

**SHEPAUG VALLEY SCHOOL**  
**Course Syllabus Fall 2022**

**Grade 8**  
**Explorations**

**Mr. Taylor**

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## Exploring a Personalized Capstone

### Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to propose, develop, and complete a long-project based on an interest, hobby, or topic of their choosing. Students will gain deeper insight into their own learning process and attain a higher level of self-awareness as individual learners. Students will also benefit from collaboration and discussion with classmates. The course will culminate in the completion and presentation of a personalized capstone project.

### Classroom Expectations

- *Diligence*: students are expected to make a serious commitment to consistent effort and to thoughtful revision of their work.
- *Participation*: students are expected to share ideas, to provide positive encouragement to their classmates, and to engage in critical discussion.
- *Respect*: students are to treat everyone in our learning community with kindness and respect at all times.

### Essential Questions

- What topics truly fascinate and engage my mind?
- What kind of learner am I and how can I become a more well-rounded learner?
- How does the creative process provide opportunities for self-discovery?
- What techniques and methods can I use to become focused and engaged in my work?
- How can I incorporate advice and feedback into my work?

### Units of Study

#### Unit 1: Exploring Interests

*In this unit, students will describe, explain, and reflect on their interests, hobbies, and passions. They will identify those subjects, ideas, activities, and hobbies that engage their intellects, enliven their imaginations, and inspire them to action. Students will continuously ask themselves, "What is my passion?" "What drives me?" "What subject do I want to explore in detail?" "What do I want to build?" Throughout the unit, students will be writing, discussing, and sharing their ideas and interests with each other.*

#### Unit 2: Developing a Personalized Capstone Project

*In this unit, students will develop a plan for a long-term project. After reflecting on their work from the previous unit, students will describe what they will create and the various steps that will go into the creative process. Throughout the unit, students will formulate and refine their goals (immediate, medium, and long-term) until they have a well-developed plan that they will begin to implement in Unit 3.*

### **Unit 3: Creation Phase**

*Students will work on their projects by implementing the plan developed in Unit 2 and by course-correcting when necessary. Throughout the unit, students will develop and maintain a progress portfolio, which will keep a record of the steps they have taken toward achieving the goals that they set out in Unit 2. Throughout the unit, students will self-monitor their progress, share their work with classmates, and continue to deepen their knowledge and refine their skills. At the end of the unit, students will reflect on their work so far, self-assess their work to this point, and refine or adjust their plans if they need to be changed.*

### **Unit 4: Celebration**

*In this unit, students will continue to work on their independent projects. Throughout the unit, students will be engaged in the creative process and conducting further research into their chosen topics. Students will regularly be sharing their work and collaborating with classmates. The class will collectively explore various aspects of the creative process, including strategies for overcoming obstacles and responding to challenges, opportunities to draw connections between disparate subjects and themes, and methods of self-assessment and monitoring that encourage creativity. At the end of the unit, students will reflect on their accomplishments and present their work to the class. Students will also develop formal presentations in which they share their work to the class in a clear, organized, engaging manner.*

### **Assessment and Grading**

There are three kinds of assessments: formative, interim, and summative. Each kind of assessment carries a specific weight towards the overall grade.

- *Formative Assessments* (10% of the overall grade)- typical examples include: short written responses, most classwork, short informal class presentations, and exit slips.
- *Interim Assessments* (60% of the overall grade)- typical examples include: short written assignments, quizzes, short formal class presentations, group work activities
- *Summative Assessments* (30% of the overall grade)- typical examples include: formal reports and presentations, the final product of one's long-term capstone project.

### **Late Work Policy**

Students are expected to turn in their work on time. Untimely or unsteady work completion disrupts the learning process and makes it more difficult for the class to cohere and to function as a whole. Late work can also be unfair since some students have had more time to finish their work than their classmates.

In general, late work will result in loss of a half letter grade per day until seven days. After seven days, the highest grade an assignment can receive is a C.

### **Materials for Everyday Use**

- A three-ring binder with lined paper
- A folder for our course
- Your Chromebook
- Pens/pencils

**Resources, Texts, and Materials**

- Handouts with short readings on the creative process
- TedTalks and other online video resources
- Readings selected by the students in connection with their project

**Contact Information**

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