

“Mentor-Assisted” vs. “Self-Directed” Enrichment Projects

Below are some of the findings from a study of “Mentor-Assisted” and “Self-Directed” Enrichment Projects that involved 31 proteges in grades 5-6. (Reference: William A. Gray, Mentor-Assisted Enrichment Projects for the Gifted and Talented, *Educational Leadership*, Nov. 1982, pages 16-21.)

Binominal t-tests comparing the frequency with which 31 students in grades 5-6 indicated a preference between a “Mentor-Assisted” or a “Self-Directed” Enrichment Project. (This tests the probability of students choosing either type of project. “Missing data” occurred when no preference was given.)			
Questions	Response Frequency		2-Tail Prob.
	MAEP	SDEP	
1. Which enrichment project did you most want to do <i>before</i> beginning the project?	19	12	0.28
2. Which enrichment project did you become more interested in doing <i>as you worked on</i> the project?	25	6	0.00
3. Which project did you most want to <i>complete</i> ?	22	9	0.03
4. Into which project did you put your <i>best effort</i> ?	22	9	0.03
5. Which project did you most want to <i>present</i> to you classmates?	22	9	0.03
6. Which project did you do a <i>better job</i> of presenting to your classmates?	24	7	0.00
7. Which project did you spend <i>more time</i> doing outside of school time?	18	13	0.47
8. Which project helped you learn how to take <i>more responsibility</i> for doing an enrichment project?	21	4	0.04
9. Which project was better <i>planned</i> so that you <i>finished</i> the whole project according to your plan?	24	6	0.00
10. Which project was better planned <i>each week</i> so that you knew what to work on?	24	6	0.00
11. Which project was better completed to <i>your</i> satisfaction?	22	9	0.03
12. Which project required you to use <i>higher level thinking</i> skills?	20	11	0.15
13. Which project most helped you develop a <i>more positive self-concept</i> ?	22	9	0.03
14. Which project helped you learn how to <i>ask questions</i> you would later answer?	22	7	0.01
15. Which project most required you to use the <i>community</i> as a resource?	25	6	0.00
16. Which project most required you to use <i>other people</i> as a resource?	25	5	0.00
17. If you were to recommend <i>one type</i> of enrichment project to a friend, which one would it be?	27	4	0.00
18. Which type of enrichment project would you most want to do <i>again</i> ?	18	13	0.47
19. Which project do you think should be done <i>first</i> ?	24	7	0.00

After answering this survey, follow-up interviews with the student-proteges revealed the reasons for their responses. These students had no inherent bias for doing either type of enrichment project (see Question-1), and many said they wanted to do a “Self-Directed” project after learning how to do an enrichment project with a mentor (see Q-18). Student-protege responses on 15 other Questions clearly indicate 15 ways that “Mentor-Assistance” has a significantly beneficial impact. Except for Q-7 (it takes time to do an enrichment project) and for Q-12 (these students were already learning to use higher level thinking skills in class).

NOTE: 29 of these 31 student-proteges said that the MAEP must be completed for them to view it as worthwhile. This is highly significant statistically ($p < .0000$). Mentors said that because students knew from the outset that they were required to present a completed enrichment project, the students were motivated to do homework and show up for scheduled meetings with mentors prepared to do what was planned.

Over 300 of my undergrads have carried out MAEPs with some 1,000 proteges (gifted/talented; ESL; At-risk; Native) in grades 4-12.

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