West Island School
Middle Years Diploma
The Year 9 Personal Project

A Guide for Parents

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Mission Statement

We seek to encourage individuality; foster respect for difference and value learning from others within an international community school.

We strive to inspire and support all students in achieving their individual potential for a successful life as responsible global citizens.

Values Statement

At West Island School we value:

Community: Collaboration, team work and unity of purpose

Compassion: Service and action at school, locally and globally

Consideration: Honesty, tolerance and respect for others

Commitment: Recognition of our place and responsibilities within the communities in which we live

Courage: To challenge ourselves as individuals and as a community

West Island School Aims

To promote excellence and enjoyment in teaching and learning.

To motivate through high expectations of personal initiative and individual achievement.

To challenge in academic, sporting and creative endeavour.

To provide an inclusive, balanced and culturally diverse curriculum which is centred on the attributes of the West Island School learner profile.

To encourage the ethical, emotional and physical development of each individual.

To provide a safe, supportive and happy environment.

To commit to holistic education in providing a diverse range of meaningful opportunities beyond the classroom.

To develop lifelong learners who approach the world with confidence and curiosity.

Dear Year 9 Students,

Welcome to the Year 9 Middle Years Diploma (MYD) Personal Project. The Personal Project is an inquiry based task which allows you to work on a topic which really inspires and interests you. It will involve all Year 9 students and teachers in Learning for Life working together to produce meaningful and unique outcomes.

This guide is designed to help you complete the challenging and exciting task ahead. Please make sure you read the guide thoroughly and keep it at hand during each stage of the Personal Project process. In addition to the guide, please make sure that you look for help from your parents, teachers and the school teacher librarians. In particular, stick to the timeline as this is a project that will require lots of work. You won't be able to complete the project the night before the deadline.

Remember this is your chance to investigate and present conclusions on an area of genuine passion or interest to you. Take time to really reflect and make the right choice for the topic of your project. Make sure it is a challenging and achievable goal.

Remember too that completing the Personal Project is a passing criteria of the MYD. Without achieving at least a pass in the Personal Project you will not be awarded the West Island School Middle Years Diploma in Year 11.

Good luck and enjoy your investigation!

Not only does the personal project help students learn new things from their question, but helps us with citation, which is crucial when it comes to research. From this experience, I have learnt what makes a good research question, how to determine whether a source is reliable or not, and much more. I am almost certain that those in my year have also learnt what I have, and I am certain that students that are yet to complete this project will learn many new things that will help them in the future.

Year 9 Student 2015-1016

What is the Personal Project?

Students complete the Personal Project as part of their Learning for Life course in Year 9.

The project is an inquiry based task which allows students to investigate an area of particular interest or significance to them. The final project consists of:

- an ePortfolio (a process journal)

- a product/outcome of their choice

- an exhibition to parents, teachers and classmates

To this end, the Year 9 Personal Project is a structured and guided task, in which students develop the skills necessary for independent critical thinking. It involves students asking purposeful and constructive questions, gathering and analysing information, generating solutions, making decisions, justifying conclusions and celebrating achievement.

Why do the Personal Project?

The Personal Project gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and interests developed since the start of year 7. In particular, the Personal Project allows students to embark upon a personal inquiry which can be linked specifically to an area of the taught curriculum or an area of personal interest. Through the teaching of specific information location, organisation and presentation skills, the Personal Project also prepares students for the challenges of coursework at IGCSE and ultimately the IB Diploma or the International Diploma levels. Consequently, the Personal Project enables students to develop confidence and independence as lifelong learners.

"The personal project has helped me concentrate on something that I am interested in. The fact that I am doing it by myself makes me able to manage my own time, and the work that I produce can be in whatever style that I want."

"It really pushed my inquiry and organisational skills to the next level. The exhibition also helped to improve my confidence."

Year 9 Students 2015-2016

What are the requirements of the Personal Project?

The Personal Project will involve students…

- deciding upon an area of knowledge, topic of interest, inquiry focus and inquiry question using the "Personal Project Process" on the next page

- reflect upon the process using the ePortfolio – this is an important part of the Personal Project and will involve students showing evidence of their inquiry at every stage

- meeting deadlines for each stage

- submitting a final outcome or product of their choice e.g. video diary, blog, website, essay, display, brochure, poems, short story

- setting up and preparing for their final exhibition in which they will explain their inquiry and outcomes

The Personal Project Process

steps to success

Defining

What do I really want to find out?

Locating

Where can I locate the information I need?

Organising

How can I best use this information?

Selecting

What information do I really need to use?

Presenting

How can I present this information?

Assessing

What did I learn from this?

brought to you by

The Learning for Life department

What is the Personal Project timeline?

January	Area of knowledge and topic of interest brainstormed and identified.
Early February	Inquiry focus and question decided.
March 24	Personal Project outcome and ePortfolio submitted.
March 28	Exhibition for parents, teachers and students.
April 21	Final award shared with students.

How will teachers help?

Teachers will …

- help students establish and maintain a focus for their Personal Project

- assist students in establishing a realistic timeline and help to ensure that the students stay on track

- review with the students the appropriate approaches to learning and skills that they can use to help them develop their projects

- discuss with students' relevant sources of information and, when necessary, other resources that the student may use to develop the project

- encourage students to keep detailed entries in their ePortfolio and check the journal regularly

- guide students on the organisation and presentation of their final piece of written work and their exhibition display

- assess the final outcome and the ePortfolio

How is the Personal Project assessed?

Personal Project Assessment Criteria

Criterion A	DEFINING INQUIRY QUESTION	Maximum 3
Criterion B	SELECTING AND ORGANISING INFORMATION	Maximum 3
Criterion C	PRESENTING INFORMATION	Maximum 3
Criterion D	WORKS CITED LIST	Maximum 3
Criterion E	RECORD OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	Maximum 3
Criterion F	ASSESSING AND REFLECTING	Maximum 3
Criterion G	PERSONAL EFFORT AND COMMITMENT	Maximum 3

Criterion A: DEFINING INQUIRY QUESTION

Achievement Level	Level Descriptor
1	The student can choose a topic of interest and formulate a line of inquiry but this may be limited in depth or accessibility.
2	The student can choose a topic of interest and narrow their focus to formulate a line of inquiry that is manageable and accessible.
3	The student can choose a topic of interest and narrow their focus to formulate a line of inquiry that is clear and challenging.

Criterion B: SELECTING AND ORGANISING INFORMATION

Achievement Level	Level Descriptor
1	The student has made some attempt to select relevant information from sources using one or more graphic organisers.
2	The student can select relevant information from sources as well as make connections using one or more graphic organisers.
3	The student can select highly relevant information from a range of sources. The graphic organiser/s show analysis and clear conclusions have been reached based on evidence.

Criterion C: PRESENTING INFORMATION

Achievement Level	Level Descriptor
1	The student can create a limited outcome in response to their learning.
2	The student can create a substantial outcome in response to their learning.
3	The student can create an excellent outcome in response to their learning.

Criterion D: WORKS CITED LIST

Achievement Level	Level Descriptor
1	The student uses some sources of information.
2	The student uses a variety of mostly reliable sources of information.
3	The student uses a wide range of reliable sources of information.

Criterion E: RECORD OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Achievement Level	Level Descriptor
1	The student partially uses the ePortfolio to plan and record the development process of the project.
2	The student uses their ePortfolio adequately to plan and record the development process of the project.
3	The student effectively uses their ePortfolio showing a detailed and accurate plan and record of the development process of the project.

Criterion F: ASSESSING AND REFLECTING

Achievement Level	Level Descriptor
1	The student has made little attempt to reflect on the process of creating a personal project in the ePortfolio.
2	The student is able to reflect on the process of creating a personal project in the ePortfolio.
3	The student is able to thoroughly reflect on the process of creating a personal project in the ePortfolio.

Criterion G: PERSONAL EFFORT AND COMMITMENT

Achievement level	Level descriptor
1	The student shows satisfactory effort and commitment.
2	The student shows a good standard effort and commitment.
3	The student shows outstanding effort and commitment.
In doing so students must: meet deadlines, use the ePortfolio, produce a final outcome, use research skills and be proactive throughout the process.	

OVERALL AWARD

Pass	Merit	Distinction
7 – 10 marks	11 – 17 marks	18 – 21 marks

How can parents help and support?

Parents can…

- ask about the area of interest your son/daughter would like to pursue for the inquiry

- ask where your son/daughter plans to get information for their inquiry

- track their progress throughout the project

- ask to read their ePortfolio on a regular basis

- give as much encouragement and support as possible

- attend the Personal Project exhibition in March

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