

## WHAT IS AN EXHIBITION?

An exhibition is a high-stakes demonstration of mastery that occurs at a culminating academic moment, such as the end of a school year or at graduation. Exhibitions are summative assessments, but the process of building up to a final exhibition includes ongoing assessment, feedback, and revision. Exhibitions are open to the public, and community members and local experts are often invited to attend. Because exhibitions involve extensive preparation, they are most successful when adopted on a school-wide basis.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT IS NOT AN EXHIBITION?

An exhibition is not something that simply happens at the end of a unit, detached from prior learning. An exhibition is the end result of an extended, in-depth period of learning. An exhibition provides evidence that students have mastered specific content and standards.

Exhibitions are not limited to the fine arts. Students can use exhibitions to demonstrate mastery in all domains.

## HOW CAN I USE EXHIBITIONS WITH MY STUDENTS?

- > [Getting Started: Six Key Features of Exhibitions](#)
- > [Getting Started: Four Supportive Conditions for Implementing Exhibitions](#)
- > [Additional Resources](#)



guide

GETTING STARTED

## SIX KEY FEATURES OF EXHIBITIONS<sup>2</sup>

### 1. THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO AN EXHIBITION PROVIDES MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REVISION BASED ON FREQUENT FEEDBACK.

The exhibition process focuses on feedback-driven learning and revision. The formative learning process prepares students to ultimately create a successful exhibition.

### 2. EXHIBITIONS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Community members are encouraged to attend.

### 3. EXHIBITIONS INVOLVE SCHOOL-WIDE PARTICIPATION.

All students and teachers are involved in the exhibition process. Teachers coach students in how to learn. Students take initiative in their learning, assuming a worker role.

### 4. EXHIBITIONS ARE HIGH STAKES.

Exhibitions are often a requirement for graduation or advancing to the next grade.

### 5. EXHIBITIONS OCCUR AT CULMINATING MOMENTS.

Exhibitions occur at the end of a unit or school year, for example.

### 6. EXHIBITIONS DEMONSTRATE MASTERY.

Exhibitions reflect in-depth learning. Through the feedback and revision process, students move increasingly closer to mastery and eventually become experts on their topic(s).



guide

GETTING STARTED

# FOUR SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING EXHIBITIONS<sup>3</sup>

## 1. SCHOOL-WIDE APPROACH ENCOMPASING INSTRUCTIONAL AND ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Exhibitions require the restructuring of class time, and often serve as an alternative to traditional high-stakes assessments (i.e. standardized, norm-referenced tests). For these reasons, exhibitions are most successful when a school-wide approach is adopted and common standards are agreed upon and shared.

## 2. STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT SUSTAINED COLLABORATION AND INQUIRY AMONG STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Systems should be in place to facilitate regular communication among faculty and students. Examples include scheduled weekly meetings, providing feedback to colleagues on instructional materials/ideas, and soliciting feedback from students about their learning.

## 3. STRONG CONNECTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL

As a student explores the topic of her exhibition in-depth, she may wish to interview a local expert in her field of study to advance her research.

Community members are encouraged to attend student exhibitions to see what students are learning and to ask questions. Community involvement in the exhibition process also holds schools accountable: Community members can attend student exhibitions and judge for themselves how well a school is educating its students.

## 4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN A SYSTEM OR NETWORK OF OTHER SCHOOLS USING EXHIBITIONS

Support networks are helpful. The Coalition of Essential Schools is a large, popular network of schools that use exhibitions.



resource

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### > **Quest High School**

Example of [student exhibitions](#)<sup>4</sup> with teacher and student perspectives on exhibitions

### > **The Coalition of Essential Schools**

The Coalition of Essential Schools has played a central role in developing the use of exhibitions as performance assessments in schools. CES has a strong reputation for supporting schools and teachers in implementing exhibitions as a way to assess student learning.

[Exhibitions: Demonstrations of Mastery in Essential Schools](#)<sup>5</sup>

### > **New York Performance Standards Consortium**

Description of how exhibitions are used in place of the New York

State Regents exams ([High-stakes test alternative](#)<sup>6</sup>)

### > **For more on student-centered assessment, see [Assessing Learning](#)<sup>7</sup> from the [Students at the Center](#)<sup>8</sup> series.**

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Jill Davidson. 2009. "Exhibitions: Connecting Classroom Assessments with Culminating Demonstrations of Mastery." *Theory Into Practice*. Vol. 48, No. 1, 36-43.

<sup>2</sup> See Davidson (2009).

<sup>3</sup> See Davidson (2009).

<sup>4</sup> Coalition of Essential Schools. 2013. "Coalition of Essential Schools–National Exhibition Month" [Video]. April 17. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45HIW3jgEPg>

<sup>5</sup> See Jill Davidson. 2007. "Exhibitions: Demonstrations of Mastery in Essential Schools." Coalition of Essential Schools: <http://www.essentialschools.org/resources/237>

<sup>6</sup> See "Alternatives to High-stakes Testing": <http://performanceassessment.org/consortium/calternatives.html>

<sup>7</sup> See Heidi Andrade, Kristen Huff, & Georgia Brooke. 2012. *Assessing Learning: The Students at the Center Series*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future. Available at: <http://studentsatthecenter.org/topics/assessing-learning>

<sup>8</sup> See the Students at the Center website: <http://studentsatthecenter.org>

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Students at the Center synthesizes and adapts for practice current research on key components of student-centered approaches to learning. Our goal is to strengthen the ability of practitioners and policymakers to engage each student in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and expertise needed for success in college and a career. The companion volume Anytime, [Anywhere: Student Centered Learning for Schools and Teachers](#) (2013) is now available from Harvard Education Press. This Jobs for the Future project is supported generously by funds from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.



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