**Help Finding Inspiration for a Topic**

* **Questions you have about the world around you** – If you find yourself asking questions about how or why something works, ask yourself if you could do an experiment based on your question. Remember, though, a science fair project has to be testable with the scientific method and measurable.
* **Follow a passion or special interest** – Think about what you love to do and try to develop a testable project around it. You will be a spending much of 6th grade working on this project, so it’s important that it is something you find interesting. It is also interesting to the judges when your project connects to your own life.
* **The news** – When you watch or read the news, look for possible project ideas. You will grab the attention of the judges if a topic is something new that everyone’s talking about, and you’ll earn bonus points for being able to connect your project to “the real world.”
* **Science magazines** – It can be fun to read a book by Rick Riordan or something from the *Harry Potter* series, but it is important for young thinkers to read nonfiction as well. Reading scientific magazines is great if you have a possible career interest in science or medicine. They are also great for getting ideas for science fair projects. Some suggestions include: *Scientific American, Science, Discover, Popular Science, and Popular Mechanics.* Many of these titles are available for free at the Atlantic County Library in EHT.
* **Find a need and fill it**. This would most often be for Engineering or Computer Science projects, but it can work for any category. One example of this was a student who wanted to help people with disabilities. She visited a school for the blind and asked them about some of their everyday challenges. One challenge the students mentioned was not being able to read food labels, which typically aren’t written in Braille. Being able to read food labels was a *need*. In order to *fill that need*, the student acquired a bar code scanner and wrote a program that would scan the bar code on the labels, identify the product, and read what it was aloud to the blind person.
* **Internet searches** – Reading examples of other students’ projects can help you learn about project design approaches, testing techniques, or just get you thinking. BUT taking someone else’s project directly from a website is not ethical and your work will not be original. Both of those are major problems. And, besides, you want your project to be YOURS, not someone else’s.
* **Categories** – I have attached a list of the categories at our science fair competitions and some topics that fall within them. Some students start with a category that interests them and then brainstorm possible topics that will fit into that category.