
National History Day Project

With Dr. Eden Stein

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Dr. Eden Stein

Dr. Eden Stein is a teacher at Worthington Hooker School in New Haven, CT, and participated in the Connecticut Writing Project's Summer Institute around 20 years ago. It was not long after her participation in the Summer Institute that Dr. Stein was made aware of the National History Day project by a colleague.

According to the National History Day site, The National History Day Project is, "A non-profit education organization [that] offers year-long academic programs that engage over half a million middle- and high-school students around the world annually in conducting original research on historical

topics of interest."

Dr. Stein was immediately intrigued by the project, but felt that it may have been an undertaking beyond her own capabilities. Though, when Dr. Stein learned more about the program she became passionate about implementing it in her classroom.

An element of the project that influenced her decision to become involved was that the project was theme based. Students could decide how to present their projects, and how to get their projects to fit within the theme. Dr. Stein says she feels that student choice is extremely important within a classroom, a principle she credits to the Summer

Institute along with some of her best practices she uses today. She felt the National History Day project exemplified student choice.

An additional factor that convinced Dr. Stein to pursue the implementation of the project was that students would be able to learn about topics they may have not typically been taught. Student involvement in the project is a long and very rigorous process, which Dr. Stein believes is extremely valuable. Though, with this factor in mind she encourages students to research a topic they are genuinely passionate about or interested in because they will be spending so much time working on the topic.

The idea of the project is great, but figuring out how to actually get students involved in the classroom is a new challenge she was going to have to figure out. Students spend a lot of time in the classroom selecting their topics, and then doing extensive amounts of research for the projects. A part that Dr. Stein enjoys with having the students work on their projects in class is the students for the first time get to see how their subjects can interact. For example, the students will work with the Library Media Specialist to use the databases, or receive mini lessons in language arts, and use areas of science in their collection of

historical data. Students often don't get the opportunity to work on one project across multiple subject areas, and this project allows students to pull knowledge from several different areas to make one cohesive piece.

Throughout the years, Dr. Stein has been able to see how her students have felt about the project. Of course, many students complain because it is a challenging and somewhat stressful process, but when they pursue a topic they love it makes the project seem less like work. Some students are motivated by the competition, but others are genuinely inspired by the project which she finds very authentic. While at the end of the day it's for a competition, she enjoys the fact that the writing is so genuine. The students who are successful with their creative endeavors enjoy it immensely, and seeing students win is incredibly rewarding.

New Haven, the city in which Dr. Stein teaches, is incredibly diverse, and Dr. Stein has seen this diversity come alive throughout her students' National History Day projects. When students pursue a project related to who they are and where they come from, they often write their strongest piece of writing. She recalled specifically two students, one who was Muslim and the other who part Israeli, the

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Individual Website

A Website for a National History Day Project by Stein's Student

two worked together in their ideas and research and turned out an amazing project with their joint effort. Dr. Stein encourages students to explore their unique backgrounds, and even explore local topics. Finding primary sources that may not be on the internet for a unique topic may set a student's project apart, and encourage them to delve even deeper into the subject matter.

Dr. Stein understands it would be unrealistic to expect all students would be able to or want to participate in the project on the national level. Dr. Stein and her school host a mini fair to display all of the students' projects. The fair allows all students to feel the reward of their hard work, and gives them the opportunity to choose if they would like to venture further with their project in the National History Day project.

Dr. Stein says her hope for students participating in the event is that they don't fear research, and they approach it with an open mind because they might enjoy it. She believes that every topic has something interesting that the

students can take away from it. She emphasizes the world is an interesting place with so much to learn about, and she hopes this project drives students to learn more about it.

Additionally, she hopes that students are able to see that things are a lot more accessible once you break them down. Looking at the project as a whole can be overwhelming, but when broken down each element that adds up to the whole is less intimidating. Dr. Stein recognizes that writing a research paper is scary, but when the students have help to break it down it's easier to grapple with. She wants students to recognize that even once the research paper is done, the learning never really stops, and they should embrace the learning curve of the project.

Dr. Stein recommends any teacher who is considering implementing National History Day projects in their classroom to absolutely do it. She believes the project has so many benefits, and she is willing to be a resource to other teachers and schools as they begin implementing the project.

When giving her final remarks on the project, Dr. Stein said she truly loves the way the project brings students and teachers together. She has found the program incorporates so many of the principles she learned in the CWP Summer Institute. As a teacher, she finds it extremely rewarding to learn about so many of these topics from her students, and enjoys revisiting her students' projects. Dr. Stein explains that being an English teacher in the times of so many things being virtual isn't simple, but she feels that this

project makes research come alive.

To learn more about the National History Project, and how you can get involved [click here](#).

To learn more about the CT History Day Project [click here](#).

Twin Studies in Nature vs Nurture: What Makes You, You

Introduction

Twin studies - studying twins and their differences and similarities - is crucial to studying the age-old debate of whether genetics or environment affect people more. Because of them, we have a far greater understanding of what causes different conditions and behaviors in people. This knowledge can help to prevent or develop various physical and psychological traits.

Background

Although the term "Nature vs. Nurture" was created by Francis Galton in the mid 1800s, people had been theorizing about what makes people the way they are long before.

Plato, Socrates, and Descartes believed in nativism; that people are born with certain traits and experiences don't affect them. Aristotle, John B. Watson, and John Locke believed that everyone was a "blank slate" or "Tabula Rasa" at birth and everything about them depended on their environment and experiences.

Heart of the story

Neither of these theories are completely correct. Both nature and nurture play a role in human development and traits. Scientists were able to find this through twin studies. Since identical twins mostly have the same DNA at birth, any differences they have can be credited to environmental causes. Scientists can study which things were affected by difference in environment. One study was done on the general intelligence of 11,000 pairs of twins and found that while genetics influence intelligence more greatly, environment also has a moderate effect on it.

In studies of 14.5 million pairs of twins on 17,804 different traits, genetics and environment had about equal impact.

A study compared identical and fraternal twins. If the identical twins had more in common, then genetics had a higher impact on a person, and if it was equal to the amount the fraternal twins had in common, then the environment had more impact. They found that both affected different parts of the brain.

Conclusion

The ability to acquire this type of information is almost solely due to twin studies. Not only can this solve the Nature Vs. Nurture debate, but also allow us to better understand the causes of medical conditions, find out what types of people are susceptible to them, and help prevent them. The studies can also help us to find the cause of various physical and psychological attributes so they can be developed minimally, either through change in environment or lifestyle, or through more complex and controversial methods such as genome editing. Although this information is extremely important, it is unethical to separate twins, at least for the sole purpose of a study.

These studies and many more, show that both nature and nurture have an effect on people in different ways.