

Frequently Asked Questions About  
Research Reports,  
Project Displays,  
and the  
**GSDA**  
**Showcase Event!**



June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010 2-3:30pm

Your consultant has just handed you the instructions for a research report. Maybe you have been at Greater San Diego Academy for a while and you know why we stress teaching students to write research reports. Maybe you've been to one of our project showcase events and have marveled at the quality and diversity of the projects and reports presented there. Or maybe this is your first year with Greater San Diego Academy and you have no idea how to go about teaching your student to research and write reports—or even why!

Below is a list of frequently asked questions that we've received regarding the process of writing research reports and specifically about our showcase event. We hope that the answers here will be helpful to you as you begin this exciting adventure into the world of inquiry. The next few months could very well be the most exciting ones of the year for you and your children.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **1. What is a research report? What is a project display board?**

There are two kinds of research reports most frequently produced by our students. One type of report is created when the student thinks of an interesting topic, researches that topic, summarizes what has been learned, and creates a report from that summary. The other type of report is a scientific method report, and for this type, the student thinks of an interesting topic, creates and experiment to learn about some aspect of that topic, and then reports on what was learned from the scientific method.

A project display board is usually a tri-fold cardboard display on which information about the topic that the student researched is artistically arranged, using text, graphics, illustrations, etc. The project display board accompanies the report at the showcase event and makes the display more interesting to its viewers.

#### **2. Is my student required to complete a research report?**

All students are *strongly encouraged* to complete research reports. This learning activity is valuable for a few reasons:

- It allows the student to have a stimulating source of learning at a time of the school year when the school books may be losing some of their pizzazz.
- It allows the student to apply many of the skills that he or she has been practicing all year long. For example, many students have been working in grammar programs for most of the year, learning to identify correct sentence structure and punctuation; now they will have the opportunity to put that grammar knowledge to use in the process of revising and proofreading.
- It allows students to practice their skills that are best taught as part of larger projects; skills like note-taking, outlining, and summarizing.

#### **3. Is completing the research packet the same as writing a research report?**

Not necessarily. It is possible to complete all of the worksheets in the packet and still not have completed a research report. The purpose of the research packet is to help give you instruction in researching skills; a research report is the written culmination of your student's study of a specific topic.

#### **4. Can we choose any topic to research?**

GSDA has no strict guidelines on topic choice; however, we do suggest that you help your student choose a topic that

- is of interest to him or her,
- is specific enough to be covered in a research report of grade-appropriate length.

Families with multiple students have to consider a few more things when choosing topics. They may

- choose to all study the same topic,
- choose to have each student in the family study a related topic,
- choose to study completely individualized topics.

#### **5. Can kindergarteners really complete a research project?**

Many of them can, especially if they have the help of mom or dad. Of course, the project completed by a kindergartener will be very different from one created by a tenth grader, or even by a third grader. If you choose to do a research report with your kindergartener-and we hope that you do-follow the suggestions below:

- Expect to be heavily involved. Your excitement about the process of learning will be infectious.
- Find a topic that interests your child.
- Find resources related to that topic to read and discuss them together.
- Write down notes on what is learned from your various sources, and then model how to put the report together into a written piece. Some kindergarteners will be ready and able to copy sentences onto separate pages in a little book and then illustrate the pages; others may need to have a parent do the writing and will do the illustrations by themselves. For kindergarteners who are still developing the ability to draw, you might help them find appropriate pictures in magazines, newspapers, and on the internet to use as illustrations in their reports.

#### **6. Will my consultant be willing to help me review my student's rough draft of his or her research report?**

Yes! It would certainly be a good idea to take advantage of your consultant's experience as you help your student with the research report. One benefit of your monthly consultation is that you may use this time to go over the draft together.

#### **7. Should we stop our current work while we are working on our research reports? How much of our usual curriculum do we need to complete?**

Some families choose to intersperse the research project with the regular schoolwork while others choose to complete their regular schoolwork early and do an in depth exploration and

preparation of their research project during the last couple weeks of school. If you choose to intersperse the research project throughout your regular schoolwork, here are some modifications you might choose to make to your regular routine:

- On a day when your student is researching (reading and taking notes) a topic, he or she does not have to do reading in a literature course.
- On a day when your student is outlining the report, or writing the report, he or she is not expected to work in his or her core writing program.
- On days close to the showcase event, a lot of time may be spent on completing the report and project display. On such days, much other work will need to be set aside. We would encourage you, though, to *continue working daily in math*.

High school students should be reminded that they will still need to meet all of the requirements of their regular coursework to receive credit.

### **8. How long does my student's research report have to be?**

We have no strict requirements as to the length of research reports; actually, in our minds, *quality* is a much more important factor. Please talk with your consultant to find out what would be appropriate for your student.

### **9. Can you give me an idea of how to pace this research project?**

You and your children are free to create your own pacing schedule for the completion of this project. Below is a sample pacing guide that you might want to follow as a guide:

- **March- Plan:** Select a topic, if you haven't already done so. Brainstorm and jot down ideas for your research project (resources, props, etc....) and create a plan.
- **April- Prepare:** Begin gathering sources and start researching on your topic. Ask your consultant for help or advice.
- **May- Draft:** Begin putting your research project together.
- **June- Finalize:** Edit, revise, and add finishing touches to your project. June 11, 2010 is the big day and is time for you to showcase your project and be a STAR!!!!

### **10. Are there any display boards that we can look at to get an idea of what they should look like?**

There are pictures of past presentation boards on the GSDA website and at your local resource center.

### **11. Do we have to attend the showcase event?**

While it is not required that your student displays his or her research project at the showcase event, we feel confident that if he or she does, it will be a wonderful and memorable experience. Students will have the opportunity to show off their hard work to hundreds of viewers and will also be able to experience the results of the efforts of other students at GSDA.

### **12. May my student bring a live animal with his or her project?**

If your student's report is on a specific animal and you feel that his or her display would be enhanced by a live animal, please follow these rules:

- Let GSDA know in advance that you will be bringing a live animal. Not all requests will be approved due to Balboa Park regulations.
- Let GSDA know what type of animal you will be bringing.
- The animal must be small enough to fit in a cage or enclosure alongside the project display.
- The *animal must be in a cage at all times.*
- For the safety of the animal, as well as the viewers, *animals on display must be monitored by the student or his or her parents at all times.*

**13. Can my student sing, dance, play piano, or do karate, etc.?**

Yes. There is an opportunity for a limited number of performances at the event. Please discuss what your student would like to do with your consultant. Your consultant will then inform the showcase committee and you will be contacted.

We also welcome pictures, PowerPoints, video and audio recordings of your student's performance. Please let us know if you will need access to electricity for your display.

**14. Are there project display boards available from the school?**

Yes. You can purchase a presentation board at your resource center for \$2. Presentation boards can be purchased at Staples or any art supply store as well.

**15. Do we need to register for the showcase event?**

Registration is very important to us as we plan for your participation in the showcase event. For one thing, it allows us to ensure that we have adequate space allocated for your student's project and that all your special needs, such as electrical access or a larger display area may be met. If you would like your child's name and showcase title included in the program, please complete your registration by April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

**16. Are there size limitations on my display?**

The normal space allocated for a display is one that will hold a regular-sized display board with space in front of it for the report and any models or display objects that might accompany the report. However, if you have an exciting project that requires more space, let us know in advance at the time of registration and we'll try to accommodate your request-from our viewpoint, the more creative, the better!

**17. Will there be food available?**

Unfortunately, we will not be providing food or drinks for the event. There is a café inside the Hall of Champions where you can purchase food and drinks. Water fountains are also available.