Great Brain Independent Research Project

The administration and faculty of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_Elementary encourage students, with the help of their parents and classroom teachers, to become involved in a Great Brain Independent Research project. To become a Great Brain, a child chooses a topic in which he or she is interested, researches the topic in-depth, using a variety of sources and keeping careful records of all findings. The child then plans and makes a presentation before an authentic school audience of classmates and other invited guests. At the presentation, a photo will be taken of the student and displayed in the school. The student will be awarded a Great Brain badge and certificate and will be congratulated by the principal and recognized on school announcements. A great Brain Independent Research Project is more intensive than regularly assigned schoolwork. Curiosity, creativity, commitment, and perseverance are needed to complete such independent study. A strict set of guidelines and steps must be followed to accomplish the goals of the project, but the rewards of accomplishment and increased self-esteem that result are well worth the efforts of students and parents. For an exciting adventure in learning, we invite you to begin a Great Brain Independent Research Project soon!

Steps to Becoming a Great Brain

1. List several subjects that arouse your interest or curiosity. Remember, there is a whole, wide world of interesting things, common or uncommon, out there to be discovered. *Your own interest* is the most important guide to choosing a topic. Don’t be afraid to stray from the beaten path and explore the possibilities. Take what time you need to brainstorm until something really sparks your interest. You might discover an interesting subject while reading a newspaper or magazine, listening to a special program or speaker, or observing something in a real-life situation. Perhaps you’ve always had a fascination with a certain subject and want to pursue it in greater depth. Of course, a Great Brain subject should be one that will *stretch the limits* of your knowledge, rather than one you have already mastered.
2. Choose, with your parents’ help, one of the subjects from your list that is most appealing and offers the most promise of new discoveries. Your parents can help you narrow or broaden the topic as needed and as is appropriate for your own age and abilities.
3. Fill in and sign the official Great Brain Contact included as the last page of this guide. This is a very important step and no Great Brain project is considered in progress until this piece is done. You, your parent(s) and your teacher must all read and sign the contract before any further work is done.
4. Prepare a high-quality list of questions that you would like to find answers to on your subject. Keep adding to your list as you dig deeper and deeper. A minimum of 20 GOOD questions to answer should be listed.
5. Gather information about your subject from a variety of sources and from all possible places over a period of one to several months. Go to libraries, museums, laboratories, exhibits, programs, etc. Use books, magazines, television, telephone and personal interviews of experts, videos or DVDs, experiments, the Internet, and surveys—any sources you can find that would apply to your subject. You must have at least five (5) different sources in your bibliography.
6. Keep notes and accurate records of all the interesting things you learn and the places where you find information. Don’t just copy the author’s words. Summarize information in your own words and tell some of your own ideas along the way.
7. Organize your findings by grouping related ideas under major headings. Make a formal outline to help make sense of your subject and help your ideas flow from beginning to end.
8. Create an original product that has to do with your subject and reflects your own thinking. This could be a story, a poem, painting, a photo essay, a play, a short video program, construction of an original model, devising and demonstration of an original science experiment, or any of a number of things. This is a very important part of your project.
9. Make or collect audio/visual aids such as pictures, posters, real objects, artifacts, sound effects, etc., which will make your presentation more interesting or easier for your audience to understand and appreciate.
10. Practice your presentation until you are able to give it clearly and confidently. Know your subject very well. Be prepared to answer questions from your audience. Of course, you may use notes, but you should know your subject well enough in your own words that you do not need to read your entire presentation. Even though you may feel a little nervous, you should practice giving your presentation in a loud, clear voice to your family. Listen to their suggestions for improvement and try again as many times as necessary. Most importantly, you will want to share your ENTHUSIASM and EXCITEMENT with your audience.
11. Schedule your presentation with your teacher when you are sure that you are ready or soon will be. Your teacher will review with you the steps involved and schedule an appropriate time for your presentation if you have fulfilled the obligations of the contract. Be sure to tell your parents and special friends and talk with your teacher about the audience you would feel comfortable with. Make sure your teacher knows if you need any special equipment or furniture for your presentation.
12. Hand in the written component of your Great Brain project three days prior to the time of your presentation. This should include a title page, list of your research questions, a written report of your findings, and a bibliography. All of these things should be typed or neatly written and included in some sort of folder or binder. Your teacher may also ask to see your notes and your outline. You will be able to keep this written report and be proud of it for many years to come.

What is the Parent’s Role?

Since a Great Brain Project is mostly an independent research undertaking and is completed, to a large extent, outside of school, parents play a significant role. A parent will, in most cases, be very involved in the preparation of the project, but will be a spectator when the child does his presentation. Following are some guidelines:

1. Help the student decide on a realistic and interesting topic.
2. Brainstorm with your child to develop questions of inquiry on his topic.
3. Promote and encourage the project by helping your child set up a schedule to complete each step.
4. Provide or help your child obtain the necessary materials for visual aids and the creative phase of the project.
5. Center some of your family discussions and activities on the child’s Great Brain topic.
6. Guide your child in his research and help him to evaluate his progress.
7. Help you child prepare and rehearse his or her presentation.
8. Be sure to attend your child’s presentation, along with other invited adult guests such as grandparents, neighbors, and friends. This should be a very important day! Your child will have completed a difficult and unique task and will deserve your praise and recognition within the family unit.
9. HELP BUILD YOUR CHILD’S CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM.

Great Brain Agreement

As a student of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Elementary, I am very interested in completing a Great Brain Independent Research Project. I understand that I will have to work very hard and spend extra time on this project. I will ask my teacher for help and will work with my parents to complete the project.

Student’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

As a parent, I understand that my child wishes to complete a Great Brain Independent Research Project. I am willing to work with my child and help in every way.

Parent’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

As a teacher, I understand that one of my students wants to complete a Great Brain Independent Research Project. I am willing to assist in getting the final presentation scheduled, completing a review checkpoint, and assisting along the way.

Teacher’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(This form should be submitted to the teacher at the time of project commitment.)