

# GUIDED STUDY: CAPSTONE PROJECT

A New Course Offering

Presented by:  
ATF/APS Capstone Joint Task Force



## Exciting New Student-Centered Elective Opportunity: Capstone Project

All schools are invited to participate in this effort to engage students in a more student-centered elective choice that promotes relevance in their education. This new offering is the result of a negotiated joint task force.

The intent of this course is to provide students the opportunity to practice:

- Developing solutions
- Formulating arguments
- Communicating their findings and understandings using various media

Students' efforts will culminate in a district-wide symposium.

Any licensed secondary teacher is eligible to teach the course, which will be called **Guided Study: Capstone Project**, however, no extra funding or district-delivered professional development will be provided. The teacher volunteers from each school site will work as a collaborative cohort during the spring 2021 semester to develop curricular supports and rubrics for this developing pilot program.

Students should receive a recognition at graduation as determined by the teacher cohort. This course will not be mandated by the district.

## Capstone Project Course

### General Description:

In semester one, students will explore meaningful issues through varying critical lenses to understand how and why research is conducted. Students will have the opportunity to practice developing solutions, arguments, and communicating their findings and understandings using various media, such as video, slide presentation, performance, written documents, legislation, physical construction, and other demonstrable methods.

In semester two, students will work independently to develop a passion project based on a topic or issue of interest that has relevance to the community. Students will conduct their own research to guide a deep dive into the subject matter and create their own project. Students will work with a mentor to use the skills they learned in semester one, culminating in a district-wide symposium to present their findings. Students will have the opportunity to share their passion project and also engage with community members and peers from around the city.

In this year-long class, students will develop a variety of skills including how to conduct research as well as critical thinking skills, resilience, problem solving, time management, integrity, positionality, identifying bias, community-mindedness, communication, and collaboration. Most importantly, students will develop the habits of self-directed learning. The capstone project is an exhibition of what a student can do when they apply knowledge in a particular area. Some potential projects may be building a guitar after researching various models, engaging the community in a development project, working with legislators to write potential legislation, writing and producing a podcast series or short film, or constructing an engine from scratch.

Successful completion of the capstone course and symposium will earn students a capstone seal, graduation regalia, and recognition.

## Broad Framework and Sequence

Semester 1	Semester 2
<p>Semester one will focus on practice of skills needed and investigation to help guide student-directed projects. During this semester, the following topics and skills will be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practice of topic analysis while reviewing a variety of text genres               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluate texts and sources</li> <li>○ Identify bias on behalf of students and authors</li> <li>○ Examine the topics through a variety of critical lenses, considering cultural awareness</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Practice source evaluation and examining credibility of sources</li> <li>● Work on a collaborative smaller project to practice and learn project management skills</li> <li>● Practice public speaking and presentation skills</li> <li>● Learn how to avoid acts of plagiarism and understanding the ethics of plagiarism               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Learn how to properly cite sources as necessary</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Maintain a portfolio collection of work including personal reflections               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reflections should occur throughout and after the process</li> <li>○ Reflections should be about what students are learning, how they are working through the process and how their skills apply to life after high school</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Support narrowing down topic selection for individual investigation during semester 2               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instructors help guide students to ensure their topic is reasonable and achievable, while still a passion</li> <li>○ Students identify exemplars in project area</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Semester Two will focus on student's individual passion project development. Teachers will work with students to build in check-ins and deadlines to ensure they complete the project in time for the culminating symposium. During this semester, students will complete the following tasks to build skills and meet expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintain a portfolio collection of work including personal self-reflections               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reflections should occur throughout and after the process</li> <li>○ Reflections should be about what students are learning, how they are working through the process and how their skills apply to life after high school</li> <li>○ Research steps, results and conclusions will also be included this semester</li> <li>○ Include reflections on how the project can be applied to their college and career goals</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Select a topic, problem, service, community need, creation, performance piece, hypothesis, investigation or written document to develop as the capstone product.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If appropriate, this capstone may be conducted in a variety of languages.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Some processes to follow may be:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Action research</li> <li>○ Academic research</li> <li>○ Service-learning projects</li> <li>○ Career research and self-organized internship</li> <li>○ Build or creation investigation</li> <li>○ Interview or mentorship</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Product proposals may include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Slide presentation</li> <li>○ Video</li> <li>○ Performance</li> <li>○ Physical construction</li> <li>○ Written documents</li> <li>○ Legislation</li> <li>○ Audio Recording</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Examine their own positionality and cultural awareness within the context of their passion project</li> <li>● Identify resources and build an independent library of resources</li> <li>● Seek out community and mentor connections and opportunities</li> <li>● Script their presentation and rehearse with their instructor and peers</li> <li>● Present their research at the culminating district-wide symposium</li> </ul>

Some skills to be assessed during the course and with the capstone project include: metacognition, time-management, integrity, communication, collaboration, cultural awareness, ownership, information management, comprehension, problem-solving, contextualization, critical-thinking, application of computer technology, presentation skills, organization, preparedness, professionalism, public speaking, and visual creation.

## Timeline for roll out

The goal is to have a minimum of one teacher for this course at each high school. The course to be used for the 2021-22 school year will be "Guided Study: Capstone Project." This will be a different guided study course than the one utilized by Gifted programs. We recognize that the course may not "make" at each school right away, however.

**Early December:** Finalize course description and reach out for teacher volunteers and add course descriptions to site catalogs

**December before break:** Advertise to teachers to recruit for group

**Early January:** Form task force of teachers from each school to meet and set goals

**Early January:** Teachers develop "selling" techniques to make sure students understand the course (videos, images, student-friendly language)

**February:** Present and share at TLF Summit

**January through May:** The teacher task force works to complete the following:

- Solidify rubrics for ongoing assessment of skills and product assessment at conclusion of the year
- Decide upon more specific and concrete goals for each semester as needed
- Develop resources to support student-directed learning and daily activities
- Develop a narrower calendar for check-ins and mini deadlines during both semesters
  - Practices
  - Pacing
  - Positionality (prior K and background early on) and how to build moving forward
  - Topic choice and proposal
  - Start researching and identifying sources
  - Product proposal
  - Rehearsals
- Compose a list of more detailed topic suggestions
- Examine samples and guiding documents from other locations to assist with the work (share the resources used in negotiations and with the mini-task force)

**August 2021:** Capstone classes begin at schools that were able to recruit for a section