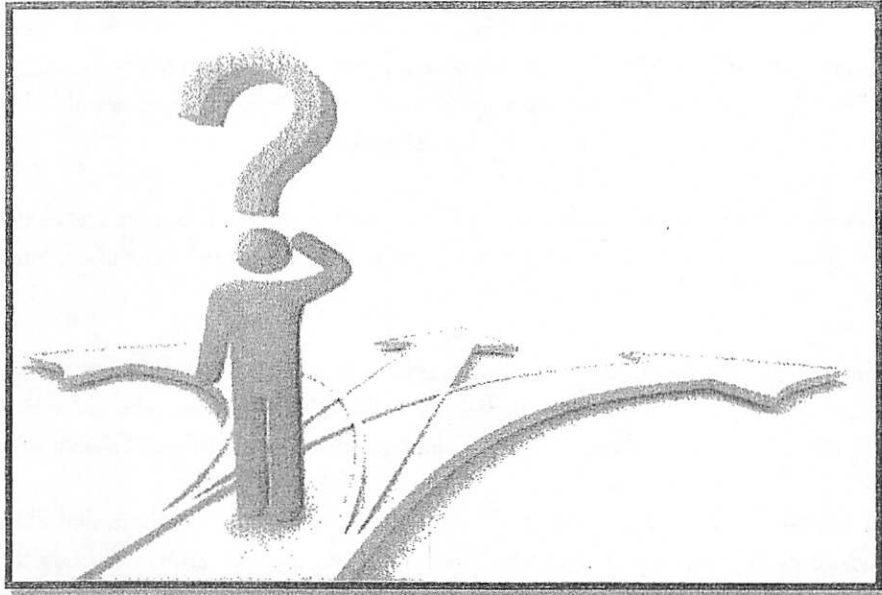


# Upper Arlington High School Capstone Project



Seniors at Upper Arlington High School are required to complete a Capstone Project in order to graduate. The senior Government and Language Arts teachers designed this packet to clarify the district's expectations for this yearlong project. The Capstone experience is rigorous, but manageable, and will not require an unreasonable workload if the student makes the effort to meet all deadlines and requirements and stays focused on the project throughout the year. Students who procrastinate will find catching up both stressful and difficult. Students and parents should not hesitate to contact the student's Government or Language Arts teacher if they have any questions or concerns.

## Project Rationale

The Senior Capstone Project is designed to be the culmination of the student's experience at Upper Arlington High School and is an opportunity for the student to explore his or her various interests, passions, and curiosities, while showcasing academic skills and community engagement. Similarly, the project is a vehicle for the student to demonstrate autonomy, complexity, uniqueness, and awareness. While the project has significant academic components, it may explore a field not traditionally considered academic, but one in which the student has a talent or passion.

The Capstone project will be completed in 12th grade Language Arts and Government classes and will be a significant part of the grade for those courses. Students will also be given 8 full-day release days to work on the different components of the project. Successful completion of Capstone is required for graduation. A copy of this handbook as well as all other Capstone forms can be found on the Capstone Moodle at [www.uamoodle.uaschools.org](http://www.uamoodle.uaschools.org). The password is capstone (all lower case).

## The Hallmarks of the Senior Capstone Project

**Multi-Faceted Approach:** Due to the complex nature of each Senior Capstone Project, seniors must incorporate complex thinking skills in the planning, implementation, and exhibition of their projects. Learning can take place in many ways, including experiential learning as well as learning through scholarly research. Projects should showcase self-direction, innovation, risk-taking, problem-solving, and capacity for reflection.

**The Essential Question:** A successful and meaningful Senior Capstone Project involves purposeful inquiry around a topic of the student's choosing. Thus, each senior will focus his or her work around a complex, interesting, and sustainable essential question.

**Benefit to the Larger Community:** We are all members of a broader community, so each Senior Capstone Project must incorporate some aspect of "giving back" to others. The fieldwork should meet a genuine need in the community, allow interaction with diverse groups and individuals, and demonstrate involvement as a citizen of a democracy.

**A Research Component:** No Senior Capstone Project will be successful without a substantial element of new learning. This learning can take place in many ways, one of which must be research. Research must be both experiential (interviews, internships, surveys, etc.) and text-based (library, internet, etc.), although the degree to which each form is emphasized will vary from student to student.

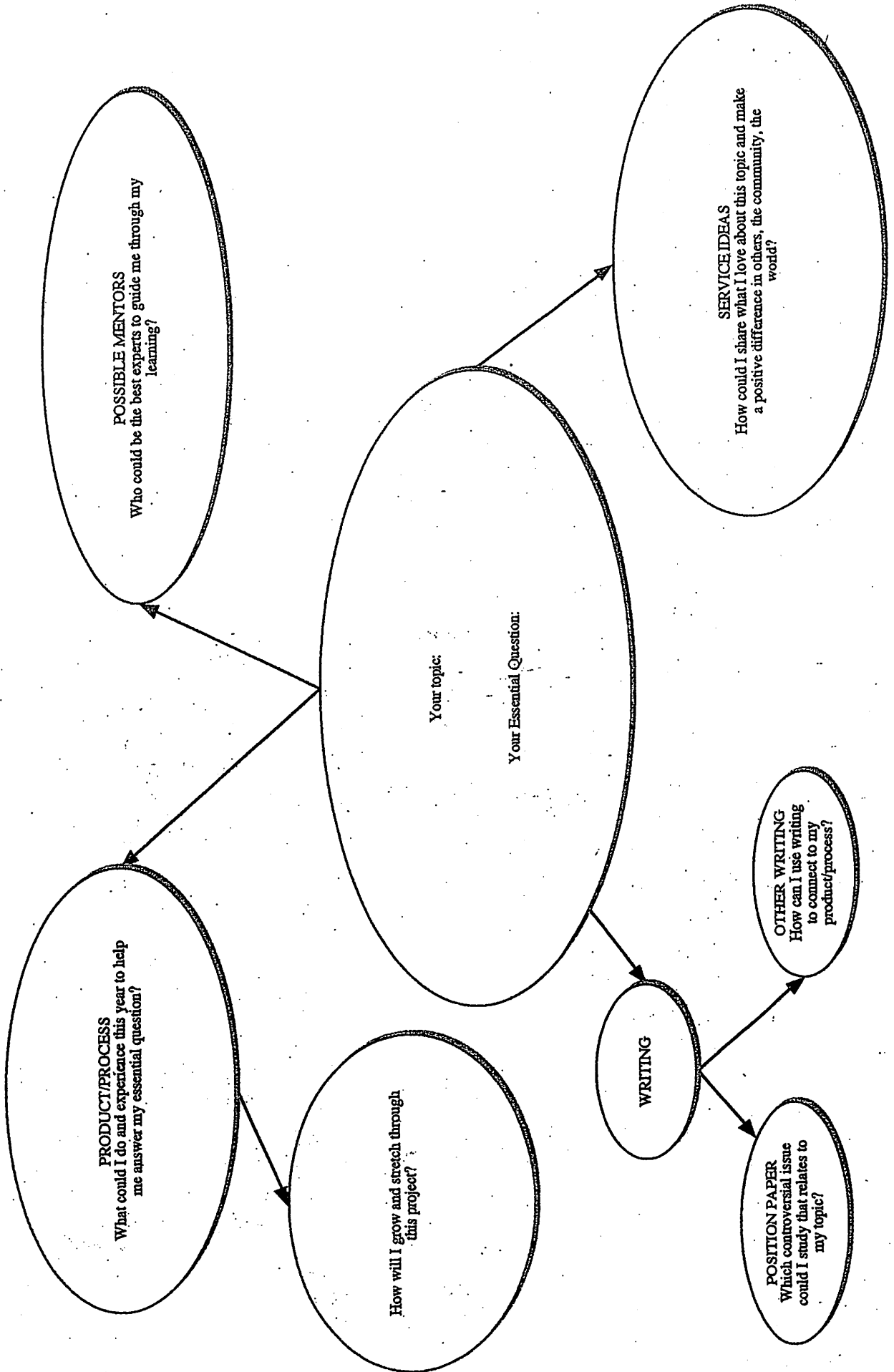
**Collaboration:** One of the most important skills in life is the ability to work with and learn from other people. Each Senior Capstone Project should incorporate some element of collaboration with individuals outside the immediate UA community. Seniors are expected to find and consult with a mentor or mentors throughout the duration of their Capstone Project.

**Rigor and Personal Challenge:** Each Senior Capstone Project must be conceived in a way that challenges the students to think in complex ways beyond what he or she already knows and is able to do. Students will identify an essential question, research and analyze information, explore alternative ideas and solutions, make decisions and carry out a plan, and finally reflect on what they have created. The topic must be big enough for the student to consider multiple perspectives but not so big that it will lead only to superficial understanding.

## THE SENIOR CAPSTONE PROJECT COMPONENTS

The Capstone Project consists of several components. The position paper and product/portfolio will be completed in Language Arts classes. The product/portfolio is tangible evidence of all the student's work, including documentation of research, mentor collaboration, process components, and exploration of the essential question. The government connection and the monitoring of community service will be completed in Government class. Students will prepare and practice their presentations in both classes during the month of May.

**CAPSTONE PROJECT  
BRAINSTORMING**



**PRODUCT/PROCESS**

What could I do and experience this year to help me answer my essential question?

**POSSIBLE MENTORS**

Who could be the best experts to guide me through my learning?

**SERVICE IDEAS**

How could I share what I love about this topic and make a positive difference in others, the community, the world?

**WRITING**

**POSITION PAPER**

Which controversial issue could I study that relates to my topic?

**OTHER WRITING**

How can I use writing to connect to my product/process?

<b>21st Century Skills Criterion</b>	<b>Beginning 2-3</b>	<b>Approaching 4-5</b>	<b>Meeting 6-7</b>	<b>Succeeding 8-9</b>
<b>COMPLEX THINKING</b> The learner:				
<b>Identifies an essential question</b>	The learner identifies an essential question that is unclear or does not have a question at all.	The learner identifies an essential question that requires minimal personal, academic or community exploration.	N/A	The learner identifies an essential question that inspires genuine and relevant inquiry that will lead to personal, academic and community exploration and represents a "stretch" for the learner.
<b>Proposes a plan of action to explore the essential question</b>	The learner is unable to propose a plan of action.	The learner is able to propose and develop a plan of action, but the plan lacks exploration of the essential question.	The learner is able to propose and develop a plan of action that explores the essential question.	The learner is able to propose and develop a plan of action that explores the essential question in multiple ways.
<b>Collects, assesses and analyzes relevant information that is incorporated into the project</b>	The learner collects minimal information.	The learner collects information that is not relevant to the essential question or does not include enough information in the project.	The learner collects and analyzes information that is relevant to the essential question and incorporates it into the project. Data may be analyzed from sources such as academic research and field experiences.	The learner collects and analyzes diverse and extensive information that is relevant to the essential question and incorporates it seamlessly into the project. Data may be analyzed from sources such as academic research and field experiences.
<b>Reflects critically on the learning experience (Final Project Reflection)</b>	The learner reflects on the learning experiences (includes only restatement of steps).	The learner reflects on the learning experiences, but reflection does not fully address strengths and weaknesses of the learner's process and project.	The learner reflects on the learning experiences and addresses strengths and weaknesses of the learner's process and project.	The learner reflects on the learning experiences realistically and with rich detail. Fully addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the learner's process and project.

<b>CREATIVE THINKING AND INNOVATION</b> <b>The learner:</b>	<b>Beginning</b> <b>2-3</b>	<b>Approaching</b> <b>4-5</b>	<b>Meeting</b> <b>6-7</b>	<b>Succeeding</b> <b>8-9</b>
<b>Demonstrates creative thinking and/or innovation within the Capstone project.</b>	The project may demonstrate imagination, but fails to produce a tangible result.	The project produces a tangible result that reflects imagination.	The project produces a tangible result that reflects imagination, and begins to develop a fresh perspective, or a new approach.	The project produces a tangible result that reflects imagination, a fresh perspective, or a new approach.
<b>Takes risks and pushes beyond his/her comfort level through her or his Capstone project.</b>	The project is not challenging and doesn't require the learner to take a risk.	The project does not demonstrate the learner's willingness to engage in unfamiliar situations or tackle challenging problems.	The project demonstrates the learner's willingness to engage in unfamiliar situations or tackle challenging problems without obvious solutions.	The project demonstrates the learner's willingness to engage in unfamiliar situations or tackle challenging problems without obvious solutions.
<b>Demonstrates willingness to adapt and benefit from errors and setbacks.</b>	The learner becomes hindered by setbacks and/or errors in process or is unwilling to address them.	The learner acknowledges setbacks and/or errors in process.	The learner addresses setbacks and/or errors and shows how he/she corrected them.	The learner articulates setbacks and/or errors in process or planning, and uses it as a learning opportunity.

<b>GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP</b> <b>The learner:</b>	<b>Beginning</b> <b>2-3</b>	<b>Approaching</b> <b>4-5</b>	<b>Meeting</b> <b>6-7</b>	<b>Succeeding</b> <b>8-9</b>
<b>Identifies and acts upon a connection between the essential question and a community interest.</b>	The learner identifies a connection between the essential question and a community interest but does not follow through with the service component.	The learner identifies and acts upon a connection between the essential question and a community interest.	The learner identifies and acts upon a purposeful connection between the essential question and a community interest.	The learner identifies and acts upon a purposeful and closely aligned connection between the essential question and a community interest.
<b>Uses time, and/or talent in the Capstone project to make a positive difference in a community.</b>	The learner does not demonstrate an awareness of personal responsibility to a community.	The learner demonstrates minimal involvement to make a positive difference in a community related interest.	The learner demonstrates involvement to make a positive difference in a community-related issue. Actions facilitate change, help alleviate a suffering, solve a problem, or meet a need, but changes do not address the urgency or scope of a community interest.	The learner demonstrates active and ongoing involvement to make a positive difference in a community related issue. Actions facilitate change, help alleviate a suffering, solve a problem, or meet a need, that addresses the urgency or scope of a community interest.

<b>SELF DIRECTION</b> The learner:	<b>Beginning</b> 2-3	<b>Approaching</b> 4-5	<b>Meeting</b> 6-7	<b>Succeeding</b> 8-9
<b>Shows evidence of goal-setting</b>	The learner rarely participates in goal setting.	The learner sets goals that may not be challenging or achievable, and frequently needs guidance.	The learner sets achievable, challenging goals with some guidance.	The learner independently sets achievable, challenging goals.
<b>Takes initiative with the project, shows evidence of working through problems, and seeks help when appropriate</b>	The learner relies heavily on teachers for motivation and direction with the project.	The learner relies on teachers for motivation and direction with the project.	The learner takes primary control of project, occasionally needing direction from teachers.	The learner takes full control of the project, works through problems and seeks help when needed.
<b>Monitors his or her own progress and uses time productively.</b>	The learner rarely monitors progress and uses little time for the project.	The learner sometimes monitors progress and inconsistently uses time for the project.	The learner monitors progress and uses time productively.	The learner consistently monitors progress, and provides evidence of using time productively.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> The learner:	<b>Beginning</b> 2-3	<b>Approaching</b> 4-5	<b>Meeting</b> 6-7	<b>Succeeding</b> 8-9
<b>Uses communication skills to convey message present in the portfolio/product.</b>	The portfolio/product does not include enough evidence to convey a message.	The selection of inappropriate media, a lack of attention to details, and/or disorganization detract from the portfolios message.	The selection of appropriate media, attention to detail, and organization convey intended message in portfolio.	The selection of a variety of media, rich attention to detail, and organization seamlessly convey intended message in the portfolio.
<b>Uses appropriate format and applicable technology to promote and communicate findings in the portfolio/product.</b>	Findings are not effectively communicated.	Format and/or technology may not be ideally suited to promote and communicate findings.	Uses appropriate format and applicable technology is used to promote and communicate findings.	Format and technology maximize impact of findings.
<b>Shows competence in the application of writing conventions in the portfolio/product.</b>	Poor application of writing conventions in the mechanical aspects of language.	Inconsistent application of writing conventions in the mechanical aspects of language.	Writing conventions show competence in the mechanical aspects of language.	Writing conventions show obvious care in the mechanical aspects of language.

## **Some Questions for Consideration:**

1. Is the long-form research paper obsolete in the age of Twitter?
  - a. What does higher education want?
  - b. Has the genre been supplanted by blogs, wikis, and websites?
2. Is the language arts classroom the appropriate place for the teaching of research?
  - a. Where would the students develop research skills if we stop assigning research papers?
  - b. Are there cross-curricular models?
  - c. What if no one is home in the library?
  - d. What would an ideal model of support look like?
3. How will the Common Core Standards impact the teaching of research?
4. How will OTES impact the teaching of research?