

# Independent Project Week – Criteria for Approval

## Eligibility

Students may do one independent project in middle school and one independent project in upper school, but no student is guaranteed automatic approval for any project. Project approval is determined by the Project Week Committee. Proposals must be received by the due date in order to be considered.

Students cannot do an independent project during their first year of enrollment.

Students applying for an independent project must also submit a project week sign-up form listing five other options, in case their proposal is not approved.

## Criteria

The four defining characteristics of the school's Project Week program are **challenge, experiential education, group process, and reflection**.

In keeping with those goals, the committee approves independent project week proposals when they do most or all of the following:

- Provide unique opportunities for learning that would otherwise be missed.
- Cannot be done or are not better done in some other time frame, such as spring break, senior project, or summer vacation.
- Have clear and substantive learning goals and objectives.
- Have a clear daily itinerary where the bulk of each day will be spent in educational activities.
- Provide opportunities to learn with experienced leaders, mentors, or practitioners (outside of family) of a particular skill, art, or practice.
- Challenge a student outside of his or her comfort zone.
- Are experiential, rather than academic, learning opportunities.
- Culminate in a formal reflection that will be turned in for credit, being shared with an audience or real-world purpose whenever possible.

## Examples of projects that the committee has approved include:

- A 10-day hike through technical canyon terrain, led by a NOLS certified leader and involving specific outdoor education goals;
- Intensive training as a yoga instructor in a formal program, where the student was also using winter break, spring break, and senior project to accumulate the hours necessary for instructor certification before her 18th birthday, when fees would double.

There are many valuable activities that do not meet those criteria. For example, the committee does not approve projects that a reasonable person would see as being primarily vacation, even though we acknowledge that these experiences can provide valuable family time or learning. **Examples of projects the committee has not approved include:**

- Family projects, such as a scrapbooking or gardening project
- Family vacation to Hawaii or Mexico, or skiing or biking trips with friends or family
- Trips with grandparents to historical sites
- Internships that could be done during senior project or in the summer

### **Final Credit**

Even after approval, all students on independent projects must meet with the Independent Project Leader before and after their trip in order to receive credit. All independent projects will require additional work (beyond the week itself) in order to receive credit. Examples of these final projects could be a journal, a presentation to peers, an article in the *Overlake Independent*, or a short film.

To be approved, all proposals must detail the specific work that will be completed in order to receive academic credit.

Students who do not complete final projects to the satisfaction of the independent project coordinator must redo the work or submit a new independent project proposal in order to receive credit for this graduation requirement.

**While writing the proposal students should ask some guiding questions regarding How am I prepared to get the most out of this experience by meeting all 4 criteria? Some of those guiding questions should include.**

**Experiential Education:** This is learning by doing. Students are intensely involved in a focused activity for a week. The presence of an Overlake teacher or other experts, ensures a quality, guided, learning experience.

- 1) Expert mentor(s) that are not my immediate family members:
- 2) 3-4 guiding questions that will focus my activities. I hope to be able to answer these questions by the end of my project:

**Challenge:** Students challenge themselves in many ways. They are exposed to new activities and forced to deal with the apprehension of trying new things. Their physical and/or creative limits are stretched. Whatever the challenge may be, it is posed in such a way that growth is inevitable.

- 3) What challenges will I face and what opportunities are there for growth by trying new things and engaging in creative problem solving?

**Leadership:** Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. Leadership shows up in many ways.

4) What is the goal of your project? How will you assist your group to achieve this goal?

**Group Process:** All Project Week courses are group experiences. Participants get to know students of other grades, teachers, and even their old friends in new ways. Sharing and cooperation are stressed, as students are asked to work closely with others and to share their thoughts with the group.

5) During the course of my project, how will I be learning from others?

6) During the course of my project, how will I share my insights and explore my guiding questions in collaboration with others?

**Reflection:** To maximize the student's experience, time should be set aside both during and after Project Week to reflect on the week, which will help derive meaning of our experience and provide content for presentation.

**Presentation:** Presentations either to the group or the school as a whole should be part of the project.

7) How will I document my experience in order for it to be shared with others?

8) I plan to share my project with others by...

- Presenting to a small group during homeroom or class time
- Presenting to the MS or US during announcements
- Inviting students to participate in an activity related to my project
- Other:



## Independent Project Week Proposal Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a new student (circle)    yes                  no

List projects in which you participated for the previous two years.

\_\_\_\_\_

- Students may do only one independent project in grades 6-8 and one in grades 9-12.
- Students may only participate in one college tour, independent or organized by Overlake.

Final approval will be granted by the Project Week Committee. Follow up meetings will be required with the Independent Project Leader.

In order for your proposal to be approved, you must include following items. Please type your answers and attach them to this page.

- Description: Please describe in detail what you intend to do for Project Week
- Educational component (what will you be learning)
- Daily activities or itinerary
- People you will be working with or who will be supervising
- Location

In addition to this information please fill out the sheet below entitled **“Am I prepared to get the most out of this experience by meeting all 4 criteria?”**

**Presentation.** In order to receive credit for this project, you will need to put together a culminating presentation or project. This may be in the form of a daily journal, a research report, a photo journal, a completed physical project (i.e. artwork or music) or some other approved presentation. Please outline how you plan to meet this requirement.

Please Contact the Project Week Director (Joey Pauley [jpauley@ovelake.org](mailto:jpauley@ovelake.org)) if you have questions.

See website for due dates <https://www.overlake.org/node/558>

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_