Communicating With Your Panel:
A Guide for Capstone Students

Initial Contact:

When building your panel, it's important to reach out to potential panelists in a timely and professional manner. Make sure you take into consideration how familiar the person already is with you, the Capstone program, and MTRS in general. In your initial contact make sure you include:
➔ Background information on the Capstone program and our school, if needed.
➔ Your project topic and big goals.
➔ Why you think the person is a good fit for your panel.
➔ What the time commitment and expectations are for participating.
➔ A link to the Capstone Website.

This should be your most formal communication, so make sure you proofread thoroughly and include all the pleasantries expected when speaking to someone on formal terms.

Sample email text:

> Dear [RECIPIENT],
>
> My name is [NAME] and I'm a senior at Mohawk Trail Regional High School in Shelburne Falls. I got your contact information from [FILL IN] and I think that you would be a good person to participate as a panelist for my Capstone project because of your background in [DESCRIBE]. I'm reaching out to see if you are interested in and available to support my project.
>
> Senior Capstone at MTRS is a semester-long project where seniors design and do a project on a topic of their own choosing. My project is [DESCRIBE PROJECT]. You can find more information about the overall program on the Capstone website.
>
> If you agree to sit on my Capstone panel, the first thing I'll do is send you my draft website which outlines all my plans. Then, there are two stages to participate in. The first is a halfway point presentation on [DATE/TIME] and the second is a final, more formal presentation on [DATE/TIME]. For each of these, I'll email you some materials to look over ahead of time, the presentation and Q&A will be about 30 minutes, and then there is a feedback form to fill out on your time afterwards (not more than 20-30 minutes). You can find additional panelist materials on the website if you'd like to look over the forms and rubrics before making your decision.

First Group Email:

After you've finished your proposal and gotten agreement from your family/community and faculty panelists, it's time to "launch" your project to your whole panel. You should send out one email to all of your panelists with the following information. Remember to **CC your Capstone teacher** and **BCC everyone else.**

➔ An appreciation for being on your panel.
➔ A reminder of when your panel is.
➔ A link to your project website (make sure all updates are published!)
➔ Heads up that you'll be providing updated materials in a reminder email 3-4 days before the panel.
➔ Anything about your project that you want highlighted.
➔ Some personality and pleasantries! Let them know you're excited, working hard, etc…

Presentation Reminder:

3-4 days before each presentation, send a group email to your panel (don't forget to CC your teacher and BCC everyone else). Please try to put yourselves in the shoes of your panel and include all the information they might need in order to feel confident of what to do. Include the following:

➔ A reminder of the date, time, and place.
➔ Directions to outside folks for signing in at the main office.
➔ Link to your updated website.
➔ A link to the panelist page of the website where they can find the Capstone rubric, the panelist guidelines, the master schedule for the day(s), and the link to the feedback form.

Presentation Follow-up:

1-2 days after each presentation, make sure you send a thank you to your panel. Include the link to the feedback form or website as well, with a reminder to fill it out if they haven't already.

EMAIL TIPS:

➔ When emailing a large group, **put everyone's email addresses in the "BCC" section**. This way they can't see each other's emails (for privacy) and they won't be able to accidentally "reply all" to the whole group. On communications to your whole panel, DO **put your Capstone teacher's email in the "To" or the "CC" section** so that panelists can reach out to both of you.

➔ Include a **subject line** that lets your recipient(s) know what the email is about. Be more specific than just "Capstone" - try phrases like "Capstone panelist request" or "Capstone Project Materials".

➔ Always **begin with a greeting and an acknowledgement** (which also serves as a reminder) of the last contact you had with the individual or group. *For example, "Hello everyone! Thank you again for attending my panel presentation on December 2nd…"*

➔ Don't forget to hyperlink or attach any documents!

➔ Always, **ALWAYS reread** your emails before you send them. They should be thoroughly spell-checked and proofread.