



How to Do It: Tips for Implementing a District Capstone Requirement

1. Objective

- How can a capstone project requirement make learning more relevant to students?
- How can capstones involve the broader community more deeply in schools?
- How can revised graduation requirements and some kind of advisory structure facilitate successful capstone implementation?

2. Preparation

- Read about Colorado's changing [graduation requirements](#) and the [capstone section](#).
- Study Roaring Fork's new [graduation requirements](#).
- Read more about [Expeditionary Learning crews](#).
- Read Roaring Fork's [capstone action team](#).
- Examine promising capstone practices from other schools and districts, and find one that best fits your vision. Here are two promising candidates:

- I. [University High School, Greeley](#)
- II. [Denver School of Science and Technology, Stapleton](#)

- Create capstone teams in every high school, consisting of administrators, teachers, and counselors.
 - I. Have teams spend time with teachers so that they understand what capstones look like, and what their purpose is, as well as what expectations there will be of them.
 - II. Communicate that this is different work, not more work.
- Spend time with students so that they understand what will be expected of them.
- Organize community meetings to discuss capstones and garner support for the plan.
- Bring in a consultant to help plan and implement, preferably from a district that has successfully implemented a capstone program.

“Capstones aren’t simply about the project; capstones are another opportunity to get students engaged. If your goal is the capstone, you have a whole bunch of work that you have to build on from here all the way across until you get to this big project.”

*Matthew Hamilton, Director
Aspen Skiing Company*



3. Implementation

- Start slowly, allowing plenty of time to plan.
 - I. If your district or school plans to implement a crew or advisory class, phase it in first, before capstones begin.
- Be sure that you don't try to copy exactly what some other school or district has done. "Be organic to your environment," as one Roaring Fork educator said.
- At the same time, do not feel you need to "reinvent the wheel" if practices elsewhere seem to fit what you want to do.
- Keep ownership of the idea and its implementation at the school staff level to the greatest extent possible.

4. Assessment/reflection

- What worked?
- What did not work?
- How can it be adjusted?