

Timeline of Mentor Activities

August/September

- Narrow down student's topic to a strong interest area, one in which research and production of a tangible product can be achieved by April.
- Provide experiences and resources that enhance the student's knowledge and understanding.
- Help establish goals and timelines.

October/November/December

- Continue refinement of research.
- Guide and develop product choice and proposal.
- Re-evaluate and refine goals and timelines.
- Evaluate Research Portfolio.
- Help student procure supplies for product development.

January/February/March

- Continue to guide product development.
- Evaluate product.
- Advise and critique format of final presentation.
- Review written and AV material for final presentation.

April/May

- Evaluate completed product.
- Attend and evaluate student's final presentation.

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August 2020



Northside
Independent School District



Independent Study Mentorship

Gifted and Talented Programs & Advanced Academics

Mentors – the Key Element to a Successful Independent Study



Overview

Since the late 1980s, Northside Independent School District has offered an honors-level independent study course for high school juniors and seniors. The Independent Study Mentorship (ISM) course is taught by one of Northside's Gifted and Enrichment teachers and by a community professional who serves as the academic mentor in the student's chosen field of study. The student is required to conduct extensive background research and then design and present an original, real-world product. ISM has become the perfect course to challenge the student's skills in all content areas, as well as prepare the student for college and a possible career. Professional guidance for the development of quality products and portfolios can be obtained by the high school student to help facilitate a successful transition from high school to college.

The Mentor Component

NISD believes that effective individuals in a variety of professions and cultural pursuits have something to share with young people that goes beyond classroom learning experiences. Mentors are the key element to a successful independent study. The mentor is an adult who has a lively enthusiasm for their work or hobby. Some of the responsibilities of the mentor are to:

- assist students in learning, especially by providing first-hand observations and hands-on experiences.
- introduce students to other community resources.
- help learners recognize and accept the possibility of changes in plans and goals.
- be willing to listen to students' ideas and questions.
- provide constructive criticism.
- encourage students to explore new opportunities for learning.
- keep in contact via scheduled meetings, email, and phone, approximately once a week.

The Student Component

ISM offers students freedom of choice in topics, products, and mentor experiences. Students make decisions about what to learn, the methods of learning, and how to use what they've learned. The typical ISM student:

- is bright, energetic, and curious.
- wants to be like the mentor.
- begins the school day between 7:45 and 8:45 a.m.
- may have a part-time job.
- has 1 to 1.5 hours during the school day to work on the ISM project.
- is usually very active in extracurricular activities.
- may have as many ups and downs in the school day as an adult has in a busy job.
- appreciates having real responsibilities and being a part of the mentor's place of business.

There are many benefits for students. Students improve and expand their methods of research. Students are encouraged to expand their creativity and their critical thinking skills. Time management skills and organization skills needed for successful long-term projects are part of class training. In addition, students benefit by:

- receiving an honors, elective credit class.
- earning a speech credit, which is mandatory for graduation.
- investigating a career field or lifetime interest of choice.
- gaining real-life experiences.
- developing skills in communication and speaking, decision-making, time management, problem-solving, and methods of inquiry.

The Teacher Component

A Northside teacher, trained in learning strategies for gifted students, helps the mentor and student achieve project goals. The ISM teacher is open to innovative approaches to solving problems and accepts students as fellow thinkers, rather than simply learners. The teacher nurtures growth and encourages independence and positive self-concepts. The Independent Study Mentorship teacher helps convey what is expected and allowed in each mentorship location.

ISM Course Timeline

The ISM course is divided into three focus areas of study and performance. The first of these areas is research which continues throughout the year but is especially emphasized in the first three months of the mentorship. The second area is product development. The student is required to create a tangible product, one that has real-world purpose. Lastly, the student conducts a formal presentation of research and of the product that was developed.