**Curiosity Project***Learning How to Learn*

**The cure for boredom is curiosity.
 There is no cure for curiosity.***-Ellen Parr*

#### **Dear Parents,**

The goal of this project is to help students become intellectually curious learners by providing them with modeling, structure and practice. We want learners who initiate and pursue their own learning and develop the disposition for deep learning. The project is designed to be done in a relaxed manner over the course of six weeks.

Your role in the project will be to **guide** and **support** your child. ***You’re co-interested and co-curious in this pursuit, but the pursuit is theirs, not yours***. During this project we are going to experience and think about how learners...

* **use curiosity to initiate their own learning.**
* **take their curiosity to the next step with a plan for learning.**
* **gather information.**
* **share information.**
* **reflect on their learning.**

## The Project

1. Your child will choose a topic that sparks his or her curiosity. It could be something that fascinates him, or something she wants to learn how to do.

2. Your child will produce three things: a presentation or product to share with the class, a “curiosity journal” in which he or she records thoughts and ideas throughout the project, and finally a “Curiosity Story,” which explains how he or she conceived the project.

3. Children will have six weeks to complete the project. During the seventh week, they’ll be invited to present what they’ve learned.

4. You will need to help your child two or three times a week. This project is meant to be flexible, enjoyableand not overwhelming! If it becomes stressful, I’m more than happy to make accommodations to ensure that your child is successful. Please contact me with questions or concerns along the way.

**Timeline**

Week 1 Exploring & Selecting a Topic

Week 2 Planning & Information Gathering

Week 3 Information Gathering

Week 4 Information Gathering/Planning Presentation

Week 5 Beginning work on Presentation

Week 6 Completing Presentation

Week 7 Presentation! Parents/Families are encouraged to join in this celebration.

**Guidelines for Choosing a Topic**

* The topic must be worthy of learning. Your child should have a “live interest” and a current sense of curiosity about this topic. Your child has to be able to convince others that this topic is worth learning. He or she will be asked to “defend this choice” early in the process. Natural curiosity is obvious, so this is easy when the correct choice is made!
* The topic must be a topic ***selected by your child***, and not something you’ve selected. Self-direction is one of the main traits your children must have as learners throughout their entire lives. Below are some examples of topics; however, your child should be encouraged to choose something on his/her own!
* The project should have no (or minimal) financial cost.
* The project should be something your child can learn or do with minimal direction and assistance.

*Previous Successful Topics Chosen by Children*

How Jet engines work

Dangerous Weather

How electricity travels

Jewels and gems

Digestive system

Allergies

Mosquitoes

How Glass is Made

Echolocation in Animals

Eyes and how they work

How Earth Began

How Do Cell Phones Work?

WEEK 1

What is curiosity?

**Day 1:** With a parent or other adult at home, discuss these questions:

*· What is Curiosity?*

*· Is it important? Why or Why Not?*

Find a special notebook, or create your own by stapling some pieces of notebook paper together. Label it as your “Curiosity Journal.” This is where you will keep all the notes and information for your project and also where you will write your “Curiosity Story.” To begin, write down a few thoughts in response to the questions above.

**Day 2:** *How do curious people use their curiosity or passion to learn new things?*

Take notes in Curiosity Journal on what you notice.

**Days 3, 4 and 5:** Time to think about what YOU want to learn! Talk with someone at home about what makes you curious! Begin a list in your journal. Remember to include the reasons why you are curious about the subjects on your list. Over the next few days, continue adding to your list. Your first impulse might be: But I already know my topic! Slow down. Give yourself the whole three days to think of more ideas. Talk with your family at the dinner table, or in the car on the way to school. Your “curious bug” may jump out when you least expect it and surprise you with an entirely new, more interesting idea! Remember, your goal is to become an ever more curious person, and not to race through this project.

**Day 6:** Time to choose a topic. Look at the notes in your curiosity journal and circle the topic you’d like to explore for this project. Make sure it is something you are interested in *now* and NOT something that others think you should do!

**WEEK 2**

How do curious people start learning?

**Day 1:** **Your Story Begins**

At the top of a page in your notebook, write: “My Curiosity Story.” You are going to *tell a story* about how you first became interested in your topic. Were you having breakfast with a friend or family member? Did the idea come to you while you were reading a book or sitting in the bathtub? How long have you been curious about this? Remember, stories have a beginning, middle and end. You don’t need to finish your story tonight; you will be adding to your story as you continue with your project. Be sure to leave several blank pages at the end so that you’ll have space to finish your curiosity story!

**Day 2:** **Putting Your Topic in Focus**

You will talk with an adult at home this evening about what, specifically, you want to learn about your topic. You are *focusing* your research. Be specific and list all the questions you can think of that interest or excite you about your topic. Try to come up with six to 12 questions. Write them in your curiosity journal.

**Day 3: Creating a Learning Plan**

Today you will work with an adult at home and generate ideas for how to research your topic. Think about these questions:

* Where can I find information on my topic?
* Do I know anyone who might be an expert on my topic?
* Who will I work with at home to help me with my research each day? How about at school?
* How will I take notes when I find answers to my questions or other interesting information?

Write the answers to these questions in your curiosity journal.

**WEEK 3:**

How do curious people go about finding the answers?

**Day 1: Interview**

Your parents or another adult in your home will interview you. This is the question you need to answer: *How do curious people gather information? Think of as many ways as you can.*

Your parent or other adult helper should dictate everything you say, verbatim, in your Curiosity Journal.

**Days 2 and 3:** If you haven’t already, take the dive! Start learning as much as you can about your topic. Go back to your questions and search for answers. You can find them in books, on websites, in videos, and from one of my favorite sources: People. Who could you call on the phone to interview? There are a lot of adults who are experts in their fields and would love to help you. However, you MUST have supervision from your parent or caregiver to speak to any adult you don’t know. Record everything you learn in your curiosity journal.

**WEEK 4**

How do curious people go about finding the answers?

**Day 1: Your Curiosity Story, Continued**

Two weeks ago, you began your curiosity story. You talked about how you first became interested in your topic. Now, write the next part. Here are some ideas you might right about:

* What have you discovered? Have you uncovered anything that fascinates you? Have you met any interesting people who share your curiosity in your topic?
* Have your discoveries led to any new questions?
* What has been most challenging? Most rewarding or fun?
* Have you learned anything unexpected or unusual?
* Are you *more* or *less* interested in your topic now that you are deep into learning about it?

**Days 2 and 3: Continue Learning and Begin Thinking about How You Will Share**

* Continue to record new information in your curiosity journal. Maybe what you’ve learned has made you curious about new things. What new questions do you have?
* If you feel you’ve gathered enough information, start thinking about your presentation. What is the best way to share the information you’ve gathered? There are so many creative ways to teach our class what you know! Take a look at the list on page xxx. Remember to consider your personality and style. Are you the kind of person who loves to get up in front of a group and talk? If you’re shy, how can you present your information in a way that will be comfortable for you?

**WEEKS 5, 6 and Sharing Week**

How can curious people share their learning in a way that makes others curious?

These are the remaining tasks in your project. You decide how many days you need to complete them. I would suggest, however, completing them in the following order:

1. **Choose the way you will share what you’ve learned**

I’ve included a few ideas at the bottom of this page, but you are in no way limited to these! Choose a presentation that’s right for you. Before you choose, discuss these questions with the adult who has been helping you.

* Will you enjoy creating this presentation and not get tired or bored in the middle of it?
* Will you feel at ease when presenting it to the class?
* Is the amount of work it will require challenging but not overwhelming?
* Most importantly, is the work something that YOU – not Mom or Dad or anyone else – can and will do?
* Add a few sentences to your Curiosity Story that answer the questions above and explain WHY you made your choice.
1. **Create your presentation.** As you work, add a few sentences to your Curiosity Story about the joys and frustrations of the process.
2. **Schedule a time to present your project to the class.**
3. **Write an ending to your Curiosity Story**
4. **Make sure your Curiosity Journal is complete.**
5. **Congratulations! It’s showtime! Don’t be nervous. We are so proud of your hard work.**

**Some successful ways that curious students have shared their learning:**

* Make a poster.
* Build a model.
* Make a documentary movie.
* Use multi-media tools such as Google Slides, PowerPoint, Prezi, or websites.
* Give a talk. (15-minute maximum for sharing)
* Create a game.
* Dress up as a famous person, create a list of questions, and have the class use it to interview you.
* Create an ABC Book.
* Make a diorama with labels.
* Design and decorate a roadmap.
* Think of your own creative idea. (Please check with me first, though.)

Appropriate Ways My Parent or Adult Helper Can Contribute:

* Helping me gather inexpensive supplies.
* Arranging interviews with knowledgeable experts on my topic.
* Suggesting resources and helping me get them.
* Cutting, creating and printing things *with* me and not *for* me.
* Writing down what I say in my journal, but not telling me what to say.
* Asking questions that spark my curiosity.
* Showing me *how* to do something – and then setting me free to do the work!

What I Shouldn’t Expect my Parent or Adult Helper to Do:

* Spend a lot of money for supplies.
* Find most of the books and resources without me.
* Build or draw for me. Being me “scribe” is OK, as long as the ideas and words are mine.
* Do the work while I direct him or her.

**Assessment**

Together, we will develop a checklist to assess your project. Your final project (product) must include two main components: your information and the sharing of your Curiosity Story.

You will be assessed on:

1. Your Information/Research → *What* you learned.

2. Your Curiosity Story → *How* you learned it.

3. Your Reflection → *Your thoughts* on the *process* of learning.

Good luck and enjoy learning!