

# METSA's Capstone Project

## Overview

Clearly, all high school graduates need a strong, basic skill foundation. State assessments drive and underscore that focus. However, METSA requires that its graduate be able to independently demonstrate an application of those skills (and other skills not tested (e.g., time management, active collaboration, and other 21st Century skills)).

Capstone projects capitalize on the most promising aspects of career-focused education and research-based teaching such as:

- Cooperative and group learning
- Integration of academic content standards and technical competencies
- Self-directed learning
- Teacher in the role of facilitator
- Authentic instruction and assessment

Capstone projects apply academic and technical knowledge and skills to complex problems in a career field by allowing students to engage in problem-solving, research, teamwork, interpersonal communication and connections with adults. The capstone project is the culminating experience, demonstrating what a student has learned in his or her career pathway.

## Procedure

The Capstone project is conducted during the fall or spring semester of the senior year. In this project, the senior...

1. selects a problem related to his or her career pathway.
2. conducts research related to the problem.
3. identifies teachers, business and postsecondary education partners with relevant expertise of the problem and its solution.
4. analyzes and synthesizes information to solve the problem.
5. maintains periodic reflective journals of the project's progress.
6. establishes with teacher checkpoints for assessment to ensure the project time line is on track and he or she is meeting the standards for the project.
7. develops a multimedia presentation to adult partners detailing what he or she has learned.

## Components

### Research

The student selects a problem related to his or her career pathway. Research is collected and analyzed to begin formulating a solution to the problem or question. The student uses various methods and sources to investigate the problem.

## Internship Program

### Overview:

Throughout the years young people have worked side-by-side older accomplished people in order to learn. Apprentices learned the specific skills of their mentors by helping them on the job and progressively took on more responsibility as they gained additional skills and experience. Modern internships resemble apprenticeships, except in one crucial way; modern internships are designed to teach young people general work skills, while emphasizing skills learned at school in a given content area. The focus on general work skills comes from the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report, as well as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The SCANS report was commissioned by the Secretary of Labor to determine the skills our young people need to succeed in the world of work. SCAN's report listed five basic workplace competencies:

- Resources: Time, money, facilities, and people
- Interpersonal: Team work, teaching co-workers, client relationships, leadership, and negotiating.
- Information: Gather, evaluate, organize, interpret, and use computers to process and share
- Systems: Understand complex relationships, monitors and corrects own work performance, and improves performance
- Technology: Selects, applies, and maintains appropriate technology tools

METSA's internship program focuses on these competencies by pairing interns with mentors who can teach these general skills through work and assigned projects. Interns will be able to use these skills regardless of what career they choose. The program combines weekly classroom reflection with onsite project-based learning and work. The program is an integral part of METSA's core mission of preparing young people for postsecondary success.

### Objectives:

- Teach students workplace and academic skills through project-based learning in a real-world environment.
- Provide local organizations with a well-supported intern who provides a modest return on investment.
- Foster students' personal growth and understanding of the adult world of work and application of the content learned while in high school.

### Logistics:

- *Insurance:* Interns are covered by CFBISD liability insurance while on-site.
- *Pay:* Unpaid. Program is academic in nature. Interns may be paid after successful work, or in the summer at mentor's discretion. Donations are accepted to the program for transportation and other expenses.
- *Schedule:* Semester long, 10 hours per week
- *Transportation:* Provided (either by the students own car, mass transit, or parent.)

## METSA's Internship

Internships can be an interesting, challenging, and very rewarding way to learn about a particular business or industry. Consider it a bit of a "test drive" of a career or company. By spending time in an office, you'll see first-hand how business works—learning from professionals who have the experience you're looking to gain.

### What is an Internship

Like a semester in school, an internship is a job that lasts for a limited length of time. An internship is often set up with specified responsibilities in a company, nonprofit, or other organization. **At METSA, you will spend 10 hours per week for 10-12 weeks at your internship site.** Before and after that during the semester, you are getting the job and updating your portfolio.

An internship is a great opportunity to get your feet wet in a profession; see if you like it, and learn and hone some skills for the future. As for pay, sometimes you are compensated with a stipend for the whole chunk of time that you are there or with an hourly rate. Some internships are volunteer internships—they pay nothing but experience. **METSA's internships are non-paid**, but may lead to paid position the following semester depending on the quality of your work and company's needs. Remember, the point of an internship is to learn, to gain experience.

### What You Get

**Experience.** There is nothing more valuable when starting out. No matter how good your academic or extracurricular performance in school, employers will ask (and this is certain) what "real" work experience you have had. An internship will show that you are the kind of person who is willing to do what it takes to go after the job or career you want.

It will also give you a distinct advantage over the competition. Good grades, strong character, and an impressive list of extracurricular activities are great, but *internships launch you into the work force.*

Quite simply, an internship isn't about making money (in most cases it will cost you in investing in gas and professional clothing). Instead, you'll be paid in experience. You will learn a great deal — the specific skills of that business, how to deal with coworkers, and how to rely on yourself. You probably won't realize just how important these skills and experiences are until the internship is long over.

**Treat your internship like any other job and you'll go far. Even the process of interviewing for the internship is training for the real work force. Dress smartly. Ask good questions. Be enthusiastic. It will pay off in the long run.**