



## Student Reflections

*"This project has helped me learn an important lesson. I learned that everyone has a story, and everyone deserves respect. Just because someone's life is different than yours doesn't mean that it is easier. Everyone goes through obstacles and has to overcome them."*

*Erin Layden*

*"This project has had a profound effect on my life and I will take the knowledge, experience, and skills that I gained from it all through my life. Whatever college major or career I choose, I will be able to integrate my skills in leadership, writing and creativity, which were developed and advanced through the course of this project."*

*Patricia Sunseri*

*"My most memorable problem that I encountered in Camden was my ignorance. I laughed when I was nervous, stared when I was in disbelief and could not control my emotions. Being taken completely out of my environment was really hard for me! I've been sheltered from the harsh realities for most of my life. I never thought two days [my senior project experience] could have such a huge impact on my life. I am glad that I got to share it with my friends."*

*Kalyn Adams ~ Urban Challenge*

*"When you do something as a nearly selfless act you learn quite a bit about the benefits of things that do not have a straight and narrow objective of bettering your life. Ironically, when you stop trying to only better your life but the lives of those around you to a much further extent than ever before, you actually gain quite a lot from the experience and evidently see things in a better light.*

*So, by helping others you coincidentally help yourself in a far greater way. I know personally I've learned invaluable skills concerning the handling of other individuals as well as dealing with myself and any internal conflicts, as a matter of fact no person taught me any of these things. I learned a lot of life lessons through the animals which I worked with during my time volunteering. All in all,*

*I now understand why this is a requirement to graduate from an institution which essentially is provided to prepare individuals for the rest of their lives."*

*Keith Schippnick ~ Mainline Animal Rescue*

### Claire Powers

Senior Project Coordinator

Renaissance Academy

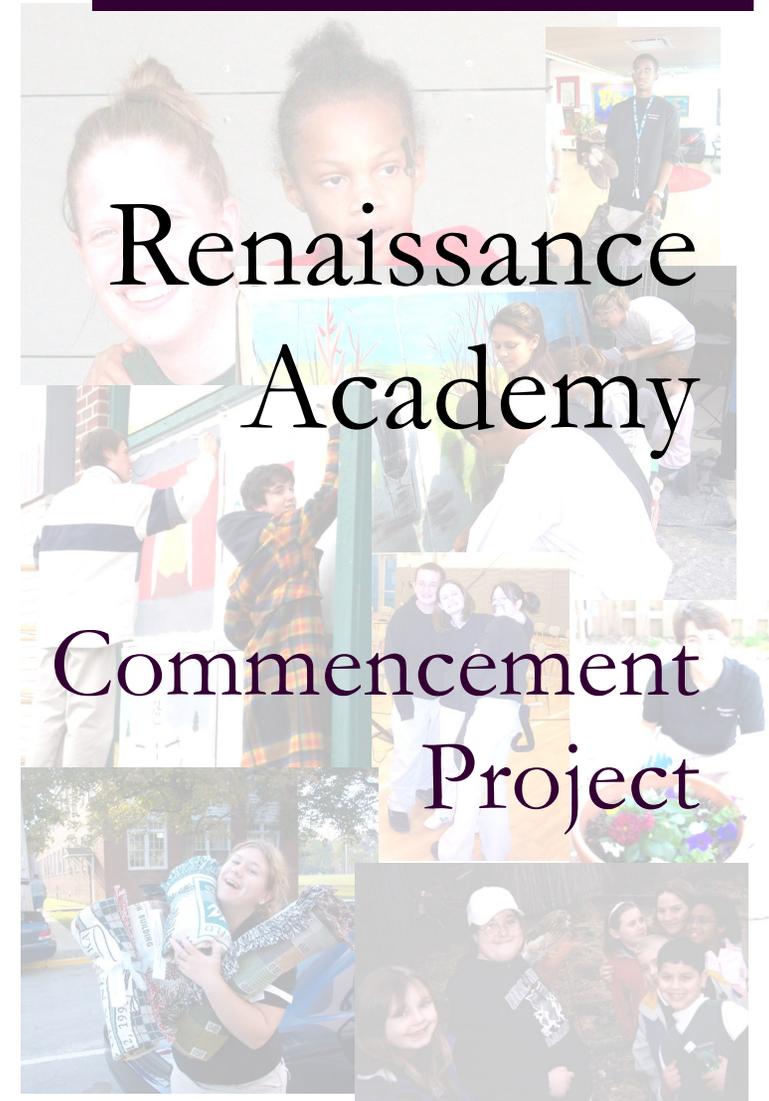
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*A student will take what he or she has learned in the classroom and combine it with a personal passion to initiate a positive influence in the greater community.*





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The Commencement Project of Renaissance Academy is designed to encourage each graduating senior to reflect on personal abilities and life experiences, synthesize what they have learned, and apply it to a field of interest with a responsible well planned methodology of addressing a need in the community. The student is asked to effectively communicate the project's purpose and results for critical evaluation.

**Objective:** The objective of this project is to provide the graduating senior of Renaissance Academy with an authentic learning experience outside the classroom where they will find the opportunity to think critically and communicate effectively. Each project is initiated by a personal interest, supported by self-directed research, and resulting in a uniquely formulated presentation. This Commencement Project is an expression of what each student has learned and its application to a challenge in the community. Upon completion of this project, the student will fulfill the culminating project requirement outlined by the state of Pennsylvania.

The High School Graduation Project Requirement  
According to the State of Pennsylvania  
Department of Education Regulations  
Section 4.24

Each school district (including charter schools) shall specify requirements for graduation in the strategic plan under 4.13 (relating to strategic planning). Requirements shall include course completion and grades, completion of culminating project and results of local assessments aligned with the academics standards.

. . . **The purpose of the culminating project is to assure that students are able to apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information and communicate significant knowledge and understanding.**

## Notes



Five sources to start:

- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*



## Benefits

In addition to meeting the state of Pennsylvania requirements, this project has the potential to be a meaningful experience that will benefit each student in an assortment of ways.

The student has the opportunity to discover a field of study that may direct their college choices or future career choices.

The student will be exposed to experiential learning that will be irreplaceable and compliment what is being taught in the classroom.

The student will build confidence in contributing to areas of the community that they have not been exposed to before.

The student will experience first hand how the Core Values not only apply to Renaissance Academy but are a necessity in society.

The student will receive recognition for their effort in the form of scholarships and acknowledgment from the community.

The student will be expected to exemplify how they will contribute in a college environment. College Admissions Officers are looking for a well-rounded student ready to give back to their institution. Evidence of such qualities will be detailed in this project.

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

Email: \_\_\_\_\_





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The following four elements of the Commencement Project will give direction to career choices, help in the selection of college course work, increase a competitive edge in college application acceptances, and define an individual greater sense of purpose that “I can make a difference.”

**Reflection** – During this project the student will be asked to define personal interests and abilities, investigate a greater sense of purpose, and analyze the effectiveness of the desired outcome.

**Synthesis** – Each student is encouraged to bring together all that he/she has learned in the classroom, the Core Values, and personal life experiences to formulate a well-researched presentation.

**Application** – As the project evolves, each graduating senior will have the opportunity to investigate an issue outside the classroom, get involved, reflect on how they can make a difference, and evaluate their effectiveness. The students are required to formally present their research, planning, implementation, conclusion, and self-evaluation to the members of the Renaissance Academy staff using creativity and available technology.

**Community** – The student must reach outside the familiar surroundings of the Renaissance Academy classroom to strengthen their commitment to the value of their contribution in society.

The Renaissance Academy Commencement Project will fulfill the state requirements for graduation; at the same time, it will provide a springboard for future educational decisions.



## Project Contacts

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### Agency Contacts:

- \*
- \*

### Other Contacts:



## Time Line (continued)



**11<sup>th</sup> Grade** – The bulk of the project should be completed during the summer before the student’s junior year of high school. Students are encouraged to dedicate 40 hours working in a community-centered activity. A community-centered activity can be described as a work experience in a profit or non-profit organization that will give the student exposure to career opportunities or a personal commitment to better the lives of others. This experience can range from an internship to community service. This time is designated outside the academic hours of the school day. It is the responsibility of the student and his/her parents or guardians to provide transportation to community centered activities. An Interim Report is due during the third trimester of the student’s junior year. In addition, the students will prepare for an Administrative Review in April. As the project progresses, the student is responsible for keeping an accurate Time Log with appropriate signatures and a detailed Journal to keep track of reflections and accountability checklist.

**Reference:**

- Mentor/ Advisor Information (Due Junior Year –1st Trimester )*
- Administrative Review (Due Junior Year-3rd Trimester)*
- Interim Report/ Administrative Review (Junior Year-3rd Trimester)*
- Documentation of Hours (Due June 3rd)*

**12<sup>th</sup> Grade** – As a senior, the student should be finished with his/her work in the field and will be concentrating on the final Presentation Portfolio. There are two components of this portfolio: The Written Report and The Oral Presentation. Upon completion of the Presentation Portfolio, the student will earn .5 credit hours toward graduation. The Senior Project Coordinator will work with each student to review the appropriate paperwork and confirm the Oral Presentation dates.



## Portfolio Checklist

*Upon finishing the Project Portfolio, the graduating senior needs to complete and submit this form to the Senior Project Coordinator to receive a room assignment for the presentation evaluation.*

|                                                                                      |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name:                                                                                |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| E-Mail:                                                                              |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Review the following requirements.                                                   |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>                                                          | <b>10<sup>th</sup> grade</b>                                                                           | <b>11<sup>th</sup> grade</b>                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Individual Reflection</b> <input type="checkbox"/>                                | <b>Written Plan</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br><b>Detailed Time Line</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Interim Report / (Administrative Review)</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br><b>Updated Plan and TimeLine</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br><b>Documentation of Hours</b> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Due Date:                                                                            | Due Date:                                                                                              | Due Date:                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Presentation Portfolio Checklist – 12<sup>th</sup> grade</b>                      |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Written Report</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br>* The COMMON APPLICATION essay | <b>Oral Presentation</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br>(15 minutes)                                  | <b>One-page project summary</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br>* Picture<br>* Title<br>* Student Name<br>* Quote from Paper                                                                                |
| Due Date:                                                                            | Due Date:                                                                                              | <b>Self-Evaluation Survey</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br><b>Documentation of Hours</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br><b>Thank You Letters</b> <input type="checkbox"/>                           |



**Self-Evaluation:** The graduating senior should complete this Self-Evaluation Survey after the Presentation Portfolio is completed. Complete the designated survey (provided on Google Forms) or compose a short essay answering the following questions:

- \* Did the project accomplish what I expected?
- \* Did I effectively communicate my expectations and experiences during all stages of this project?
- \* Did I consistently meet time line objectives?
- \* What do I consider to be the strengths of my project?
- \* What would I do differently to improve my project if I were to undertake it again?
- \* How did I challenge myself during this project?
- \* *Optional:* If I were in charge of the Commencement Projects, what would I change in the process of planning, executing, and presenting the projects?

**One-Page Summary:** A one-page summary will highlight the project objective with a picture and a quote from the student's Written Report. The student's name and project title should also be included. The one-page summary will serve as an introduction on the door of the presentation room and Commencement Project bulletin board in the Flex Space.

**Thank you Letters:** A Letter of Appreciation should be sent to all those who helped in the process of completing the senior project.

**Documentation of Hours:** The student will submit a time-log of his/her volunteer hours.

*The Final Presentation Portfolio should be submitted with a Self-Evaluation, Time Log, One-Page Summary and a copy of the PowerPoint / Google Slides presentation. All student work should be saved on Google Drive (Last Name. Assignment Name).*



### Presentation Portfolio

**Written Report:** In a written essay, the student will incorporate his senior project experience to answer one of the essay prompts of *The COMMON APPLICATION*. This essay will be evaluated on its authenticity, organization, mechanics and format. MLA format can be used as a guideline.

**Oral Presentation:** The 15 minute oral presentation should be complete with visual aides and other forms of creative presentation materials. The graduating senior needs to communicate two elements. The first element is a detailed summary of the project: research and preparation, process of implementation and completion, and a summary of resources used. Secondly, the oral presentation involves a great deal of personal reflection. Reflection questions will be provided to aid in this process. The presence of technology in the oral presentation should be very evident to the evaluation team.

The Final Presentation Portfolio should be submitted with the completion of Self-Evaluation Survey.

#### Reference:

*Presentation Portfolio Summary*

*Written Report/ PowerPoint (Due October of Senior Year)*

*Self-Evaluation Survey (Due October of Senior Year)*

*One-Page Summary (Due October of Senior Year)*

*Documentation of Hours (Due October of Senior Year)*

*Portfolio Checklist (Due October of Senior Year)*

Finally, the graduating senior needs to formally thank his/her Mentor and Advisor by sending them a Letter of Appreciation.

## Project Roles and Responsibilities



*The following roles have been defined to encourage teamwork between all participants. Keep in mind that this project is to be the effort of the graduating senior.*

### **Advisor**

- *Brainstorm with the student his/her project goals*
- *Help the student select goals that are appropriate and manageable*
- *Ensure that the student's project demonstrates learning that matches his/her capabilities*
- *Review the Presentation Portfolio—Written Report*
- *Conduct practice sessions for the Oral Presentation*
- *Work with student during Remediation, if necessary*

### **Mentor**

- *Guide the student in search of the appropriate and timely human and material resources*
- *Meet with the student to assess progress and provide expert information and guidance*
- *Communicate with Senior Project Coordinator when concerns arise with project requirements*

### **Parents**

- *Help and support student working through the project*
- *Give permission to community-centered activities*
- *Review the progress of the project requirements in the student's SLC's.*

### **Evaluators**

- *Read, prior to presentation, the written portion of the Presentation Portfolio submitted by the student*
- *Attend and evaluate the presentation using the appropriate rubric*
- *Provide comments/recommendations to students when projects are incomplete*

### **Senior Project Coordinator**

- *Orient students and parents with project requirements*
- *Review Written Plans and approve projects/reports*
- *Track the submission of required project information*
- *Review the progress of project activity*
- *Inform teachers when student fails to meet project requirements*
- *Refer students to community agencies*

## Project Presentation Portfolio



*As a senior, the student should be finished with his/her work in the field and will be concentrating on the final Presentation Portfolio. There are two components of this portfolio: The Written Report and the Oral Presentation. Upon completion of the Presentation Portfolio, the student will earn .5 credit hours toward graduation. These questions are listed to help the graduating senior with the reflection element of the Presentation Portfolio.*

**Written Report:** In a written essay, the student will incorporate his senior project experience to answer one of the essay prompts of *The COMMON APPLICATION*. This essay will be evaluated on its authenticity, organization, mechanics and format. MLA format can be used as a guideline.

**Presentation:** The 15 minute oral presentation should be complete with visual aides and other forms of creative presentation materials. The graduating senior needs to communicate two elements. The first element is a detailed summary of the project: research and preparation, process of implementation and completion, and a summary of resources used. Secondly, the oral presentation involves a great deal of personal reflection. Reflection questions will be provided to aid in this process. The presence of technology in the oral presentation should be very evident to the evaluation team.

The Final Presentation Portfolio should be submitted with the completion of Self-Evaluation Survey.

Project Purpose:

- \* What were my goals and objectives? Did I meet the goals?
- \* Explain the project plan and implementation.
- \* What problems did I encounter?
- \* How did I resolve these problems?
- \* How did I apply my high school course work? Detail the evidence of application.
- \* How did I integrate the Core Values into this project?

Interaction with Others:

- \* Describe and give examples of the effects that this project has had on me. How was I affected (positively and negatively) by the people involved in this project?
- \* Describe and give examples of the effects that I have had on the people with whom I interacted during this project. What have they learned from me?

Personal Growth:

- \* What life lessons have I learned as a result of being involved in this project?
- \* If I were to begin the project over again, would the topic be the same? Why? What would I have done differently?

## Interim Report



*The Interim Report is designed to notify the Senior Project Coordinator that the student is on track and meeting project requirements. If the project goals change, please attach an undated Written Plan and Time Line.*

- \* In regards to your Commencement Project, give an account of what you have completed so far.
- \* What items on your Time Line do you have left to do?
- \* Have you been using a Journal to record your reflections from your community-centered activities?
- \* Have you documented in your Log the hours that you have spent on community-centered activities?
- \* How has your original plan changed during the project implementation and does your Time Line reflect those changes?
- \* How can your Mentor, Advisor, Teachers, or Senior Project Coordinator be of help to you at this time?

### Administrative Review / Elevator Pitch

As a Junior, students will use the format of an “Elevator Pitch” to briefly notify Administration as to what has been done and what is left to do on their senior project. This 30 to 60 seconds pitch is a brief summary and includes the following:

- \* *Introduce yourself. Choose words that will inspire. Brevity is critical. Consider what matters most to the listener. What is your opening statement?*

\_\_\_\_\_

- \* *What is the project goal?*

\_\_\_\_\_

- \* *What accomplishments have you made towards the project goal?*

\_\_\_\_\_

- \* *What do you have left to do?*

\_\_\_\_\_



## Project Checklist

*Use this checklist throughout your project to track deadlines and requirements.*

| <b>Assignment</b>                                                        | <b>Due</b>               | <b>Done?</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Project Orientation                                                      | 9th grade                |              |
| Individual Reflection                                                    | 1st Trimester/9th grade  |              |
| Parent/Guardian Consent                                                  | 3rd Trimester/10th grade |              |
| Research Project                                                         | 1st Trimester/10th grade |              |
| Written Plan                                                             | 3rd Trimester/10th grade |              |
| Project Time Line                                                        | 3rd Trimester/10th grade |              |
| Mentor/Advisor Info                                                      | 3rd Trimester/10th grade |              |
| Interim Report<br>Administrative Review                                  | 3rd Trimester/11th grade |              |
| Documentation of Hours                                                   | June /11th grade         |              |
| <b>Presentation Portfolio</b><br>~ Written Report<br>~ Oral Presentation | October/12th grade       |              |
| One-Page Summary                                                         | October/12th grade       |              |
| Self-Evaluation Survey                                                   | October/12th grade       |              |
| Thank you Notes                                                          | October/12th grade       |              |
| Project Checklist                                                        | October/12th grade       |              |

## Individual Reflection



Use the following questions to write a short composition to reflect on your abilities and interests. The final draft should be a one page typed composition. (MLA format)

**Prompt: What do I have to offer the people in my community?**

What skills/talents do I have?

What activities do I enjoy doing?

What life experiences are unique to me?

What careers do I have an interest in?

What field of study do I enjoy learning about?

## Written Plan



The Written Plan is a formal proposal of the Commencement Project. It details the project's goals, procedure, detailed timeline, budget, key personnel, and rationale of how the project will benefit others. The plan should incorporate the research that the student has completed on the designated need in the community. The Written Plan is a working document which will change and evolve as the project is completed.

### Proposal for Action:

In the \_\_\_ (place), a problem exists with \_\_\_ (statement of the problem) and its effect on \_\_\_ (segment of the population). Through the efforts of \_\_\_ (title of the project), this issue will be addressed by \_\_\_ (awareness) and \_\_\_ (call to action). (How will your project assist existing programs to reach the people who are in need?)

**Goals:** State the desired goals to address the needs/problems in the community. Also include key benefits of reaching the goals. (Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely.)

**Procedures/Scope of Work:** Be specific and describe how the project will be carried out. Provide sufficient detail for potential project evaluation and possible recommendations for improvement. Describe the methods of collection and list the required materials.

Provide detailed information about proposed procedures, and the specifics of the project. Include information on activities such as the “who”, “what”, “where”, “when” and “how’s” of the project.

- \* How are you going to raise awareness of this issue?
- \* What resources do you need to meet these goals?
- \* Is there a connection to the core values?
- \* When are you completing the project?
- \* Who will you be working with (target population)? Is the school community involved?
- \* Are you collecting something?
- \* How are you going to get the word out? Announcements/ Newsletters/Flyers/SLCs
- \* Where will the event take place? Rough Timetable and Budget?
- \* Specify at least five things that need to be done to get started.

### Time Line

At the end of the student's sophomore year, he/she will provide a detailed project Time Line including dated milestones. If the event is proposed for Renaissance Academy, you must get the Dean's approval four months prior to the event.

## Research Paper



*During ELA, students will complete a research paper which will focus on a need in the community. This research will be included in the Written Plan Proposal.*

**Thesis Template:** In the \_\_\_\_ (place), a problem exists with \_\_\_\_ (statement of the problem) and its effect on \_\_\_\_ (segment of the population). By examining the background of \_\_\_\_ (this problem), its impact on the greater community, and how \_\_\_\_ (this problem) is presently being addressed, one can conclude that this is an opportunity for change.

**Summary of the Problem:** Provide the readers who are not knowledgeable of the topic with sufficient background to understand the proposal. The introduction needs to identify an issue in your community, define the obstacles that it presents, and explain the affect that it has on a specific population. This section should address the following questions:

- \* What is the problem in the community and how long has the need existed?
- \* What are some statistics that would quantify this problem?
- \* What obstacles does this problem present in the community?
- \* What specific segment of the population does it impact?
- \* What effects does it have on the population?
- \* What is being done in this field of study?
- \* Are there misconceptions about the problem? Why?
- \* Are there underlying issues that need to be addressed by a government organization?
- \* What common approaches are taken by local organizations or agencies to meet the needs of this population?
- \* What has been the most effective approach to serving the needs of the people affected?
- \* Why are the services ineffective to meet the need at this time?
- \* What is the best way or the preferred time of year to serve the people in need?

*The research should focus on the **causes, effects and efforts** to address the problem in the community. Use the NOTES page to list additional sources.*



## Parental / Guardian Consent

I have reviewed the Commencement Project Document. If I have any questions or concerns, I will voice them immediately with the Senior Project Coordinator.

\_\_\_\_\_(Student Name) has my permission to participate in this project through Renaissance Academy from \_\_\_\_\_(today's date) to \_\_\_\_\_(completion date).

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_(Student's Name)

will be working at/on \_\_\_\_\_(Agency

or Project Title) under the supervision of \_\_\_\_\_(Agency Contact or Mentor). Neither the agency nor the school's Senior Project Coordinator will be held responsible in the event of an accident or injury. Should it be necessary to contact our family immediately, I can be reached at the following phone numbers.

\_\_\_\_\_(Parent or Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_(Phone Number)

\_\_\_\_\_(Work Number)

***I understand that completion of this Commencement Project is a state requirement for graduation. I agree to support my high school student through the requirements of this project.***

In addition, I grant Renaissance Academy permission to use the Commencement Project of my child over the video distribution systems (RNN), on The Renaissance Academy web pages, or for presentation purposes. I give Renaissance Academy permission to use the finished project (including negatives, prints, reproductions, and copies of the originals) for educational or instructional purposes only.

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

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mentor and Advisor Information



**Mentor**— *A Mentor is requested to help the graduating senior meet his/ her project goals. The Mentor should have connections in the community that will be helpful in the design of the project. We ask that the Mentor be willing to give of his/ her time and advice to help the student meet the project goals. The Mentor should meet with the graduating senior at least three times during this project.*

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

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

*I intend to give of my time and talents as a member of the community to guide the student. I agree to meet with the student at least on three occasions to work through the details of the project.*

**Advisor**— *An Advisor is requested to help the graduating senior meet the project goals. The Advisor should have insight towards the project requirements, which will help the student with deadlines and the Presentation Portfolio.*

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

Room Number/Extension: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

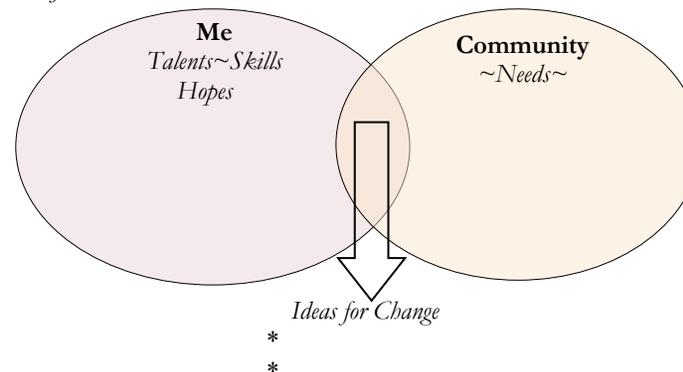
*I intend to give of my time and talents as a teacher to guide the student. I agree to meet with the student at least on three occasions to review the project requirements and help the student prepare his/ her Presentation Portfolio.*

***On behalf of Renaissance Academy, we thank you in advance for your time and efforts to help the students of our school.***

## Initial Proposal



*Students will be challenged to investigate a need in the community and propose how they will use their skills, talents, life experiences to generate ideas for a senior project. The Initial Proposal is designed to prepare the student to formulate project goals and make the contacts that he/ she will need to work through the project objectives.*



- What need in the community do you plan to focus on?

**Focus of Research:** \_\_\_\_\_

- How will you use your talents and life experiences to generate a project ideas?

Talents/Passion: \_\_\_\_\_

- How will you find more information about this community issue?  
Web Sites/Agencies—5 sources needed

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

- How do I propose to address this need?

Project Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

**Senior Project Coordinator Check-in:** \_\_\_\_\_