

The New School of Northern Virginia Exhibition Handbook

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Preface

Exhibitions are an integral part of The New School and of Morning Modules. Although each class has its own set of goals and expectations, teachers are unified in their desire that each student create and present in the ninth week a quality public presentation that shows that he or she has made the academic connections between the course work and themselves. Equally important, the students show that they can communicate this knowledge effectively to others.

In order to best model the organization, research, writing, and presentation skills required in an Exhibition, this book answers its own Essential Question: “What does the student need to know in order to create and present a successful Exhibition?” The information is presented in a Magazine Format to most effectively convey the wide range of information and guidelines students may find helpful for their own quarterly projects.

The *Table of Contents* contains all of the important parts of the Exhibition: the *Introduction* defines the terms and explains the rationale or the “why” of the Exhibition; the *Middle* gives the nuts and bolts of researching, organizing, writing, and presenting the Exhibition; the *Conclusion* contains the evaluation and grading information; and the *Questions and Answers* section lists FAQs and resources students should find helpful.

The purpose of this book is to help each student create a successful, quality Exhibition. Of course, questions and issues will arise that are neither covered by the scope of this book nor had been anticipated. In those cases, communicating with your teacher is still the best way for the student to guarantee that he or she is on track.

Mark Farmer and Michael Oliver

I. Introduction

The Purpose of an Exhibition

The Essential Question

Focus Skills

The Purpose of an Exhibition

Simply put, an Exhibition is a particular kind of test. Unlike most tests, which are private in nature and take place between the student and the teacher, Exhibitions are public and occur primarily in the open among students, faculty, and interested others.

In this sense, Exhibitions are public performances of knowledge. They provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the following:

- Their understanding of a body of information.
- The skills needed to make sense of that information.
- The skills needed to communicate that understanding to others.

For teachers, the Exhibition is a powerful assessment tool. Through the Exhibition teachers can:

- Evaluate students' abilities to understand and express a particular body of knowledge.
- Witness students' abilities to put information together in meaningful ways.

Although Exhibitions can occur at any time—weekly, at the end of a unit, at the mid-course mark—at The New School they always happen at the end of the Morning Module. Morning Module teachers design classes to end with Exhibitions. These exhibitions are organized around Essential Questions. Although there will be more on Essential Questions in the next section, for now it is important to know that the Essential Question guides students in their understanding of a particular body of information. Thus, teachers design Exhibitions that allow:

- Students a chance to answer an Essential Question in a individual way.
- Teachers to assess a student's mastery of a set of Essential Skills, called Focus Skills, in relationship to a particular body of information.

When participating in an Exhibition process, teachers are expecting students to do more than simply recite a list of facts or present prescribed conclusions, and it does not make any difference whether the students have acquired their facts and/or conclusions from teachers, parents, or books. In the Exhibition process, students evaluate the information and the conclusions of others. In the process they create their own perspectives, which may or may not agree with the perspectives of authors, teachers, or parents. Thus, in the Exhibition process the teacher is assessing the student's ability to construct a meaningful perspective and, then, to share or communicate that perspective to others.

For example

In a team-taught course entitled *The Vietnam Project*, the two teachers required students to answer the question: "What are the lessons of the Vietnam War?" The teachers taught many facts about the war. They shared many conclusions about the war's consequences. In other words, the two teachers answered the Essential Question many times, for themselves. In the Exhibition, however, students were not asked to recite facts or repeat the opinions of their teachers. In this Exhibition, students created characters, hawk or dove, who had lived through the war. The students developed the perspective of these characters on the war and the lessons that they had learned. Then the students shared their lessons about the war with the audience.

Thus, the purpose of exhibitions is to provide students with a forum for creating and performing their knowledge of the world around them. With an Essential Question as their guide and Focus Skills as their tools, students wrestle with the facts and the evidence, evaluating the reasoning and logic of others, with the goal of making sense of the world. That understanding is then shared with the people around them.

The Essential Question

The Essential Question helps the student and the teacher study a subject in a structured and cohesive manner. Each teacher creates an Essential Question and thereby provides a unifying theme for the course. Understanding the Essential Question, knowing why it is important to the class, and making connections between the coursework and the Essential Question are each an important step to the student's success in the class and with the Exhibition.

The Essential Question is the focal point for each Morning Module class. Teachers describe it in the syllabus, they refer to it during lectures and classroom assignments, and they post it on the wall in most classes. As a rule, the Essential Question is broad and open-ended and has no one answer; instead, the question allows for multiple answers in multiple directions. Students have a wide array of answers to choose from when organizing their Exhibition.

Using the Essential Question in an Exhibition

The successful Exhibition is organized around and provides a thought-provoking answer to the Essential Question. Students often find it helpful to refer to the Essential Question at least once during the Exhibition, as it provides a rationale for the Exhibition topic and it helps the audience make the connection between the student's answer (or thesis statement) and the supporting argument. Most importantly, *the entire Exhibition is the answer to the Essential Question*. The research, content, visual displays, demonstrations, and even the format of the Exhibition are all supporting evidence for the answer to the Essential Question.

For example

In a course entitled *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, the Essential Question is "What is the nature of God?" In class, materials presented focus on each religion's beliefs concerning the nature of God, thereby highlighting cultural similarities and differences. For the Exhibition, this open-ended question allows the student to look at an understanding of God in any one of the three religions explored in the class.

Focus Skills

In teaching the course, the teacher not only presents the information needed to answer the Essential Question; he or she also gives students the opportunity to develop the primary skills that the student will need to complete the course. These skills are called Focus Skills and no more than two from the following list are selected for each Morning Module. They include:

1. Communicating effectively.
2. Working independently.
3. Working collaboratively.
4. Applying effective research methods.
5. Persisting in achieving quality.
6. Accomplishing goals through organization.
7. Solving problems.
8. Appreciating and understanding different perspectives.
9. Putting information in context.
10. Working creatively.
11. Thinking and acting ethically.
12. Serving and acting for the benefit of the community.

Using Focus Skills in an Exhibition

The Exhibition should also demonstrate to the audience that the student has mastered the required focus skills.

For example

If one of the Focus Skills is *working creatively*, the exhibition could be organized around a new or creative format and the content should include creative work completed during the quarter.

Or, if one of the Focus Skills is *persisting in achieving quality*, the Exhibition materials and presentation should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the subject and the question accompanied by a presentation that is as neat and error-free as possible.

In summary, a successful Exhibition is organized around the student's answer to the Essential Question and demonstrates mastery of the specific Focus Skills.

II. The Exhibition

Overview: A Step-by-Step Preparation Guide

Choosing an Exhibition Format

The Parts of an Exhibition

The Role of the Audience

A Step-by-step Preparation Guide

The following steps will help the student complete a successful Exhibition from start to finish. Some of these steps are done concurrently; for example, Steps 3, 4, 5, and 6 overlap and are considered by the student at the same time.

1. *Explore ideas.*

During the first two weeks of class, the student should become familiar with the Essential Question, have an understanding of the material that is to be presented in class, and talk to the teacher about the direction he or she is expecting the Exhibitions to take. The student should explore personal interests within the boundaries of the course and see which of these will provide an interesting and academic answer to the Essential Question. *Talking to the teacher about personal interests with regards to the course often helps identify one or more directions the Exhibition can take.*

2. *Develop a thesis statement or argument that answers the Essential Question.*

The student should be able to write a one-sentence *thesis sentence* or *controlling idea* that will provide the theme for the argument and evidence. Such a thesis sentence is not a one-sentence answer to the Essential Question; instead it is a theme or a concept that is strengthened by the arguments and evidence uncovered through research.

When developing the thesis sentence, the student may be able to transpose the Essential Question into an “essential statement,” thereby showing a path the ensuing research will follow.

For example

In an American Literature class where the Essential Question is “How does the literature of the period parallel the growth of American civilization,” a thesis statement comes directly from the question: “American literature of the 19th Century parallels the cultural maturation of the United States.” Although it does not provide an exact answer, it defines the framework for the student’s research. Next, the student must find evidence that supports this statement and determine *how* this statement is true.

3. **Research, research, research.**

Depending on the course objectives, the student's answer to the Essential Question is going to come from either research or artistic work. If the Exhibition is research-based, the presentation will have more meaning and depth the more sources are used. *Students having difficulties finding materials should talk to their teacher about sources and related ideas.* Regardless of sources, students need to have some method of tracking their sources and the material they provide so that they can properly cite their sources in their papers and in their presentations. A system of note cards or a research journal that contains the title of the source, the content, and bibliographic information will be of considerable help when it is time to organize and/or write the presentation.

Note on Internet Research

Although the Internet is a great place to do research fast, it has its own drawbacks. For example:

- Not all information on the Internet is correct. Anyone can post a website and say whatever he or she pleases. There are no editors or publishers to screen the information. Corporations and organizations with even the best intentions have agendas that may differ from scholarly truths. And, the most popular search engines display first those sites that have paid a fee. *Students must find confirming reports from independent sources.*
- Not all information is on the web. It has been estimated that, because of copyright laws, as little as 15% of published information is available on the Internet.¹
- Plagiarism is potentially a very real problem because of the ease of cut-and-paste technology. *Using somebody else's material without giving appropriate recognition can result in a failing grade.*

Ways to avoid potential problems with the Internet:

- Don't cut and paste; instead, summarize and quote.
- Cite sources, either in the text, as footnotes, or as endnotes.
- Verify Internet information with primary source materials.
- Use books and journals of known and reputable authorship.

¹ Stepp, Laura. "Point. Click. Think?" *Washington Post*, July 16, 2002.

4. *Determine primary evidence that supports the thesis statement.*

During the research phase, the student selects specific examples and evidence that offer strong support to the thesis statement. The student should also consider what evidence will be good candidates for charts, graphs, or other forms of graphic displays.

5. *Determine the Exhibition format.*

If the teacher does not specify a particular Exhibition format, the student should determine the presentation and organizational structure (see “Choosing Exhibition Formats”).

6. *Organize the data and construct a plan of action.*

Writing an outline is one of the best ways to begin organizing data and researched materials. Based on the format and the argument, the plan of action (see “Parts of an Exhibition: the Middle”) helps determine the most logical organization of the data.

7. *Complete the research.*

After most of the research is complete and the student has some sense of the organizational flow of the Exhibition, it is time to identify those gaps or holes where information is vague or lacking. This is where final research efforts should be focused.

8. *Write out the answer and create the visual displays.*

Whether or not the teacher requires a written report for the Exhibition, the student should write out, in essay or report form, what will be spoken and/or shown during the presentation. The supporting visual displays must also be designed and created. These could take the form of a research paper, a debate position, a script for dramatic interpretation, visual displays, museum exhibits, note cards, or overheads.

9. *Proofread.*

During the last days prior to the class rehearsal, materials should be reviewed for completeness and papers and displays should be proofread and finalized.

10. Rehearse in class.

Each Morning Module has scheduled time during the last two days before Exhibition Day specifically for students to complete a full dress rehearsal. A critical step in the Exhibition process, it allows students to make sure they have all of the visuals they need, know how to work all of the equipment, make sure they are organized, and work out any last-minute bugs. Students should also be aware of how much time their Exhibition takes, and plan accordingly. If students need specific equipment or technology, this is the time for them to make arrangements to have it during the Exhibition.

11. Complete a final edit.

This is the last chance to fix problems and ambiguities that were apparent during the rehearsal. It might require some last-minute research to avoid uncertainties or a reorganization of existing data to make the presentation smoother. It is also an opportunity to address the comments or suggestions made by the teacher or other students in the class. And, it is the final opportunity to review the organization methods (note cards, displays) and to check for thoroughness. Even if no substantive changes have been made, a final rehearsal at home often helps the student be more comfortable with his or her upcoming presentation.

Choosing an Exhibition Format

When choosing the format for an Exhibition, the student has two considerations: (1) to work alone or with others and (2) the exhibition format.

Work alone or with others?

There are three options the student can choose from:

- **The Individual Exhibition**
Most Exhibitions fall into this category, where one student performs one exhibition. The student is responsible for the research, organization, and all elements of the Exhibition.
- **The Group Exhibition**
Sometimes students are permitted to team up with one or more other students to create a group Exhibition. As a rule, Exhibitions of this nature are longer, more complex, and often require greater technical skills than any one individual can provide. Students who choose this method should be able to meet outside of school to organize and discuss their work.
- **The Class Exhibition**
A type of group Exhibition, the Class Exhibition is longer still and follows the guidelines determined by the teacher and/or the class. It is often presented several times during Exhibition day.

The Exhibition format?

Some of the more common formats are described below:

- **The Speech and Visual Display Exhibition**
Perhaps the most common and the most basic type of Exhibition, the Speech and Visual Display Exhibition involves the student standing before an audience and making a speech with visual displays to support the argument. This format highlights the student's research, organization, and presentation skills. It can be made exciting and unique through the use of charts, graphs, posters, creative artwork, short dramatic interpretations, interactive materials, experiments,

demonstrations, handouts, audio/video clips, web pages, slide shows, or computer graphics presentations.

Note on Visual Aids:

Visual displays are an integral part of this particular Exhibition format and an important part of most Exhibitions. Regardless of whether you choose to use posters, video, computer graphics or overheads, they should

- **Create impact.** A good visual presents information clearly and dynamically. And, it is relevant to the particular point the student is making. Visuals that are specific and focused create the most impact.
- **Be timely.** Visuals should be presented when they are needed and not simply be background art for the Exhibition. A focused, visual display works best when shown the moment it is needed and removed once the evidence has been presented.
- **Be legible from any location in the room.** Fonts and pictures must be enlarged if they are to be seen or read from across the room.
- **Be neat and well organized.** Different elements for the display must be chosen as a result of thought and care. An effective display is thematically cohesive and follows artistic principles for design and layout.

- **The Dramatic Exhibition**

In this Exhibition format, the Essential Question is answered through drama, where one or more students take on dramatic personae. It can include live or taped productions, or even a combination of both. Students should be aware that most dramatic productions require a greater time commitment and involvement than other formats. Students are also expected to provide a real-time Introduction and Conclusion discussing their Exhibition and to field questions from the audience.

- **The Roundtable Exhibition**

In this Exhibition, one or more students host a panel discussion created around the Essential Question. Typically, one or more students act as moderator while other students present specific viewpoints or defend their own arguments. It may be designed as a debate, a roundtable discussion, a “peace talks” format, or some other variation. Students choosing a discussion-style format should know that a high level of participation during the Exhibition is critical to

their success. Students are also expected to provide an Introduction for the audience that places the discussion in context with the Essential Question, and provide a Conclusion at the end.

- **The Magazine Exhibition**

This format allows for individual students or a group of students to create a polished, final publication they can distribute to faculty and peers. The magazine can consist of any subject or format: a poetry anthology, a collection of stories, photo essays, science reports, etc. Students can enhance a magazine Exhibition with art, photos, computer graphics, or some other form of creative work. Along with the traditional binding methods, students can use digital technology to create a web-based e-magazine with links from a personal page or the school home page. Students should still expect to provide a presentation discussing their work, its relationship to the Essential Question, and the process involved in creating their publication.

- **The Museum Exhibition**

This format has individual students or a group of students creating self-explanatory information displays. These Exhibitions are similar in design to museum exhibits, science fairs, and art gallery shows. They can incorporate hands-on, interactive displays and audio/video accompaniment. Although the Exhibition should be completely comprehensible without additional input from the student, a student presentation that explains their work, guides the audience through the exhibit, and answers questions is typically required.

The above list of Exhibition Formats is not the final, definitive list. The subject matter or the thesis statement may suggest an intriguing variation, or perhaps something truly different. Students should use their creativity to be open to new ideas and discuss them with their teacher as they move forward with their Exhibition.

The Parts of an Exhibition

Although teachers design exhibitions to fit the needs of specific Morning Modules, certain parts remain unchanged. These recurring parts are 1) the main presentation, 2) the question and answer session, and 3) the documentation of sources and suggested further readings. In this section, these elements of an exhibition are discussed. Defining features of each element are presented, with special attention given to how different styles of exhibition might alter and affect the characteristics of those features.

The Presentation

As with any good drama, story, illustration, or research paper, an exhibition's main presentation should contain certain elements. These elements are:

- A beginning or introduction
- A middle
- An end or conclusion

When these three elements work together well, the student has created a coherent argument. These elements are not proportional, however, as the introduction and the conclusion are decidedly smaller than the middle, which constitutes the bulk of any exhibition.

The Introduction

Regardless of a course's content or an exhibition's style, the student needs to use an introduction. This introduction should accomplish the following:

- Capture the audience's attention and interest
- Establish the topic and its context
- Clarify the Exhibition's Essential Question
- Present the central argument or thesis
- Layout the structure or outline of the speech

For example

In a speech and poster style Exhibition, the elements of the introduction are fairly self-evident:

A student does an exhibition on viruses. She begins by describing in microscopic detail the body's battle with a flu virus, thus capturing her audience's attention. Then she establishes the scope of her topic: the millions of battles that are waged every hour against viruses. She follows this description with a statement of the Essential Question: What are the best ways of fighting the flu? She follows this with her argument or thesis statement, asserting that a healthy immune system is more important in the fight against the flu than any medicine or vaccination. She tells her audience how over the next twenty minutes she will describe what happens when the body is attacked by flu and, then, how diet, exercise, and a balanced life-style help a person develop a more dynamic immune system.

A museum-style exhibition would have the same basic introductory elements. It could be written up and situated at the entrance to the museum; or better yet a tour guide could speak the introduction to the audience.

Of course, not all exhibitions at The New School rely on the telling of information. Frequently, teachers devise Exhibitions that allow students to demonstrate mastery of the class, its skills and content, by demonstrating that mastery through art, video, drama, or some other creative devise. In these styles of Exhibition, the student does not capture the audience's attention by telling them an interesting anecdote, but by showing them something that engages their imaginations. Nevertheless, the Exhibition still needs an introduction.

For example

Using the example Exhibition above, instead of a tour guide telling the audience the introduction, the first thing the audience sees upon entering the museum is a visual representation of what happens when the body battles a flu virus. Then the audience sees several objects: a needle representing vaccinations, a bottle of pills representing medicines, and a visual representation of an immune system. A short paragraph on the wall asserts that nature's immune system is still the best way to fight the flu. Following this paragraph are several objects: a plate of healthy foods, an exercise machine, and a series of images in which a man and woman are engaged in a "healthy life-style."

Such an example can only be hypothetical, of course, because each Exhibition is ultimately unique to the class and its creator. Depending on a student's creativity and boldness, the look and sequence of an Exhibition are open to debate. Confusion should not, however, ever be considered a desired

effect. Audiences attending Exhibitions should know what they are seeing or hearing, and where their guide, the presenter, is taking them. Although they can, on occasion, become uncertain about exactly where they are going, that uncertainty should never be the result of vagueness or disorganization on the part of the Exhibition.

The Body

An Exhibition requires a middle section where the student presents facts that support the central argument or thesis. The argument or thesis must respond to the course's Essential Question. In other words, in the Exhibition's middle section the student, like the lawyer, argues her or his case to the audience.

Remember

To be successful, the argument needs to be logically constructed and supported with solid evidence.

Of course, before students can present evidence, they have to select it; for in arguing a case, students cannot successfully argue a thesis without cogent and meaningful evidence. Hence, a major question confronted by every researcher and exhibitor concerns the nature of evidence. Students must ask themselves: What kind of evidence supports the exhibition's argument?

Evidence can take several forms:

- Specific actions by or events involving the subject
- Quotations by the subject or from an authority on the subject.
- Numbers and statistics about or concerning the subject.
- Photographs and video clips, charts and graphs dealing with the subject

Students also need to practice the art of persuasion when arguing their case. The art of persuasion consists of many elements, some of which are:

- Speaking with conviction
- Appealing to the audience emotionally
- Presenting information clearly and dynamically

Logic, or reason, is an important element of this middle section.

- Students need to use logic or reasoning when arguing their thesis statement.
- Students demonstrate logic or reason in the organization of their Exhibition.
Students also demonstrate the use of logic or reason when they explain how their evidence supports their conclusion or thesis.

The student then follows a logical plan laid out in his or her introduction.

a. The Plan of Action

When a student constructs a plan of action, the student should consider the nature of the argument being presented. Some arguments are linear in nature and require an adherence to time. With these arguments students should follow a chronological order. Other arguments do not focus on historical events but rather on social or scientific problems. The plan of action for this type of exhibition needs to revolve around the problem and its solution. Although the organization of each exhibition is somewhat unique, most will follow one or the other of these types of plans:

- The Chronological Plan
- The Problem-Solution Plan
- The Cause and Effect Plan
- The Main Ideas Plan

Choosing the right plan of action for presenting the argument is critically important. Students can then make sure that information is presented at the appropriate time by analyzing their evidence and presenting specific facts in support of specific parts of their plan. Those students who take the time to organize their Exhibitions' middle sections coherently and well have completed the most difficult part of their work.

1. The Chronological Plan

In the Chronological Plan, the student begins at the initiation of a process or a historical sequence and proceeds one important event, decision, or action after another toward the process' or historical sequence's conclusion.

For example

A student's Exhibition on the construction of the Washington Monument might take the following shape:

- The student begins with L'Enfant's original plan to have a statue of General Washington on a horse at the District's prime meridian.
- Then he addresses Robert Mill's original design (1837) of a monumental obelisk surrounded by a circular colonnade and statues of revolutionary heroes and Washington riding a chariot.
- Next, the student talks about how in the 1850s lack of funds slowed the progress of construction.
- Next, he discusses how the Civil War interrupted the building of the monument altogether.
- Then the student describes how the lower half of the monument is a different color than the upper half because when construction resumed in the 1870s, the government could not find stones of the same color and quality.
- The student concludes the Exhibition's middle section with the completion of the monument in 1884.

2. The Problem-Solution Plan

In the Problem-Solution Plan, the student begins the middle section with a description of the problem that needs to be addressed. After thoroughly describing the problem, which might include a couple of main ideas or connected problems, the student launches into the possible solutions to the problem, with the pros and cons of each solution.

For example

the middle section of a museum style Exhibition that deals with global warming and its possible solutions might proceed as follows:

- With the introduction concluded, the audience enters a section of the museum entitled "The Problem." A dozen pictures vividly capture areas of the globe that are most affected by the earth's warming: polar ice caps, agricultural areas affected by slight changes in temperature, etc. Each picture is accompanied by text that explains to the audience what it is seeing.
- In the next section the audience gazes on numerous pictures of those manmade or natural things that contribute to the global warming problem: images of

industrial pollution, of traffic, of forest fires, etc. Again, text accompanies each image with facts about how the activity in the image contributes to the problem.

- In the next section, the students have devised an interesting way to represent how the ozone is being destroyed.
- After passing a vestibule, the audience enters the section entitled “Solutions.”
- Neatly organized, titled and captioned, the audience proceeds through the museum’s middle learning about the various solutions to the green house problem.

3. The Cause and Effect Plan

When a student elects to use the Cause and Effect Plan, he or she is answering an Essential Question that asks the student to interpret the reasons why a certain event, reaction, or activity has occurred. The structure of the middle section of the exhibition consists of two parts. The student organizes one part around the event, reaction, or activity itself. The other part deals with the various forces, reasons, and/or motivations that have caused the event, reaction, or activity to occur.

For example

In the middle section of a speech and visual display Exhibition on Toni Morrison’s novel *Sula*, the student analyzes how the author creates her disassociated characters.

- In Part One, the student discusses the narrative, how numerous plot elements recur throughout the novel, but in fragmented form.
- The student discusses the lyrical, yet detached nature of the language, how even the most horrendous acts seemingly sing on the page but in such a way that the reader does not emotional empathize with the victim.
- The student discusses how the novel shifts into a first person narrative only on one occasion. For three pages the reader experiences the internal monologue of a lead character.
- In Part Two, the student explains how Morrison’s literary devices create a world in which the characters remain emotional detached from other people’s tragedies.
- The student discusses the characters’ behavior during several key moments in the plot, pointing out how the devices cause a disassociated effect.

4. The Main Ideas Plan

When an exhibition's Essential Question asks students to respond with key points, students may elect to use the Main Ideas Plan. With this approach, the exhibition's middle consists of a list of ideas that collectively answer the Essential Question. Students can order that list using a number of rationales, although saving the strongest idea for last is always advised.

For example

A roundtable exhibition asks students: what are the most important qualities of a leader during a national crisis?

- After completing the introduction, a student describes a leader's ability to balance competing perspectives and interests during the struggle for consensus. She cites Lincoln during the Civil War.
- Another student counters, saying that Lincoln's balancing act was indecisiveness. It caused the war to drag on for several years.
- A third student suggests that unity is important during crises but that unity requires compromise unless, of course, tyranny forces people into agreement.
- The discussion continues for several minutes until the moderator calls for a vote from the audience: Is the ability to balance competing perspectives and interests an important quality of a leader?
- The roundtable continues, with discussions on decision-making, speechmaking, and compassion, each followed by audience vote.

The Conclusion

The Exhibition also requires a conclusion in which the student pulls the main ideas of the exhibition together. A conclusion should accomplish the following:

- Re-direct the audience's attention back to the larger issue: the Essential Question and the presenter's thesis or argument.
- Summarize the major points or ideas expressed in the exhibition.
- Suggest broader implications or ideas that the thesis or argument might provoke.

For example

Students produce a magazine of short stories addressing the Essential Question: “What area of the brain’s structure most affects our experience of the world?” In the introduction, students present various features of the brain that affect people’s experiences. As the magazine was organized around those features, during the middle section, each student presents her or his story and discusses that brain feature on which the story focused.

One student discusses her story, which focused on the thalamus. After explaining why she chose the thalamus, she concludes her Exhibition by reasserting that the brain’s structure profoundly affects experience. She suggests that, because the thalamus is the main relay station for sensory data, its role is the most important. As a result, all students of human behavior should pay more attention to this older less prominent feature of the brain.

Questions and Answers

With a story or research paper, the author hopes to provoke questions or challenges from her or his audience. Unfortunately, authors seldom find out if their work has provoked responses in the public. They can read reviews or talk to friends, but they seldom have an opportunity to engage in dialogue with audiences about the meaning of their research or study.

The same is not true for the authors of Exhibitions, however. After concluding the main presentation, the author of an exhibition faces members of the audience in a question and answer session. These sessions have two main functions: 1) to clarify ideas or facts and 2) to discuss the author’s central thesis or argument.

An Exhibition that has answered the Essential Question, clearly and with lots of relevant facts, almost always invokes a lot of questions; unless, of course, the presenter actively discourages audience participation. In this sense, Exhibitions that fail to generate questions have not succeeded. There are at least two reasons why this might occur. The Essential Question might not have been answerable with evidence, and thus the student could not responded clearly to the question and/or in many different ways.

For example

An Essential Question asks: How did Allen Ginsberg's feelings about his parents and their relationship affect his poetry?

If, however, the student cannot find information on Ginsberg's feelings about his parents, such as letters to them or to a friend about them; or cannot find any direct connection between their relationship, his feelings about them, and his poetry, then the question is unanswerable.

Without evidence, Exhibitions are almost always vague and boring.

Sometimes the Essential Question is not open-ended enough:

A teacher asks: What kind of democracy did ancient Athens have? The student can describe Athenian democracy, but because he is not being asked to evaluate that democracy, the student's assessment of it is absent from the exhibition.

Fine-tuning Essential Questions happen frequently in Morning Module courses. By the time students present their Exhibitions, they should feel confident that the question to which they are responding is clear and open-ended. Thus, students should expect, indeed demand, questions from their audience. Questions are a sign of a good audience, an audience that respects the Exhibition process and the presenter's time and good work.

For example

A student concludes her Exhibition on the uses of mathematical reasoning in everyday life by suggesting that the person who develops her reasoning skills will be decidedly happier than the person who does not develop those skills. Another student in the audience questions the author as to why a highly logical person would be happier. The exhibitor offers an example.

- Student X has developed her reasoning ability to a high degree.
- Teacher Y hands out an assignment, asking the students to create a maze that has two possible solutions.
- The student creates a very simple maze that has two trails: one leading to the exit; the other, to a dead end.
- The teacher looks at the maze and says, "But there is only one way out of this maze."
- The student responds, "But, of course."

- “I asked for two possible solutions,” the teacher says.
- “There are two *possible* solutions,” the student answers, “but only one actual one.”
- The teacher grunts once, before retorting that, “That’s not what I meant.”
- “But that’s what you said,” the student answers.
- The teacher then gave the student an “F” on the assignment.

After completing the hypothetical example, the student looked at the presenter quizzically for a moment, before asking, “So how does your example answer my question?” “It doesn’t,” replied the presenter. She then turned to the audience and asked, “Are there any more questions?”

Of course, for those students who don’t really know their facts or who don’t really have an answer to the Essential Question, the question and answer sessions are difficult. Those students seem to do everything possible to avoid the question and answer sessions.

Sources and Suggested Further Readings

Finally, the student should have a clear understanding about sources. Opinions and perspectives that the student gained from others should be referenced in the actual presentation.

For example

A student’s Exhibition explores how different biographers come to different conclusions about the life of John Brown. When the student references the Steve Oates biography, he says, “According the Steve Oakes . . .

Even in an Exhibition without a clear need to reference an author, such as an Exhibition on the nature of the universe, the student might say, “According to Einstein . . . “

Each Exhibition should also be accompanied by a list of sources that audience members can go to for further reading on the subject. The presenter should publish a list of sources, handing it out to the audience.

For example

a student's list of sources for his or her Exhibition on the resident theaters in America might look like this:

- “Advance or Retreat?” *American Theatre* April 1991: 43-45.
 Bentley, Eric. “I Reject the Living Theater,” *The New York Times* 20 October 1968, sec 2: 1.
 Brustein, Robert. *Seasons of Discontent*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.
 Gelber, Jack. “Julian Beck, Businessman.” *The Drama Review* Summer 1986: 6-29.
 Miles Julia. Telephone interview with author, 18 October 1996.
 Zeigler, Joseph Wesley. *Regional Theatre*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota Press, 1973.
 ----- . *Arts in Crisis*. Chicago: a capella, 1994.

The presenter can also offer members of the audience a chance to talk afterwards about possible books and magazine articles to read.

The Role of the Audience

When not exhibiting, students make up the audience, and as such have an insightful relationship to the Exhibitor. Not only can students learn from the Exhibition, they can relate to the different choices and decisions each Exhibitor made while creating his or her presentation. However, the role of the audience changes depending on whether it is a class rehearsal or whether it is the actual Exhibition.

On class rehearsal days, the student audience should provide constructive feedback to the presenter with the goal of improving the Exhibition. In most classes, the student's ability to provide a peer review is a part of the Exhibition grade. Students should focus on questions such as:

- What parts of the rehearsal did I really connect with?
- What parts of the presentation did I find confusing? Were there gaps in the research or in the argument?
- Does the thesis statement answer the Essential Question and is the supporting evidence clear?
- Are the visual displays relevant to the material presented?

- What could be done to make the presentation smoother or more complete?

Being able to communicate this information to the presenter is key to helping each other improve his or her Exhibitions. *In most classes, a student's offering qualitative suggestions results in a higher grade for his or her own Exhibition.*

It is equally important that the student giving the presentation objectively look at the students' statements and decide what changes should be made. *A student's making changes in response to suggestions made during rehearsal usually results in a higher Exhibition grade.*

On Exhibition day, it is now time for the student audience to listen carefully to the Exhibition, connect with the thesis and arguments, and ask questions—after all, a good Exhibition is interesting and informative. *One sign of a successful Exhibition is an honest discussion of ideas between the audience and the student presenter.* Use the Question and Answer period to:

- Ask that the presenter clarify the evidence or those parts of the Exhibition that were unclear to you
- Have the student elaborate on those points that you found interesting
- Find out more about the research methods or processes employed by the student when creating the Exhibition
- Comment to the presenter on alternate conclusions or ideas that you find interesting, given the information that was just presented.

III. Appendix

Public Speaking Guidelines
Frequently Asked Questions
Suggestions for Further Reading

Public Speaking Guidelines

Along with the organization and the content of the Exhibition, a student's presentation skills will determine how the Exhibition is received by the audience. The student's ability to communicate information in a professional tone and help create a learning environment where ideas and questions are exchanged will make for a successful Exhibition.

Below are some tips to consider when speaking to an audience:

- ***Have a definite start and a definite end.***
An Introduction that is straightforward and spells out the thesis statement and the Essential Question lets the audience know that the Exhibition has started. Similarly, a concluding statement, followed by a pause and a request for questions or comments tells them the main body of the presentation is completed and Exhibition has now entered into the Questions and Answers section. When there are no more apparent questions, the student should ask if there are any more questions, and if not, thank the audience. At that point, the Exhibition is over.
- ***Start on time; finish on time.***
If a student does not start on time, it is implied that the audience's time is not valued. Looking for equipment or setting up displays should be done before the start time, not after. If an Exhibition runs long, a student risks losing his or her audience by one's and two's as they leave for other Exhibitions. If the Questions and Answers are running long, the student should take control by stating that there is time for only one more question in the last remaining minutes. A student should not wait for the teacher to end the *student's* Exhibition.
- ***Be professional.***
Students who make eye contact, speak clearly, and who look good impress the audience. A slouchy presenter bores the audience. If a student fidgets, becomes disorganized, uses slang or curses, or speaks parenthetically to a friend in the front row, he or she creates distractions and diverts attention away from the Exhibition and, in the process, loses the interest of the audience.

- ***Know the equipment.***
Students who use audio or video clips should cue them up in advance so they are ready to play when needed. Students should know how to operate all of the equipment—the rehearsal is designed specifically with that in mind.
- ***Take pride in the Exhibition.***
Students should be proud of their Exhibition. They are interested in their subject, they have found an intellectually challenging way of answering the Essential Question, and they have completed the necessary work. If the student lets this feeling show during the presentation, the audience will want to hear what he or she has to say.
- ***Be specific.***
Vagueness is a dead give away that the student has not come to the Exhibition prepared. He or she is telling the audience that the research is incomplete. On the other hand, students should tell what they know, not what they don't know; for example, a student should not tell the audience that he or she was going to do something but never got around to it, or that he or she forgot to look something up. The audience will feel as though their time is being wasted.
- ***Speak with confidence and conviction.***
Knowledge and preparation beget confidence. If a student is prepared, all the above points become much easier to achieve. Public speaking is hard enough; public speaking without facts or an outline is impossible.

FAQs

Below are some of the *Frequently Asked Questions* from students about Exhibitions:

- ***I'm having trouble finding a topic. What do I do?***
First, go back to the Essential Question. How has it been answered in class? Try brainstorming, making a list on paper of important concepts, people, events, that are associated with the Essential Question. Which of these appeals to you? Talk to classmates. Talk to your teacher; there may be interesting aspects he or she would like to see covered. But, do not wait to long—if you need help, get help.
- ***Can I change my topic even though I have already started?***
Talk to your teacher. Questions to consider before switching include: (1) How important is your original thesis to other Exhibitions being done in the class? and (2) How late is it in the quarter; will you have enough time to start over?
- ***I can't find anything on the Internet. What do I do?***
Try books, magazines, and journals. Try using the keywords of your thesis statement as your basic search parameters on several different search engines. Try using the local library *Title* or *Keyword* searches to explore its database (it can most likely be searched from home or from school).
- ***Can't I just read from the pages I printed from the Internet?***
No. Internet information is neither your own original idea, your organization, nor your own writing. To have a successful Exhibition, you will need to research several different sources, internalize the material, organize it according to a plan, and write your own original argument in support of your own original thesis statement.
- ***My topic doesn't answer the Essential Question. What do I do?***
Most Essential Questions are intended to be of a broad nature, allowing you to focus on just one aspect of it. Does your thesis statement address one aspect of the Essential Question? If not, you will need a new thesis statement.

- ***I don't speak well in front of people. Will that hurt my grade?***
Talk to your teacher. If your problems are just a result of nerves, it should not have much effect. But, if your nerves are a result of a lack of preparation, it will hurt your grade more.
- ***Do I have to do a rehearsal in class?***
Yes. The class rehearsal is an important part of the Exhibition process. Ultimately, a rehearsal makes for a better presentation as you become more familiar with the material. In most classes, the rehearsal is actually a part of the overall Exhibition grade, and most classes will not allow you to give an Exhibition if you do not rehearse in class.
- ***What happens if I can't do my Exhibition on Exhibition Day?***
Apart from emergencies, your Exhibition must be completed on Exhibition Day. If you don't, you fail the Exhibition, which in some classes is worth up to 20% of your overall class grade.
- ***Can I pick a time slot for Exhibition Day?***
Sorry. Trying to organize the time slots for both the junior high and the high school is difficult enough without added constraints of personal preferences. Times are randomly assigned.
- ***Can I switch my Exhibition Day time slot with someone else?***
No. Once the schedule has been handed out, switching out of a scheduled time will only confuse everyone else.
- ***What can I do to improve my Exhibition grade?***
Talk to your teacher and look at the rubric to see what you can do to improve your Exhibition. As a rule, teachers like to see students offer constructive feedback during the class rehearsals and ask relevant questions during Questions and Answers. And, the more complete your rehearsal, the better your Exhibition grade will be.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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