

High School and Beyond Essay

(Updated 9/1/2015)

The High School and Beyond Plan is a formal process designed to help students think about their future and select course work that will best prepare them for their post high school goals. Students create their High School and Beyond Plans in cooperation with parents/guardians and school staff. Students write their plans in middle school and then continue to revise throughout high school to accommodate changing interests or goals.

Students should be encouraged to include the following elements in their plan:

- **Their personal story – what experiences, interests and goals are shaping who they are now and who they want to become**
- **Their learning style**
- **Their goals for high school – what their four years of high school look like, including classes, extracurricular activities, sports, a job, etc.**
- **Their goals for immediately after high school – a student’s plan should include the classes needed in preparation for a 2- to 4-year college, vocational or technical school, certificate program or the workforce.**

(The above information is from the OSPI website.)

The High School and Beyond Plan is both a process and a product. It is a process, because it requires you to look at your interests and aptitudes in order to formulate the essay. In other words, it requires you to commit **some** plan to paper. The plan isn't set in stone; as you grow and learn, you'll probably change your plans. Figuring this out, and informing your decision through research, will inform you as you develop the final product: your plan that you will include in your senior portfolio. (Of course, life will still cause you to change plans; it's just good to have an idea of where you're starting.)

While the “essay” component of the High School and Beyond Plan is less unified than most essays, keep in mind that it is basically a narrative. Use it as an opportunity to consider your personal strengths and challenges and to assess your goals. Here are some ideas on how to write a High School and Beyond Plan that motivates the reader to read it:

Writing Standard 3.

Write narratives to develop real ... experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a situation and its significance, establishing a point of view, and introducing a narrator;

- Try “hooking” the reader by showing, not just telling, a situation that shows your experiences, interests, and/or goals.
- Use the first person throughout: YOU (first person “I”) are the narrator!

(WS3a continued): **create a smooth progression of experiences or events.**

- After “hooking” the reader, be sure to clarify the purpose and organization of the essay, mentioning (NOT announcing) how all the content (1: learning style, 2 high school goals, and 3: post-secondary goals) follows from the opening experience. (This will be your thesis statement.)
- Focus paragraphs on specific subjects: learning style, high school goals, and post-secondary goals. You want to engage the reader, but you also want to be very **clear** in this essay!

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, (and) reflection... to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

- Consider how words of encouragement or advice (dialogue) or reflection on specific experiences might help you show your motivations and goals.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g. a sense of ... growth or resolution).

- Layering your experiences in different paragraphs (e.g. segments showing you applying your learning style in a specific activity or completing a specific project that showed learning in a class) can help you show how your life experiences have led to your goals for the future.

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

- While this essay is more informational than some narratives, use of varied vocabulary and specific sensory detail can enliven it.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

- Your body paragraphs should definitely cover the three main topics (1: learning style; 2: high school goals (or completed goals, if you're graduating); and 3: post-secondary goals) in depth.
- Having covered these areas, where does this lead you? One idea: give us a picture that connects your previous content to your next step.

Narrative Essay Assessment Rubric

Area	Below Expectations	Approaching Competency	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Focus and Thesis	Does not set out a specific experience and its significance.	Orients the reader by setting out a specific experience and its significance.	Engages and orients the reader by setting out a specific experience and its significance (WS3a).	Engages and orients the reader by involving reader in a specific experience and its significance.
Audience and Purpose	Uses few narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, (and) reflection... to develop experiences, events, and/or	Uses some narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, (and) reflection... to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; more would benefit	Uses narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, (and) reflection... to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. (WS3b)	Skillfully uses narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, (and) reflection... to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

	characters.	piece.		
Organization	Experience is not identified or implied in first paragraph. Progression of experiences or events is confusing. No conclusion or perfunctory conclusion.	Experience is in first paragraph. Creates a progression of experiences or events. Provides a conclusion.	Experience is identified or implied in first paragraph. Essay creates a smooth progression of experiences or events (WS3a). Provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative (WS3e).	Reader is hooked by experience in first paragraph. Essay creates a smooth, cumulative progression of experiences or events. Provides a conclusion that skillfully follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
Development	Few precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters are used. Little or no revision has improved essay. One draft or drafts with little revision reflect this.	Some precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters are used. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience (WS5). Two or fewer minimally-revised drafts display this.	Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters (WS3d). Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience (WS5). Multiple thoroughly-revised drafts display this.	Skillfully use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters (WS3d). Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience (WS5). Multiple extensively-revised drafts display this.
LOCs	Grammar and editing errors are excessive and interfere with reader's understanding.	Some grammatical or editing errors distract reader.	Few distracting grammatical or editing errors. Appropriate tone is demonstrated	No distracting grammatical or editing errors. Language is used skillfully and precisely. Appropriate tone is demonstrated

High School and Beyond Plan Organizer

I: Introduction:

- “Hook” reader (SHOW -- describe with sensory detail -- yourself engaged in an activity that illustrates your future interest/skill):
- Clear thesis statement -- We need to know your specific career plan and that this essay will tell us about your preparation for this (**in different words** -- “don’t announce”!)

II: Learning style –

Point: What are your primary learning styles/intelligences?

Illustration: SHOW (through sensory details) yourself engaged in an activity that displays your learning style

Explanation: How will you use this learning style/intelligence in your future career?

(Repeat I and E for additional learning styles/intelligences)

III: Goals for high school –

P: Identify a 2-3 high school classes, activities, or accomplishments that relate to your post-high school goals

for each:

I: Show yourself doing the relevant class or activity, or earning the accomplishment

E: Describe how the class, activity, of accomplishment might relate to your future plans

repeat I and E as needed for each class, activity, or accomplishment

IV: Goals for immediately after high school –

P: Give reader a skeleton plan of your steps after high school -- 2- to 4-year college, vocational or technical school, certificate program or the workforce -- that you will apply to reach your career goal

Then develop specific parts of the plan --

I: Specific school/program you are planning to enter

E: How does this choice fit your goals?

I: Estimate of post-h.s. plan timeline and funding requirements

E: How are you and your parents working to fund your post-h.s. plans?

V: Conclusion

Recap how specifics of how your

- learning styles/intelligences
- high school classes, activities, and accomplishments
- planning for post-h.s. training/college

will prepare you for your future. End with a related thought on this.