

Observation vs. Experience

Below you will find a clear explanation of these differences. By the beginning of May you should have completed a minimum of 30 hours, including at least 8 hours in each category.

Observation: This is truly an opportunity for you to experience exactly what the job entails or what it takes to “pull off an event.” You can observe your mentor or other experts in your field. Your goal, while observing or job shadowing, is to get the “big picture.” For example: if you want to see what it is like to be a teacher, then you will observe him/her providing direct instruction, grading papers, answering emails, planning upcoming units, and meeting with colleagues. In this capacity, you will be working closely with your mentor and experience what the job entails. You may not find an “exact match” with a mentor and that is okay. For example, if you want to be a comic book designer and your mentor is a graphic designer, then you will be observing him or her working. You will observe your mentor planning, drawing, meeting with colleagues and editing their work. It’s not an exact match, but it is a great observation opportunity. These hours do not need to be completed on the same day. Your mentor may only be available for 2-4 hours at a time; therefore, your observation may take place over several different days. Log your time and the tasks you completed on your running timesheet!!

Experience: This includes your hours spent on fieldwork (planning an event, distributing fliers, meeting with community members, emailing your mentor, meeting with your mentor, writing letters to solicit donations, visiting a job fair, conducting your personal interviews, researching on-line (beyond your research paper requirements) and writing thank-you notes to volunteers, donors, and interviewees. You need to document EVERYTHING you do on your running timesheet when it comes to planning and pulling off your project. Remember, your “experience” is not time spent on researching your essay or writing reflections for your English class.

Whenever you are observing or working, you should be professional and courteous. Try to schedule your observation days and field work hours during one of your days off from school so that you don’t feel overwhelmed with trying to fit in all of the hours. Remember that if you are visiting in an office environment, you should be dressed appropriately and turn your cell phone off.

Bottom line, what you put into this experience is what you get out of it. If you want an amazing experience, you need to work hard and be relentless. Those who benefit most from the Senior Project are those who set high expectations.