



## Exhibitions of Learning

Whether it is getting student work on the walls, showcasing a class project, or hosting a whole-school exhibition with community members and experts, celebrate students' work and learning by making it visible.

### Why do it?

Exhibitions of student learning promote...

- **High Quality Work for Authentic Audiences.** When students know they will share their work with an audience beyond the classroom, they are motivated to make it high quality. The best exhibitions showcase work that has required students to think critically, problem solve, and revise through multiple drafts. Exhibitions are a great way to share student writing, art work, performances, debates, experiments, engineering projects, mock trials, podcasts, or videos.
- **Community Pride & Transparency.** Exhibitions put students center stage as they describe the process and products of their learning. Like a sports event or performance, they bring families and community members together to celebrate the collective work of a class, a team, a school. But with exhibitions, the community is taking pride in students' academic learning.
- **Equity.** Exhibitions set the expectation that all students, not just a select group, are capable of producing high-quality work and will share that work with people beyond their classroom. They motivate all students to do their best, so they can stand proudly beside their work.

### How to do it

**Schedule a date.** Pick a date and time for your exhibition and share it with your community. Invite families, students, colleagues, and community members to participate in the celebration.

**Curate the learning students will share.** Have students transform your classroom, school, or community space into an environment where they can display their work and share their learning. Exhibit the final products, as well as artifacts that highlight the learning process such as drafts or prototypes.

**Prep your students.** Help your students prepare to engage in a discussion about their work by having them reflect on their learning and practice talking about it with a peer. You can even invite another class to an exhibition "rehearsal". The following prompts can be helpful questions for students to practice:

- What were the steps in the process to create this work?
- What did you learn?
- What new skills did you develop?
- What were some challenges?

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- What was your favorite part of this learning experience?
- What advice would you give to others who want to do this?

**Students share their learning.** During the exhibition, have students discuss their work and learning experience with audience members. Help community members engage by providing them with sample questions to ask, or a student guide to walk them through the experience.

**Students reflect on the experience.** Provide time for students to debrief the experience the next day:

- Journal prompt - *How did it feel to share your learning with our community?*
- Pair-share with a peer on the above question
- Class share-out/discussion

### Tips & Tricks

**Learn from professionals.** Help students see how work is presented in the “real world.” Galleries have Q&A sessions with artists or filmmakers, scientists present findings at conferences, writers publish their work. Each profession offers examples for how to bring meaningful work to an authentic audience.

**Help students reflect, not describe.** Without an opportunity to prepare and discuss their learning in advance, students may default to describing the steps they took to complete the work instead of talking about their learning. Prior to exhibition, provide time to help students identify what they *now know* and *can do*, as opposed to listing the tasks they completed.

**Don't wait!** Exhibitions are a great opportunity to bring the community together and build pride for students' work, before the end of the year.

### Resources

- Sample Exhibition Timeline: <http://bit.ly/ExhibitionTimeline>
- Exhibition Logistics: <http://bit.ly/ExhibitionLogistics>
- High Tech High regularly exhibits student work: <http://bit.ly/2n11gSY>
- EL Education Kindergarten exhibition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PjaZF9o9uE>
- How to do exhibitions of learning: <http://bit.ly/2nROaMG>
- EL Education 7th grade exhibition: <https://vimeo.com/channels/celebrationsoflearning/48803088>
- EL Education has a great chapter on celebrations of learning in their book, [\*Leaders of their Own Learning\*](#).

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