

Independent Semester Overview

The Independent Semester will be composed of small group of Seniors who work individually and collaboratively to study topics of interest to them and ultimately to create a project that gives back to the community. Seniors who are ahead in their credits and who have shown that they can work independently will be able to apply to the program and will be selected by a group of teachers. Those selected will be enrolled in the Independent Semester program for at least 4 of their second semester classes. They will be able to enroll in up to two other classes, so can continue with up to two year long classes.

The Independent Semester will allow students to work outside of the regular classroom setting and follow individual inquiries that are interesting and relevant to them. This will teach them the critical thinking skills of how to acquire, assess, and apply information. They will also learn communication skills as they work with their peers who are involved in the Independent Semester and share their knowledge. They will collaborate with students, teachers, and community members and learn how to provide and accept constructive feedback. Students will work on inquiries in one subject area intensely for four weeks at a time in the mornings. In the afternoons they will be working on individual Passages, which are passion-focused projects. In the final three weeks, students will work together and devote their entire school day to create a Collective Endeavor that addresses a concern in the community. Students will use self-evaluation and peer-evaluation methods to provide each other feedback and to reflect on their learning and effort. They will work with a subject teacher in each field of inquiry and will demonstrate their learning through a portfolio of their work.

At Steller, we are following the framework used by students at Monument Mountain Regional High School in Massachusetts who created the first Independent Semester. They produced an informative video that can be found at the following link <http://youtu.be/REIUmGI5gLc>.

Overall organization of the Independent Semester (17 weeks)

Week 1: Orientation	Week 2: Social Science	Week 3: Social Sciences	Week 4: Social Sciences
Week 5: Social Sciences	Week 6: English Language Arts	Week 7: English Language Arts	Week 8: English Language Arts
Week 9: English Language Arts	Week 10: Natural Sciences	Week 11: Natural Sciences	Week 12: Natural Sciences
Week 13: Natural Sciences	Week 14: Collective Endeavor (All Day)	Week 15: Collective Endeavor (All Day)	Week 16: Collective Endeavor (All Day)

Weekly schedule dependent on type of inquiry

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>Science and Socials studies 8:30-11:45 Morning Work: Present findings; discuss findings, ask questions, and give feedback; complete a self-evaluation and reflection; brainstorm new inquiry question.</p>	<p>Morning Work: Develop questions of inquiry; gain approval of question from subject teacher; look for sources; fill out inquiry planning sheet.</p>	<p>Morning Work: Research question on inquiry</p>	<p>Morning Work: Research question on inquiry</p>	<p>Morning Work: Research question on inquiry; prepare presentation</p>
<p>English Language Arts 8:30-11:45 Morning Work: Discuss predetermined sections read and brainstorm individual inquiries based on time period, author, style, etc. of book. Presentation of previous individual inquiries. Give feedback on final papers.</p>	<p>Morning Work: Determine and begin to research inquiry and read predetermined sections of the text. Write down questions for discussion.</p>	<p>Morning Work: Coach predetermined sections read. Continue to research individual inquiries based on time period, author, style, etc. of book.</p>	<p>Morning Work: Research inquiry and finish reading text. Write down questions for Seminar.</p>	<p>Morning Work: Seminar the text read. Prepare presentations of individual inquiries for Monday. Plan Post-writes.</p>
<p>12:40-2:05: Passages</p>	<p>12:40-2:05: Passages</p>	<p>12:40-2:05: Passages</p>	<p>12:40-2:05: Passages</p>	<p>12:40-2:05: Passages</p>