

# FOURTH GRADE GUIDE TO SUCCESS

## **Foreword**

### Purpose

The Guide to Success is meant for teachers who are interested in finding new ways to differentiate instruction for gifted and talented students or in becoming familiar with curriculum that provides enhanced academic opportunities for all students. The Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) does just that—it is a statewide system of standards, curriculum, and assessment for gifted and talented students. On this CD, you can learn about implementing the program in your classroom, school, or district. The CD also includes information about resource people and materials available to you.

### How To Use the CD

The CD was developed for use on computers running current versions of Windows and Macintosh OS X operating systems. Some features require the Adobe Acrobat PDF Reader software which can be downloaded for free from [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) if it is not already installed on the computer. For PC users, the CD should start automatically. If it does not, choose “Explore CD” from the explorer menu, navigate to the “Guide\_to\_Success.exe” file and double click it to start the program. Macintosh users will need to follow the steps in the “Read\_Me” file in the “Macintosh\_Version” folder for instructions on running the program on the Macintosh computer. Additionally, for optimal viewing, the recommended display settings are a resolution of 1024 x 768 or higher.

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## **Section 1: Introduction to the Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP)**

### *1. What is the TPSP?*

The TPSP is a statewide standards and assessment system you can use to capture the high levels of achievement of gifted and talented students. The goal of the TPSP is for students to create work that reflects the quality that the [Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/gted/GTStatePlanEnglishAug05.pdf) (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/gted/GTStatePlanEnglishAug05.pdf>) requires. Interdisciplinary student projects are TEKS-based and focus on the core content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Currently the TPSP is developed for fourth grade, eighth grade, and the exit level (typically eleventh or twelfth grade). The TPSP is available for any district or school that wants to use it for G/T instruction. The tasks are designed for use with gifted students, but can be differentiated for all students. Multiple tasks exist for fourth and eighth grades. At the exit level, the research project is completely student-driven. For all levels there is a scoring rubric teachers and students can use to determine the level at which the student is performing and how he/she can move to the next level.

See the TPSP website for a [glossary](http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/glossary.php) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/glossary.php>) of terms that are specific to the program.

### *2. Who developed and maintains the program?*

In 1999, the Texas Legislature directed the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop an assessment system and statewide standards for G/T students. Work on the exit level began in 2000, on eighth grade in 2001, and on fourth grade in 2002. Working committees consisted of these members:

- Texas educators
- [The Texas Education Agency](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/gted/GifTal.html) (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/gted/GifTal.html>)
- [Education Service Center, Region 13](http://www.esc13.net/) (<http://www.esc13.net/>)
- [Resources for Learning](http://www.resourcesforlearning.net/) (<http://www.resourcesforlearning.net/>)

A team from TEA, Region 13, and Resources for Learning currently maintains the program.

See the TPSP website for more information on the program's [history](http://www.texaspsp.org/history.php) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/history.php>).

### *3. What makes the TPSP unique from other G/T curricula?*

The TPSP assessment system—the scoring dimensions and scoring scale—is aligned to the State Goal for Services for Gifted Students and allows for differentiated instruction. The vertical alignment of the fourth grade, eighth grade, and exit level projects provides a tool for assessing the quality of G/T services.

The structure and content of the tasks help students to feel successful. The TPSP provides students with many opportunities:

- A wide variety of choices in their learning
- More flexibility
- The ability to take charge of their learning
- Real-life research experiences
- A chance to develop a high-quality product and presentation
- The ability to research subjects that are interesting to them
- Differentiated instruction that focuses on the individual student

## **Section 2: Resources for Implementation**

### 1. What are some resources available to help me implement the TPSP?

The TPSP website ([www.texaspsp.org](http://www.texaspsp.org)) is an excellent resource for teachers, administrators, and others who want to learn more about the program. The website houses basic background information and more detailed information about the program at the three levels—fourth, eighth, and exit. You can find information about the tasks, teacher curricular and instructional resources, and optional forms that students can use to guide them through the experience.

### 2. How can my Regional Education Service Center help me?

The regional ESC gifted and talented specialists are great resources. In addition to providing general information about G/T services, they can provide specific resources for the TPSP:

- Informational DVDs for fourth grade, eighth grade, and exit level
- Guides to Success for fourth grade, eighth grade, and exit level
- Awareness training
- Scoring training
- Examples of student work

See the TPSP website for [ESC contact information](http://www.texaspsp.org/escontacts.php) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/escontacts.php>).

### 3. Whom can I contact if I have questions about the TPSP?

If there are questions that district or regional specialists cannot answer, there are other people you can consult:

- Kelly Callaway, Director of Advanced Academics/Gifted Education at the Texas Education Agency, [kelly.callaway@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:kelly.callaway@tea.state.tx.us)
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See the TPSP website for a [discussion board](http://www.texaspsp.org/discuss/) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/discuss/>) that teachers can use to seek advice or share ideas.

## **Section 3: Program Benefits**

### 1. How do students benefit from participation in the TPSP?

Students who participate in the TPSP have a lot to gain, including:

- developing confidence in their abilities to complete an independent research project;
- using their own research to produce an innovative, discipline-based product;
- being pushed to their limits and discovering what they are capable of doing academically;
- learning to accept challenges in order to perform at a high academic and intellectual level;
- exploring an area of interest and passion;
- performing research outside of the traditional curriculum; and
- improving communication and presentation skills.

### 2. How do teachers benefit from participation in the TPSP?

Teachers who participate in the TPSP have a lot to gain, including:

- an evaluation tool that provides measures for student growth;
- fully developed G/T curriculum tasks that can be differentiated for students of all ability levels;

- units of study that are aligned with the TEKS and the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*; and
- the opportunity to work with students in a meaningful, creative, and open-ended way.

### 3. What are the benefits to the entire learning community?

The TPSP provides a way to align the curriculum so that a school or district has a true continuum of G/T services. This alignment helps ensure that G/T programs are meeting the Texas State Plan's criteria for G/T education. After participating in the TPSP, educators will be able to identify areas of strength and weakness in the program.

Because of the open-ended nature of the tasks, the TPSP showcases what gifted students are capable of doing academically. Successful students are visible in the learning community and project a positive image of the G/T program.

### 4. How does the TPSP help students achieve their learning goals?

The TPSP gives students a framework for successfully completing an independent research project. Because the student work is divided into two phases, there are built-in opportunities for teachers to provide direct instruction so that students have the skills necessary for developing an end product.

The TPSP enables students to become real thinkers and scholars. Students are challenged to think critically, abstractly, and logically to evaluate and solve a problem. Students synthesize new information and comprehend different points of view. They learn to communicate effectively and clearly in written and oral forms.

## **Section 4: Program Structure**

### 1. What are the tasks?

The performance tasks are TEKS-based, interdisciplinary research units that teachers can use with students. Though designed with the G/T student in mind, the tasks can be differentiated to meet the instructional needs of any student. The tasks generate excitement for learning and are open ended, authentic, and student centered.

The tasks consist of two phases. Phase I, Learning Experiences, is teacher-driven instruction. During this time, students develop research skills and content knowledge that they will use in Phase II. Fourth grade tasks require more teacher guidance than eighth grade tasks. Phase II, Independent Research, allows students to immerse themselves in a project and develop a high-quality end product that demonstrates their knowledge and skills.

See the TPSP website for task summaries and complete [task descriptions](http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/taskdescriptions.php?p=1) (http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/taskdescriptions.php?p=1) (available in PDF format).

### 2. Since there are multiple tasks available, what determines which task the students complete?

The tasks were designed to give teachers the flexibility to integrate the TPSP into their instruction. The tasks are open ended, can be extended and adapted, and do not have a right or wrong answer. If time and resources permit, teachers should introduce all of the tasks to the students so that students can choose which task they want to complete. Because of the intensity of study, teachers should encourage students to choose the one task that best reinforces their interests and strengths. To help students pick a task, teachers may have them consider questions such as these:

- How can you use this task to make a difference in your community?
- How can you apply this task to a real-world situation?
- How will this task have an impact on you?

If teachers must have all of the students do the same task, they should choose a task based on student interests, background knowledge, and needs. The teacher should review the tasks to ascertain which tasks best fit into the classroom environment. For instance, some tasks may be more appropriate for a pull-out class, while others may work better in the regular classroom. When choosing a task, teachers may wish to consider these questions:

- Which task best meets the needs, interests, and motivations of my students?
- Which task can most effectively be integrated into the existing curriculum?
- Which task is feasible for the G/T program design?
- Which task can be differentiated to meet the needs of all learners so that they benefit from participation?
- Which task best utilizes existing school and community materials and resources?

### 3. How do the tasks help teachers structure instruction?

The tasks provide teachers with a structured curriculum, but teachers still have the freedom to make appropriate adjustments. While the tasks provide a guide for novice teachers, more experienced teachers may wish to modify the content to meet the needs of their students. **The tasks should not create more work for G/T students. When G/T students have demonstrated that they already know course content, it provides an alternative for in-depth study and application.**

The content of the tasks is laid out in a clear manner that is easy to follow and to implement in the classroom. Under the Phase I and Phase II sections of the tasks, there are suggested activities, instructions, and questions for students to consider. At the end of the task description, there is a list of all of the pieces that the student needs to submit with a complete project.

### 4. Are the tasks aligned with the TEKS?

Each task has been aligned with the TEKS. Applicable TEKS objectives are listed within each task. The tasks are also connected to TAKS objectives.

See the TPSP website for more information on [TAKS connections](http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/taksconnections.php?p=1) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/taksconnections.php?p=1>).

### 5. How do the tasks address different learning styles?

The tasks have a broad and open-ended format, and they provide for different learning modalities. This format allows for personal development and creative expression on the part of teachers and students. Using the task activities, teachers can optimize their instruction to meet the needs of students with different tactile, visual, and auditory learning styles. Projects can be structured in various ways so that students can choose a medium that is appropriate for them.

### 6. Are group projects appropriate?

Each school/district is encouraged to complete the work as outlined in the task descriptions. The TPSP's flexibility allows for the teacher to decide the best avenue for participating in the program. Two or more students may collaborate on a project if the project is of sufficient magnitude to warrant a team approach. The students need the approval of their teacher. Each student develops a product that stands on its own, while contributing to the overall group project. Individuals should outline project components that were their responsibility and include evidence of their own contributions. For collaborative projects, each student's individual submission of his/her product and documentation is comparable to that of a student doing an individual project. Credit is awarded only to individual students, and the teacher is responsible for determining the integrity of each student's final product.

## **Section 5: The TPSP in the Classroom—The Two Phases**

### 1. What is the teacher's role in the TPSP?

The teacher is responsible for guiding the student through the project. The teacher must have received the required state training in gifted education and has the following responsibilities:

- Determining criteria for selecting a task
- Collaborating with students to establish project timelines
- Informing students of project guidelines, requirements, and scoring criteria
- Providing the instruction necessary for students to succeed in the project
- Coaching students throughout the duration of the project
- Locating any necessary resources for the learning experiences
- Assessing student progress periodically and providing final assessments of student projects
- Certifying that the project is the student's own work
- Following district guidelines for photographing and videotaping students and securing a release in accordance with district policy

See the TPSP website for tips for [videotaping and photography](http://www.texaspsp.org/all/PhotoVideoTips.pdf) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/all/PhotoVideoTips.pdf>).

### 2. What are some planning considerations when thinking about introducing the TPSP in the classroom?

When planning to implement the TPSP, teachers should consider how to:

- address student needs, background knowledge, and interests;
- develop teacher content knowledge and instructional strategies;
- differentiate the task to make it appropriate for all students;
- locate and utilize available resources and materials;
- integrate the tasks into the existing curriculum and incorporate activities into the school day;
- moderate and encourage individual student progress; and
- communicate with and involve parents, colleagues, and community members.

Before introducing the TPSP to students, teachers will want to become familiar with the tasks and the scoring dimensions in order to have a better understanding of how the TPSP will unfold in their individual classrooms. Teachers may wish to:

- review the task summaries;
- procure necessary supplies and materials;
- construct a plan for helping students to develop research skills;
- look at the guiding questions for the tasks and make any necessary adjustments; and
- develop a class calendar with potential deadlines and deliverables.

In Phase II as students begin to conduct more independent research, teachers will need to ensure that students have an adequate place to do their work and sufficient time to complete the project while at school.

### 3. How might Phase I look in the classroom?

The tasks are interdisciplinary, though they may have a discipline-specific focus. They include a TEKS alignment guide, activities, and other resources to help teachers integrate the tasks in the classroom. Even though each task suggests resources and includes student forms, the tasks are not intended to be limiting. The tasks simply provide a framework that teachers can build upon to meet their students' needs. For example, teachers may also want to extend the tasks into the community through a service project.

In addition to the learning experiences suggested in the tasks, teachers may consider offering instruction to help students build their research skills, including lessons on the following topics:

- Conducting research and surveys
- Asking guiding questions
- Developing computer skills
- Using library resources
- Using a variety of primary and secondary sources
- Writing a research proposal, paper, and bibliography
- Developing tables, charts, and graphs

#### 4. How can teachers use tools to structure student learning?

The teacher plays an important role in the student's TPSP experience. Teachers can structure student learning in various ways:

- Use organizers or research journals
- Set weekly goals and keep records
- Reflect on and revisit goals
- Work with students to develop calendars with intermediate and final deadlines and deliverables
- Utilize the scoring scale to evaluate student progress and to determine how much work is still necessary
- Hold individual student conferences
- Implement flexible grouping as appropriate

#### 5. How do students document their learning?

Teachers should introduce the scoring scale at the onset of the project so that students can understand the scope of the TPSP and the expectations for quality work. Students document their learning in the research process, which is one of the three components on which the student work is scored. An effective way for students to document their learning in the research process is to keep a journal of their experiences. The journal will allow students to review their experiences and findings from Phase I and apply them in Phase II. Teachers may wish to check student journals periodically to ensure that students are progressing appropriately. Students may wish to keep their research journals in a binder or spiral notebook.

Teachers can reinforce the idea that documentation of learning is evidence of scholarly behavior. The TPSP website also houses optional forms that students can use to document their learning, including forms for recording research findings and primary and secondary sources. Some [optional forms](http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/forms.php) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/forms.php>) are available online:

- Weekly Planner
- Product Proposal
- Research Plan/Proposal
- Primary and Secondary Resource Sheets
- Periodic Progress Check

Documentation provides a professional experience for students. Students can develop this lifelong skill and apply it to their future careers in the upper grades, college, and professional settings.

#### 6. How do teachers help students synthesize their learning?

Teachers can schedule individual and peer conferences. During the conferences, the teacher and student can construct a dialogue through the teacher's use of questioning and coaching techniques. Teacher and peer questions can prompt students to synthesize their learning and to evaluate their progress.

There are other ways to help students synthesize their learning:

- Modeling a professional presentation
- Conducting ongoing evaluations with the scoring dimensions
- Providing time for peers to offer suggestions and share ideas

### 7. How do students develop unique product ideas?

In small groups or as a whole class, students can brainstorm possible product ideas. Depending on the student's level of development, teachers may want to take a more active role. Teachers may also want to plan activities to encourage students to think creatively about the end product. Students can look at existing products or ideas and discuss ways to improve the product or to morph the product into something different. Teachers may wish to share professional products that are also specific to the discipline. The key is to create an environment where students feel safe to take intellectual risks and to be creative and unique.

When discussing product development with students, teachers may wish to:

- Stress originality and creativity—How can we improve what already exists? What doesn't exist that should?
- Use questioning and coaching techniques—I see you've identified a wide variety of resources. When you think about the range of resources available, how will you prioritize investigating these resources?
- Focus on the scoring scale—Which descriptor best fits for where you are now in your project, and where are you going?
- Watch for signs of frustration—Do we need to talk about this?
- Guide the students in journal writing—How can you document what you just did? How can you clarify your thinking?

See the TPSP website for samples of [student work](http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/worksample.php) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/worksample.php>).

### 8. How can teachers challenge students to move beyond what they already do?

Teachers should provide students with a secure environment in which students feel safe to move outside of their comfort zones without fear of failure or ridicule. In this type of setting, students are challenged to take academic risks and experience and move beyond intellectual struggles. Teachers may wish to share the stories of successful people who pushed themselves beyond their limits and triumphed after struggling.

### 9. What is the final outcome? How will students know when their product is complete?

Teachers should use the scoring dimensions and scale throughout the course of the project to determine the level at which the student is performing and the steps necessary for the student to reach the next level. The scoring dimensions can help students determine when the project is complete.

As students complete their research, teachers may wish to have them practice their oral presentations. Teachers should share tips and pointers for communicating effectively. Teachers may wish to model or show a professional presentation. Students might also benefit by reviewing film of a practice session before the final presentation.

See the TPSP website for tips on [oral presentations](http://www.texaspsp.org/all/OralPresentations.pdf) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/all/OralPresentations.pdf>).

### 10. What are the students required to complete?

Each task has unique requirements. Submission requirements are listed within each task and in the task summaries. All tasks have a presentation component to accompany the final product. Please note that each task lists options for product development—students **do not** need to complete all of the options.

### 11. How can students organize their materials to turn in?

TPSP participation helps students to develop lifelong organization skills. Students should organize their materials and research findings in a manner that is easy for others to understand. Students and teachers should remember that the project is stand-alone. If formal judging occurs at the campus level or beyond, judges will only be able to see what students have prepared to submit. Students should start with the end in mind. From the beginning of the project, students should be aware of any submission requirements. This knowledge will help them organize their work throughout the TPSP process. Students should use an organizational tool, such as a binder, expandable file folder, or portfolio. Each submission should be clearly labeled with student name/number and a description of the specific items being submitted.

### 12. Who needs to receive completed student projects?

Student projects should initially go to the classroom teachers. Projects will undergo teacher, peer, and self scoring using the scoring scale. Some Educational Service Centers provide scoring sessions for scoring the projects at a regional level. For more information, check with the regional G/T specialist.

### 13. How should I assign student grades?

Though teachers and students should use the scoring dimensions to measure progress, the dimensions were not meant to be a way to assign grades. Teachers should consider all aspects of student work and progress when determining classroom grades.

Teachers may want to consider some of the following questions when constructing a grading system:

- Does the student meet deadlines?
- What is the quality of the student's research and/or experiments?
- How detailed is the student's documentation?
- Does the student exhibit in-depth knowledge of the field during teacher-student meetings and/or interviews?
- Does the student take advantage of resources?
- How prepared is the student for the presentation?
- Are the student's communication techniques effective?
- How has the student progressed over the grading period or duration of the project?

## **Section 6: Time Management**

### 1. What is the role of time management?

Time management is crucial in order for students to have a satisfying, successful experience. Many teachers who have participated in the TPSP have found that timelines and calendars are helpful ways to organize the project. Teachers may want to develop a timeline for milestones and deliverables with student input. As students move through the work, it may become necessary to revise the timeline. Students should have an understanding of what the TPSP process looks like from the onset—here is where we are, here is where we are going, and here is where we will end up.

### 2. How do teachers and students determine deadlines?

The TPSP projects are not short term; they require adequate time for students to complete quality, advanced products. It is important to set up a timeline from the beginning of the project—for students and for teachers. When estimating the time needed for completion of Phase I and Phase II, teachers should consider program design, class time, frequency of meetings, and curriculum requirements. Teachers and students can revisit the timeline periodically.

## **Section 7: Assessing Learning through the TPSP**

### 1. What are the scoring dimensions?

Experts in gifted and talented education designed the scoring dimensions and scale. The six scoring dimensions provide the basis for the student's work and for scoring of the project in the following areas:

1. Content Knowledge and Skills—the key facts, concepts, principles, skills, themes, and methods of inquiry of a discipline.
2. Analysis and Synthesis—advanced thinking processes that enable students to make connections across time, disciplines, locations, and cultures.
3. Multiple Perspectives—the consideration of other, diverse points of view.
4. Research—the inquiry process used in the discipline.
5. Communication—the use of appropriate written, spoken, and technological media to convey new learning in the discipline.
6. Presentation of Learning—the coherence of a student's presentation of new learning, including evidence of planning and reasoning.

See the TPSP website for more information on the [scoring dimensions](http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/studentassessment.php?p=2) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/studentassessment.php?p=2>).

### 2. What is the scoring scale?

The scoring scale is based on the six scoring dimensions and is used to award a score to the student's work. The scoring scale consists of three categories—product, research process, and communication—and a student can receive up to 4 points in each of the categories. Descriptor statements of the different score levels are provided for each category.

See the TPSP website for the [scoring scale](http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/assessment.php?p=2) (<http://www.texaspsp.org/fourth/assessment.php?p=2>).

### 3. How are the scoring dimensions used throughout the research and product development processes?

The scoring dimensions and scoring scale should be introduced to the students at the beginning of the task and used throughout as a guide for students developing their projects. Exposure to the rubric from the onset will help students feel more comfortable and confident when scoring themselves and their peers. Teachers and students can discuss the project using the language of the scoring dimensions and scoring scale. During product development, teachers may wish to encourage students to use self-evaluation and peer-evaluation techniques. Using the scoring scale throughout the project will keep students focused on the level of work they are capable of performing.

Note that the scoring scale does not have to be used in its entirety. Further, the scoring scale is not designed to assign classroom grades but as a way to assess the level of performance of gifted students.

### 4. How are the final projects scored?

When using the scoring scale, one should consider the student's complete set of submitted items, which includes some aspects of Phase I and Phase II. A teacher version and a student version of the scoring scale are available. The scoring criteria are the same, but the language is age-appropriate.

Unless it is the focus of the project (e.g., creating a website), the use of media technology does not affect the score given, except in the judgment of its overall contribution to the quality of the product.

### 5. Who scores the project?

Projects are scored by teachers and students. For a formative, ongoing evaluation, students and teachers should regularly evaluate the students' progress and revise plans as necessary. Upon completion of the project, the teacher scores the final product according to the teacher scoring scale. Using the student scoring scale, each student self-assesses his/her final product, and at least two other students provide peer assessment.

### 6. Are projects scored outside of the classroom?

There is currently no requirement for scoring beyond the classroom. District-level scoring can provide summative and formative information on an individual student's learning. Schools and districts can also use the results of this assessment to improve their services for gifted and talented students. Scoring training and additional scoring opportunities may be available through the Regional Education Service Centers.

### 7. How should teachers provide feedback for students and parents throughout and at the conclusion of the project?

Students should use the rubric routinely to determine the level of their work. Teachers should continually monitor student progress and make suggestions for improvement. Teachers may wish to provide written feedback, directly on the student's work if appropriate. Individual conferences are another effective way to provide students with feedback.

It is important to report the outcome of the assessment to students and parents. All too often, reducing the results of assessment to numeric scores dilutes the benefit that is gained. An effective method of providing feedback is to communicate results and share insights during individual conferences with students and parents.

### 8. How does the scoring contribute to the project's credibility and success?

The scoring process provides students with feedback that is not biased or subjective. The scoring dimensions and scale give students guidance for developing presentations and meeting expectations at a high-quality level. When the TPSP is implemented at the fourth, eighth, and exit levels, student scores are a valuable tool for charting student progress. Upon completing the scoring process, students can see that they have worked as true scholars.

## **Section 8: Supporting Student Research**

### 1. What does a student's research process look like?

The student's research process should consist of the following steps:

1. Identifying and defining the research problem or question.
2. Reviewing the existing evidence.
3. Refining the research question(s).
4. Developing a research design and proposal.
5. Carrying out the research design.
6. Analyzing the results.
7. Reporting the findings through a product or performance.

### 2. Who in the school community can contribute to student research?

The school librarian or media specialist is a valuable resource to students who are undertaking TPSP research projects. Teachers with specialized content knowledge in the sciences, history, mathematics, and language arts are also good resources. Technology specialists can also be helpful with computers, telecommunications, or multimedia usage.

### 3. How should administrators be involved in the TPSP?

Support from the school/district administration is crucial in order for students to have a successful experience. Teachers can invite principals into the class to observe the students while they are working on their projects. Principals can also attend student presentations. Exposing administrators to the positive effects of the TPSP will help garner their support.

District personnel should also be involved in the program. The district should support teachers and students during the process—this may include providing necessary funding. If the district has a gifted and

talented coordinator, facilitator, or specialist, this person should provide additional support for the teacher through staff development, peer coaching, and/or modeling of instructional strategies.

In general, administrators can:

- help TPSP teachers to secure necessary time, finances, and academic resources;
- support students in their research endeavors and development of products and presentation; and
- inform parents and other faculty members about the TPSP.

#### 4. How can districts utilize local community resources?

The local community contains a wealth of resources that students can use while conducting research. Consider tapping into local businesses, museums, colleges and universities, and libraries. Many community members are just waiting to be asked to contribute to student learning.

#### 5. What are some financial considerations? Is additional funding necessary?

The financial needs for implementing the TPSP are minimal. Most of the necessary resources, such as libraries, Internet, and supplies, are available in the school or district. In general, TPSP participation does not present a financial burden to the school, teachers, or families.

If a student is developing a unique product with associated costs, community businesses are potential sources of funding. One way to show appreciation for any funding from community and civic groups is to have the students present their products to those groups. Community presentations are also a good way to promote the school/district gifted program and students. Once businesses see the impact of a small contribution, they may be more likely to get involved in the future.

### **Section 9: Overcoming Challenges**

#### 1. How can students and teachers plan ahead to avoid obstacles at the end of their projects?

Students and teachers sometimes encounter challenges when trying to finish the projects. There are some ways to avoid these obstacles:

- Organize all of the student's work and submission requirements
- Mark deadlines on a calendar
- Secure locations and equipment for student presentations
- Test audiovisual equipment and disks/tapes before they are needed

#### 2. How can teachers ensure that students complete their projects?

Teacher organization and planning are very important. The following guidelines will facilitate timely completion of projects:

- Start early
- Establish timelines with students
- Notify parents and students of project requirements and deadlines
- Develop a review schedule and carefully monitor each student's progress
- Leave some extra time near the end of the project for unexpected delays
- Allow time for students to practice their oral presentations and to receive feedback from peers

#### 3. What are some common challenges teachers face when implementing the TPSP?

Before jumping into the TPSP, teachers should fully consider the tasks and requirements in order to understand expectations of teachers and students. Teachers might encounter some challenges:

- Time management
- Administrative support/buy-in
- Availability of work space for teachers and students
- Lack of research skills or experience

Considering these and other challenges is important when planning to implement the TPSP. One way to overcome problems with time is to develop a timeline and to share the timeline and expectations with students from the beginning. Teachers should get started on the project early and leave some additional time at the end in case aspects of the project take longer than initially expected. Administrators, other teachers, and resource people should be aware of the project and the requirements and invited to participate. Teachers should remind administrators that the TPSP meets requirements for teaching gifted students in the state.

#### 4. What challenges might students encounter?

Teachers should consider potential challenges that the TPSP might present to students. For instance, many gifted students may never have faced a curriculum that is challenging and differentiated to meet their learning needs. The following challenges commonly arise:

- Procrastination
- Narrowing a subject to research
- Lack of research skills
- Fear of taking intellectual risks
- Choosing one task
- Organizing the project
- Problems with commitment and time management

To help students overcome these and other challenges, teachers should make sure that students are grounded in basic organizational and research skills. With these basic skills, students will feel more confident about their journey. Teachers should establish a low-risk, safe environment where students feel comfortable practicing scholarly behaviors. Teachers can also make themselves available for student conferences to discuss timelines and progress. Time to brainstorm and plan with peers is also helpful.

#### 5. What are the ethical and legal considerations?

The teacher is responsible for ensuring that student work is original and demonstrates academic integrity. To uphold high ethical standards, student work should include the following:

- Accurate and reliable documentation
- Full acknowledgement of the ideas and words of another person
- Clear and precise references
- Complete biographical listing of all works cited
- Appropriate releases for copyrighted materials, including videotape footage, audio recordings, and photographs, if use extends beyond fair use guidelines
- Appropriate releases for using images of other students

The teacher and student must sign the cover sheet, which indicates that the work is the student's.

#### 6. How can teachers prepare to handle unexpected problems or challenges effectively?

If problems arise, teachers can contact other teachers and talk about possible solutions. Some sources of support include teachers who have previously participated in the TPSP and G/T specialists at the Regional Education Service Centers. These people can provide teachers, schools, and districts with technical assistance.

Here are some other ways to handle unexpected problems or challenges:

- Stay flexible
- Ask for help
- Refer to the TPSP website and discussion board
- Develop a support team of district TPSP teachers
- Visit with students individually
- Leave some extra time in the calendar for unexpected situations

## **Section 10: Involving the Learning Community**

### 1. How can teachers connect students with community and school resources?

When building awareness of the TPSP during the first year of implementation, students can present their products to community and business representatives in order to spread awareness of the program. If the community is able to see the student work, members may be more willing to help students in their endeavors. Students can also present their products to other grade levels and school personnel. This is another good way to build awareness and garner support within the school. Faculty members and other employees, such as librarians, principals, counselors, technology specialists, and nurses, can be good resources for the students.

Teachers may consider contacting various people and organizations including the following resources:

- Local colleges and universities
- Newspapers
- Museums
- Retirement centers
- Local businesses
- Community organizations
- High school volunteers
- Previous TPSP participants

## **Section 11: Setting the Stage for Long-term Success**

### 1. What do teachers who are new to the TPSP need to consider when undertaking the project?

New teachers need to review the tasks and other supporting materials thoroughly in order to understand the scope of the project requirements. Then teachers should consider what they already do in the classroom that would support the project. When used in the regular classroom, the TPSP should be integrated into the classroom curriculum rather than simply added on. The project should replace work or skills already mastered by the students, not be added to regular classroom work. It may be helpful for first-time teachers to gather all the resources and materials and put them in a central location to aid in organization. Teachers should keep communication open among students, other teachers, administrators, resource people, and parents.

### 2. What are the ingredients for a successful project?

While each teacher, classroom, and student is unique, there are some common ingredients for a successful project. There are some things teachers can do to help their students succeed:

- Become familiar and comfortable with the project and tasks
- Integrate the project into the curriculum
- Prepare carefully for the phases of the project
- Provide students with a thorough background in research skills
- Create an atmosphere of excitement for the project
- Remain flexible with students and let them explore their interests
- Commit to the project and student success
- Cooperate with other teachers, resource people, and students
- Have fun