Saint Louis Sudbury School
Diploma Process and Requirements
Updated April 2024

In students' final year at Sudbury (usually aged 17-18 at the start of the school year), they may choose to participate in various processes to reflect on their time here and prepare them for their lives moving forward.

These options include:

1. Saint Louis Sudbury School Diploma - Student fulfills the "Time At Sudbury" requirements AND all three components of the Diploma Process (Portfolio, Mutual Aid Project, and My Story).
2. Saint Louis Sudbury School Certificate - Student fulfills the "Time At Sudbury" requirements AND at least one component of the Diploma Process (Portfolio, Mutual Aid Project, or My Story).
3. Post-Secondary School (i.e. Sudbury) Readiness - Student completes research of college or other post-secondary school options and what is required for applications, studies for and takes standardized tests required for entry at institution of choice, and prepares for the experience of college or other programs.

In the following, we explain the process of earning the Saint Louis Sudbury School Diploma. Students must meet ALL requirements outlined below to receive the diploma at the end of their final year. These will not be "graded." Diplomas will be awarded upon completion of all components to the very best of each student's ability.

Mentor (OPTIONAL, but recommended)
- Student recruits a staff member (or other trusted adult) to assist in the diploma process.
- Staff members are not required to say yes if they have multiple other mentees.

Diploma Components

1. Time At Sudbury
- Student has attended Sudbury for at least 2 school years by their diploma or certificate completion.*
- Student has an 85% attendance record (not including excused absences or medical absences)
- Student has chaired or co-chaired a Sudbury committee for at least 2 months

Exceptions can be made if the student demonstrates deep understanding and practice of the Sudbury philosophy.

2. Portfolio
- Student compiles a portfolio demonstrating their experiences of learning during their time at Sudbury. Some common student portfolio items include (these are just examples):
  – Table of contents outlining the self-directed portfolio
  – Learning objectives or subject summaries
  – List of books, educational videos or other supplements used
  – Brochures, ticket stubs, flyers or other field trip memorabilia
  – Photo album documenting projects and outings that cannot be represented on paper
  – Writing samples including completed essays or other writing projects
  – List of achievements which could include awards, certificates or community service recognition
  – Work experience outside of school- letter from supervisor, job description, photos
  – Legal documents required by your state, which could include medical records, letter of intent and/or attendance reports
- Criteria: Student includes at least 10 items in their portfolio.

3. Mutual Aid Project
- Student plans, raises money for, and completes a project to benefit someone who had a role in the student's growing up, or as a gift to future generations of the school.
- For Sudbury-specific projects, the student is prompted to think about what could contribute to younger and future student's wellbeing and happiness.
- If they find it helpful, they may use some or all of the following guidelines:

  Planning
  – Decide on what you'd like to do by considering who you can help, what your strengths are, and what they need.

– Create a budget for the cost of the project.
– Break the project down into steps to use as your benchmark goals. (Consider how you will raise money, skills you may need to acquire, help you may need, and steps involved in completing your project.)
– Create a calendar of benchmark goals, including fundraising and execution, and completion.
– Raise Funds
– Follow your fundraising plan
– If you make less or more than your fundraising goal, readjust your project budget and amend your project plan.

Execute
– Follow your project plan.
– Respond to (inevitable!) problems with creativity.
– Don't be afraid to change the plan when you're presented with new information!

- Criteria: Student completes a project that is useful to and approved of by the recipient. The recipient is a member or group from the student's community that has been a part of their growing up.

4. My Story
- Student tells their story, explaining what has led them to be ready for the next chapter in their life. This could take the form of an essay, a performance, a game, a photojournalism project, a graphic novel, and so on. We recommend the student recruits a mentor from staff or elsewhere to ensure quality and rigor in their project.
- Criteria: Student includes at least 5 components of their life and/or what they've learned at Sudbury.
- Student should be sincere in their storytelling. Student should research and practice their craft throughout their final year to create a high quality final product.

Timeline
Below is a suggested timeline for the benchmarks for each part of the program. The entire process takes a minimum of one year to complete and should begin no later than the October of the school year in which the candidate plans to graduate.

October
- By Oct 15, Candidates submit their intent to graduate to Graduation Committee
- Candidates recruits a mentor (staff, volunteer, or another adult/graduated Sudbury student) by end of October (OPTIONAL)
- Candidate works with mentor on proposal for the Mutual Aid Project
- Candidate begins to organize and collect items for their Portfolio

November
- Candidate creates the Mutual Aid Project plan and timeline. The framework should include an overview of the following:
    – Vision - What is the project?
    – Budget and funding
    – Preliminary logistics
    – Transportation needed
    – Adult commitment required
- Candidate presents their Mutual Aid Project idea to Graduation Committee for approval
- Candidate begins to outline My Story and brainstorm what medium they wish to use for it

December - March
- Candidate continues to develop logistics and details for My Story.
- Candidates complete their Mutual Aid Project fundraiser and begin to work on their project
- Candidates continue to add items to their Portfolio.

April - May
- Candidate completes and presents Mutual Aid Project to Graduation Committee and School Meeting.
- Candidate completes and presents My Story to Graduation Committee and School Meeting.
- Candidate completes and presents Portfolio to Graduation Committee and School Meeting.

May (Last week of school)
- Graduation Ceremony