



## Schools gear up for new project

By David Wall/Richmond County Daily Journal

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Resources are being put into place to help students in Richmond County and across North Carolina decide upon and locate a mentor on the topic they chose for their graduation project.

Beginning with the class of 2010, all students will be required to score proficient (Level III or IV) on the five end-of-course assessments of algebra I, biology, English I, civics and economics, and U.S. history and successfully complete a graduation project.

While many states are now implementing a graduation project, North Carolina is the only one that requires it of all students for graduation.

"The graduation project is designed to enhance the rigor in our classrooms and help better prepare our students for the future," Richmond Senior High School Principal Cory Satterfield said. "This is also a way to reinsert the community into the structured education of our students."

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has created a Web site, [www.ncpublicschools.org/graduationproject](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/graduationproject), to assist students with links to materials and information to complete their project.

This assistance is also being offered by the North Carolina Office of Environmental Education. The agency has developed a Web site, [www.eenorthcarolina.org/gradproject.html](http://www.eenorthcarolina.org/gradproject.html), to assist students and individuals in an environmental profession to connect in order to facilitate the mentoring aspect of the project.

The graduation project consists of four parts:

**Research paper** — An eight to 10-page research paper, which requires students to develop and demonstrate proficiency in conducting research and writing about a chosen, in-depth topic.

**Portfolio** — A folder containing reflective writings or logs and other documentation demonstrating the research process and progress.

**Product** — A tangible product related to the field of study or research topic, which students select, design and develop.

**Presentation** — A formal oral presentation encapsulating the graduation project, from the topic selection to project completion and self-growth. Judges will include school staff and community members who may interact with the student following the presentation.

Projects will be based in the senior English classes, but must be beyond what students are learning in class. Students will be presented with a handbook that includes all deadlines and necessary forms. Projects must be approved by an advisor and may be literature, service-based learning, or work-based learning experiences.

To help prepare students for the project, all rising sophomores will begin preparations. There will be extra classes in the media center to improve research skills. More oral presentations and writing assignments will be given in other curriculum areas.

"The Graduation Project provides an opportunity for students to comprehensively apply their accumulated knowledge to a challenging self-selected task," said Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Michael Perry. "These real world projects place students into an arena of deadlines, collaboration, research, and multi-media presentations. All of these skills and attributes are necessary to be successful in college or in the workforce."

Another resource being offered to students is [Futures for Kids](#) (F4K). F4K is an online career exploration tool that connects middle and high school students with businesses and career coaches.

"We offer them the tools they must have to be successful," said Tanja Hawes, F4K employer development manager.

Contact David Wall at 997-3111, ext. 32 or E-mail: [dwall@yourdailyjournal.com](mailto:dwall@yourdailyjournal.com)