



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Howard N. Lee, *Chairman*

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION June St. Clair Atkinson, ED.D., *State Superintendent*

WWW.NCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

February 11, 2009

Dear Principal,

In December 2008, the State Board of Education approved a policy to clarify the high school graduation project and how it should be implemented. The policy is online at http://www.ncpublicschools.org/sbe_meetings/0812/gcs/0812gcs06.pdf. In short, the Graduation Project is supposed to be implemented as described in The North Carolina Graduation Project Implementation Guide available for free at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/graduationproject/resources/> or for purchase through the NC Department of Public Instruction's Publication Sales area, 1-800-663-1250 (within North Carolina).

All high school students, beginning with those who entered high school in the fall of 2006 (Class of 2010), are required to successfully complete the Graduation Project in order to receive a high school diploma. The Implementation Guide gives details about how to handle the project in your school. If your school has a situation or implementation question that is not specifically addressed in The North Carolina Graduation Project Implementation Guide, use your best judgment and any guidance offered by your local school board's policies. Schools have flexibility in implementing some elements of the Graduation Project.

As principal of your school, you set the tone for how teachers and students view The North Carolina Graduation Project. The project offers your students the opportunity to explore a topic that they care about, to demonstrate what they know and can do and to interact with adults in a professional way. These are skills that high school graduates need and that are not well-tested in traditional ways. That is why the State Board of Education saw the need for and benefit of requiring the Graduation Project.

A few of the most important reminders are below.

- The NC High School Graduation Project should happen over a number of school years. It was not intended to happen only in the senior year or over a short time span.
- Make sure that students and their families receive information about the Graduation Project early, at least by ninth grade orientation, with frequent reminders and follow-up information. It is important that students and parents be able to get information about the Graduation Project and how your school is handling it in multiple ways and at multiple times throughout each school year and even in the summers. This should not be a surprise to upperclassmen looking forward to graduation.

ACADEMIC SERVICES AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

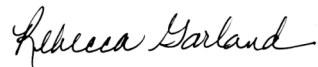
- Students should work on the project independently and, for the most part, outside of school. The school's responsibility is to provide proper tools, guidance, assistance and ongoing coaching from teachers, mentors and other adults in the community.
- The Graduation Project is not a test but an activity that is evaluated against a rubric (supplied in the Implementation Guide). It is not graded or included in the grade of a specific course. Student transcripts should simply indicate whether or not the student has completed each of the four components; no grade for the project should be reflected.
- Classroom instruction and work should help students build the skills and knowledge needed to successfully complete the project, but the project should not be identified with only one particular class or subject area. In fact, students are building skills necessary to complete their project from kindergarten throughout high school. Some of those skills include: planning, developing an idea, doing appropriate research, tracking their progress, creating a product and research paper, and doing an oral presentation.
- The NC High School Graduation Project is meant to give students the opportunity to show that they can use knowledge and skills they have learned throughout their K-12 education to address a topic that interests them. The four parts of the project allow students to demonstrate different ways of addressing an issue or problem and to present their work to community members. This is valuable because it so closely mirrors activities that they will need to do as adults.
- Many schools had graduation projects of some sort in place longer than the state has had the NC Graduation Project requirements. For these schools, they may already meet all the requirements of the NC Graduation Project and already have the organizational structure they need to assist students. Or, they may meet part of the requirements and need to adjust to meet all of them. For some schools, this is completely new. Every school, regardless of prior practices, is expected to conform to The North Carolina Graduation Project Implementation Guide.

This checklist can help you ensure you're on track to implement the NC Graduation Project:

- I have read the The North Carolina Graduation Project (NCGP) Implementation Guide and shared it or the url where it is located with my faculty.
- Teachers have the information they need to describe the NC Graduation Project to students and families.
- My school or school district's Web site, student handbook and other materials include information about the NC Graduation Project and pertinent links to key information.
- Teachers and administrators at my school have developed a plan to meet the logistical requirements of the Graduation Project, including organizing a committee to guide implementation.
- Details of our school's implementation plan are clearly communicated to all faculty, staff and students.
- All teachers serve as NCGP advisors for students in my school. Advising on the NCGP is not limited to one subject area's teachers.
- The faculty in my school understands how to communicate about The NC Graduation Project in a way that encourages students and their families and that generates enthusiasm for students' work on their projects.

- Mentors are identified for each student. Mentors may come from business or industry or other parts of the community. Students communicate with their mentors face-to-face, by email, U.S. mail, by phone or other means.
- It is clear to mentors and students that the mentor's role is to advise, consult and provide information to the student, but not to do the project. There is no set amount of time required for the mentor's participation; it is negotiable.
- Each student's four NCGP components are evaluated against the state rubrics. No specific grades are given other than satisfactory or not satisfactory.
- Students may submit, revise and resubmit portions of their project until all four are satisfactorily completed.
- Students may complete their project whenever they are ready prior to the end of their senior years.
- My school faculty understands that the NCGP components may be done in tandem with other programs or courses such as service learning, the International Baccalaureate Program, Advanced Placement Courses, etc., but none of these courses or programs supplant the NCGP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Garland".

Rebecca Garland