

November 6, 2006

Dear Parents,

Once again this spring, seniors have the opportunity to undertake an independent senior project. They may continue to choose from within the School's academic, athletic, and extracurricular offerings, or they may go out into the community to take part in a working experience which is equivalent in hours to a normal work week. Options may include working at a government agency, museum, hospital, school, law office or business, studying abroad, doing studio work or an independent research project. Students may design a project which combines a part-time off-campus placement with the continuation of some academic work or athletic participation. The most successful projects are those in which students find a position which allows them to pursue a variety of interests and which is challenging, personally meaningful, and a change from the daily high school routine. A list of projects since the program's inception in 1985 is available online. The project period runs from **Monday, April 23**, the beginning of the second half of spring term) to **Friday, May 25**, with the option of extending the project to June 1, depending on academic and other end-of-year commitments.

We strongly believe this program to be an appropriate conclusion to the Derryfield educational experience. From their initial design of a senior project to completion of the project, students are expected to assume responsibility for the success of their undertaking. They will still have the support and guidance of a faculty project advisor in-house and of an on-site advisor where appropriate. We hope that seniors will gain a deeper appreciation of their own talents and of the importance of serving and learning from others. We hope, too, that they will learn that there are many things worth doing for which they will not receive a grade or monetary gain, and that independent academic work is an exciting and valuable experience.

Participation in the ISP program is optional. For those who choose to participate, this program is a serious commitment and a significant responsibility. Time spent on the project, whether full-time or shared with class and athletic involvement, should add up to about forty hours a week. A specific individual at the project site must be willing to take responsibility for supervising the student. All application due dates are firm. If they are not met, a student's application will be denied. Students must realize that potential on-site advisors are very busy. Therefore, students must plan far enough ahead to avoid missing deadlines which include the on-site advisor's endorsement letter and subsequent evaluation letter.

The application process includes a preliminary application (due Monday, February 5), which is a specific outline of the project; the final application (due Wednesday, March 7) requires a well-written description of the project, a weekly schedule, contact names, addresses, and four signatures: the on-site advisor's, the faculty advisor's, the student's

and yours. Also the student must write a final report which will be kept on file as reference for future seniors. During the project, each student will meet weekly with his/her faculty advisor to discuss and evaluate the experience. Should any problems arise the faculty advisor will be available to help the student in resolving it, in consultation with members of the ISP Committee. **SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT IS A GRADUATION REQUIREMENT.**

Your role in this process is important. As your son or daughter thinks about the spring project, we encourage you to take an active role in identifying interests, defining goals and suggesting possible programs. Your signature on the application is your way of letting us know that you are satisfied with your senior's plans.

The format of the ISP allows students to drop many or all of their courses; however, the Math Department offers the following advice:

“Pre-Calculus serves as a pre-requisite for college calculus. Dropping this course for the final half term will make the transition to first-year college calculus difficult. Dropping AP Calculus or AP Statistics for the final half-term will make it very difficult to begin a second-level course next year. Dropping the course will have an adverse effect on the Math AP exam in May. If the AP exam is an issue, we would suggest continuing the math course until the exam.”

Occasionally, parents are in a position to offer an internship to a senior or to suggest opportunities. If you can help in this way, we would be grateful. Please contact me or Bruce Berk, ISP co-coordinator, with such opportunities, or if you have any questions about the program.

Sincerely,

Sandra Townsend
For the ISP Committee
stownsend@derryfield.org