

CHAPTER 9:**INSTALLATION
AND EVALUATION**

“Everything should have a reason for being in the exhibit, and for being where it is and how big it is. Everything should be in support of or relate to that big idea. If it isn’t, you must seriously ask yourself why it is in the exhibit.”

—WILLARD WHITSON

(*Planning an Exhibit*, p.210)

TARGET QUESTION:**What Have We Learned?****PREREQUISITES:**

Core Activities in Chapter 8

**CORE ACTIVITIES:****LESSON 1****Final Design and Installation****LESSON 2****Developing an Audience
Evaluation Tool****LESSON 3****Evaluations**

- Students’ Self-Evaluations
- Peer Evaluations
- Teachers’ Evaluations
- Visitors’ Evaluation Forms

**ASSESSMENTS:**

Final Reflections/Evaluation

**WEB COMPONENTS:****FOR STUDENTS**

- Making an Exhibit*
- Profile of Joyce Cloughly*
- Profile of Alec Madoff*
- Profile of Geralyn Abinader*
- Profile of Marco Hernandez*

* All Web reading selections for students are available as blackline masters.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 9

Students make last-minute adjustments, and then, following their plan, they install the exhibit. When everything is in place, they conduct a preliminary walk-through to check for trouble spots.

They develop a plan for collecting visitors' reactions to the exhibit. Later, they use the visitor's evaluation forms to help them assess the success of the exhibit.

As closure, students evaluate their work during the course of the unit. Then they reflect on their experiences and record their thoughts on why biodiversity counts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

INSTALLATION

In a large museum such as the AMNH, the actual installation of an exhibit is carried out by another team of specialized personnel called exhibit preparators. They follow the detailed plans to put all the components of the exhibit in place.

EVALUATIONS

Exhibit evaluators conduct their work at several different times in the life of an exhibit. First, they are involved in the very early stages of planning an exhibit. Their task then is to find out if there is a need for or an interest in the topic of the proposed exhibit. It is also important for them to determine how much the target audience already knows about the subject and what they would like to know.

Later, after the exhibit has opened, evaluators try to assess its effectiveness. They may use a variety of methods to collect audience response. For example, they may question visitors directly and record their responses on a tally sheet. They may ask visitors to fill out a brief questionnaire. Or they may simply observe visitors as they take in the exhibit.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Students reap enormous benefits from the opportunity to assess their own progress. In this chapter they can measure their progress in a number of different ways. First, they make their own individual statements about what they think they have accomplished. Then they measure their progress as seen through the eyes of their teacher, their peers, and the audience at the exhibit.

The process also encourages students to consider the assessments of others while at the same time maintaining a certain independence of thought.

1 LESSON

LESSON 1 **FINAL DESIGN AND INSTALLATION**

TIME Several class periods

MATERIALS All components of the exhibit

Floor plan for the exhibit space

WEB COMPONENTS

Making an Exhibit

OPTIONAL: Profiles of Alec Madoff, Joyce Cloughly, Marco Hernandez, GERALYN ABINADER

PREPARATION Organize a supply box and set it out where students have easy access. It might contain tape, tacks, markers, scissors, an extension cord, sponges, glue, and paper.

Alert the custodial staff to your plans so they can help with arrangements. For example, they might provide extra tables for the exhibits, seating for visitors, and audiovisual equipment.

If possible, get parents or other adults to help supervise students during the installation of the exhibit.

1. Ask students to read the on-line article “Making an Exhibit.” Discuss some of these questions afterward:

- What techniques have we used to mount our exhibit that are similar to the techniques that museums use?
- In museum exhibits, what are the advantages of using models, dioramas, videos, and computer displays instead of real specimens?
- Describe some of the techniques Barrett Klein uses to make models.
- What do dioramas show? Why do dioramas have to be painted with intentional distortions?
- What functions do mounts serve? Have we used any mounts in our exhibit? For what purposes.
- Longer videos (8 to 10 minutes) need special placement in the exhibit. Why?

2. Several days before the scheduled date for installing the exhibit, ask all teams to report briefly on their final products and have the class offer feedback. If necessary, give students time to make final revisions or adjustments.



TEACHING TIP: ASSESSMENT

This is a good checkpoint. Students have one more chance to critique one another’s work and to revise their final products in preparation for the exhibit. It is also an excellent assessment opportunity. As individuals and teams report on their products, consider taking time to evaluate content, process, participation in the research, data representation, and analysis.

3. Help the class develop a plan for how to set up the exhibit and prepare a checklist of who will be responsible for the various components. Regroup the class into installation teams and have the teams plan what they will do, what tools and equipment they will need, and what kind of adult help will be necessary.

4. With the class, review copies of the floor plan so that the installation teams are certain of where to place their materials.

5. Students now move into the space that their exhibit will occupy and follow their plan to install it. Try to install the exhibit at least a day before the opening so that students have enough time to take care of last minute problems.

6. When everything is in place, take a few minutes to do a walk-through of the exhibit with the class.

- Look for trouble spots. How does the traffic flow? Are there any potential bottlenecks? Does anything need to be moved?
- Are there any safety hazards?
- How well does the concept come across? Do you need to add any signage to emphasize or clarify the big idea?
- How well do components of the exhibit relate to one another? Does the story line flow well? Should any of the components be moved?

Make any final adjustments.

2 LESSON

**LESSON 2 DEVELOPING AN AUDIENCE
EVALUATION TOOL**

TIME 1 class session

1. Discuss how to evaluate the success of the exhibit. How will you know what visitors have gotten out of it? Here are two ideas to consider for collecting audience evaluations:

- Hand visitors an index card on the way in. Ask them to jot down what they already know about biodiversity. On their way out, ask them to list two or three things that they learned about biodiversity from the exhibit. Have them post their evaluations on a bulletin board at the door.
- Develop a list of questions. Either pass them out to visitors at the door or have students circulate among the visitors with the questionnaire and record their responses. Here is an example of a visitor questionnaire (also available in the Reproducibles section of the Teacher's Guide):

VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE



Dear Visitor,

Thank you for coming to our exhibit. We hope you will take a few minutes to fill out this form. We will use it to evaluate our exhibit.

Please rank the exhibit on the following. Use a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high). Circle your response.

Interesting	1	2	3	4	5
Informative	1	2	3	4	5
Attractive	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
Well organized	1	2	3	4	5

What was your favorite part?

What could we improve?

What is the main idea of the exhibit?

What did you learn about biodiversity that you never knew before?

Other comments:

2. Save the visitor responses to discuss in the last lesson.



TEACHING TIP: EVENT REMINDERS

- Record the event. Have someone take photographs or make a video.
- Be sure to have students acknowledge the people who helped during the project. These may include members of the teaching staff, custodial staff, parents, and administrators. Mention all of the resource people in the community who contributed their time and expertise as well.

Students may write and mail individual thank-you notes, or they may want to post the notes on a display board at the exhibit. If they plan to make remarks at the opening, it would be appropriate to repeat the acknowledgments then, too.

- If students have planned to give guided tours of the exhibit, have them greet visitors at the door and offer their services. If they are also going to offer tours to the outdoor site, they might inform visitors of this added attraction. One way to help control overcrowding and improve traffic flow is to take some groups outside while others are viewing the exhibits inside.
- Don't forget to collect evaluation forms from the visitors.

Once the exhibition is over, it is important for students to assess the experience.

Students' Self-Evaluations

1. Ask students to evaluate their own progress and record their self-assessments in their journals.

- Have students point out what they thought they did well and what they thought they could have done better.
- Ask them to make a list of what they learned from the unit and then to go back and rank the items on the list in order of importance to themselves.

2. Discuss the self-evaluations.

Peer Evaluations

1. Give students the opportunity to comment on the work done by their peers. They might evaluate the work of their own teammates, of other teams, and of other classes.

2. Ask students to give examples of how they learned from each other.

Teacher's Evaluation

1. Congratulate students on their efforts and share some of your own observations about their progress.

- Point out specific aspects of the exhibit (and of their work in the rest of the unit as well) that you feel were particularly well done and tell students why.
- Give some examples of student growth that you noticed over time. It might be in such areas as making observations, recording data, drawing, or working cooperatively to solve problems.
- Discuss with them how their definition of biodiversity evolved over time.

2. Discuss areas where work could have been better. Ask students how they could improve work in those areas.

Visitors' Evaluation Forms

Display the visitors' evaluation forms collected at the exhibit.
Have students analyze the visitors' responses. Ask:

- According to these forms, how well did you get the big idea across to the public?
- What did visitors learn from the exhibit?
- What did they mention most often? Why do you think that is so?

**ASSESSMENT: FINAL REFLECTIONS/EVALUATION**

As their final journal entry, ask students to write a reflective piece on their experiences during the course of the unit. As a prewriting activity, discuss some of these topics:

- What did you find interesting?
- What did you find difficult?
- What was surprising?
- Which questions interest you most? Might they lead to further research? What could you do to try to find answers?
- Which plants and animals at the site interested you most? How could you find out more about them?
- What would you tell next year's students?

You may leave the reflective writing topic open-ended, or you may suggest that students write on one of the following ideas:

- What is biodiversity?
- Why biodiversity counts.
- What are the major threats to biodiversity?
- What can we do to make sure biodiversity is protected?
- Advice to next year's class when they work on the *Biodiversity Counts* project.

