



CASE STUDY

Spring Valley High School

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What is your Design Challenge?

Senior Project

The Senior Project serves as a culminating assessment for high school seniors to demonstrate their academic and soft skill development, preparing them for college and career readiness. The project is truly an interdisciplinary approach to display student learning throughout their educational experience. The project requires students to choose an approved topic of genuine interest and complete a research paper, maintain a progress portfolio, develop a product, and present their work to a committee. The Senior Project provides a comprehensive evaluation of students' academic and soft skill proficiency, reflecting on their years of high school learning. Project Ideas: The topic for the project is based on a student's interest and demonstrates global readiness.

In order to get to my end goal of having a senior capstone project, which is a monumental shift in thinking and accountability for educators and students alike I had to take a close look at practices already in place. The Personal Project- Project Y is currently the 10th grade project required by International Baccalaureate MYP. The Personal Project- Project Y will serve as a capstone project at the halfway point in a student's academic career.

Description of MYP Personal Project- "Project Y"

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) Personal Project is a culminating activity for students in the MYP (end of grade 10). It is designed to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the MYP concepts and their abilities to apply their knowledge and skills in a self-directed manner. Students choose a topic of personal interest and significance to them. Once the topic is chosen, students conduct independent research to deepen their understanding of the subject matter. This often involves gathering information from various sources, analyzing data, and critically evaluating different perspectives. Students create a detailed plan outlining how they will execute their project. This includes setting goals, establishing timelines, and identifying the resources they will need to complete their project successfully. With their plan in place, students proceed to create their project.

This could involve writing a research paper, designing an experiment, producing a piece of artwork, organizing a community event, or any other creative endeavor that aligns with their chosen topic. Throughout the process, students are encouraged to reflect on their learning journey. They document their experiences, challenges, and successes, and consider how their project has impacted their personal growth and understanding of the world around them. Finally, students present their completed project to their peers, teachers, and often to a wider audience. This allows them to showcase their work, share their findings, and reflect on what they've learned throughout the process.

The MYP Personal Project provides students with an opportunity to develop and demonstrate key skills such as research, critical thinking, communication, and self-management. It also encourages them to explore their interests and passions in depth, fostering a sense of curiosity and lifelong learning.

We want to ensure that the IB design cycle and tenants of design thinking are alive and well through Project Y. The personal project- Project Y- will serve as the foundation for the senior graduation project in the future. In order to have a solid foundation for the future, it is imperative that we take a close look at the current project and identify what is working well and what needs to be improved and adapted for the future. Some of the challenges are that the project itself is a bit ambiguous to all teachers and students alike. This project should be seen as a benchmark and celebration of student achievement and is sometimes viewed as an act of compliance rather than opportunity.

In order to truly build collective efficacy around this cumulative learning opportunity we must build the capacity (agency) of both students and teachers. In working with a consultant it is our desire to adapt this process into modules that can live in the learning management system of Canvas, which is readily available and used by students. This allows the project to be more self-guided and takes the lift off the teacher and puts the responsibility on the student. My goal is to have an interactive process that walks learners through the phases of the work with assignments that illuminate their interests and passions and guide them into asking the right questions so they can build out a project of significance (not compliance). Teachers can then focus their energy and efforts on being mentors and cheerleaders for students.

 1 - COMPLETE GUIDE: IB's Personal Project Y Guide.pdf

[SVHS MYP Personal Project Guide](#)

[Picture of 10th Grade Personal Project](#)

[Project Y Planning Outline](#)

[Project Outline](#)

[ATL Skills](#)

What did you do?

To achieve my ambitious aim of implementing a senior project, I needed to pause and critically assess our current practices. This reflection taught me the importance of taking a step back to propel forward. The MYP Personal Project, known as Project Y, is a vital component of the final year in the MYP International Baccalaureate Program. While some successes have been noted, it's often perceived more as a compliance task rather than a genuine showcase of learning and progression within the IB framework.

Furthermore, despite Spring Valley High School being a comprehensive magnet institution, only 10th-grade students aiming for the IB Diploma Program or IB Career Program were mandated to engage in this project. The IB guidelines emphasize that both educators and students should possess a thorough understanding of the project, recognizing it as the pinnacle of applied learning and a catalyst for fostering lifelong learning.

I met with the 10th-grade English team, responsible for overseeing the completion of Project Y, as well as the IB coordinator. Through our discussions, it became apparent that there was a pressing need to enhance both student and teacher capacity and agency. This project is meant to be driven by students, supported by the guidance and mentorship of school staff; however, this was not the current level of implementation. Following a debriefing session with my coach, who suggested meeting with a consultant, I initiated discussions to chart our next steps forward with Nicole Allard, CEO of Leading for Transformation. Currently, I am still in the process of working with Nicole Allard on the framework, implementation plan and subsequent modules (see plan artifact).

What was the biggest surprise/barrier in implementation?

What was the impact?

The main difficulty resided in examining the disparity between the International Baccalaureate course guides framework/components for the MYP Personal Project and its execution at Spring Valley High School over the past several years. Additionally, it was essential to involve students to understand their views and grasp the intended objectives versus reality.

A significant area of concern surfaced regarding the deficient development of Approaches to Teaching and Learning (ATL) skills, which students were not fully embracing. This deficit resulted in minimal impact of the project on both the students themselves and their community, a core objective of the project. As anticipated, students predominantly perceived the project as obligatory rather than embracing it as a pathway to lifelong learning through inquiry, action, and reflection. However, upon prompting students to extend their learning and consider the broader implications on themselves and their community, they enthusiastically embraced the concept, indicating a willingness to engage beyond mere compliance.

Engaging in discussions about how teachers perceived the project's implementation proved to be both enlightening and intriguing. Primarily, only the 10th-grade teachers, particularly those teaching English, were well-versed in the MYP Personal Project. The majority of the staff had little to no familiarity with the project's nature or purpose, despite their roles as mentors to students. These conversations shed

light on the current situation and provided valuable insights for determining our next steps. An immediate next step was quickly identified as creating a staff survey to identify staff interested, which would be shared with students in order to appropriately match them with an appropriate mentor thus making the relationship between the mentor and and mentee more strategic, purposeful and relevant.

For the MYP Personal Project, and eventually the Senior Graduation Project, to thrive and become truly impactful, it became evident that staff needed to be educated about the project's requirements and its underlying purpose. While students at the school complied with completing the project, their engagement often stopped there. An immediate next step will be presenting Project Y to the staff at our opening of school staff development. The staff will be propelled into the work by pondering on the question: What does the world need? Project Y will take on a new meaning and life at Spring Valley High School as all staff will be required to be actively involved in the process throughout the year.

To truly elevate this project and ensure its future growth, having the right team was crucial. To facilitate this, I needed to take a step back and reassemble the team to ensure we had the right people in place now and could build capacity for the future. Consequently, the original portrait team from Fall 2023 was dissolved. I then conducted my own research and interviews, aligning the new team with the priorities of the District, the International Baccalaureate framework, and the goals of the Nevada Portrait of a Learner.

[Adult Passion/Interest/Strength Survey](#)

Please identify all items on this list that you have experiences or interest in: *

<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (e.g., painting, music, theater)	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading and Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing/Painting	<input type="checkbox"/> Fiction
<input type="checkbox"/> Music (playing instruments, singing, composing)	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-fiction
<input type="checkbox"/> Theater/Acting	<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry
<input type="checkbox"/> Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Blogging
<input type="checkbox"/> Photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Journalism
<input type="checkbox"/> Film/Video Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel
<input type="checkbox"/> Science and Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Exploration
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer Programming/Coding	<input type="checkbox"/> Adventure Travel
<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Sites
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Science	<input type="checkbox"/> Nature and Wildlife
<input type="checkbox"/> Space and Astronomy	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking and Food
<input type="checkbox"/> Biotechnology	<input type="checkbox"/> Baking
<input type="checkbox"/> Robotics	<input type="checkbox"/> Gourmet Cooking
<input type="checkbox"/> Sports and Fitness	<input type="checkbox"/> Culinary Arts
<input type="checkbox"/> Team Sports (e.g., soccer, basketball)	<input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Sports (e.g., running, swimming)	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Blogging
<input type="checkbox"/> Fitness Training	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering and Community Service
<input type="checkbox"/> Yoga/Pilates	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Welfare
<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Activities (e.g., hiking, cycling)	<input type="checkbox"/> Child and Youth Services
	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Conservation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Wellness
	<input type="checkbox"/> Education and Literacy
	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Justice
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Final Written Reports:

[Exemplar A](#)

[Exemplar B](#)

[Exemplar C](#)

What's next? How does your team plan to evolve this work? What are the most significant pieces of learning you see impacting adult work and young people's experiences? What school level, district level, state level policy may need to be addressed?

To advance to the next level, it's essential to build the capacity of both teachers and leaders. While there is now a clear vision, it's crucial to have full commitment from all stakeholders within the broader context and environment. The work must be meaningful and relevant, with both students and staff understanding its purpose. This project is designed to be student-driven, supported by the guidance and mentorship of school staff.

For this project to truly succeed, expanding my team and enhancing staff capacity are essential steps. I will kick start this process by involving the administrative and leadership teams, along with tapping in the lead 10th grade English teacher and IB coordinator. I will then gradually broaden participation. Leveraging the expertise of the current 10th-grade English teachers, who have been integral to the project thus far, will be a cornerstone of this expansion.

The next steps involve working directly with Nicole Allard, CEO of Leading for Transformation. In collaboration with her, we will create a framework, implementation plan, and subsequent modules for Project Y. The existing materials and processes are currently being revised and enhanced to meet the needs of the capstone project.

To build true capacity, the IB Coordinator, along with administrators, will play an active role in introducing Project Y schoolwide and providing monthly professional learning for the staff. It's imperative that the staff at Spring Valley High School understands the "why" behind the project and their role in the process to ensure its success. Additionally, teachers will be assigned at different checkpoints to monitor student progress, with the IB Coordinator managing this process alongside the administration.

It is important to recognize that this represents a shift in mindset for both adults and students. For this capstone to be successful and to eventually expand the senior capstone project, the adult mindset must evolve. Relevance is key, and once staff and students collaborate and produce an outcome (a product), they will see the value in the work. As the world rapidly changes and evolves, our approach to learning and measuring outcomes must also change. Engaging in this design process with a capstone project will help young people find their voice, build agency, and ultimately enhance their learning.

[Project Outline](#)

Research + Resources that inspired and informed our thinking

Participating in the network has provided me with the opportunity to envision our future goals while also appreciating and acknowledging our current efforts. While there is always room for improvement, we are often constrained by the requirements imposed on us. This work has allowed us to explore innovative methods for measuring learning outcomes and, more importantly, it has created opportunities for students to actively engage in their own learning. Teachers frequently complain about student apathy, yet we continue using traditional teaching methods. The world has changed, the student context has changed, and what students need to know has changed. It is time for us as educators and educational leaders to think outside the box, embrace discomfort, and find innovative ways to meet the needs of our students and the evolving world around us.

["A Capstone Project Before Graduation? New York Debates New Ways To Earn A Diploma"](#)

[North Carolina Senior Project](#)

[High School Senior Project Ideas](#)

[CAS International Baccalaureate Project](#)

[College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards](#)

[Employability Skills for Career Readiness Standards](#)

[Ikigai](#)- Positive Psychology

[The Spirit of CAN.](#)

[Podcast: Andy Bestwick \(founder of CAN.\)](#)