

Adapted from materials developed by Alan Perry and the AHS English Department.

Definition

The Independent Study Project (ISP) process consists of a number of composition steps designed to instruct the English III student how to research a topic, how to explain that research in a written narrative, and how to document sources for the research. It is INDEPENDENT in that the student is in control of topic selection, area of focus, and research sources. The student will STUDY the topic carefully for several weeks as he/she completes the prescribed process steps, which lead toward final assembly of the overall PROJECT, the final paper and associated data.

Philosophy

The Las Virgenes Unified School District believes that the English III student should possess basic research skills prior to entering English IV, where those skills will be utilized in constructing the Documented Critical Essay (DCE). It is also designed to challenge the student to apply previously gained knowledge and skills. Those who successfully complete the ISP are well prepared for the rigors of English IV.

Approach

In the past, some composition students have developed their thesis ideas prior to conducting research. Then they try to find evidence to support their ideas. This approach, while seemingly more convenient, skips over an important part of the process: examining the data in order to draw conclusions based on facts. For the ISP, we ask that you research your area of interest; identify an area of conflict (or potential conflict) among those interested in the topic; then look at the data and arguments on all sides of the conflict; become an expert in your understanding of the topic; choose a point of view; then prove with facts and arguments that your point of view is correct. Note that you will not choose a point of view until **after** reviewing all of the available research. You must become an expert in the information and arguments about your subject before developing your opinion.

Objectives

Students will learn:

- A lot about a specific topic in which he/she is interested;
- Varied research skills;
- How to synthesize research information;
- Analytic writing skills;
- Research paper format;
- Time management;
- A lot about himself/herself;
- enhanced speaking skills.

Content and Materials

The student will choose a topic (topics vary by teacher) and utilize a variety of sources as he/she researches books, magazines, newspapers, people, computer-generated sources, etc. Source and note cards will be compiled using data taken from these sources. All will then be assembled into a logical, orderly, final product. Individual teachers have the prerogative to guide

students away from any questionable areas of research.

Time Frame

The ISP process will span much of the spring semester (usually eight to ten weeks). The final paper due date will vary from teacher to teacher. Other English-related content will be taught concurrently.

Grade Value

The ISP process will not, in itself, "Make or break" a student's overall grade, though it will comprise 25-35% of it. Individual process steps will account for the majority of the points earned, with the final paper counting for less than half the grade. Students who do not turn in the ISP will not complete the course.

Suggested Student Philosophy

Students who are successful with this project find a topic in which they are greatly interested and approach the ISP with a positive attitude. They are, as a result, left with a satisfying feeling of accomplishment. They are also able to see the "bigger picture" involved, such as having an easier time with next year's Documented Critical Essay and with future college assignments. Students who are less than successful often go "kicking and screaming" into the project, pursue a topic for which they have little interest, are often absent from important classroom instruction, and tend to PROCRASTINATE. Attitude is half the battle. You CAN do this project, as have thousands of other English III students before you. "Hit the deck running," get help early if you need it, and GOOD LUCK!

Calif. Standards applied: Writing 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6; Writing Application 2.4A-E, 2.6 A; Written and Oral Language 1.2, 1.2, 1.3; Listening and Speaking 1.1, 1.2, 1.3,