

PERSONAL INTEREST PROJECTS



Every nine weeks, your child will have the chance to explore something that interests him or her. These are called Personal Interest Projects or PIPs. These projects help to fulfill research standards in Science and Social Studies. You should help your child choose a topic that has something to do with the theme of study during that term. You can choose from the list of suggested topics or come up with one on your own. You should help your child choose a topic by the beginning of the second week of term and share his/her ideas with the teacher. At the end of each term, there will be a sharing time for each student to present his or her PIP to the parents and other students.

During the course of the school year, each class will explore four different topics. Your child will have the opportunity to present four different PIPs. Because he or she will have a month to work on the project, it should reflect a good month's work. However, it also should be something that's fun for your child and not something that causes a lot of stress to for your family! Plan ahead and do a little each week and the job will be done. Children have a tendency to procrastinate, then rush to do the work during the last few days. Please help them structure the time so they are working on their PIP throughout the month.

One of the projects during the year may be a book report on a chapter book that is at your child's independent reading level according to teacher direction. The other PIPs must be projects that involve the higher-level thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.



PIPs can take a variety of forms. They can be collections made, research done, experiments conducted, models built, or demonstrations presented (i.e., teaching the class how to do something new.) PIPs are only limited by your child's imagination! Each PIP should include a written report with the following information:

- The title of the project
- The purpose of the project (i.e., why was this project chosen?)
- A list of materials used
- A list of sources for the research, (i.e., other words, what books, magazines, internet sources, etc., studied)
- The procedures followed or the steps taken to complete the project.

- The results of the project. What did your child learn? Has this changed his or her thinking in any way? What recommendation would the child make to others?
- What is he or she going to do in the future as a result of what he or she has learned?

PIPs also include a product, poster, display, etc.

All PIPs require an oral presentation in the classroom.



The Parent's Role

1. Offer suggestions when appropriate, but let your child choose the topic and make the key decisions.
2. Set aside a regular time each week for your child to work on his or her project. Be available for consultation, but don't do the work for him or her. Encourage a variety of research materials, not just the internet.
3. Make sure your child has access to the books, tools, and materials that he or she needs. Taking your child to the library should be a regular event. In terms of materials, talk about what you can or cannot buy/supply for the project in the very beginning so that your child can plan around that and won't be hitting you up the night before the project is due with a request for expensive tools and materials!
4. Supervise your child whenever he or she is working with materials or tools that are sharp, hot, or in any way potentially dangerous.
5. If your child uses the internet, make sure that you have a firewall program that blocks adult content. It is also important that the computer be in a location in your home - like the living or family room - where you can easily see what your child is seeing. You shouldn't put the computer in a bedroom and leave the child unsupervised to surf the net. Also warn your child never to post any personal or family information on any internet site or respond to anyone else's personal information. Occasionally check out the information your child has gleaned on line. There are some excellent and expert sources to be found, but there are

also a lot of people's personal opinions. Follow up to see who posted the information and if it is a reliable source.

6. Help your child set up a timetable for the project so the work does not get left until the last minute.
7. Remember, the project is supposed to be educational and fun. Don't nag or try to make your child feel guilty. The PIP should not become a stressful experience for either of you. If *you* need help, just ask!



Choosing and Working on Your PIP The Student's Role

1. Pick something that interests you. It should be fun as well as educational.
2. Don't pick something too big. It should be something you can do by working a few hours each week (average: $\frac{1}{2}$ hour each day) for 4 weeks.
3. Talk about your topic to your parents and your teacher to make sure the project is safe, ethical, and not too costly in terms of the materials and supplies you will need. You need to have the approval of your parents and teacher before you actually begin work on your project, so start early.
4. You can get project ideas from your teacher, your parents, books you've read, something you've seen on TV - almost anywhere. Your teacher will give you some suggestions each term.
5. Begin early to research your topic. You can do research from trade books, reference books (like encyclopedias, atlases, dictionaries, etc.), newspapers and magazines, personal interviews, or on the internet.
6. Keep good records as you go. You may want to keep a science journal to keep track of what you are doing.
7. Work safely! When in doubt, ask an adult for help.

8. Present your material in a neat and organized way so that other people can understand what you've been studying and what you've learned.
9. You will be explaining your projects to other students and parents, so have some ideas ahead of time of what you will say. Practice explaining your project at home to your family.
10. The most important part of your PIP is sharing what you have learned about your subject and how that is going to affect your life in the future.¹

These Personal Interest Projects, when done correctly, meet the Arizona State Research Standards in Social Studies and Science. If you would like to know about the Academic Standards in the State of Arizona, go to the Arizona Department of Education/Standards at the following link:

<http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/>

¹ Some of the suggestions in this handout were suggested by and adapted from the book *Quick-but-great Science Fair Projects* by Shar Levine & Leslie Johnstone, Sterling Publishing Co, Inc., New York, NY, 2000.