at standard by the established deadline will not be allowed to participate in the current semester's commencement ceremony. Upon completion they will be eligible to participate in the next scheduled ceremony. Students will not be awarded a diploma until all of the graduation requirements are met (See Board Policy 2410).

## **Monitoring of Progress**

The Everett School Board requires that each school supplement the Culminating Exhibition Handbook with the target completion dates for each component. Target completion dates are set to help students manage their time, to help staff and parents monitor progress and to allow for interventions when necessary prior to the established deadline. Schools will assign each student to a staff member who monitors the student's progress toward completing work in a timely manner. Throughout the timeline, multiple opportunities will be provided for students to submit CE work and receive feedback and instructional support. Dates for submission of drafts are set by teachers to allow for timely feedback on student progress towards meeting standards. Each high school has a method for implementing the CE that aligns with the school's master schedule. Schools will provide face-to-face instruction for each component as well as offer access to online resources.

For the Senior Seminar course, students will work in the classroom utilizing online resources which tie informational resources, instructional guidance, students' work and teacher's feedback together. A teacher can see students' project work right after it is submitted and send comments regarding progress toward standards. Students learn what pieces of their project are at standard and which pieces they need to revise. Progress and grade reports will include an update of the student's status on each component.

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## **Intervention**

Schools will notify student(s) and parent(s) if the student is not making adequate progress. If a student misses a target completion date the instructor will conference with the student and notify parents in order to determine what level of continued support will lead to the student's successful completion of all components of the Culminating Exhibition. If a student continues to miss target dates, the school will schedule a conference with both the student and parents to create a plan establishing goals that will lead to successful completion of all work, including resources the school can provide to aid the student. This planning conference will be scheduled as early as possible in advance of the deadline in order to offer the student both the opportunity and the time to complete work to standard. If the student's work does not meet standard by the deadline, the student will not qualify for the current semester's commencement ceremony. The school will schedule another conference with the student and parents to plan for completing work, graduating and participating in the next scheduled commencement.

## **Appeals**

The decision to deny participation in a graduation ceremony requires written notice to the student and to his/her parent or guardian delivered by certified mail or in person. The notice shall specify information as to the reason for denying participation in a particular commencement ceremony by the principal.

If students or parents have concerns regarding the successful completion of the Culminating Exhibition they should contact their teacher. If the parent or student feels the complaint is not resolved after discussion with the teacher, they may choose to submit a written complaint to the building administrator assigned to oversee the Culminating Exhibition. If the parent or student feels the complaint is not resolved after discussion with the CE Administrator, they may choose to bring the complaint to the principal. The principal will review the complaint and then render a decision. If the parent or student does not feel the problem has been satisfactorily resolved at the building level, they may file a written complaint with the Superintendent or the Superintendent Designee. The school will be asked to provide any relevant documentation. The Superintendent or the Superintendent Designee will review the complaint and documentation and render a decision. The decision will be final.

## **Intellectual Integrity**

Intellectual integrity is the cornerstone of being a self-directed learner. It is imperative that students present an honest accounting of all CE related activities. Students falsifying any aspect of their work will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, ranging from submitting completely new, verifiably original work up to and including loss of the privilege to participate in commencement ceremonies.

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## **Running Start and Sno-Isle**

All students who participate in Running Start, Sno-Isle or other equivalent programs are required to complete all four components of the CE and meet their building requirements. Students who intend to participate in these programs need to plan carefully to ensure completion of the CE within their school's published deadlines. Work done for the Self-Directed Project must be in addition to coursework that receives high school credit other than for Senior Seminar.

## **English Language Learners (ELL)**

ELL students who receive services will have an individualized plan detailing how each student will meet the CE requirements. Each student's plan will be developed by a team including the student and ELL teacher(s), counselor(s), and parent/guardian(s) with the approval of the District-level representative for ELL. A building administrator will approve all plans.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities may require accommodations and/or modifications to complete their work. Student IEPs or 504 plans will detail how each student will meet the CE requirements. The plan may include input from the student, parent/guardian(s), Special Education teacher(s), counselor and general education teacher(s) who are familiar with the student's needs. A building administrator will approve all plans.

## **Intra-District Transfer Students**

Since the CE is an Everett School District graduation requirement, students will still be required to complete all requirements when transferring from one high school to another within the District.

## **Out of District Transfer Students**

Students who transfer into the Everett School District will be required to complete all four components of the Culminating Exhibition.

- Students may apply to the building principal for an exemption from the Argumentative Paper if they transfer with English 3 or equivalent credit.
- Students may apply to the building principal for an exemption from the letter, project, and presentation:
  - if they enter as seniors, are within two semester for graduation and have completed a Culminating Project in another Washington State school district
  - if they transfer from outside of the state, enter as seniors and are within one semester of graduation

## **Summer School Students**

Students often enroll in summer school because they have the opportunity to design a project which does not work with their full school schedule. If the unique nature of a summer project requires a student to complete project activities during scheduled class time, a student must apply and receive permission in advance of enrolling in the class. At standard proposals are required before beginning any project work. Applications are available from the building CE Administrator.

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## **Self-Directed Project Parameters**

### ***Approval***

Parents/Guardians are asked to certify that they understand what their student plans to do for their Self-Directed Project. The supervising teacher must approve a Project Proposal before a student begins work. Only activities documented after teacher approval will count toward project completion. Work required for a course other than Senior Seminar that receives high school credit cannot be used for the Self-Directed Project. Projects must be designed by the student and all resources secured by the student independently. Enrolling in a course which does not receive high school credit or participating in an established school activity may be part of the learning but a self-directed project must extend beyond an instructor determined class outcome or taking part in a school-sponsored extracurricular activity.

Self-Directed Projects must comply with parameters established by the Everett Public Schools' Risk Management Pool, federal and state law, and the policies and procedures of the Everett Public Schools, including those governing:

- Student Conduct, No. 3240 and 3240P,
- Student Fund-raising Activities, No. 3530 and 3530P,
- Associated Student Body, No. 3510 and 3510P,
- Religious-Related Activities and Practices, No. 2340 and 2340P, and
- Community Relations, No. 4333 and 4333P.

Although students, when designing and working on their Self-Directed Project, are encouraged to challenge themselves in original and creative ways, certain hazardous activities are prohibited. The district has the right to reject any project that is judged to be unsafe or in conflict with school district policies and procedures.

### ***Parental Consent/Waiver***

All parents/guardians are to sign the Project Proposal giving permission for their child to participate in the chosen Self-Directed Project activity and work with the identified mentor. Students who are providing approval for their own work will need to provide verification to the instructor of having submitted all appropriate paperwork and have their FERPA status verified before being approved to begin project activities.

### ***Costs***

Despite its status as a graduation requirement, the Self-Directed Project need not cost any more than a typical school project. Schools are not responsible for funding any expense incurred during the Self-Directed Project. While projects may require some expense, the district encourages students to work within their means. During the planning phase, students will be encouraged to develop a reasonably accurate estimate of costs, a guaranteed source for those funds, and parents are asked to plan accordingly.

### ***Facilities***

District facilities are not automatically available to students for Self-Directed Projects. Students wishing to secure Everett School District facilities will be required to follow all procedures for an outside group wishing to use facilities including a formal request for use of facilities and any required fee. Because facilities are scheduled well in advance, students cannot be assured of use.

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## ***Fundraising***

Discretion should be exercised before proposing or approving a project which will involve the handling of money or fundraising. Specific legal stipulations apply and vary according to the situation proposed. Students who propose a project involving the handling of money must have a sponsoring agent and/or shall comply with the policies and procedures of the school district. If a student is interested in raising funds for a community organization, the student must provide documentation that the organization has approved sponsorship and agrees to oversee the collection of money. Students must ensure that any announcement specifies that the school district is not sponsoring the activity.

## ***Restrictions***

Some activities students choose may not be appropriate for district-sponsored programs. Several proposed topics that the Risk Management Pool has reviewed for member districts have been morally and/or socially objectionable, and some have even been illegal under Washington State law. In order to prevent students from selecting subjects for their project that may be inappropriate the following representative list of project activities have been determined as not permitted by the Everett Public Schools for the Self-Directed Project:

1. Air or Flight activities: Airplane flying, hang gliding, helicopters, hot air balloons, parachuting and skydiving
2. Motorized vehicle rides, races and contests: Contests include auto racing, demolition contests, motorcycles and go-cart races, demolition contests, stunting and tractor pulls
3. Water activities such as: Activities involving large watercraft; canoeing, kayaking, wind surfing, power boat racing, swimming in private pools, lakes and rivers, scuba diving, watercraft activities, use of any raft, tube or other vessel used for navigating white water streams, and any jet ski or other similar motorized personal watercraft, water skiing, water slides, and water park
4. Amusement Park Activities: Amusement park/carnival rides, bungee jumping, dunk tanks, and food eating contests
5. Animal Activities: Pack animal trips, snake handling, uncaged wild animals, and handling stray domestic animals
6. Athletics Not WIAA Approved: Specifically archery, high contact martial arts and boxing, various kinds of wrestling, unsupervised skating: roller skating, roller-blading, ice skating and skateboarding. No WIAA approved activities or athletic camps that are not continuously supervised by qualified coaches;
7. Wilderness/Climbing Activities: Mountain/rock climbing, spelunking (cave exploring), rappelling, buildering, or wilderness survival
8. Weapons (and weapons-related) Activities include use and making of weapons such as firearms, knives, bows and arrows, explosives, rockets, firecrackers, and paint-balling
9. Activities not permitted under minors labor laws: These are listed under WAC 296-125-030, including all work performed more than ten feet above ground or floor level
10. Construction or shop activities which are unsupervised including working with power tools, high temperature kilns or chemicals

For projects not included in the above list, a risk-benefit analysis will be used in determining which activities clearly have an educational benefit. In the approval process, consideration of the project proposal will utilize the standards used throughout Everett Public Schools for what is permitted for an extra-curricular activity.

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### ***Mentors***

Mentors are required for the Self-Directed Project. Qualified mentors assist students by offering guidance and advice. Mentors who are not currently employed by the Everett Public Schools are required to submit paperwork associated with being a District volunteer. Background checks will be a part of the approval process. Volunteer paperwork is available from the Volunteer Coordinator and/or on the district website at <http://www.everett.k12.wa.us/ce/Project>. Students may not begin working with a mentor until the mentor has been officially approved by the school district.

### ***Guidelines for Students Working in the Community***

Students need to have parents/guardians review and approve project activities in the community. For safety reasons, students should always stay alert to inappropriate behaviors or communications. They should discontinue contact immediately if they are uncomfortable with ANYTHING being said, done, suggested, or implied.

When working in the community students should always notify their parents/guardians:

- where they are meeting (a public place or place of business is advised)
- whom they are meeting
- how long they plan to meet and when they will return
- of the purpose for the meeting
- what transportation they plan to use

To establish a good working relationship with others, students should:

- set up meetings well ahead of time and then call to confirm immediately before the planned date.
- clearly state purpose when requesting a meeting date/time and always respect others' busy schedules.
- be sure when communicating by email or voice mail to leave complete information.
- give people time to respond to messages but follow up when necessary.
- be accommodating, polite, and flexible.

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## How to Assist with the Culminating Exhibition

Parents and community members are often interested in participating in the Culminating Exhibition experience. This could include, among other things, serving on a panel for the student presentations, mentoring, or even tutoring. Each school will have information as to how parents and community members may contribute.

## Whom to Contact for More Information

Each school has a CE Administrator who can be contacted for more information. The phone numbers for each of the high schools are:

Cascade High School	(425) 385-6000
Everett High School	(425) 385-4400
Jackson High School	(425) 385-7000
Sequoia High School	(425) 385-5100

## Commonly Asked Questions and Answers

Question: When can I start working on my project?

Answer: Exploratory work can be done throughout high school, but project approval will not be granted until a student is enrolled in Senior Seminar. Approval by a supervising teacher is necessary before any activities will count toward project requirements. Preference for enrollment in Senior Seminar will be based on successful completion of the Argumentative Paper.

Question: Will the CE affect my GPA?

Answer: The components of the CE will be integrated into course work. This means that your performance on the CE could impact both your grades in those classes and your progress towards graduation.

Question: Do I have to enroll in Senior Seminar?

Answer: It is a district requirement that you earn a .5 Senior Seminar credit.

Question: Can I choose my own topic?

Answer: One of the unique things about the CE is the flexibility students have to pursue what interests them. For example, you could choose a topic in plate tectonics for your Argumentative Paper, create and instruct a ballet class for a local youth organization for your project, and design a multi-media slide show for your presentation or you may do a paper on the censorship of art and create an art exhibit for your project.

Question: How will the schools keep track of what we have finished on the CE? Will it be on our report card?

Answer: In addition to progress report updates, your report card will show your status on each component.

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- Question: Do I have to complete all of the components meeting every standard, including the Culminating Presentation, to pass the CE requirement?
- Answer: Yes. The Argumentative Paper, Reflective Letter, Self-Directed Project, and the Culminating Presentation must all be completed “At Standard” and every standard within each component must be met.
- Question: My GPA is high. Do I still have to do the CE to graduate?
- Answer: Yes, all students in the Everett Public Schools must meet the District standard on all the components of the CE to graduate. The CE is an opportunity to advance your learning in an area of value to you.
- Question: What happens if I don’t meet the requirements of the CE?
- Answer: You do not graduate yet. You will be able to enroll in the following semester and receive support, even during summer school, but summer school requires a fee.
- Question: What if I don’t understand what to do?
- Answer: You should first re-examine the standards. Next, you should talk to you Senior Seminar teacher. If you need more support make an appointment and meet with you school’s Culminating Exhibition Administrator. If you are away from school and need help, you can go to the resources and models online. If you have exhausted these resources never forget your school’s counselor or administrators. They are very well connected to all kinds of support to help you.
- Question: What if I miss the target completion dates?
- Answer: Target dates are established at each school to allow for timely response by instructors in order for students to be able to reach standard. Target dates allow for drafts to be revised and resubmitted several times. Missing these dates indicates that you are behind. It is best if you start early, meet target dates, and establish good communication with your teachers. Missing target dates means you will have to work harder to catch up. You want to have plenty of time to get feedback on your work so that you meet standard before the semester deadline and do not have to be nervous or pressured.
- Question: Can I participate in my school’s commencement exercise if I have passed all my required classes but have not completed all the requirements for the CE?
- Answer: No. The CE is a graduation requirement. All graduation requirements must be met before a student can participate in a commencement ceremony in Everett Public Schools. Ceremonies are held in both the spring and the summer.
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