

Senior Project Information

Last Edited 9/26/26: info reorganized to be more family-facing, instead of all assignments back to back

Each senior at Lopez School completes a Senior Project during their senior year. It fulfills a school board requirement for graduation and is a core assignment of the Civics (fall semester) and CWPS (spring semester) courses taught by Mr. Berg.

For this project, students pick an issue they see in their community to study for the year. They will personally research it with different sources and present their findings to an audience. This connects to Washington State Social Studies Standards C4 (civic involvement), SSS2 (inquiry-based research), and SSS4 (an interdisciplinary research project shared with a meaningful audience).

Important Dates

October 8-9	Project proposals, verbally in class
December 18	Research paper due, for the S1 Civics grade
April 30	Senior Document due, for the S2 CWPS grade
May 17-28	Presentations to CWPS class
June 1	School and Community Presentations

This project involves four assignments:

(1) Project Proposal: *October 8-9, presented verbally in class*

Students give a 2-3 minute talk to their classmates and Senior Project Committee members. This project proposal includes the issue they want to research, how they plan to research it, why it matters, and what project they plan to do to address the issue. This helps students begin to practice in front of others and get immediate feedback from staff about their project choices.

(To see more info on this, open the tab on the left)

(2) Research Paper: *due December 18, for the S1 Civics grade*

Students will write a shorter paper explaining their project's issue by the end of the fall semester. This will become part of their full written document in May, and it asks them to finish the secondary research around published sources.

(To see more info on this, open the tab on the left)

(3) Project: *completed by the time of project presentation*

(4) Senior Document: *due April 30, for the S2 CWPS grade*

This is the full paper. Students combine their own interviews and observations with their previous research, and explain what they want the community to know or do. The previous research paper will give them a solid foundation for their primary research in the spring semester. The length of this paper depends on the diploma type, as listed below.

(To see more info on this, open the tab on the left)

(5) Presentations: *presented May 17-28, in CWPS class*

Students present their project and what they learned. Audience and length depend on diploma type, and many students will present their project again on June 1 to the school community and Lopez community.

(To see more info on this, open the tab on the left)

Here's how the project differs by diploma type:

Diploma	Research Paper	Senior Document	Presentation
Essential	3+ pages	4-6 pages	6-10 minutes, to their class
Enhanced	4+ pages	6-10 pages	8-10 minutes, to their class and school community
Honors	5+ pages	8-12 pages	8-12 minutes, to their class, school community, and the Lopez community on Scholarship Night

For grading, the rubrics are based on Mastery-based grading with four levels. I (Mr. Berg) prefer to label the categories: Meets+, Meets-, Developing+, and Developing-, so students know they need to reach the Meets levels to pass the senior project. Additionally, it's easier to see which level is above the other, as opposed to other terms used alongside meets, like mastery or exceeds. These descriptions are posted on Canvas, but students won't see their CWPS page on Canvas until January. The proposal and research paper count toward the fall Civics grade, and the document and presentation are for CWPS.

In terms of how families could help, I'd suggest asking your student what local issues they notice and what they are planning to research for this project. These can become ongoing conversations about who they can talk to and what other communities have done. For primary research, students should identify community stakeholders (those who are affected by the issue) and people with experience in the project area. It can be helpful to debrief what students are learning in the winter and spring. Also, please encourage your student that they can make a difference and make this project an enjoyable capstone project and not a stressful one.

If you have questions, feel free to reach out to Mr. Berg at iberg@lopezislandschool.org.

The following info is pasted from Canvas and is student-facing.

Assignment One:

PROJECT PROPOSAL (due October 8)

Learning Target: *I can propose a research topic on a local issue and explain how I plan to investigate it.*

This year, instead of writing a proposal, you will pitch your Senior Project idea out loud in class on October 8 or 9. You will have 2-3 minutes to explain the local issue you want to research, how you plan to do so, and why it matters. This will also include Robb and Dr. Martin, since they are part of the Senior Project Committee.

The reason I'm going this direction is for you to summarize your idea out loud to other people. This will make presenting your project in May a lot less stressful since that won't be your first time talking about it. You'll also hear back very soon about whether your proposal is accepted or not.

What you'll need to cover in your proposal:

- 1. The issue and why it matters on Lopez.** What issue do you want to investigate, and why does it matter in our community? Explain who or what it affects, and what your project will help do. Also, please explain why it matters to you.
- 2. Primary research.** When I use this term, I'm referring to what you're investigating on your own. Who do you plan to interview and what do you plan to do on your own?
- 3. Secondary research.** This is about the existing information you'll use. Try to be specific on the kinds of sources you'll look for and why they will help with your project.
- 4. Outcome.** The Senior Project already includes a paper and presentation, but the outcome is what you want your project to accomplish. Do you want to make something physical to give back to the community? Or do you want to explain the importance of what you learned to a specific group?
- 5. Timeline.** How will you manage your time during this school year? You'll need to accomplish your primary research early since you're working around other people's schedules and you can't throw a meaningful project together last minute.

Why do you need to do a Senior Project in class?

This project is a school board requirement for graduation, and I've made it the central assignment of Civics and CWPS, so you can choose a current problem to study and make a difference. It also connects to these WA Social Studies Standards: C4 (civic involvement), SSS2

(inquiry-based research), and SSS4 (an interdisciplinary research project shared with a meaningful audience).

I will cover this more in the future with you and add more information to this module, but please let me know if you need any help coming up with a project topic.

Proposal Rubric

Criteria	Ratings	Points
Topic + Significance	Meets (+) Topic is clear and specific. Explains exactly who/what it affects on Lopez and why. Personal connection is genuine and explained. 3 pts Meets (-) Topic is clear. Connects it to our community with some specifics. Personal connection is stated. 2.4 pts Developing (+) Topic and local connection are broad or vague. Personal connection is thin or missing. 1.8 pts Developing (-) Topic is unclear or has no real local connection. No sense of why it was chosen. 1.2 pts No Evidence No proposal given 0 pts	/3 pts

Research Plan	Meets (+) Names specific people/groups to interview, survey, or observe (and why they matter!) Names specific kinds of secondary sources. 3 pts Meets (-) Identifies real primary research and general kinds of secondary sources that fit the topic. 2.4 pts Developing (+) Research plan is generic. Hard to tell how the sources connect to the project. 1.8 pts Developing (-) No workable plan for primary research or secondary research. 1.2 pts No Evidence No proposal given 0 pts	/3 pts
Outcome	Meets (+) Clear picture of what the project should accomplish and who it's for. Timeline is realistic, with primary research prioritized early. 3 pts Meets (-) Has a direction for the outcome and a reasonable timeline that covers the main steps. 2.4 pts Developing (+) Outcome or timeline are vague. Primary research is left until spring. 1.8 pts Developing (-) No real outcome or timeline. The plan doesn't fit this school year. 1.2 pts No Evidence No proposal given 0 pts	/3 pts

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Assignment Two:
RESEARCH PAPER (due December 18)

Learning Target: *I can use secondary research to explain a local issue and why it matters.*

This is a brand new assignment for this year, and I'm creating it to help you out with project momentum and make your final document less overwhelming. In the past, this tied in with progress checks I had in January and February.

The Senior Document (full paper documenting your project) isn't due until April 30. But the biggest headaches I've seen with this project in the past involve waiting too long to get progress moving on the project, especially the secondary research that leads toward primary. After this paper, you'll come into CWPS in January with a strong foundation for your final document and project.

These are the points of emphasis in the rubric:

Topic and Local Impact // Explain what your issue is and the background someone needs to understand it. You'll need to explain who it affects and why Lopez should care.

Secondary Research // This paper is called a research paper because it's built on your secondary sources: articles, books, (credible!) websites, reports, and data other people have gathered.

Primary Research Status // Include a short section (a paragraph is fine) on what you plan to do for this: who you've contacted, who has agreed to talk with you, and what you hope to schedule.

Writing & Readability // Organize your paper so a reader can follow, even if they aren't familiar with your topic. You can use a formal or personal tone, but keep it consistent
The length is based on your diploma type, double-spaced with 12 point font:

- 3+ pages: Essential Diploma
- 4+ pages: Enhanced Diploma
- 5+ pages: Honors Diploma

This is a summative assignment for your Civics grade, since we'll be working on it during the fall semester. Please ask for help early if you get stuck, and let me know if you have any questions.

Research Paper Rubric

Criteria	Ratings	Points
Issue + Impact	Meets (+) Issue is explained clearly with useful background. Impact on Lopez is specific with naming the who, how, and why. 3 pts Meets (-) Issue is explained and connected to our community with some specifics. Why it matters is stated. 2.4 pts Developing (+) Issue described, but the local connection is general. Why it matters is not developed. 1.8 pts Developing (-) Issue is unclear, or the paper could be about anywhere. No real local impact shown. 1.2 pts No Evidence No paper submitted 0 pts	/3 pts
Secondary Research	Meets (+) Five or more solid and varied sources. Evidence is woven in and clearly supports key points. Complete source list at the end. 3 pts Meets (-) Four sources that fit the topic. Evidence appears in the writing. Source list included with small gaps. 2.4 pts Developing (+) Fewer than four sources, weak sources, or research does not support the whole paper. Source list incomplete. 1.8 pts Developing (-) Little or no real research behind the writing. No usable source list. 1.2 pts No Evidence No paper submitted	/3 pts

	0 pts	
Primary Research Status	Meets (+) Names specific people contacted, who has confirmed, and dates or plans for interviews, surveys, or observations. Outreach is underway. 3 pts Meets (-) Shows real outreach has started, with people named and next steps identified. 2.4 pts Developing (+) Vague plans or little evidence anything has started. 1.8 pts Developing (-) Section is missing or shows no outreach at all. 1.2 pts No Evidence No proposal given 0 pts	/3 pts
Writing	Meets (+) Organized and easy to follow. Consistent tone. Meets length and format. Reads like it was written with care, not in one sitting 3 pts Meets (-) Mostly organized and readable. Minor tone or format slips. Meets length. 2.4 pts Developing (+) Hard to follow in places, inconsistent tone, or short of the length and format expectations. 1.8 pts Developing (-) Disorganized or very short of requirements. 1.2 pts No Evidence No proposal given 0 pts	/3 pts

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Assignment Three:

SENIOR DOCUMENT (due April 30)

***Learning Target:** I can organize and explain my Senior Project experience in writing to prepare for my final presentation.*

At this point, you've thought about your project ideas and put in a lot of research. You'll just need to make sure your research and actions are wrapped up in a paper to reflect on what you've learned this semester (or longer!). This paper is what will become your presentation next month, and others may read this who aren't able to see your presentation.

Your Problem Research Paper from December is the starting point for this document. You're expected to reuse and revise that writing here, then build on it with your primary research and everything you've learned since. We won't have formal graded checkpoints this spring but I'll be checking in with you regularly during class, and your writing needs to show it grew over time.

Here are a few points of emphasis on the rubric categories, which will help you finish up your paper:

Ongoing Development // This is so your project feels like something that was built over time and not all at once. Please make sure your writing reflects how your project evolved from your October pitch and December paper, and how you've reflected on the changes you made. (Not wrote it in one sitting!)

Primary Research // Make sure you include your primary research (interviews, surveys, observations) and weave them into your paper. These need to be on a Works Cited and listed in your writing.

Secondary Research // Same idea for secondary sources (articles, books, websites). You already did a lot of this work in December, so I'm looking for how that research has grown and blended into the full paper.

Reflection & Critical Thinking // Please make sure to analyze what you've been doing and learning. It's totally fine if ideas have changed since your proposal, but this is your chance to be reflective and honest about what you've learned in the process.

Local Relevance & Civic Connection // From the beginning, you needed to choose a topic of local relevance. Does your paper make it clear why this issue matters to our island? Make sure to include your outcomes and what you'd want others to know or do.

Length, Readability & Tone // Your paper length is determined by your diploma type (see below), and like the last paper, the tone of how it's written is entirely up to you. You can make it

formal and academic or personal and reflective, but you'll need to be consistent throughout your writing.

Style Options:

Formal/Academic Format

- Use a third-person or neutral tone
- Emphasize structure, evidence, and clear transitions
- Example: “This research project explored the causes of...”

Reflective/Personal Format

- Use first-person voice
- Emphasize personal experience, decision-making, and growth
- Example: “When I began this project, I planned to...”

Length Guidelines by Diploma Type:

Essential: 4-6 pages

Enhanced: 6-10 pages

Honors: 8-12 pages

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Assignment Four:

SENIOR PRESENTATION (May 17-28)

***Learning Target:** I can present my Senior Project and why it matters.*

You've done the research and finished the document. Now you get to share it with your classmates and school community. Honors students will give a community presentation as well.

Presentation lengths by diploma type:

Essential: 6-10 minutes, presented to your class

Enhanced: 8-10 minutes, presented to your class and school community

Honors: 8-12 minutes, presented to your class, school community, and to the Lopez community on Scholarship Night

This won't be your first time talking about your project in front of people since you pitched it back in October. By now, you'll know more about your topic than anyone else in the room.

The rubric is split into the following categories:

Delivery & Presence: How you stand and speak. Show us you really know your material by talking to the group confidently (not just reading your notes) with a clear voice and good pace.

Research Content: How well your info shows you did the work. I grade your document separately; this score is based on how the evaluators feel you dug into solid sources and can back up your key points.

Structure & Visuals: How smoothly everything flows. We want to see ideas in a logical order, readable slides, and the ability to present within your time limit.