

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A TOPIC

### From Katz, *Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach*

Predicting which topics will work well with any particular group of students is not easy. The following is a tentative set of criteria for topic selection, which will help the teacher in attempting to select a student-generated topic for study.

1. Sufficient relevant phenomena are directly observable in the student's own environments, in that the topic will provide ample opportunity for firsthand and direct contact with aspects of the topic.
2. The topic is within some of the students own experiences.
3. Firsthand direct investigation is feasible (and not potentially dangerous).
4. Local resources and experts are readily available and potential field sites available.
5. The topic has good potential for students to present investigation to others in a variety of forms (role playing, construction, oral presentations, visual media, computer generated such as Power Point, etc.).
6. Parental (of other adult) participation and contributions are likely.
7. Topic is sensitive to local culture, as well as culturally appropriate in general.
8. Topic is potentially interesting to as many students as possible or it is an interest that adults consider worthy of developing in children.
9. Topic is related to the grade appropriate and content of the NJCCCS.
10. Topic is optimally specific—not too narrow or not too broad (for example, a study of the teacher's own dog or "buttons" at one end, and the topic of "music" or the "seasons" at the other end. Broad topic can be made more appropriate through the use of "webbing."
11. The teacher's own knowledge of and experience related to the topic will strengthen his/her own ability to enrich the students experiences during the investigation. However, the teacher should not be afraid to undertake a topic that he/she has either no or limited knowledge but is of high interest to the students.
12. The topic is rich enough to allow for extended and in-depth investigation activities over a period of several weeks.