How do you Develop Independent Study or Research Projects for Gifted Students?

Kaplan (1979) listed the following principles as a guide in making curriculum decisions for gifted students:

1. Focus on major issues and concepts.
2. Emphasis on a large knowledge base.
3. Use of activities that show how subjects relate.
4. Emphasis on in-depth research.
5. Teaching of thinking skills.
6. Higher order thinking incorporated into all instruction.
7. Increased complexity and pace.
8. Focus on student self-direction.

The Kaplan Model (1986) examines curriculum differentiation in the areas of content, process, product and learning environment and the model provides an excellent scaffold for developing theme-based independent research or study projects.

In an independent investigation:

1. Students are attempting to answer a question through research.
2. Students need to use a variety of resources.
3. Students need to communicate their findings in an effective manner.

To do so, students must:

- review the literature to find out what is already known about the topic.
- generate questions about a self-selected or teacher-selected topic.
- select one question.
- formulate one or more hypotheses about the question.
- design a way to answer the question or assess whether or not the hypothesis is true.
- collect and analyze information.
- form conclusions about the question or hypothesis.
- present conclusions to an appropriate audience.
- present questions for further research.