



Teaching Them to Fish: Original Student Research in the Secondary Classroom

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At Massanutten Regional Governor's School (MRGS), all 11th and 12th grade students are required to conduct original research for both of their years in attendance. Through this experience, students acquire skills and concepts foundational to the research process, which for all school disciplines, is based upon the scientific method of inquiry. Students are paired with a research mentor, who is a member of the MRGS faculty, who will guide them throughout their investigations. Often, students will find an outside mentor who is an expert in their field who will help them in their work or even provide them with a set of questions to explore. Such outside mentors have included government scientists, university professors, leaders of community organizations, and more. At the beginning of the year, students identify a topic and set of questions for which they formulate a testable hypothesis, explore it through primary and secondary research, and through data interpretation. In the course, students gain an understanding of the methods and tools of higher-level research, including descriptive and inferential statistics, Internet and print-based research methods, advanced composition techniques, and integrated agricultural and environmental research methods. Student projects culminate in a deliverable product in the form of a public oral presentation in a manner suited to their field of research.