Approved Innovative Course

Course: GT Interdisciplinary Studies Mentor Seminar I-IV
PEIMS Code: N1290309, N1290313, N1290317, N1290318
Abbreviation: GTISM1, GTISM2, GTISM3, GTISM4
Grade Level(s): 9-12
Number of Credits: 1.0 per course

Course description:

This course is based on the required, exit level Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) for gifted and talented (G/T) learners; it offers a non-traditional learning experience to students who have the ability to create innovative products or performances. Students will develop a product proposal, compile a portfolio, conduct in-depth research, be matched with a mentor from the business or professional community, and prepare for a public presentation of their product or performance at the end of the school year. An audience that includes expert(s) in the field will evaluate the product or performance. Students work with their mentor to create a related product with real-world application and tangible documentation. The final product will be shared with an audience outside the school setting.

Essential knowledge and skills:

(a) Introduction. Students focus their study on a topic of their choice. They develop a research portfolio that has a collection of resources, including interviews and observations with people who work in their chosen topic field. Students work on time management, communication, goal setting, and presentation skills. Students work with mentors on a regular basis to gain "real world" experience. They will work with their mentor to create a product related to their topic. Students give progressively longer speech presentations and will give a formal presentation of their product and year-long experiences at the end-of-the-year presentation.

(b) Knowledge and Skills

(1) Research. The student uses reading and research skills to investigate self-selected topics, develop a research question, and compile a research portfolio. The student is expected to:

(A) locate, evaluate, and gather information from a variety of primary, secondary and electronic sources, including interviews, observations, data-based research, surveys, original recordings and experiments as well as letters and e-mails of inquiry; and

(B) process and compile sources in a professional research portfolio.
(2) Presentation. The student prepares, organizes, and presents independent research, mentor experiences and processes used in development of product. The student is expected to:
   (A) use language clearly and appropriately;
   (B) use nonverbal strategies appropriately;
   (C) use notes, manuscripts, and presentation skills; and
   (D) incorporate audio or visual materials as well as media to enhance presentation.

(3) Product Design. The student designs and develops a professional-level product that reflects independent research and uses mentorship. The student is expected to:
   (A) work with mentor to narrow and focus plans for professional research sources, product development, and implementation;
   (B) create a process journal that details the research and development of product;
   (C) create representations such as drawings, illustrations, models, and written descriptions; and
   (D) establish real-world application and uses for the product.

(4) Professional Behavior. The student demonstrates an understanding of the expectations in a professional setting. The student is expected to:
   (A) develop written documents that showcase skills, accomplishments, and interests;
   (B) role-play appropriate interviewing techniques;
   (C) determine appropriate attire for a variety of professional settings;
   (D) communicate professionally in situations such as cold phone calls, appointments, and interviews;
   (E) demonstrate an understanding of workplace ethics such as confidentiality and privacy issues; and
   (F) build and maintain a professional relationship with a mentor.

(5) Evaluation. The student evaluates his or her performance as well as the performance of peers. The student is expected to:
   (A) create weekly progress reports that address time management and goal setting;
   (B) meet periodically with the teacher for conferences about progress, concerns, successes, and needs;
   (C) conduct a student self-assessment of speech presentations;
(D) evaluate classmates’ speech presentations; and
(E) provide feedback of mentor performance.

(6) Communication. The student composes written reflections regarding strengths and weaknesses as well as areas of growth. The student is expected to:
(A) communicate effectively in written formats such as notes, journals, correspondence, and formal essays;
(B) communicate effectively in spoken format such as interpersonal exchanges and formal presentations; and
(C) use spoken and written communication to reflect authentic research practices.

Description of specific student needs this course is designed to meet:

- Opportunity to be grouped with other high-achieving students
- Opportunity to focus interests and develop career direction
- Opportunities in independent research (data-based research, experimentation, observation, original creations)
- Opportunity to compile a professional portfolio to document research, product development, and year-long experiences
- Opportunities to polish presentation skills while sharing research and work
- Opportunity to develop a professional-level product
- Opportunity to interact in a professional setting
- Opportunity to glean knowledge and experience from a mentor
- Opportunities for self-discovery and self-evaluation
- Opportunities for students to develop innovative products and performances that reflect individuality and creativity
- Opportunity for students to participate in an original research project, fulfilling the Distinguished Achievement Program advanced measure requirements

Major resources and materials:

- Access to the Texas Performance Standards Project at www.texaspsp.org
- Access to library sources such as books and periodicals
- Access to the electronic research tools and database periodicals
- Access to willing professionals in desired topic fields
- Access to transportation for interviews, observations, and mentor visits
- Access to media and/or technology that enhances presentations, including means to record for self evaluations
- Access to guidance and materials for independent products
- Access to course facilitator for regular conferences, guidance, and evaluation
Suggested course activities:

- Conduct secondary research using school library, local college libraries, and electronic research tools
- Conduct primary research using observation and interviews of professionals
- Conduct primary research using self-generated work such as surveys, original art, original music, models, and experimentation
- Compile portfolio and submit for regular reviews
- Perform increasingly longer formal speech presentations culminating in year-end formal presentation to audience and mentor
- Provide self-evaluation using regularly scheduled student/teacher conferences, weekly progress reports, and evaluation forms
- Arrange and attend regularly scheduled meetings with mentor
- Share final product with an authentic audience
- Design product with real world application under advisement of mentor
- Provide tangible representation of product and processes
- Demonstrate appropriate behavior in a professional setting

Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:

- Grading of assignments by instructor such as resumes, research summaries, and topic proposals
- Periodic evaluations of portfolio by both instructor and mentor
- Critique of speech presentations by instructor and classmates
- Monitoring by instructor of regular progress reports
- Individual conferences between instructor and student
- Scheduled evaluations from mentor regarding professional performance, portfolios, and product
- Critique by instructor of tangible representation of product including product proposal, product description, log of product development, and presentation to an audience
- Use Texas Performance Standards Assessment Rubric as the evaluation instrument or as a guideline for a self-developed rubric

Teacher qualifications:

- Subject area certification such as English Language Arts, Composite
- 30-hour foundational G/T training and maintain six-hour annual G/T professional development update
- Preferred teaching experience of GT students
- Preferred GT Supplemental Certification
Additional information:

This course will be made available to high school students for up to 4 credits. Candidates desiring enrollment in GTISM beyond the second year will be required to either extend their previous self-selected study or research a new field of interest.