Overview of the Senior Thesis Project

The Richmond Community High School (RCHS) Senior Thesis Project is the cumulative, independent research project that students undertake during their senior year. It is a graduation requirement for the school’s 32-credit advance studies diploma. This project is an opportunity for each senior to demonstrate the, organizational, research, written and oral communication, and leadership skills gained over the four years spent at the school and showcase the student’s readiness for college level processing and synthesis.

The writing of the senior thesis project is a long-term project that will begin mid-September and conclude in late May. During this, their final, year at RCHS, the seniors will work under the direct supervision of the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator as well as a faculty/staff advisor (to be selected by the student) to determine a question or topic for exploration before commencement of more extensive study. Before beginning research, each senior will identify a member of the community, an expert in a relevant field, to serve as a mentor for this project. The senior thesis must be the work of the student; he or she will be under the supervision of the project coordinator, thesis advisor and, thesis mentor to ensure that this is the case.

The RCHS Senior Thesis Handbook has been developed to serve as a guide for the senior as well as a tool of accountability for all parties included. The handbook outlines the steps the student must take to write the senior thesis paper, prepare for the defense and senior symposium. In order to graduate from RCHS, the senior must receive a passing grade on his/her final Senior Thesis. The information contained within is intended to supplement information presented in the student’s English classes at RCHS. It is expected that the senior will use the handbook as a reference guide.

Parents are expected to be familiar with the requirements and timeline for the Senior Thesis Project. The student, however, will be uniquely and completely responsible for following the guidelines, formats, and information exactly as presented in this handbook.
Senior Thesis Elements

1. **Parent Acknowledgement Form** – The student will have his/her parent/guardian read and sign the Parent Acknowledgement Form. The student must submit the form to the senior thesis project coordinator by **9.7.2012** *(5 points maximum)*

2. **Time Sheet** – This sheet is a log of the hours the student spends meeting with the senior thesis project coordinator, faculty/staff advisor and project mentor. All meeting (group and individual) should be documented. The student must secure a signature from each individual involved following each meeting. *(5 points maximum)*

3. **Senior Thesis Advisor Form** – This form is used to identify the RCHS or RTC faculty/staff member who will serve as the advisor for the student’s research project. This advisor will be responsible for reviewing the drafts of the research paper and providing general feedback. The thesis advisor will also serve as one of the judges for the student’s oral defense. The student will submit this form to the senior thesis project coordinator by **9.14.2012** *(5 points maximum)*

4. **Senior Thesis Proposal Form** – These sheets document the selection of the topic and/or project for the senior thesis. The students will submit the form to the advisor and senior thesis project coordinator. The student is expected to submit the form by **9.21.2012**. *(10 points maximum)*

5. **Senior Thesis Mentor Form** – Using the letter template provided, the senior will identify a mentor, meet a least monthly to discuss the progress of the research and have the mentor complete an evaluation form following each meeting and at the conclusion of the project. The student will submit these forms to the senior thesis project coordinator as a part of his or her Portfolio. The mentor commitment form is due by **9.28.2012** *(10 points maximum)*

6. **Research Paper** – The bulk of your grade will be based on the quality of the research paper. This document must include thirteen to fifteen pages of text *(12 point Times New Roman font)* using the MLA or APA format. The research paper process will include at least three drafts with no fewer than ten sources and a working bibliography. The student must submit each draft on or before the assigned due date and all three
drafts as a part of his or her Portfolio. See the calendar in this document for due dates. 

(115 points maximum)

7. **Working Binder/Portfolio** – The student will compile all items 1 thru 6 in a two inch three-ring binder with a professional looking cover (This may be artistic, but it must be understated). The binder should include a table of contents and divider tabs for each section. The portfolio should include all the process work, final document, forms and other items related and collected through the entire senior thesis process. The portfolio will be displayed in the gymnasium at the Senior Symposium presentation on _______________. (15 points maximum)

8. **Thesis Oral Defense** – The oral defense is the senior’s opportunity to explain, and then defend, his or her project, covering the thesis, the research, and the conclusion(s). The student will offer an 8 to 10 minute presentation before an audience familiar with the thesis, followed by five minutes of challenge from the evaluation panel and the audience. (20 points maximum)

9. **Senior Thesis Symposium** – During this session, the RCHS underclassmen and community will be introduced to the senior thesis project. Each senior will create and show their research findings on a tri-fold presentation board to the student body and guests during an activity program on ______________ in the school’s gymnasium. All ideas and projects must be submitted in advance and approved by the student’s advisor or senior thesis project coordinator. Documentation could include photographs, website, videotape, slideshow, models or etc. (15 points maximum)

**The Lottery** – Between 10% and 15% of the Senior class will be randomly selected to present their projects before the entire student body, including faculty, staff, and any visitors in attendance. This will take place during an activity block schedule, and will serve three purposes: 1. The Lottery will “raise the stakes”. Each presentation will need to be prepared and polished with a mind towards the possibility of mass exposure. 2. The Lottery will provide a valuable opportunity to sophisticate public speaking/presentation skills. 3. The Lottery will raise the profile of the senior thesis project among the underclassmen. *(Participants will be awarded extra credit based on...)*
Selecting the Topic for Your Senior Thesis Project

As you prepare to select a topic for your senior thesis project you should take time to select a topic thoughtfully. The topic should be selected by _____________. The Senior Thesis Proposal Form must be submitted to the project coordinator by this due date. Please refer to page 6 of the handbook for details regarding the submission.

The following are some questions you should answer before finalizing the topic for your senior thesis:

1. **Does this subject really interest you?** Do you care? You must, and you must know why. A good senior thesis topic is one that you already have some experience with from classes you have completed at RCHS or elsewhere and experiences you’ve encountered (i.e., MSI Summer Program, RTC Engineering classes, minimester experience, special talent, interest, or hobby etc.). Choosing a subject of genuine interest will not only make the work more interesting and more rewarding to you personally, it is indispensable to the quality of a long-term project such as this.

2. **Are mentors and ample sources of information readily available?** Material and support for your research should be readily accessible. The availability of a mentor will likely affect your topic selection. Richmond City libraries will complement our limited high school resources. College, university, and state libraries, bookstores, and online databases expand your capacity to retrieve data.

3. **Is there a debate surrounding this topic?** A thesis is, at its base, a work of persuasion. You will not simply be educating your audience (although this is a necessary part of the project), you will be trying to convince us of something. Your choice of topic must insert you into a pre-existing discussion. At any given point throughout the work you will do on this project, you should quickly and clearly be able to answer the questions “What are you arguing?” and “What are some significant counter-arguments?”

4. **Can a personally meaningful and challenging project be developed from this topic?** When researching your topic you need to feel that the work you will do will
be meaningful and challenging to you and others. Be aware that a critical question during your defense might simply be “So what?”

5. **Is the topic one that you can present effectively to an audience during the oral defense?** You must be willing to share your work before a panel of professionals and with other students. You’ll have two opportunities to present your research, the oral defense and senior symposium. Accept that some topics might be more personal, requiring more vulnerability, than might be conducive to a public presentation. While it is important that this topic be “real” to you, carefully consider avoiding areas that might be emotionally volatile or sensitive.

6. **Can you focus the topic?** Can your subject be scaled to the confines of this project? Remember, your paper must be between 13 and 15 pages of typed text. It is better to have a focused topic that is fully developed than a broad topic that cannot be adequately covered within the parameters of this assignment.

7. **Does this topic offer a challenge?** You are attempting not only to enter a pre-existing discussion (see #3), but to make a substantive contribution. This project is not intended to stop at a survey of existing thought (although this will be included), but to offer an original contribution to considerations surrounding your chosen topic. Above all, you should select a topic that will allow you to go beyond your current base of knowledge, ideas, opinions and insights – a “learning stretch”.

8. **Has the topic been agreed upon by the student, parent, advisor and Senior Thesis Project Coordinator?** Simply put: Meet the requirements. They are excruciatingly detailed in this handbook. It is important that the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator, faculty/staff advisor, mentor, parents and others involved in the project understand the expectations and plans for your project. Parents, advisors, mentors and others must sign-off on your research proposal to acknowledge their understanding of the project. To facilitate this communication, you are required to complete the **Senior Thesis Proposal Form (Page 6)** describing where and from whom the research will be collected, what the paper might cover, and what kind of project the topic might generate.

**Seniors: Understand that all topics may not be approved.**
**Please see the Senior Thesis Coordinator before extensive investment.**
Senior Thesis Proposal Form

Your senior thesis proposal must be typed and is due to the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator on or before ______________. Request for major changes to the signed agreement must be submitted in writing to your faculty/staff advisor and approved by the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator.

Your Senior Thesis Proposal must include four typed paragraphs. Please respond to each of the items listed below in your proposal.

**Paragraph One**
- Includes a statement of purpose and the general subject area of the thesis.  
  Yes  No
- Explains why this subject/topic was selected.  
  ___ Yes ___ No
- Explains what is already known or has been accomplished in this area.  
  Yes  No
- Explains how the senior thesis will challenge the student.  
  Yes  No

**Paragraph Two**
- State the topic and focus of the research paper.  
  Yes  No
- Identify the potential mentor(s) and his/her expertise in the area of research study.  
  Yes  No
- Include at least ½ of your bibliography.  
  ___  ___

**Paragraph Three**
- Explains what the project, model, video or slideshow will be about.  
  Yes  No
- Explains who (mentor) will be interviewed and why.  
  ___ Yes ___ No

**Paragraph Four**
- Explains how this thesis project will impact the student personally.  
  Yes  No

**Senior Thesis Proposal Format** – The Senior Thesis Proposal must be typed in 12 point “Times New Roman” font (1.5 or double spaced). The proposal must include the student’s name, date of submission student’s signature, and advisor’s signature.

Student’s Signature ___________________________ Date Completed _____________

Advisor’s Signature ___________________________ Date Completed _____________

Senior Thesis Project Coordinator’s Signature _________________________________

Date (Print) ________________________________

**NOTE** – Please attach this form to your senior thesis proposal and submit to the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator by _______________.

6
Senior Thesis Advisor Commitment Form
(This form must be submitted by ________________)

The Senior Thesis Advisor must be a current member of the RCHS faculty/staff (teacher, administrator, media specialist, social worker, nurse, or guidance counselor) or an approved member of the Richmond Technical Center (RTC) faculty. The advisor’s role is to support and monitor the student, and rigorously critique the work, as the student progresses towards completion of the senior thesis assignment. The advisor is asked to:

- Share suggestions and recommendations for improving seniors’ research;
- Serve as a preliminary editor, carefully checking each draft before the student renders it for grading;
- Sign off on students’ time sheet, senior thesis proposal form, research paper and other documents related to the project;
- Serve as chairman of the panel that will evaluate the defense of the students’ thesis;
- Notify the parent if the student misses deadlines or receives a failing grade on any portion of the project;
- Limit themselves to advising three students or less.

Student’s Name (Print) ____________________________________________

Explain why you asked the identified staff member to serve as your advisor. (Print)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Advisor’s Name (Print) ____________________________________________
Advisor’s Title (Print) ____________________________________________

What schedule has your advisor established for meeting with you?

Week Day (Print) __________ Time (Print) __________

Student’s Signature __________________________________ Date Completed __________

Advisor’s Signature __________________________________ Date Completed __________

Senior Thesis Project Coordinator’s Signature ______________________________

Date (Print) __________________________

________________________________________
**Senior Thesis Mentor Commitment Form**

*(This form must be submitted by ___________)*

The Senior Thesis mentor is required for each student and must be over the age of twenty-one. The mentor must be knowledgeable about the topic selected by the senior and may only assist one student. Family members and relatives are ineligible for assistance in this capacity. Mentors will be asked to:

- Share their expertise, meeting on a monthly basis with their mentees;
- Carefully read and critique the **first draft** of the student’s research paper;
- Sign off on the student’s work; and,
- Limit themselves to one student.

Student’s Name *(Print)*

Explain how your mentor has acquired knowledge about your thesis topic. *(Print)*

Mentor’s Name *(Print)*

Mentor’s Occupation *(Print)*

Mentor’s Address *(Print)*

Mentor’s Phone Number *(Print)*

Mentor’s Email Address *(Print)*

What schedule has your mentor established for meeting with you?

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Mentor’s Signature

Date *(Print)*

Student’s Signature

Date *(Print)*

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date *(Print)*

Senior Thesis Project Coordinator’s Signature

Date *(Print)*
Monthly Mentor Progress Report Form
(This form must be completed and signed by the mentor)

Student’s Name (Print)

Senior Thesis Topic (print)

Mentor’s Name (Print)

Student Thesis Progress:

Research Paper:

Research Project:

Interview:

What questions were discussed with the student during recent visits?

Where changes made to the original proposal during recent visits?

Mentor’s Signature -------------------------------- Date (Print) ______

Student’s Signature -------------------------------- Date (Print) ______

Senior Thesis Project Coordinator’s Signature --------------------------------

Date (Print) --------------------------------

___________________________
Senior Thesis Final Mentor Verification Form

Student’s Name (Print)  

Senior Thesis Topic (Print)  

Mentor’s Name (Print)  

As the mentor, we are asking you to verify this student’s effort on his/her senior thesis. Since most of the time spent on this project has been out-of-school, verification of the student’s effort is necessary. Please answer the following questions to help us evaluate the mentee’s project. Keep in mind that the Senior Thesis research Paper is a graduation requirement for the student. The final paper will be evaluated by a professional reader.

1. Can you verify that the student has completed the research project? If you cannot DO NOT sign this form until you are assured the thesis and/or related project has been completed.  
   _____ Yes _____ No

2. Estimate the number of hours you feel the student has spent on this research project?

3. Have you seen this project at different stages of completion, not just the final phase?  
   _____ Yes _____ No

4. The student should have been keeping in contact with you regarding the research, the drafting process, as well as the oral defense and symposium project. Comment on how he/she did in this aspect.

5. Please evaluate how this student has seemingly extended his/her learning beyond previous experience and knowledge as a result of completing this assignment.

6. Please share any problems the student encountered and overcame in completing this project?

7. What successes have you witnessed this student achieve as a result of this project?

8. Would you be willing to mentor a Senior Thesis Project again?  
   _____ Yes _____ No

Mentor’s Signature  

date (Print)  

Student’s Signature  

date (Print)  

10
Parent/Guardian Consent/ Liability Release Form

(This form must be submitted by __________________)

To the Parent/Guardian of ________________________________________________:

Your son/daughter is about to embark upon an exacting and culminating high school project. The Senior Thesis Project will provide enormous benefits as your child prepares for college. Successful completion of the Senior Thesis is a valuable tool used in determining his/her readiness for college level work and is a graduation requirement for Richmond Community High School. Please take the time to review the handbook and discuss the Senior Thesis with your child, and initial each of the items below indicating that you have read, understand and approve of each:

I approve of my child’s selected research paper topic and selected project, and understand that much of the work will be completed outside of normal school hours.

I acknowledge that the mentor selected is at least 21 years old, and is not a relative of my child.

I understand that all transportation for work outside of the school day is the responsibility of the student or parent.

I understand that all costs associated with the Senior Thesis Project are the responsibility of the student or parent.

I have reviewed the timeline for the Senior Thesis and understand/acknowledge the due dates involved; I understand that “re-dos” are not a part of this project due to time constraints and the nature of the senior thesis.

I understand that the final product and student must be physically at school the day of the Senior Thesis Defense (to be determined) and Senior Symposium on _______. The student is also required to participate in each of the aforementioned activities, including the Senior Thesis Presentation Lottery.

I understand that Richmond Community High School faculty will retain a copy of the student’s Senior Thesis Project for its archives.

I understand that each draft of the thesis paper will be evaluated by an outside professional reader and not the RCHS Faculty/staff. The evaluation of each draft will be vetted by the Project Coordinator, and the grades given will be non-negotiable.

I understand that integrity and honesty are just as important as all other components of the Senior Thesis. Any suspicion that my child has plagiarized or has been dishonest in any aspect of the Senior Thesis Project process will result in a referral to the school’s principal or other appropriate school authority. I understand that Richmond Community High School and Richmond Public Schools may not award credit for the Senior Thesis Project if the student is found to be guilty of cheating.

Parent’s Signature ___________________________ Date (Print) __________

Student’s Signature ___________________________ Date (Print) __________
### Senior Thesis Timesheet Record

(This form must be submitted by ________________)

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<tr>
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<th>Research Hours</th>
<th>Advisor Meeting Hours</th>
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The Senior Thesis Research Project should be written in the third person and must be no less than a ten-page researched, documented paper that contains ten sources or more. Professional readers will be secured to read, provide feedback and evaluate the research paper. The readers will provide feedback on all three submitted drafts only if they are turned in on time. A rubric for the evaluation of the research paper is included in this handbook. Please refer to this page for details on how your research paper will be evaluated.

Multiple Drafts

You will be required to submit no fewer than three drafts of your research paper to the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator by the due dates. Your mentor should read and critique the first draft of your paper before it is submitted to the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator. Please note that the coordinator will not accept your first draft unless your mentor has initialed indicating that he/she has read the draft. Your advisor should read and comment on the second and third draft before it is submitted to the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator. Please note that the coordinator will not accept your second and third drafts unless your advisor has initialed indicating that he/she has read the draft. Your advisor and mentor will ensure that the topic and focus of the working draft meet the specifications agreed upon in your proposal. You will receive extensive feedback from the theme reader that will include recommendations for strengthening your research paper.

Argumentation

After selecting a topic of interest, and conducting preliminary research, you will narrow the subject to a specific issue or question that you will research. You must formulate a thesis statement: a proposition or hypothesis which your paper then argues. A thesis needs to be specific and “arguable.” Please note the following examples:

1. “Western movies and television shows rose to prominence in the United States during the 1950s as allegories for the Cold War.” This would be a good topic because it is able to be argued and there is an accessible body of research.

2. “This paper outlines the basic beliefs and practices of Islam.” This topic would be unacceptable simply because there is no position. Thesis writing is not expository. Your paper should not resemble an encyclopedia entry for the topic.
Although a thesis paper will include data- an informative report or a survey of existing facts regarding the topic- the data will is meant to form a basis for persuasion. You are strongly encouraged to work with your mentor and advisor to formulate your thesis statement. (Note: it is likely that your thesis statement will be refined as the research progresses.) Please note that your paper needs to blend information gathered with your own analysis.

** A helpful rule of thumb: The initial 75% of your paper should be research, while the final 25% should be the conclusions drawn from, and your argument based upon, the research. These percentages are negotiable on a small scale (e.g. 80/20 is an acceptable proportion as well), but provide a governing ideal.

The following guidelines apply to the writing of your thesis paper:

1. Before you actually begin to write your paper, you are required to submit the senior thesis proposal. The student must meet with his/her advisor to review/discuss the proposal before beginning to actually write the research paper! The deadline for this meeting is ______________.

2. The minimum length is thirteen pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, using a conventional 12 pt. font, in MLA or APA style. Graphs, charts, tables, illustrations, photographs and etc. are not included in the minimum length (and are generally best included as appendices). Extensive direct quotes may also not be included in the page minimum. Consult with your advisor or the project coordinator for clarification if needed.

3. A minimum of ten resources must be used and cited in the paper. This minimum must include one mentor interview and at least five non-Internet print sources. Only academically sound resources are acceptable. Encyclopedias and “wikis” (either hard copy or computer/Internet based) are not appropriate resources for this level or research and writing. You are strongly advised to consult with your advisor early in the process about all resources, particularly electronic sources. Care should be taken that sources present a variety of perspectives on the subject.

4. **Internet Sources** – If you choose to use Internet sources, they must be approved in advance by your advisor or the senior thesis project coordinator. This is your
responsibility; ignorance will not be a sufficient excuse if an unacceptable source is rejected by the theme reader or project coordinator. All sources must be academic in nature.

5. At least one of the resources must be a primary source (such as a mentor interview). Your advisor can waive this requirement if the specific subject matter of your thesis makes the use of a primary source impossible.

6. A title page, works-cited page, and bibliography are required, but are not included in the page minimum. The sample title page provided in this handbook should be used as a guide. Detailed guidance regarding the works-cited page can be found on the media center link of the RCHS website. Be sure to consult with our media specialist as needed for assistance with your works cited page. The bibliography should follow the work-cited page, should list all resources consulted whether cited or not, and follows the same format as the works-cited page.

7. You are encouraged to consult regularly with your advisor and mentor regarding the progress of your senior thesis. Regular consultation with advisors throughout the semester is strongly recommended. Your advisor is there to assist you, but will NOT be tracking you down. This is a student directed learning experience; therefore you will need to take the initiative to schedule consultations with your advisor. You are responsible for meeting all deadlines; your advisor is not required to remind you of deadlines!

8. The paper is due to the senior thesis project coordinator on ____________ and it will count as approximately 60 percent of the total grade for the project (the first two drafts will comprise 25% each and the final draft, the remaining 50%). Two percent will be deducted from your score for each school day the paper is late.
Senior Thesis Presentation/Defense

Each senior is not asked simply to write a competent thesis, but to have understood and internalized the most relevant aspects of the topic sufficient the defense of his or her position. Measures will be taken to ensure that the defense is a significant challenge to the extemporaneous speaking and thinking skills of the presenter.

1. Each senior will present his/her senior thesis proposition and argument to an audience of underclassmen, visitors, parents, family, alumni, panelists and teachers. DO NOT plan to simply read your thesis! Creatively present what you learned as a result of your research.

2. Your presentation is required to last 8 to 10 minutes. You should provide a clear explanation of your thesis statement and your research. For evaluation refer to the rubric provided in this handbook. Also, a sheet of tips has been included, for your edification.

3. Your presentation will be followed by 5 minutes of substantive questioning from the panelists and attendees. Your ability to answer these questions will be included in the grade.

4. Use of visual aids will also be part of the presentation grade. Visual aids will be evaluated based on quality, clarity, appearance, usefulness and the degree to which they enhance your presentation. A PowerPoint presentation is recommended but not required. Please consult with your mentor, advisor, as well as the project coordinator before finalizing plans for your visual aide.

5. Presentations will be completed on or before **3.29.2013**.

6. The presentation will count as approximately 25 percent of your total grade.

7. If you will use a power point presentation you must turn it in to the Senior Thesis Project Coordinator two hours in advance of the presentation.

8. You are required to practice your presentations ahead of time, refining your speaking skills and assuring that your presentations fit within the time limit. You must complete the **Thesis Presentation Practice Verification Form** and turn it in at least one day before your presentation/defense date.

9. You must dress professionally for the presentation.

10. Parents, friends, relatives and others may attend your presentation but may not participate in the presentation phase of the oral defense.
**Senior Symposium**

The Senior Symposium Program is designed to introduce underclassmen to the Senior Thesis Project. By Family, and with their Family heads, underclassmen will visit the symposium with assigned questions as well as time give to ask individual questions.

Each senior will create and show findings on a tri-fold presentation board to the members of the student body (date TBA, but the symposium will occur during the **first half of April, 2013** in the school’s gymnasium. Each senior will show the process of the project in his or her Senior Thesis Portfolio. All additional ideas and presentation aides must be submitted in advance and approved by the student’s advisor and/or senior thesis project coordinator. Documentation could include photographs, website, muted/looped video clips, models, etc. Each senior will display his/her portfolio and tri-fold presentation board on a desk or table located in the gymnasium. The senior must be present for the symposium to discuss and answer questions regarding the project. A rubric for evaluation of the senior’s project display for the symposium is found on page 21 of this handbook.

**Senior Thesis Presentation Lottery**

The Senior Thesis Presentation Lottery will be conducted during activity blocks over the course of two weeks. The Seniors chosen will be required to re-present (with any needed refinements) the overview and defense of their thesis (as previously done before the assessing panel) before the student body, in the auditorium. Time will be allotted for questions, and extra credit will be awarded at the discretion of supervising individuals involved (advisor, mentor, project coordinator, etc.) Dates for the selected students’ presentations are TBA, but will take place during the **second half of April, 2013**.

**Senior Thesis Advisor**

Each senior will be required to work with a faculty/staff advisor. The advisor does not need to be a subject matter expert in the area you have chosen to research (**sole exception:** *if you have chosen a scientific topic, you must have a science teacher as your advisor*.)

17
The role of the advisor is to help guide you through the senior thesis and project process and provide advice regarding research and writing. It is not the advisor’s responsibility to check up on you or cajole you to meet deadlines, etc. The RCHS Senior Thesis Project, as a culminating high school experience, is specifically designed to be a student-directed learning experience. Frequent contact with your advisor is recommended, and the student is expected to initiate it. In all cases, it is the student’s responsibility to contact his/her adviser regularly and to meet all deadlines. Faculty members are expected to limit the number of students they advise, in order to fairly and evenly divide the workload, so it would be wise to make early contact with your preferred advisor. You must complete and submit the Senior Thesis Advisor Commitment Form found in this handbook to the project coordinator by the deadline date.

**Senior Thesis Mentor**

A valuable aspect of the Senior Thesis Project is working with an outside professional mentor. Your mentor must be a professional in the field outside of the RCHS faculty/staff and your immediate family, with whom you will consult on the subject matter of your project/thesis. The consultations may include telephone or-mail conversations, extensive individual work sessions, or job-shadowing, but must include documented contact at least once monthly. Many members of the community, universities, businesses, non-profits and corporations will be willing to assist students with their research.

You should work with your advisor to identify possible mentors as early in the process as possible. You should be consulting your mentor *as you are doing your research*, not after the fact!

Potential mentors must be identified on the project proposal form. You must have made initial contact with your mentor and that person must have agreed to work with you before you complete the *Senior Thesis Mentor Commitment Form*. 
**Portfolio for Senior Symposium**

This is the portion of your senior thesis project that will be most representative of the time and energy you have put into this major assignment. As such, it must show everything that you have done during this thesis assignment. **All forms rendered must be copied after completed, as you will need one for your portfolio.** Your portfolio must include each of the items listed below, but may also include additional items. The triptych and portfolio will comprise the foundation of your exhibit for the senior symposium. During the symposium, the RCHS underclassmen and faculty/staff will be introduced to the senior thesis project. You must create an exhibit showing your research findings on a tri-fold presentation board for the student body and guests during an activity program during the Senior Thesis Symposium in the school’s gymnasium.

*Please compile your portfolio in this order.*

**SENIOR THESIS PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents &amp; Organizational System <em>(i.e. tabs)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Thesis Proposal Forms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Thesis Mentor Commitment Forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Thesis Advisor Commitment Forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Thesis Parent Consent Form</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timesheet &amp; Thesis Presentation Practice Verification Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafts 1 and 2 of the Research Paper &amp; Final Research Paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection/ Self-Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation of Project <em>(photos, PowerPoint, video, letters, etc.)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other items that demonstrate the quality/effort invested into the completion of the senior thesis project.</td>
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</table>
## Symposium Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation and Participation of Presenter</strong></td>
<td>At display during the majority of the symposium. Student is dressed professionally for the event.</td>
<td>At display during most of the symposium. Student is somewhat dressed for the event.</td>
<td>Away from the display frequently during the symposium. Student is not dressed appropriately, but still looks presentable.</td>
<td>Rarely at display during the symposium. Student was not dressed appropriately for the symposium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polished End Product – Visual representation of process and product</strong></td>
<td>The product strongly represents work done by the student on both the research paper and display.</td>
<td>Adequately represents work done by the student on the paper or the display</td>
<td>Inadequately represents work done by the student on both the paper and the display.</td>
<td>Fails to represent the student’s work on any aspect of the research paper or display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research and Media</strong></td>
<td>Includes a tri-fold board with graphics, pictures, etc. as appropriate for representing the research. Includes an appropriate display</td>
<td>A poster board with graphics, pictures and etc. for representing the student’s work</td>
<td>Some graphical representation of some aspects of the project</td>
<td>No graphical display of project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Language Use and Appearance</strong></td>
<td>Display is professional and attractive looking in all aspects. Very clear, visible title and information. All aspects neatly typed/written and organized. Correct mechanics and grammar</td>
<td>Display is professional and attractive looking in some aspects. Clear, visible title and information. Most aspects neatly typed/written and organized. Correct mechanics and grammar</td>
<td>Display is somewhat professional looking. Title and information not clear or visible title. Some aspects neatly typed/written and organized. Some mechanics and grammar errors</td>
<td>Display is completely unprofessional looking. Lacking clear title or information. Display has no discernible organization. Numerous mechanical and grammatical errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thesis Presentation Practice Verification

The purpose of this sheet is to ensure that each senior includes as a component of her/his preparation for thesis defense a period of practice, reflection, and self-evaluation. To that end, it is an expectation that every senior presents her/his material (full PowerPoint, speech, and visual aide) to a critical adult at least once before the date of presentation.

The critical adult is asked to write down one suggestion for improvement as well as one question that the presentation has left unanswered.

How your presentation can be improved:

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

I was left wondering:

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

I _____________________________ attest that I have practiced this presentation.

Signature: _________________________ Date: _______________________

I _____________________________ attest that I have carefully considered and responded to the presentation, that it might improve.

Relationship to Student: _________________

Signature: ____________________________ Date: _______________________

Finally, to each Senior: By now, you should have a very clear idea of what you are trying to say. On the back of this page, in one or two sentences, summarize what you will be proposing and/or arguing (remembering that a thesis, and this presentation/defense, are meant to be persuasive).
**Tips for Senior Thesis Defense/Presentation**

**Key Points For Presentation**

--Know the information. (You are the expert)
--Engage the audience. (Read their reactions/Connect in order to make your point)
--Be interested in your topic. (If not, fake it well)
--Inflect. (Modulate your tone of voice/articulate.)
--Be free of the Podium. (Own your space.)
--Slow Down. (Time yourself.)
--Dress professionally. (Be comfortable in your attire.)
--Stance and Comportment (Head up, Shoulders Back, Maintain your Balance)
--Attention to hand gestures. (Everything says something.)

**Key Points for Power Point**

--Keep it simple!!
--Color and Font selections should be easily readable (even from a distance).
--Images can be interesting, but they should enhance, not distract from, the content.
--Headings- same size, font, and position.
--Print out slides for reference (in addition to your 3x5 cards)
--Time each slide. You have 10-12 minutes.
--Do not read from your power point. (Talk from it)

**Key Points for Visual Aide**

Make it relevant
Make it arresting
Make it visual
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>Research and Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“A” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The paper engages its intended audience, demonstrating insight and complexity. The paper convincingly, richly and logically develops and supports a single focus and purpose. When appropriate, the paper effectively integrates relevant outside sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“B” Papers</strong></td>
<td>Although adequate in content, the may not fully engage its intended audience. The paper generally develops/supports its focus and purpose but may occasionally wander from its central idea. When appropriate, the paper includes relevant outside sources although they are not always purposeful or integrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“C” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The paper does not engage its intended audience. The paper fails to develop/support its focus and purpose or wanders from its central idea. The paper contains limited, irrelevant, or no supporting details. Necessary outside sources not relevant, purposeful, clearly integrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“D” or “F” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The overall organizational structure is illogical, unclear and/or inappropriate. Paragraphs frequently seem unrelated or repetitive or are poorly constructed. The opening is overly general, missing, or misleading. The closing is weak or ineffective. Connections between and within paragraphs are missing or ineffective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>Content, Form and Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“A” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The overall organizational structure is appropriate to the audience and purpose. Paragraphs are thoughtful and logically related and sequenced. The opening effectively establishes the relationship between the reader and the paper’s purpose, and the paper closes effectively. Connections within and between paragraphs create cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“B” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The overall organizational structure is appropriate to the audience and purpose. Paragraphs are logically related. The opening establishes the relationship between the reader and the paper’s purpose and the paper comes to closure. Connections within and between paragraphs usually create cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“C” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The overall organizational structure is generally easy to follow and appropriate to the audience and purpose. At times, paragraph lack internal coherence or may be mis-sequenced or slightly off track. The paper’s opening or closing may be mechanical or trite. Connections within and between paragraphs are evident, but may be awkward or ineffective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“D” or “F” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The overall organizational structure is illogical, unclear and/or inappropriate. Paragraphs frequently seem unrelated or repetitive or are poorly constructed. The opening is overly general, missing, or misleading. The closing is weak or missing. Connections between and within paragraphs are missing or ineffective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>Polished End Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“A” Papers</strong></td>
<td>Paper’s sentences are consistently clear, coherent and syntactically varied. Precise word choice and an appropriate tone support the paper’s purpose and display a command of the conventions of academic writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“B” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The sentences are usually clear, coherent and syntactically varied. Word choice and tone support the paper’s purpose and usually display a command of the conventions of academic writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“C” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The sentences are generally clear and correct; however, some may be basic, choppy or lack syntactic variety. Word choice and tone generally support the paper’s purpose but may less consistently display a command of the conventions of academic writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“D” or “F” Papers</strong></td>
<td>Sentences are frequently basic, choppy or repetitive in structure and may display lapses in clarity or coherency. Inappropriate word choice or tone distracts from the paper’s purpose and frequently displays a lack of command of the conventions of academic writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVENTIONS</th>
<th>Effective Language Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“A” Papers</strong></td>
<td>Paper’s grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage conform to conventions of academic writing and lend credibility to the writer. Paper’s references to outside sources are accurately cited and documented according to the appropriate style manual. Paper’s format is consistently correct and appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“B” Papers</strong></td>
<td>The paper is free of serious errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage. References to outside sources are usually accurately cited and documented according to the appropriate style manual. Paper’s format is correct and appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“C” Papers</strong></td>
<td>Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or usage occasionally interfere with communication and damage the writer’s credibility. Paper’s references to outside sources are generally cited and documented, but not always in the appropriate style. Paper’s format is generally correct and appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“D” or “F” Papers</strong></td>
<td>Many errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage impede communication and undercut the writer’s credibility. Paper’s references to outside sources are not clearly cited; documentation style is generally inappropriate. Paper’s format is not consistently correct or appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>