

February 2009

Dear Parents and Students,

Beginning with the Valley View High School Class of 2011, new guidelines will be in place regarding the required Valley View High School Graduation Project.

This project will allow students to apply practical real-world skills they will need as they transition to the world of work or postsecondary education. The opportunity will reinforce the importance of learning content knowledge and applying 21st Century skills with the support and participation of the total school faculty and members of the community.

Students will be supported by their high school counselor who will follow them through to their senior year and track their progress with the graduation project while providing guidance and feedback. A high school faculty member will be assigned as their graduation project mentor during the junior year. They will also have the opportunity to work with a community member based upon the decisions they make in regard to this project.

The administration and faculty of Valley View High School believe that the Graduation Project will challenge our students beyond what is learned in the regular high school curriculum. The graduation project is a learning process with student-centered research while incorporating an Individual Career Plan. One of the goals of this I.C.P. is to ensure that every student graduates ready for college and/or career and to provide coherent future planning opportunities for all students starting in ninth grade. The Graduation Project will provide an avenue for creativity and demonstration of individual interests and talents. It is our goal to significantly improve student achievement and help all students explore career paths while pursuing lifelong learning.

The Graduation Project will demonstrate competencies in oral communication, written communication, information-gathering/research skills and technology utilization. All projects will be evaluated by review panels that will assess student ability to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Details of the project will be explained to all students. A handbook detailing the actual requirements will also be distributed to all sophomores at an upcoming class meeting with the guidance department. In addition, the project handbook will be posted on the high school web page at www.valleyviewsd.org under Guidance Links.

It is our hope that each student will derive a sense of accomplishment by completing a graduation project that reflects his/her interests and abilities. The opportunity to explain one's knowledge, explore possible career paths, and apply learning to real-life situations will help our students grow and promote their lifelong learning after they leave Valley View High School.

Sincerely,

James M. Timmons
Valley View High School Principal

GRADUATION PROJECT OVERVIEW

Preparing our students for career opportunities after high school is one of the purposes and goals of our curriculum. In accordance with the Pennsylvania Department of Education Curriculum Regulations, Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Career Education and Work and Project 720, the required student graduation project will have a career focus.

Section 5.214(b) of the Pennsylvania Department of Education Curriculum Regulations require that all students beginning with the Class of 2001, complete a graduation project as a pre-requisite towards completing high school. The regulation states, "A student shall complete a project in one or more areas of concentrated study which may include research, writing, or some other appropriate form of demonstration, is to assure that the student is able to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and communicate significant knowledge and understanding."

All **freshmen** will be assigned a career guidance portfolio to be maintained in the Guidance Office. Through group guidance activities freshmen will become acquainted with basic career resource materials such as, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Dictionary of Occupational Titles, PA Career Guide, Career Cruising and other internet career interest inventories, and literature and DVD's from the Career Guidance Center. The Career portfolio will contain the following:

- An individual Career Plan
- Employability Skills Assessment
- Extracurricular Activities Awareness
- Career Research Assessment
- Present & Future Educational Plans
- Volunteer Fair & Career Fair Opportunities

Through group guidance activities freshmen will become acquainted with basic career resource materials such as, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Dictionary of Occupational Titles, PA Career Guide, Career Cruising and other internet career interest inventories, and literature and DVD's from the Career Guidance Center.

Students in grade 9 will choose three potential careers from their chosen Pennsylvania Career Cluster area to explore for the purposes of the Graduation Project. This will be accomplished through the 9th grade Computer Applications course and parents will have a chance to discuss these choices with their child before final decisions are declared.

All **Sophomores** will complete the following:

- Career Assignment using the Career Guide
- Self-Directed Search (to be completed in English class)
- Opportunity to attend Volunteer Fair

Students in grade 10 will research community service/service learning projects associated with one of the three careers associated with the Pennsylvania Career Clusters they researched in grade nine.

All **Juniors** will learn ways to secure information regarding two and four year colleges, professional schools, military programs, vocational/technical programs, and the world of work.

- Juniors will utilize internet career interest inventory programs such as the Kuder Occupational Interest Survey.

- Junior will also receive information regarding scholarships, loans, college entrance assessments, application procedures, deadlines, and any related information necessary to prepare for post secondary programs.

- Students will be required to complete either a career shadowing experience and/or attend a school wide career fair. Students will be required to complete an onsite evaluation for both activities.

- All juniors are recommended to complete a resume in English classes

- Opportunity to attend Northeast Regional College Fair

- Opportunity to attend Valley View High School Volunteer Fair

- Job Shadowing opportunities in the Fall/Spring semesters for all juniors

At this point in student's high school career, each junior must choose one of the following options in order to complete their high school graduation project in their senior year:

I. Individual Career Plan (ICP)/CAREER SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

Getting started helping students achieve the Pennsylvania Career Education and Work Academic Standards is a daunting task. Project 720 requires high schools to utilize various strategies to help students understand career options that are available to them. Project 720 is Pennsylvania's high school reform initiative, so named because of the 720 required days a student spends in school from grades nine through twelve. One of the goals of Project 720 is to ensure that every student graduates ready for college and career and to provide coherent career and future planning opportunities for all student no later than ninth grade and lasting through transition to post secondary: and providing all students with opportunities for leadership, service, and connection to caring adults.

Students must give present a PowerPoint presentation regarding their career shadowing experience and include two (2) of the following topics:

- a. College/Trade School Choice (one or two schools)
- b. Career Choice (one or two choices) For some career areas live demonstrations are encouraged
- c. Military
- d. Part-time job
- e. General Career Topic (ex. interviewing techniques, helpful hints college selection process)
- f. Extra-curricular activity that relates to careers

A good Individual Career Plan/Career Shadowing Experience presentation will include the following visual aides along with the PowerPoint:

- a. short video
- b. photographs/posters
- c. brochures

- d. career related items (tools needed, artwork, etc.)

Students will present their Individual Career Plan to their assigned faculty panel at a time to be arranged per the school calendar. All Individual Career Plans will be completed no later than May of their senior year.

II. Individual Career Plan (ICP)/Service Learning Project

According to Eyer & Giles (1999), Service Learning is a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through the process of applying what they are learning to community problems, and at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves.

The mission statement of the Valley View School District as an educational community is to develop a rigorous and relative curriculum and a nurturing environment which will empower all students with the resources and abilities needed to:

- become contributing members of the changing society
- access and process information into useful life long learning skills
- develop continual thinking and leadership skills and
- promote responsible citizenship

The Valley View School District Community emphasizes strengthening students senses of civic engagement and nationalism as well as assists them in meeting educational, developmental, and social goals. Examples of service learning projects can include (but are not limited to): cleaning a park; collecting much needed items for an organization or agency; getting involved in Habitat for Humanity; reading to the elderly in nursing homes; volunteering with your local fire or police department; helping out your local library.

Students must give a 10-15 minute presentation on a specific topic including but not limited to the following:

- a. How volunteering has had powerful meaning and impact within your community.
- b. How your community service experience correlates with the real world through your chosen career cluster.
- c. Volunteering brings together a variety of people. Discuss the types of people you have encountered.
- d. Colleges pay attention to your life inside and outside of the classroom. Discuss why colleges and employers feel this is important.
- e. Discuss the intangible benefits to service learning.

Career Connection – Students must correlate their service learning experience to a general or specific career cluster. Through this experience, students will explain the educational requirements for entry into the field, work environment, advancement opportunities, and personality traits necessary for success within the realm of their chosen service learning project.

A good Individual Career Plan/Service Learning Project will include one of the following visual aides along with the PowerPoint presentation:

- e. short video
- f. photographs/posters
- g. brochures
- h. career related items (tools needed, artwork, etc.)

Students will present their Individual Career Plan to their assigned faculty panel at a time to be arranged per the school calendar. All Individual Career Plans/Service Learning Projects will be completed no later than May of their senior year.

All Seniors will become aware of basic information necessary for making the transition from high school to whatever career path he or she chooses. High school administration and guidance department will provide the chance for admissions counselors to meet with prospective students who have an interest in the various higher education institutions. In addition, the following information will be required for senior students.

- Awareness of class rank, GPA, and credit requirements through an individual meeting between counselor and student.
- Knowledge of basic dates and information necessary for college, post secondary schools, financial aid, college entrance testing, and military information,
- Continued usage of career interest inventories and internet based career and post secondary career searches.
- Students will be made aware of employment opportunities without a college degree. (Career Link)
- Opportunity to attend Volunteer Fair
- Job Shadowing opportunities in the Fall/Spring semesters for all seniors

Graduation Project Guidelines

- I. A Graduation Project Steering Committee will plan and coordinate the Graduation Project Process.
- II. Each Valley View High School professional staff member will act as a mentor to a designated number of students each school year. This number will be arrived at by dividing the number of freshman according to subject area content associated with their career choice. Each mentor will have the opportunity to assist students in their knowledgeable field of study. Each Department Chairperson will designate where each student will be placed.
- III. Mentor/Mentee time will be provided on designated Act 80 days for each grade at selected intervals. Each mentee group will meet in a designated classroom or workspace, as scheduled.

Graduation Project Administration

FACULTY MEMBERS: All faculty members of Valley View High School will serve as mentors for the graduation project. The primary reason for this is to help evenly distribute the work load that will be required for the completion of this project. The assignment of student's mentors will take place each year by the guidance department. Once a student is assigned a mentor, there can be no exchanges or exemptions from the pairings. The Guidance Office will keep an up-to-date list of mentor assignments and they will be posted and announced each year. Students may not work in groups.

STUDENTS: Students must meet all deadlines set by the high school administration. Students must complete the Valley View High School Graduation Project Application by the end of their junior year. Students must keep parents and guardians informed of their project and read and become familiar with the graduation project guidelines. Complete all parts of the project. Plan ahead and do not delay or procrastinate completing the project. High School administration will inform parents or guardians when students are not meeting their responsibilities. Remember: if you do not complete your project by the date set by the administration, you will not participate in graduation ceremonies nor will you receive your high school diploma until the project is completed.

Characteristics of a Comprehensive Individual Career Plan

The Graduation Project should be characterized as:

- An investment of time
- Evidence of planning
- Application of knowledge
- Student self-direction and reflection
- Total staff commitment to the project
- Choices which allow students to show his/her strengths
- Communicating information obtained (orally and in writing)
- Assessment criteria clearly defined before the graduation project is initiated
- Research gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing of data from a variety of sources
- Use of Technology
- A time-line for completion of the project
- Infusion of cross-curricular learning
- A clear connection to what has been learned
- A time-line for completion of the project

GRADUATION PROJECT CHECKLIST

Date Completed	Assignment
	Meeting with Guidance to explain the details of the graduation project and explanation of Graduation Project Student Handbook.
	Graduation Project Application/Parental Consent Form completed.
	Completion of Career Portfolio.
	Individual Career Plan Choice: <p style="text-align: right;">Choice A: Career Shadowing</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Choice B: Service Learning Project</p>
	Mentor Meeting Scheduled
	Individual Career Plan PowerPoint Presentation
	Evaluation

VALLEY VIEW HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION PROJECT FINAL RATING EVALUATION

Student's Name _____

Choose Individual Career Plan:

Individual Career Plan/Career Shadowing

Individual Career Plan/Service Learning Project

Individual Career Plan Title _____

Upon review the contents of this presentation the Graduation Project Rating is the following:

Evaluation of Individual Career Plan:

Exceeds Expectations (PASS)

Meets Expectations (PASS)

Work still in progress* (FAIL)

*Student will have the opportunity to correct project so that it meets expectations.

Mentor's Signature _____

Date of Completion _____

**VALLEY VIEW HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION PROJECT APPLICATION**

STUDENT INFORMATION

Student's Name		Date	
Address		City, State, Zip	
Telephone		Email	

INDIVIDUAL CAREER PLAN CHOICE

- Individual Career Plan/Career Shadowing
- Individual Career Plan/Service Learning Project

PROJECT TITLE

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DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL CAREER PLAN

*Example: **Career Shadowing:** I will be shadowing with an attorney at the Lackawanna County Court of Common Pleas. My career shadow mentor will be Bill Thomas, Law Clerk to Judge Jones. I plan to observe various court proceedings which may include: jury selection, criminal and civil court proceedings, trial verdicts and sentencing. I plan to speak to professionals who may be able to assist me with my career planning considerations. I plan to complete my career shadowing experience on Thursday, November 20, 2008. Upon completion of this experience, I plan to research this chosen career and align it with the sixteen Career Clusters established by the U.S. Department of Education. I will meet with an appointed faculty member within the discipline of my chosen career shadowing assignment to meet all requirements for the completion of this career shadowing assignment.*

*Example: **Service Learning Project:** I will be working on a project with the Scranton Postal Employees' Pet Supply Drive to benefit the Lackawanna County Humane Society. The drive will be run during the weeks of February 2 through February 13, 2009. The winter months following the Christmas holidays are especially hard for the local Humane Society that exists mainly on community donations. I will start a pet supply drive within the Valley View School District. I will advertise this drive in all four schools and provide incentives for the class that collects the most supplies. Once the drive has ended I will contact Mr. Kevin Young of the Scranton Post Office to deliver the supplies collected. I have decided to research the Humane Society. Upon review of my research, I have discovered career opportunities that are of interest to me. I am researching the career of Animal Protection Litigator. This career falls under the Human Services and Resources Career Cluster, specifically Law, Public, Safety, & Security. I will meet with an appointed faculty member within the discipline of my chosen career shadowing assignment to meet all requirements for the completion of this service learning project and I will present a PowerPoint Presentation regarding this service learning project & career cluster.*

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GOAL OF INDIVIDUAL CAREER PLAN (Explain how this is new learning and what you plan to accomplish)

*Example: **Career Shadowing:** My goal is to gain practical exposure to my career path of interest in order to make informed decisions regarding my post-secondary plans.*

*Example: **Service Learning Project:** My goal is to double the donations that were received last year from VVSD. I hope to gain a personal sense of accomplishment that I will take with me into my post-secondary endeavors.*

RESEARCH (Explain what you will research)

Example: My research will be related to the organization The Humane Society and I will also research the Department of Education's Career Cluster website: careerclusters.org to learn where my particular career fits into the sixteen career clusters designated by the PA Department of Education.

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION (Explain when you will start and when you plan to finish)

Example: I plan to start my project in February 2009. Upon completion of the pet supply drive, I will begin to research Humane Society and Career Clusters in order to complete my PowerPoint presentation. I will present my PowerPoint to my mentor in the Fall of my senior year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF STUDENT AND PARENT

I understand all of my responsibilities in completing this project, including meeting all deadlines, meeting with my mentor, handing in written documentation, and completing the oral presentation. I also understand that all work on my Graduation Project must be my original work. I will properly cite all sources in accordance with school policy. Any plagiarism will invalidate my project and will jeopardize my graduation.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MENTOR

Advisor Signature _____ Date _____

VALLEY VIEW HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION PROJECT FINAL RATING EVALUATION

Student's Name _____

Choose Individual Career Plan:

Individual Career Plan/Career Shadowing

Individual Career Plan/Service Learning Project

Individual Career Plan Title _____

Upon review the contents of this presentation the Graduation Project Rating is the following:

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Mentor's Signature _____

Date of Completion _____