

**To: Students and Families**

**From:**

**Date:**

**Re: Your Next Project**

Dear Students:

In your many years of schooling, you've done quite a few projects. You've made your fair share of posters, written a few reports, and maybe even created a diorama or two! You've written book reports, biographies, and maybe you've interviewed people for your projects. But this next project is something different. Something unique. Something AWESOME! Here's your assignment:

## **Teach us something, somehow.**

Yes, that's right. Your assignment is a simple one: teach us about something, using some interesting technique. First, let's talk about the topic:

### **TOPIC**

Now, let's talk about HOW you're going to teach us.

### **METHOD**

Yes, you can make a poster or write a written report, but let's face it – been there, done that! I challenge you to have some fun and to choose a more creative way of teaching us. Some ideas for methods include:

### **OBJECTIVES**

This project is intended to help you to accomplish the following goals:

- Be creative in choosing a presentation topic and method
- Manage your time (with help) during a long-term project.
- Recognize and address problems that come up during your work.
- Have some fun with developing a product that's totally unique to your own interests!

The rest of this packet has more information that you need to know.

## Steps to Success (and Schedule)

### Forms

You may not have a single printed word to hand in for your final product. Then again, maybe you will. It all depends on the method that you and I agree on. To help you (and me) to keep track of your progress during this project, there are four forms that you'll need to complete.

*Idea Proposal Form* – On this form, you'll share your idea for your topic and your method. While it's ok that your topic may be familiar, it must also include new learning for you. For example, imagine you're a huge fan of video games, and you want to teach us about them. You may already know a lot about the current games on the Wii, PlayStation, and X-Box, but maybe you can learn about the history of video games. If I approve your proposal, you're all set to move on. If I don't approve it, you may need to make some changes and submit a new proposal form. Don't worry, if that happens, I'll work with you to improve your proposal!

*Request to Work as Partners* – You have the option to work with a partner on this project. But you need to understand that I will not usually approve partnerships. For me to approve a partnership, you need to show me that your project idea is something that **REQUIRES** two people and that you both bring a unique skill or background that will make your partnership successful. (More information is on the form itself.)

*List of Sources* – A skilled and honest student always keeps track of where he or she gets his or her information. Use this form to record what sources help you learn about your topic. That way, if I have any questions, I can just check one of your sources. Remember, this isn't just being thorough; it's being honest too. Taking credit for another person's ideas is dishonest, and using someone else's writing and pretending it's your own is plagiarism. That's a BIG deal. Give credit where credit is due, and when in doubt, ask me if you're not sure what is ok to do and what isn't.

*Midway Progress Report* and *Final Progress Report* – I can't help you if I don't know that you're having problems! These progress reports help me to know how you're doing with the project and what I can do to help you. Nothing should be a surprise to me on the due date.

*Program Page* – We'll make a program (booklet) of information about everyone's project. Complete this page neatly and carefully, since it will be shared with everyone in class!

## Other things to know

- As you brainstorm topics and methods, and as you work on your project, be sure to look at the planning and scoring rubric. This will help you to know EXACTLY what is expected of you. Choose a grade that you want and work to get it!
- You'll notice that I'm grading the quality of your teaching, creativity, and task management. There are no "bonus points" for flashy or fancy projects, although creativity IS graded.
- This is a project for STUDENTS. Family members and friends are invited to help, particularly if you are using a method of presentation that's new to you, but remember that the final product should be YOUR OWN work. For example, your family should not make your presentation on the computer. He or she can help, but you should be the one sitting at the keyboard.
- This is a unique assignment! You may not be comfortable, at first, with having so few SPECIFIC directions and requirements. That's understandable. A student who has questions and responsibly comes to me for help will NEVER lose points. A student who waits until the last minute, needs to be nagged a lot, and does not ask for help when they need it is not being responsible. That kind of student may lose points if their project does not meet expectations.
- Worried about the time all these forms will take to complete? Don't worry, these will take the place of homework assignments as the deadlines approach.

## Attachments

- Calendar
- Scoring Rubric
- Idea Proposal form
- Request to Work As Partners form
- List of Sources form
- Midway Progress Report
- Final Progress Report
- Program Page
- Parent sign-off page

# Planning and Scoring Rubric

# TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Method \_\_\_\_\_

	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
<b>Idea Proposal Form</b>	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment.	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment on time.	Student did not responsibly manage this part of the task without extensive teacher support.	Student presented an idea for a topic and method to the teacher and worked with the teacher to finalize both pieces.
<b>Midway Progress Report</b>	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment.	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment on time.  Pieces of information were missing from this report.	Student completed this portion of the assignment on time, but details are vague and may be unclear.	Student completed this portion of the assignment on time. There is enough information for the teacher to understand how the student is progressing with the project. Any known problems were brought to the teacher's attention.
<b>Final Progress Report</b>	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment.	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment on time.  Pieces of information were missing from this report.	Student completed this portion of the assignment on time, but details are vague and may be unclear.	Student completed this portion of the assignment on time. There is enough information for the teacher to understand how the student is progressing with the project. Any known problems were brought to the teacher's attention.
<b>Program Page</b>	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment.	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment on time.	Student was vague in his or her explanation in one or more areas.  Handwriting is unclear.	People reading this page can get a great idea for what the topic and method are, and why the student chose them. The responses are detailed and insightful.

**(OVER)**

<b>Research Topic and Sources</b>	<p>The student did not present about the approved topic.</p> <p>The student did not complete the source list.</p>	<p>The chosen topic was very, very narrow and didn't have a lot of information to share.</p> <p>The topic was far too broad and was difficult to organize.</p> <p>The source list was late and/or missing significant pieces of information.</p>	<p>The student chose a topic with which he or she was very familiar. There was only some new learning. <i>(Determined based on discussions with student.)</i></p> <p>The student's source list was incomplete.</p>	<p>The student chose a topic with which he or she had limited familiarity. There was clearly a lot of new learning. <i>(Determined based on discussions with student.)</i></p> <p>The student completely listed all their sources.</p>
<b>Teaching</b>	The student did not present any material to the class.	It seemed that very little was taught to the audience.	A person who was unfamiliar with the topic would have learned several new things.	A person who was unfamiliar with the topic would have learned a lot!
<b>Method</b>	Student did not have a planned method of presentation.	The method of presentation did not work as planned.	The method of presentation taught us about the topic, although some parts were unclear.	The method of presentation taught us a lot about the topic. It was clear and easy to understand what we were being taught!
<b>Project Management</b> (RESPONSIBILITY)	<p>Problems that developed during the project were never brought to the teacher's attention before the due date.</p> <p>The final product and/or program page were handed in more than two days late.</p>	<p>There were many problems during the project that the student did not bring to the teacher's attention until the last minute.</p> <p>The final product was handed in 2 days late.</p> <p>The Program Page was handed in 2 days late.</p>	<p>There may have been a few small last minute problems, but the student handled them well, overall.</p> <p>The final product and/or Program page was handed in one day late.</p>	<p>If any problems did arise, the student handled them in responsible way, rather than waiting until the last minute. (NOTE: Last minute technical glitches are often unavoidable and will students will not be penalized.)</p> <p>Everything was completed on time. (Note: Students will not be penalized for delays beyond their control.)</p>
<b>Creativity</b> (THE BIG SCORE!)	<p>The student copied the work of another person.</p> <p>0 POINTS</p>	<p>The student chose a topic and/or method that were very "familiar" and did not challenge himself or herself to try something new.</p> <p>2 POINTS</p>	<p>The student challenged himself or herself to try something new and creative by choosing a rather unfamiliar topic or by picking a new method for teaching us!</p> <p>4 POINTS</p>	<p>WOW! The topic and/or method were really creative and were clearly brand new pieces of learning for the student! That takes courage!</p> <p>6 POINTS</p>

Total Score: \_\_\_\_/30 points

# Idea Proposal Form

## TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

**REMEMBER, the topic MUST include some NEW learning for you, even if you're familiar with it already. Your final product can't be all OLD knowledge that you already have!**

The topic I would like to teach the class is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I think this would be interesting because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The method I would like to use to teach this topic is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Grown-Up's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Families: Before signing, make sure that your student is able to complete both the topic and method that he or she is proposing. Remember, this is a home-based assignment. For example, if your student wants to teach us about Egyptian Pyramids by creating a scale model of a pyramid with different rooms inside, he or she may need your limited support to accomplish this at home.

For the teacher:              Approved:              YES              NO  
If no, see reasons on back side.

Teacher signature (when approved): \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Keep this form when it is returned to you.  
It must be turned in AGAIN at the end of the project.***

# Request to Work as Partners

# TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

HAND THIS PAGE IN WITH YOUR IDEA PROPOSAL FORM, PLEASE.

Student Names \_\_\_\_\_

Explain why you would like to work together. Remember, your reason must show why you'll be able to develop a more successful, thorough project together than what either of you could design on your own. You will share the work equally throughout the project.

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Student 1 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Grown-Up 1 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student 2 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Grown-Up 2 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For the teacher:      Approved:      YES      NO  
If no, see reasons on back side.

Teacher signature (when approved): \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Keep this form when it is returned to you.  
It must be turned in AGAIN at the end of the project.***

# List of Sources

# TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Method \_\_\_\_\_

*It is very important for responsible students to honestly give credit to the sources from which they learned the information that they used in their project. In addition to giving credit to people who had the original ideas, it also lets others know where to look if they want more information about some part of your project. You should list ALL your sources on this sheet. Your teacher can give you more copies of this sheet, if you run out of room in a given section. You may not fill in this whole form, depending on how many sources you have.*

## Print resources

(books, magazines, newspaper articles, etc.)

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

If article, name of magazine or newspaper:

\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

If article, name of magazine or newspaper:

\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

If article, name of magazine or newspaper:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Media sources

(websites, online encyclopedias, blogs, TV shows, movies, etc.)

### NOT JUST "GOOGLE" PLEASE!

Type of Source: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

URL (if web based): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Type of Source: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

URL (if web based): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Type of Source: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

URL (if web based): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(OVER)



### **Primary Sources**

(formal interviews, knowledge you already had, casual conversations, people demonstrating something)

In a short sentence, explain where/who the information came from and what you learned.

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### **“Field Trip” Sources**

(museums, tourist destinations, national parks, etc.)

List the **SPECIFIC** places you visited to conduct research (other than the library or similar places).

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### **Other Sources**

Describe any other sources you used to research your topic.

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# Midway Progress Report

# TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Method \_\_\_\_\_

*Check off what steps you have completed. You probably won't check them all off, and that's OK!*

- ☐ Topic selected and approved.
- ☐ Method selected and approved.
- ☐ Any necessary research about the topic is completed.
- ☐ Presentation method has been planned.
- ☐ I've started working on my presentation.
- ☐ Presentation finished.

Write a few sentences telling me what you've accomplished so far.

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What questions, if any, do you have? What problems, if any, have you had so far?

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What can my teacher do to help me?

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Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Grown-Up Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Final Progress Report

# TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Method \_\_\_\_\_

*Check off what steps you have completed. You probably won't check them all off, and that's OK!*

- ☐ Topic selected and approved.
- ☐ Method selected and approved.
- ☐ Any necessary research about the topic is completed.
- ☐ Presentation method has been planned.
- ☐ I've started working on my presentation.
- ☐ Presentation finished.

What questions, if any, do you have? What problems, if any, have you had so far?  
Remember, a RESPONSIBLE student comes to their teacher with problems BEFORE the due date!

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What can my teacher do to help me?

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*By signing this page, I pledge that this project is my own work. Other people may have helped me along the way, but the product I'm turning in is my own work, and I created it. This is my best work, and I'm proud to hand it in!*

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*By signing this page, I agree that this project is my student's own work and that the majority of the work was done by him or her.*

Grown-Up Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Program Page

# TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

I am teaching you \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I chose this topic because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My method is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I chose this method because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Something I learned while completing this project (other than new things about my topic) is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'm particularly proud of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Parent Letter

## TEACH US SOMETHING, SOMEHOW

Dear Parent,

I hope this is a fun project for your son or daughter. I have several goals for the students. First, I hope that this will be a motivating project for kids. In choosing their own topic and method, I hope that kids will develop a project that they're proud of and eager to share. Second, I hope that this will let kids teach their peers (and me) about a variety of topics that will enrich their overall knowledge. Third, I hope that the creative elements of this project will help kids to engage in a superior amount of higher level, critical thinking, compared to conventional book reports.

I also realize that this may be a challenging project. Such an open-ended task does place a unique challenge on your child to take responsibility for more of their work. As they get older, this sort of requirement will become increasingly common, so I hope this project is good practice for your son or daughter – my fourth goal. I understand that this project also creates more work for you. Even though it's your child's responsibility, it's appropriate for you to help him or her learn new skills, particularly when involving new technology. I intentionally developed a padded timeline that should accommodate your busy schedule. Of course, if there are unusual circumstances that make this schedule particularly difficult, I'm happy to discuss accommodations on a case-by-case basis.

We have discussed this project in class at great length, and I'm confident that the kids know what is expected of them and what their responsibilities are. As you decide how to best support your child and he or she works on this new-style project, please consider the following suggestions:

- Your child will benefit from your guidance and brainstorming as he or she works to choose a topic and method. I'm here to help, too.
- I've provided a timetable to help keep the students on schedule during the working part of the schedule. If you're available to your child to help them or guide them during this time, they'll most likely end up with a project that's more meaningful for them. You may be able to identify problems or answer questions that they haven't even thought of yet.
- I ask that you sign your child's midway progress report and final progress report. This is your child's opportunity to notify me of any problems, so it's a great way for you to also remain involved.
- This is primarily your child's project. If he or she is using a newly learned method, I understand the urge to provide lots of support, and I certainly don't object. I urge you to remember that the final product should be your child's work, and he or she should be able to confidently say that the ideas in their project are their own.

If you have any questions during the project, please be in touch with me. I'm here to help! Please sign and return the bottom portion of this page at your earliest convenience.

Best,

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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

*I have reviewed the **Teach Us Something, Somehow** assignment packet with my son or daughter.*

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_