

An Introduction

Exhibitions are a way for students to demonstrate their learning from a specific project, class, academic year, or the course of a high school career. They give students an opportunity to apply new skills toward a chosen topic, within clearly articulated guidelines, and to reflect on their accomplishments. Exhibitions can inspire students to take more personal responsibility for their work when they design a project, document it, and present it to the public—excellent preparation for college and beyond.

Exhibitions are a necessary component of performance assessment in that they provide students the opportunity to create something and present their work to an audience, which is typically a panel of community members and peers. Having to defend one’s work before an audience creates a real-world assessment opportunity and raises the stakes for student learning. Engaging local businesses and parents in assessing student work also strengthens bonds between the public and the school, making education a community endeavor.

Because Washington school policy states that, “each student shall complete a culminating project for graduation,” performance assessment often takes the form of a senior exhibition. But, senior year should not be the first time a student directs and presents his or her own work or is assessed according to a rubric, by an audience. Teachers should introduce exhibitions in stages throughout a student’s school experience, beginning with lower stakes exhibitions, like those at the end of a curriculum topic or a course. Senior exhibitions frequently occur in isolation, being treated as a separate course. Although this may be perceived as practical in a comprehensive high school, teachers in small schools should incorporate performance assessment into their curriculum planning, such that everything students do in class prepares them to apply their skills in a final exhibition.

As the progression of this Performance Assessment section demonstrates, understanding how to create a good rubric and helping students establish portfolios of their work process and products are prerequisites for teachers organizing exhibitions. It is equally important that students and community members (who will be assessing student work) understand the components of an exhibition and the standards by which they are assessed.

All exhibitions consist of some basic components—whose variations are showcased in this section by three different school examples:

- Topic Proposal (or assignment)
- Research
- Products—writing, video, photographs, etc.
- Oral Presentation, including Q&A
- Rubric and Jurors

In the following pages, you’ll find the story of one teacher’s journey into the world of exhibitions, some guiding criteria of successful exhibitions and three profiles of schools that have strong exhibition processes, along with some of their supporting tools. These resources will improve your understanding of the role exhibitions play in the greater spectrum of performance assessment and the components that frame a rewarding experience.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: EXHIBITIONS

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Anatomy of an Exhibition

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http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/223

This article presents a case study of a teacher who, after ten years of giving students the same final exam, designed a new assessment employing student exhibitions. The story is long but thorough in its examination of the required preparation for teachers and students, as well as the outcomes and lessons learned.

Margaret Metzger has taught English at Brookline High School in Massachusetts for twenty-two years. In this article, we describe Margaret's initial attempt to use exhibitions as a means of assessment in her classroom. As our title implies, an exhibition, like a living creature, is a complex organism, composed of many vital and inter-connected elements. We have dissected this exhibition in an attempt not only to understand the intricacies of the organs, bones, muscles, and nerves but also to see how these components ultimately fit together to form the whole.

This example demonstrates how exhibitions serve three integral functions. First, they make schools externally accountable by providing members of the community an opportunity to view the goings-on in their schools. Second, they make schools internally accountable by generating valuable information about what and how students are learning. This healthy scrutiny prompts schools to make changes, if necessary, so that they can graduate thoughtful and capable students. Third, and perhaps most importantly, exhibitions encourage students to move toward deeper and more substantive understandings and, in so doing, ask teachers to shift their emphasis from transferring information to providing a usable base of skills and knowledge (McDonald, 1992).

Vision

Margaret has taught Dante's *Inferno* to her senior European Literature classes for the past ten years. Until this year, she had always been the primary actor in teaching the book's thirty-four cantos, starting each day with a short reading quiz, then moving on to lead a discussion about some of the daily canto's major themes and patterns. Students did a project at the end of the unit, usually some creative presentation on Dante.

The final test on the book was a ten-page multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay exam which depended on students' recall of textual minutiae. Year after year, students did poorly on the exam; in a typical class, two thirds of them would receive a grade of C or lower. Class discussions and written work convinced Margaret that students knew the material much better than they could demonstrate on the final exam, which only raised both Margaret's and her students' level of frustration.

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Obviously, something needed to change; but lacking an alternative, Margaret continued to work with the archaic test. At first, she tried giving more review sheets and study sessions. She tinkered with the questions and at one point expanded the exam to a three-day marathon. "I knew something was drastically wrong," she recalls. "Even though my frustrations lay with the exam and not my students, it never occurred to me to change the whole concept. Then I read Ted Sizer's work on exhibitions, 2 and it struck a chord of common sense. Like much of what he writes, his words made me ask myself, "Why didn't I think of this before?"

Margaret realized that a discrepancy existed between what she was teaching and what she was testing. The test focused on nitpicky details, whereas her teaching focused on thinking and reading skills, on encouraging her students to be independent learners within a community that has rigorous academic standards. In addition, she saw that two other philosophical ideas she had held for a long time propelled her to change her ideas about assessment: first, that students want to do rigorous, honest academic work; second, that students must own their own work and their own learning. "In other words," Margaret realized, "my job is to set up situations so that they work hard. I do not want students to admire how smart I am; I want students to know how smart *they* are."

This vision of thoughtful, independent students took priority over passing on information about the content of any particular piece of literature. In all her literature classes, Margaret teaches her students how to read with sophistication so that they will know how to read beyond content and plot. Throughout the year, students learn ways to approach reading: to create mental pictures of scenes and characters, to investigate how form fits content, to abstract from specific details to ascertain general themes, to make sense of the author's choices about style and structure. As her students read, she asks them to articulate what skills they use to arrive at their understanding of a text. Students are expected to transfer these comprehension skills from one piece of literature to the next. Since Dante is particularly difficult, students need a lot of instruction on how to read him, and they are dazzled at their progress when they do get it.

Clearly, if she was aiming to develop independent and thoughtful readers, Margaret needed to fit the test to the teaching—and that meant throwing out the test and starting over.

The Plan

Margaret introduced exhibitions to her two European Literature classes after she had taught the first half of *The Inferno*, about a month into the book. She began by handing out a nine-page memo which included a rationale for the idea, quotations from Ted Sizer (1984) and Grant Wiggins (1989), and samples of materials. She purposely gave her students as much information about the procedure as possible, so everyone would know the expectations. The memo began:



Instead of a final exam and project on Dante, you will demonstrate that you can read and understand a Canto from *The Inferno* which has not been discussed in class.

The overall structure of the assignment: The whole class will read and discuss the first half of *The Inferno*. For the second half of the book, I will assign pairs of you to one Canto, which you will prepare and present to the class. The presentation will be called An Exhibition, meaning that you must exhibit your knowledge. You will have about seven class periods to prepare, as well as additional time outside of class.

For your Exhibition, you will present your Canto to a panel of three outside judges: one peer who is not taking the course, one adult outside of the school, and one adult from within the school. You will select the first two, and I will arrange for the third.

Your exhibition must include a brief check that your classmates have read the Canto you are presenting. (The most traditional way of checking is simply to give a quiz.) Next, each of you will read aloud to the class a paper that you have written about the Canto on a subject of your choice. Finally, you will teach the class a major concept in the Canto. You are free to choose any appropriate pedagogy for the teaching section of the exhibition: class discussion, dramatic presentation, art work, Socratic Seminar, small-group work, role playing, or whatever.

With these ground rules, Margaret opened up the class for discussion and questions. She straightforwardly admitted that she had never attempted this kind of assessment before. She was somewhat apprehensive about how her students would react to such a foreign idea. Several students candidly expressed concerns about managing this task in the midst of preparing their college applications, about the role of the judges, and about the prospect of "performing" before their peers. Others, the natural risk-takers, requested more flexibility in designing their exhibitions.

Despite the uncertainty that pervaded the room, none of the students resisted the idea; in fact, many said they were excited to try something new. Kneeling on the floor, Margaret wrote the names of the partners and cantos on a huge newsprint calendar as her students hovered around her, wondering aloud about what exactly they were being asked to do.

Teacher Preparation

Even though the workload later tapered off considerably as students immersed themselves in their cantos and did their exhibitions, preparing the exhibition consumed a great deal of Margaret's time early on. She spent two full evenings making the plan for the exhibition, including writing the response forms which would be needed later, drafting the "Judge's Criteria Sheet," and making lists of "Topics which might be covered in an exhibition," potential problems, and fourteen procedural steps for the exhibition process.



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The most difficult part of the preplanning was pairing students, which took three or four hours. In the end, she assigned partners for many different reasons; learning styles, personalities, and friendship patterns all affected her choices. The enormous amount of time devoted to the careful partnering paid off, however, since the students needed to be able to collaborate in order to make sense of their cantos, using each other as sounding boards for questions, ideas, and revelations.

Keeping more than twenty pairs of students on task, all working at different paces, required additional materials: large newsprint calendars on the wall that listed homework assignments, exhibition presenters, and judges; fifteen manila folders that included memos to judges, instruction sheets, response forms, drafts of papers, exhibition plans, and other handouts.

Margaret's next step, arranging for judges, was made particularly difficult by the fact that her school was embroiled in a work-to-the-rule contract dispute. She could not ask other teachers to come into her class because all teachers had to complete their work between eight and two. She did, however, ask high school and central office administrators, school committee members, and pupil-support staff. She sent brief form letters that explained the project and asked for their assistance, if their schedules allowed for it. All responses were positive; those who were unable to judge could not do so because of conflicting schedules.

Initially, Margaret worried that it took too much time to set up such an elaborate structure, and she knew that she could not sustain that much time on two classes without completely neglecting her other classes. Although the first few days demanded constant attention to detail, daily planning was not required once the structure was in place. Furthermore, although she spent several evenings working on the exhibition plan, this was still much less time than she would normally spend planning a month's worth of lessons.

This is not to say that Margaret's work was done once she had passed out the instructions, paired the students, and scheduled the judges. During the week of in-class time which students used to prepare their exhibitions, formal instruction gave way to coaching. Margaret conferenced with partners, read drafts of students' papers, and used a checklist of the various steps in the process to keep track of the progress everyone was making. For instance, early on in the process, partners had to fill out a two-page comprehension sheet that asked them about their understanding of their canto. Margaret wrote extensive comments, pushing students to go further and sometimes even to start over completely. This kind of individualized coaching, built into the structure of the exhibition, allowed Margaret to maintain a strong sense of the direction in which each student was moving.

For the five weeks of the exhibitions presentations, Margaret's workload lightened considerably. The students ran the two classes entirely, and Margaret did not stand up in front of the groups except to give minor announcements and to introduce the judges. Each day she read four papers, one from each student who had made a presentation that day. Thus, two major sets of papers were staggered over the five-week period. Because she



was filling out the criteria sheets during the exhibitions, the bulk of her evaluation was complete when the bell rang. Later, she read the other judge's evaluations and assigned a final grade.

Student Preparation

Students spent a week of class time working in pairs to study their cantos and to plan their exhibitions. Virtually every minute of every day, the classroom seemed animated and focused. At one point, Margaret commented, in partial surprise, "There is no divergent conversation here. They are on task the whole time." Because the students were clear about the task and encouraged to act independently, they demonstrated a range of unusually mature work habits.

Students used well the techniques, information, and concepts that they had learned in studying the first half of the book as the basis of their study of the second half. As Jen and Illana struggled with a difficult passage, Jen made a connection: "Remember when we learned about style, that a smaller thing represents the whole? This must be what he's doing here." The two then proceeded to reread the passage together. Wendy and Seizi, knowing that most cantos were based around central images, worked to identify the central image in theirs. Toward the end of the period, Wendy noticed the preponderance of circles; Seizi immediately began putting the canto in much clearer perspective.

It was also gratifying to see how well they collaborated. On their first day working together, Melita admitted to David that she did not understand the setting. David, who had figured it out himself, took out a sheet of paper and drew it for Melita. Looking at his sketch, Melita wondered why Dante would position a character in such a peculiar way. Sprawled on the floor with drawing and book in front of them, the two set about investigating Melita's query. On the other side of the room, Peter had come up with a list of storm images, and Masha had compiled one of animal images. As they compared notes, each added his or her own observations to the other's list.

While all the students were deeply involved in their work, the flexible structure of the exhibition put everyone at a different step in the process. For instance, Nora and Liz bounced ideas back and forth about the denotations of the word "discord," which was in the title of their canto, while Becky and Cairn had an animated discussion about the "grossness" of Dante's description in theirs. Meanwhile, two other pairs read silently, not yet ready to talk with each other.

The students, in essence, had taken over. They appropriated the room: upon entering the class, the students immediately rearranged the furniture so that each pair could have its own space in which to work. They appropriated the text: Canto XXVI became my canto or our canto. And they appropriated the responsibility for learning: no longer waiting for the teacher's directions, each pair, at the end of class, assessed what they had accomplished and where they wanted to go and then assigned themselves homework.

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Even amid this diversity, the bulk of everyone's first few days focused on comprehension. Students struggled to understand the general ideas in their canto (simply the plot) and individual lines (including subtle metaphors). Margaret was surprised at how confused many of the students were. While they were studying the first half of the book, students could hide their confusion as long as they could pass the daily quiz. Now, she saw that they had basically grasped what she said about each canto, but had not understood much beyond her words. In fact, at first, many of them could not figure out the basic action in the canto. When they had to struggle with one canto, rather than rushing through a new canto each day, both their confusion and their level of comprehension became more obvious to Margaret as well as to themselves.

It was scary for the students to admit to each other that they didn't understand the book, and that it was their responsibility to uncover the meaning. Margaret was tempted to "give answers," or at least hints, but she resisted. Instead, she focused her efforts on asking more questions and encouraging students to keep delving, even when they felt stuck, complacent, or prematurely successful. Because Margaret was so good at pressing her students to search for the answers themselves rather than providing the information that they sought, the students learned to rely on themselves and each other rather than on her. Her goal of making the students independent learners with high academic standards was no longer theoretical. Sometimes she stood in the corner not knowing quite what to do!

Another major requirement of the exhibition called for students to prepare, write, and read an analytical essay about their canto. As always, the most difficult part of the writing was selecting a topic and developing a thesis. Students had to do original thinking; they could not base the paper on outside critical essays. In her role as coach, Margaret challenged and questioned their topics and theses. Partners also read and commented on each other's drafts. During the week, students wrote several drafts; writing and rewriting the papers helped the students clarify their thinking about the canto and about their exhibition.

With this focus in mind, the students had to determine how to get what they had learned across to their peers. Of course, they relied heavily on modeling their teaching on their own classroom experiences. Sadly, the students realized that they could not think of varied classroom activities and claimed that all of their classes were alike. Margaret reviewed the techniques that she had used in September and October, but students still felt stymied.

One particularly useful parameter was that Margaret insisted that the exhibitions not be "cute." Although Margaret worried that students would not understand her when she banned "cute," the students laughed and said they understood exactly what she meant. At first, one pair wanted to do a puppet show of a particularly grotesque scene, which might have trivialized the pain and suffering of the characters. Another group considered writing and performing a rap version of their canto, which might have violated the integrity of the language. Students began to monitor the appropriateness of their presentations and realized that both plans were unacceptable because



they reduced the complexity and seriousness of Dante. In some ways, this prohibition against "cute" made designing their teaching activities even more difficult, but it validated serious, intellectual work.

Looking back, two factors conspired against the students' work during the preparation period. First, because the students took so long to comprehend the material, they did not have enough time to plan their teaching activity. Second, for many students this was the first time they had ever considered the issue of pedagogy; therefore, they needed a significant amount of time to think it through. Despite these problems—and because they were so eager to help each other out of this predicament—the partners managed to create focused, lively, and high-powered lessons.

Although the students definitely needed help figuring out how to teach their cantos, it was impossible to squeeze additional time into the curriculum for teaching them pedagogy. In the future, Margaret will make explicit—on a daily basis—the pedagogical approaches that she uses so that her students are conscious of teaching options for the next exhibition. She will also ask the students to add to this list any classroom experiences from other courses that seem useful to this brain-storming process. Most importantly, she will ask them to consider what they enjoy as students and what teaching styles most enable them to learn.

The Exhibitions

The exhibitions were intense. No time was wasted, because students were anxious to cover huge amounts of material in fifty minutes. In the back of the room sat anywhere from three to seven adults watching the proceedings. Despite the large audience, the students concentrated on each other and the material. Because each day had a different teacher, canto, and teaching technique, every class seemed riveting.

Students usually began with a short quiz and a brief summary of the plot. Next, the pair presented a preplanned activity using some creative teaching technique that matched the material they were trying to convey. This section was the most interesting, and usually the most anxiety provoking for the exhibitors. Many students opted to hold discussions. Andrew and Allison led a Socratic Seminar. Brian and Dennis divided the class in half for a debate about whether the narrator was lying. In order to demonstrate a very confusing canto, Becky and Cairn wrote a script based on their canto and asked the entire class to act it out. Finally, at some appropriate point during each class, both partners read their papers and then answered questions about them. Many classes went overtime, and each class ended with applause.

The students' depth of understanding was often impressive. Even after teaching *The Inferno* for a decade, Margaret was thrilled that many pairs had insights into the text which she had never seen. On the other hand, she cringed when students offered inaccurate interpretations. In these situations, students often corrected each other, either that day or a few days later. Even if the interpretation remained problematic, Margaret refused to intervene as the academic expert. She wanted the students to retain ownership of their learning. Authentic learning entails making some mistakes.

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The following is a transcription of part of the discussion pertaining to Canto XXVII. For their teaching activity, the presenters split up the class for small group discussions. Sara, the leader, has just asked her group to identify images of speech at the start of the canto. The group has found one in almost every line.

Sara: So you can say basically that on that page there's a metaphor for speech in every tercet. Also, there's an image of flame. Like I see that, in the first tercet, "when he finished speaking the great flame . . ."

They check the other tercets for references to flames and, again, find several.

Sara: Can you see any connection between speech and the flame and how the sinners were encased in the flame in hell itself? Why might Dante parallel flame and speech in every tercet?

Suzan: Their method of sinning is through speech and they give bad advice. And now it's kind of muffled.

David: And also their words -the way they give counsel -would be like fire unto the person. They're giving evil counsel, and like directing those words, trying to wrap someone up in those words, is sort of like the fire grabbing the sinners.

Brian: I agree with what they say. Sara: So you can see how it's kind of like a reflection of hell. Like the fire -I think what David and Suzan said is right because they use their words as a vehicle for their sins. Their words hid their own intentions, so now they're concealed in it. And that concealment, that image of being hidden in the fire, is portrayed throughout the canto. Can you see it? I mean, just thinking about it generally, there are lots of images of hidden, um, like lowly kinds of images; like in the second tercet: "the muffled roar" and then "sealed," "concealed," "hidden."

David: You mean that by giving evil counsel, they didn't actually commit the sin but they were hiding behind the words, hiding away from the sin but still . . .

Sara: Their sin, their deceit and their words -despite their true intentions -are hidden by false counsel. . . . Throughout the book there's a constant parallel between true intentions of the person before they give evil counsel and then there's their false counsel. It's like a distortion. . . . How do you think they are continuing their sins?

Brian: They conceal it behind the flames in hell like they concealed it behind their words.

David: Doesn't Guido, well, when he's talking to Dante, he sort of puts the blame on the Pope and it's sort of the same way in that -well, I guess that's not continuing.

Sara: It's still the image of concealed or . . .

David: When he says the Pope's the one who did it.

Sara: There's just a really great image portrayed of hidden denial, muffled, all that kind of stuff.

There are a few more questions and comments. At this point, Sara reads her paper, which compares the images of flame, speech, and concealment. In many ways, it sounds like a summation of group's conversation.

In their discussions, the students took charge, asserted themselves, and made substantive, original comments. Although the leaders were invested in a particular interpretation of the text, they valued what their peers contributed. The students created, expected, and enforced standards of intellectual rigor.

With few exceptions, the adults did not speak at all during the exhibitions and the students sustained animated discussions for fifteen- to twenty-five-minute stretches. This experience had a lasting impact. After the exhibitions, when the students moved on to the next book, class discussions were noticeably more animated and more reflective than before.

The Papers

Each student wrote an essay based on an original thesis statement and read it aloud to the class. In many ways, these papers were a culmination of the authors' thinking about their cantos. Choosing their own topics and using no outside resources, the students had the opportunity—and the challenge—to reveal the knowledge that they had acquired as a result of their sustained focus on one canto. The students each wrote at least three drafts, working to clarify and refine their ideas.

For example, one pair of students explicated Ulysses' sin in one of the cantos about Evil Counselors. First, Joanna presented her paper about what Ulysses perceived his sin to be:

Ulysses ultimately makes a grand analogy in order to demonstrate his sin of Hubris. Being of Greek heritage, he relied on Greek mythology to explain his nature and even compared himself to Icarus. Briefly, the story of Icarus tells of a boy whose father gave him a pair of wings but warned him not to go too close to the sun because the wings would melt. He did not heed his father's warning due to his great excitement and sense of power. He momentarily rose toward the sun but then fell and was plunged into the sea.

Ulysses' first reference to this myth is in his speech to his crew. "Our senses stand experience of the world beyond the sun." Ulysses preached that the purpose of their journey was to discover the limits of the universe; but man was not intended to challenge these limits of God. Despite this, Ulysses says, "we made wings of our oars for our fool's flight." Because Ulysses' fate parallels that of Icarus, it is only fitting that the conclusion to Ulysses' journey is that "the sea closed over us and the light was gone." As a result of

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thinking his powers could overcome the laws of God, Ulysses' arrogance led him to his fate in hell.

Her partner Suzan's paper moved the argument one step further to show that it is not hubris that is Ulysses' core sin but evil counseling: Ulysses' true talent of coercion reveals itself in his cocky depiction of his success in convincing his fellow sailors not to abandon the expedition despite their fear and initial disinterest. Using the old trick of reverse psychology, Ulysses manages to change their minds by attacking their vulnerable egos. "Greeks! You were not born to live like brutes, but to press on toward manhood and recognition!" Seeing how convincing he was, Ulysses is sure to acknowledge and gloat about his mastery of the art of manipulation. "With this brief exhortation I made my crew so eager for the voyage I could hardly have held them back from it when I was through."

While Ulysses is obviously proud and boastful, his true sin remains evil counseling. In fact, Dante is his current victim of bad advice, and therefore, he is continuing to actively practice his true sin. By telling Dante of his own failure to voyage beyond the limits of mortal man, he is really advising him to turn back and to abandon his plans of traveling through hell. In concluding his tale, Ulysses refers to his journey as a "fool's flight," implying that Dante's voyage is one of similar nature. This is the most harmful counsel that Ulysses could possibly offer Dante because Dante's journey is willed by God.

Joanna's and Suzan's papers reveal a very complex analysis that takes into account matters of language, perception, and culture. In the class discussion that followed, they asked their peers whether it was fair for Dante to punish Ulysses, a Greek, for a sin that he does not recognize, since he is unaware and ignorant of Christian ideology.

Overall, these examples show that the students chose sophisticated, non-plot topics, took intellectual risks, and backed up their positions. They wrote clearly and, most importantly, passionately about their ideas. They felt as if they were the experts on their cantos, and they were excited to share their ideas with the class. The papers were a joy to read.

The Judges

When Margaret introduced the exhibitions, the students immediately expressed anxiety about having strangers in the class. "What are they going to do here?" "Who will come in here? Our parents all work." "Why do we have to have them?" "How will they judge if they haven't read the book or if they haven't heard the other exhibitions?" Interestingly, Margaret had never considered that this element would elicit such a strong reaction; when placed beside the enormity of the work that she was asking them to do, the idea of judges seemed minor. In her thinking, she was more concerned with keeping Ted Sizer's notion of drawing in the community for a public celebration of learning than with the practical ramifications of having outsiders assess her students' work.

Furthermore, these were competent seniors who would soon be judged by colleges, and she knew that they would not be humiliated by presenting



material in front of "outsiders." In short, she had more confidence in their ability than they did. But she also wanted to up the ante, and having judges was a way to ensure that the students knew that these exhibitions were not just another oral presentation.

While their questions did point up some legitimate issues, it became clear to Margaret that the idea of judges was the most threatening part of the whole scheme, because even though the students didn't at first understand the magnitude of the task or the logistics, they could immediately get scared by the idea of having strangers judge them in a classroom. The students wanted the security that Margaret, who knew them well and liked them, would be the final judge for grades. Students assumed that judges would be harsher than the known teacher. The least academically secure students were the most anxious about judges.

After the first day's outburst of anxiety, the students never mentioned the judges again. As they became more involved with the substance of their exhibitions, the students attached less and less importance to the judges until they became almost invisible. The anxiety dissolved into a matter of logistics: most students easily found peers to serve as judges, but struggled to find neighbors, parents, or college friends.

In addition to the stakes-raising advantages that the judges provided, having these strangers in class made for some funny moments. While the students' attention was completely focused on their classmates, Margaret was amused by some of the judges' behavior. One woman, a professor from Harvard, interrupted the exhibition and lectured the class. Two judges talked to each other through one whole exhibition. And one judge, a student's neighbor, commented that the work was worthy of a seminar on Dante that he had taken in graduate school. He left the classroom, then returned to pat Margaret on the arm, grin, and remark, "Another satisfied tax payer!"

Grading

Students received two grades, one for the paper and one for the exhibition. In addition, Margaret gave some homework grades for completing the various check-points. She graded the papers in her usual way, looking carefully at the quality and clarity of the argument. To her delight, over 80 percent earned either an A or a B.

Before the exhibitions began, the class agreed on the criteria that the judges and Margaret would use to determine good work, and a simple form was given to each judge. This form included such items as: "Left time for questions and fielded questions well"; "Read a clear, brief summary of the canto which could be understood by someone who had not read the Canto"; "Did the total exhibition keep the listener's attention?" A point system was assigned.

After struggling to use the judges' responses as a basis for grading the students' exhibitions, Margaret realized that the criteria sheets were inadequate. They clarified what needed to be part of each exhibition but were not specific enough about the quality that was expected. The criteria sheets

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did not ask judges to evaluate the depth and quality of the thinking on each section. Margaret plans to overhaul this part of the process.

Grading the exhibitions as a whole felt trickier. After all the effort of getting the judges' input, Margaret didn't know what to do with it once she had it. Along these lines, there was some legitimate concern about the role of the judges. Indeed, how could outsiders make judgments without knowing the book or the context? How should their assessments be figured into the overall grade? Generally, consensus was clear on the spectacular or the disastrous; however, the middle ground was muddier. Judges had no basis for comparison, and sometimes they had not read the cantos. In turn, many judges, particularly the peers, were hesitant to be critical. Margaret expected this problem but has not resolved it.

In the end, Margaret took into consideration what the judges wrote but made the final decisions about grades herself. If her opinion differed from the judges, she wrote a note of explanation to the students. No student contested a grade.

Student Reflections

After the exhibitions, Margaret spent a class period debriefing. She also asked her students to write down their reactions to doing the exhibitions. While she had very positive feelings about the work that her students had done, she wanted to know how they felt and what they had learned.

The results: her students were overwhelmingly supportive of the experience. Many even claimed that the exhibitions were a watershed for them, an unforgettable academic experience.

Well aware of what they had accomplished, these students had a solid grasp of the difference between understanding material in depth and memorizing facts for a test. Every single student agreed that knowing one canto well was not only worth the effort but also made it easier to understand and appreciate other facets of the book. They had learned how to do something, and those techniques were applicable to other reading. Dennis compared working on these exhibitions with typical assignments: "Usually, when I read a book for school, I have to read it like a textbook, but when I was working on my exhibition, I could read Dante like a real book."

These successes did not come without stress, however. On the one hand, the students felt abandoned, left to their own devices. Yet, this abandonment is what ultimately enabled them to enjoy taking intellectual risks, to realize that they knew how to read difficult material, and to own their own learning. Kate described the process of becoming self-reliant:

I found that it was really difficult to find [major ideas like symbols, language, and sin] on my own. When they had been pointed out to me before, I kind of thought, "Oh, yeah, that's obvious," but the whole feeling is different when you are sitting there at the library without a teacher who is going to tell you the answer eventually. You sit there and sit there and struggle with the words. "What the hell is the central image? What the hell is the central



image?" screams in your head. And it doesn't hit you suddenly the way it does in class when someone tells you the answer. You go through hours of trial and error. Finally the idea begins to form and slowly you begin to find the proof of your idea in the canto, and you feel very smart.

It was scary to assume this kind of responsibility. "During the exhibition," David recalled, "there was nothing to hide behind. When you write a paper or take a test, you disappear. In front of the class, you had to be responsible for what you said."

The students were also aware that they went much deeper into the material. No matter how well Margaret taught a canto in one fifty-minute period, the student pair could understand it on a much deeper level after working for seven class periods and many evenings. Besides, if they did not "get it" right away, they knew they had the time to work through their confusion word by word, line by line, page by page, until they realized success. Jen reflected that "I didn't feel I needed to find a right answer. I wasn't afraid of wrong answers. It became easier to trust my own perceptions." Thus, getting the gist of a canto no longer sufficed; the students knew that they were not finished until they could explain every line, every word.

This appreciation for depth affected the class discussions. Joanna explained: Before, you could make one good point during a class and that was enough, but you didn't have to follow it through to get the whole idea. [With the exhibition] enough time elapsed for ideas to settle subconsciously, so I kept getting deeper and more clarified understandings of this one canto. I found this a much more valuable experience than the first method where new ideas were raised each day. Though themes were constant, I was never allowed to dwell on them in relation to just one canto.

Many of the students wrote about this experience in their college application essays, claiming that it was the most significant learning experience in their high school years. Lisa wrote:

*I will admit that I have probably never been so terrified in my life, but I came out of it with a greater understanding of *The Inferno*, and much more self-confidence. I think this should definitely replace an exam. I know (from experience) that studying for an exam is memorizing facts but not necessarily knowing. The exhibition is much more difficult but I think it's definitely worth the effort.*

Doing this exhibition made the students much more aware of what it takes to teach and learn. They could identify their own strengths and weaknesses in these roles, and they developed self-assurance and pride in their capacities to meet these challenges.

Unexpected Problems

Given the intricacies—and the relative novelty—of exhibitions, there is potential for a lot to go wrong. While what occurred in Margaret's classroom was positive and exciting, the response of the larger school community revealed some unexpected conflicts. In many ways, using exhibitions was a



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political choice for Margaret. Her department has done innovative work on curriculum but almost no work on assessment, and she wanted other teachers and administrators to have the opportunity to see this method. If only subconsciously, Margaret hoped that what she was doing might in some way influence her colleagues.

Unfortunately, her actions made some of her colleagues, particularly those who are not committed to the need for change, uncomfortable and even angry. From their perspective, Margaret's use of exhibitions was more a criticism of their work than the beginning of a provocative conversation. Even though her intentions were to push other faculty members, whom she admires and respects, to think about alternative assessment strategies, Margaret felt that teachers saw her as a show-off, grandstanding her teaching to the administrators.

To Margaret's surprise, much trouble resulted from her decision to ask administrators into her classroom as judges. Because of the contentious nature of the ongoing contract dispute, some teachers felt that it was inappropriate to ask for administrators' time or to invite them into her classroom. Margaret felt that this reaction was based on a larger philosophical disagreement about the relationship between administrators and teachers: while Margaret feels that the knowledge administrators gain from observing real classes should drive the school, her critics believe that individual classrooms represent academic freedom and independence and that administrative positions should be managerial only. Such a conflict could be avoided if an entire school agreed on exhibitions, but Margaret was alone in her efforts to implement this assessment technique. Never expecting this hostile reaction, Margaret was quite shaken by it.

The political and personal ramifications of these exhibitions underscore how difficult innovation can be. One teacher's attempts to try something different engendered a strong —and negative —reaction from the larger school. Instead of spawning fruitful discussion, Margaret's work created an atmosphere of frustration and mistrust. Yet, the fact that the exhibitions did elicit a very powerful reaction is significant in itself. In schools that are willing to look carefully at themselves, Margaret's efforts might drive substantive reflection about teaching and learning that could lead to school-wide change.

Some Keys to Success

Exhibitions are risky. Tests are easier, more controllable (and far duller). In exhibitions, the teacher sets the final destination, shows the students the map, and invites them to have a splendid journey. Safe passage, however, depends on setting certain ground rules.

Students must buy into the idea of an exhibition. If students think the whole process is just a useless exercise for the teacher, they can sabotage the project by trivializing the material or doing shoddy work. Students may think that any "creative" activity is academically legitimate.



Students must assume responsibility for their own learning. A well-structured exhibition often depends on a student-directed classroom. The students must be willing to find the answers themselves (even if the teacher already knows them). Discovering meaning takes persistence and patience. So much of high school feels like an intellectual charade to the students. When they are given the chance to do difficult work, students are surprised at the pleasure that comes from real intellectual achievement.

Students must share the workload, out of respect for their partners as well as themselves. In this particular project, only one person felt that he had done too much of the work. All the others wrote glowingly of their shared partnership. Given the importance of collaboration, it seems worth it to switch partners who do not get along early in the process. With two pairs who squabbled incessantly, Margaret decided it was better to admit an error in placement and make a switch than to force the students to spend the bulk of their time working out their differences instead of working on their exhibitions.

The teacher must prepare students adequately. Exhibitions ask students to use previously learned skills and content in new situations. Therefore, teachers must first teach a knowledge base, and they must then also teach the skills needed to apply this knowledge. Because the focus for the student changes from acquiring information to applying knowledge, the focus for the teacher must also change accordingly. However, the teacher is still required to set and explain the standards of academic excellence.

The teacher must make sure that the steps are clear. If students are going to work independently, they must be taught how to proceed. At the same time, there should be enough leeway for students to explore other territory by themselves. Getting this combination right is tricky and relies heavily on a teacher's knowledge of her students as well as her managerial skills.

The teacher must maintain the role of coach. Although a coach can explain the rules, teach the skills, and lead the practices, the students must play the game themselves. To this end, the teacher must not interrupt a poor or inaccurate presentation. Doing so would either provide a safety net or take ultimate responsibility away from the student. Providing a safety net might rescue a student on the verge of tears, but it also infantilizes the student and signals to the other students that ultimately the teacher is in charge.

Most importantly, exhibitions must be rigorous. Otherwise, they will seem shallow, irrelevant, or cute. Standards for exhibitions must be much higher than those for written tests; so much more is at stake here. A good exhibition requires collaboration, risk-taking, thoughtfulness, in-depth work, commitment, sustained effort, and original work. In a strong exhibition, the students will learn to respect academic excellence.

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Performance and Exhibitions: The Demonstration of Mastery

Kathleen Cushman

Horace, March 1990 (Vol. 6, No. 3)

http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/138

The article excerpts below show the connection between student learning goals and performance assessment, such as course-end and year-end student exhibitions. Examples of final course exhibitions from two Essential schools follow.

What do we want high school students to learn? The most revealing answer can be had by looking at what we expect from them when their time is up. What students know and what they can do, after a course is completed or a high school career ended, is in many ways a reflection of what their schools have expected them to master...

"In its original form, the exhibition is the public expression by a student of real command over what she's learned," says CES Chairman TheodoreSizer. "It began in the eighteenth century, as the exit demonstration in New England academies and in colleges like Harvard. The student was expected to perform, recite, dispute, and answer challenges in public session." If such a performance is well designed, Sizer points out, it elicits proof both of the student's understanding and of some imaginative capability—it serves at once as evaluative agent and expressive tool. "We expect people to show us and explain to us how they use content—it's more than mere memory," Sizer says. "It's the first real step towards coming up with some ideas of their own."

The concept of performance-based evaluation is nothing new, notes Grant Wiggins, who has been a consultant to CES on assessment issues; we see it every time someone presents a business proposal, performs in a recital, plays a ball game. But the exhibition is at least as much a teaching tool as an assessment method, Sizer points out, as much inspiration as measurement. "Giving kids a really good target is the best way to teach them," he says. "And if the goal is cast in an interesting way, you greatly increase the chances of their achieving it. When you can see the obvious exhilaration of the final act—as, for example, in really using a foreign language well—it's perceived quite differently from the usual test, which is secret and comes at you in a way you never see in other areas, with time constraints and machine grading"...

In an ideal Essential school, Ted Sizer believes, all decisions about a school's curriculum should flow from the devising of a culminating exhibition at graduation. Do we want graduates to be able to synthesize information from a variety of disciplines in a well-reasoned argument? Then design courses that give them regular practice in cross-disciplinary inquiry, and require a final project that shows they can do it. Do we want them to answer and ask questions on their feet, to work productively in groups? Then course work

must consciously train them in these skills. Do we want them to judge the reasonableness of an answer, whether in mathematics or ethics, and to evaluate the quality of evidence? Then in every class give priority to such habits of mind over traditional coverage of content. Do we want active citizens who know their rights and ways to affect their own government? Then require courses that directly engage them in such matters...

At the classroom level, a performance is often as simple as a final essay that requires skills in inquiry and synthesis to answer what the Coalition calls "essential questions." [See *Horace*, Volume 5, No. 5.] Or it might display student mastery in the form of a project, perhaps undertaken by a group. In some classes students prepare portfolios of their best work to submit for evaluation; in others, they present their work orally and answer questions on it before the class. Whatever its form, the performance must engage the student in real intellectual work, not just memorization or recall. The "content" students master in the process is the means to an end, not the end itself.

Because Essential school teachers use such skills as part of their everyday commitment to "active learning," it can be hard to tell where performances start and regular class work leaves off. And indeed, everyone agrees that performances do serve as a teaching tool as much as an assessment tool. But if we are to consider performances as an alternative to conventional testing, it is most useful to look at their evaluative purpose...

What exactly is an exit exhibition? Ideally, it is a demonstration by the student in front of a review committee, at which he or she shows off the essential skills learned in the high school years. If the school's standards are met in the opinion of the committee, the student will receive the diploma. First, though, the student must stand up to the kind of probing questioning that we usually associate with the defense of a doctoral dissertation. It is not enough to show simple recall of memorized facts; the review board is looking for an ability to use knowledge, put things together, or go looking for facts when an answer is unknown...

That is probably the chief reason that exit exhibitions are such a difficult and controversial way for schools to show their commitment to active learning. If they start by defining clear standards for student mastery, change in every area of the curriculum is unavoidable. After all, one cannot expect some students to be held to a new graduation standard and others to the old way, some teachers to demand only skills in rote and recall and others to ask students to think their way through harder challenges. If no consensus exists on what students should know and be able to do when school is over, a school may be split at its very core. Exit exhibitions, then, can be diagnostic tool or catalyst; they cannot be a neutral, "safe" assessment measure.

Qualities of "Authentic Performances"

Structure and Logistics

- Are more appropriately public; involve an audience or panel.
- Do not rely on unrealistic and arbitrary time constraints.
- Offer known, not secret, questions or tasks.
- Are more like portfolios or a season of games, not one-shot.
- Require some collaboration with others.
- Recur—and are worth practicing for and retaking.
- Make assessment and feedback to students so central that school schedules, structures, and policies are modified to support them.

Intellectual Design Features

- Are "essential" —not needlessly intrusive, arbitrary, or designed to "shake out" a grade.
- Are "enabling" —constructed to point the student towards more sophisticated use of the skills or knowledge.
- Are contextualized, complex intellectual challenges, not "atomized" tasks corresponding to isolated "outcomes."
- Involve the student's own research or use of knowledge, for which "content" is a means.
- Assess student habits and repertoires, not mere recall or plug-in skills.
- Are representative challenges —designed to emphasize depth more than breadth.
- Are engaging and educational.
- Involve somewhat ambiguous tasks or problems.

Grading and Scoring Standards

- Involve criteria that assess essentials, not easily counted but relatively unimportant errors.
- Are graded not on a curve but in reference to performance standards (criterion-referenced, not norm-referenced).

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- Involve demystified criteria of success that appear to students as inherent in successful activity.
- Make self-assessment a part of the assessment.
- Use a multifaceted scoring system instead of one aggregate grade.
- Exhibit harmony with shared schoolwide aims—a standard.

Fairness and Equity

- Ferret out and identify (perhaps hidden) strengths.
- Strike a constantly examined balance between honoring achievement and native skill or fortunate prior training.
- Minimize needless, unfair, and demoralizing comparisons.
- Allow appropriate room for student learning styles, aptitudes, and interests.
- Are attempted by all students, with the test "scaffolded up," not "dumbed down," as necessary.
- Reverse typical test-design procedures. A model task is first specified; then, a fair and reliable plan for scoring is devised.

(These are provided by Grant Wiggins, former director of research at CES; he gives credit to Ted Sizer, Art Powell, Fred Newmann, and Doug Archbald and to the work of Peter Elbow and Robert Glaser for some of these criteria.)

Example 1: A Final Performance Across the Disciplines

At Adelphi Academy in Brooklyn, New York, science teacher Chet Pielock and humanities teacher Loretta Brady ask students to form teams to investigate Latin America's problems of poverty and illiteracy, overcrowding, earthquakes, and political instability. To answer some questions in the performance students must exhibit detailed geographic knowledge; to answer others, they must relate them to society and history. Interesting issues can arise from such work: How are "natural resources" regarded by different cultures? What happens when different cultures conflict over the value of a natural resource? How do natural resources function in human struggles for power?

So you want to understand Latin America's problems: poverty and illiteracy, overcrowding, earthquakes, and political instability (that's right, war). Can Latin America overcome these problems? Is the United States helping Latin America all it can? What is behind these problems? One key topic we need to understand is the land itself. We will become three teams of experts exploring three key fields:

1. What forces have shaped the land?
2. What are the resources of the land?
3. Why do people live where they do on the land?

Each group has special requirements they need to fulfill but in general, these are the expectations we have for you while you work and for the day of the final exhibition of your work:

- Everyone on team understands all the material well.
- The team teaches the rest of the class effectively.
- All diagrams and maps are effective and attractive.
- Group uses class time effectively.
- All are involved.
- Group asks good questions of each other on team.
- Group asks good questions of other exhibiting groups.

Group 1. What are the forces that shaped the land?

Your group should construct detailed and instructive works for the following. You are also expected to understand the meaning of these diagrams. What do they show?

1. Schematic diagrams showing the cross sections of energy forces below the surface of the land (volcanoes, trenches, etc.)
2. Maps showing the land movement of the plates of the earth throughout earth history, focusing especially on the movement concerning Latin America.

Among the things you will need to find out:

1. Why are there mountains and volcanoes where they are in Latin America? (Why is this country full of highlands while Africa was mostly a land of plateaus?)
2. What are the natural hazards of the land? Why is there a persistent threat of earthquakes? What has to be done or has been done to accommodate this natural hazard?
3. How did the bridge between the Americas form? How has the movement of the earth's plates effected migration in Latin America (plant and animal)?
4. How does the earth produce the energy needed for all this colossal movement?

Group 2. What are the resources of the land?

Your group must find answers to and understand the following:

1. What are the animal, vegetable, mineral resources of the land? (Any oil?) How rich is the land for farming? Is there enough water? What

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- food do they rely on and in what parts of Latin America do they use certain kinds of food?
2. Why do they have the kind of vegetation they have? Or, why are (or are not) the climate zones dry like Africa, which falls roughly on the same equatorial line and latitudinal lines as Latin America?
 3. How do the seasons differ from those of North America?
 4. How do Latin American birds and plants differ from those of Africa? Why do they have the adaptations, the differences they do? What special purpose do the unique plants of Latin America serve?

Your group must construct, and be able to discuss the meaning of, maps or diagrams showing the following:

1. The vegetation/climate zones in Latin America.
2. The atmospheric currents and important ocean currents which influence climatic zones in Latin America. You may need to include average rainfall statistics.
3. The hydrologic cycle.
4. The important resources and where they are found.

Group 3. Where do the people live on the land?

Your group is responsible for finding out:

1. Where did the first societies (and first migrant people) live in Latin America? Why there? How could people have migrated to Latin America? Could people have come from Africa?
2. Where was the population living around 1800-1850? What groups were living where? Why there? (Consider especially the groups/races of people throughout the West Indies and all of Latin America.)
3. Where do people live today? Why? What are the different groups/races living in Latin America today? Where do different language groups/races live today? What effect does that have on the countries in Latin America?

Your group must be able to construct and fully explain the following:

1. A map of the populations for each of the three questions above. Question 3 may require more than one map if you think it is necessary, or a clear overlay.

(Thanks to Chet Pielock and Loretta Brady at Adelphi Academy, Brooklyn, New York.)

Example 2: A Final Performance in History and English

For a final exam in both history and English, one teaching team has students support or refute the statement, “What matters in history is not societies or events, but individuals.” Because it asks the essential question “What causes history?” such an inquiry can reflect not only how we see the past but how we think about the present and future. Next students are asked to evaluate their own essay along specific criteria, and then to relate an “English” essay on subjectivity in research writing to it as well —revealing the interdisciplinary connections between literature and history.

Your final exhibition to demonstrate mastery of the material of these two courses for the first semester will be divided into two parts. The first part is a research paper. The second part is the final examination. Together these constitute 25% of your grade for English and 20% of your grade for World History.

1. For the research assignment, write a five to seven page paper addressing the following: "What matters in history is not societies or events, but individuals." Discuss the validity of this concept of history by citing at least three specific examples from your studies this semester that support or refute the concept.

Your paper will be graded by both your history and your English teacher and a grade assigned by each, based on the standards in the "Written Exhibition Assessment Form," attached.

2. The final examination will be taken during the period scheduled for the English examination. It will consist of three parts:
 - a) An essay evaluating your research paper, both in content and mechanics. You will read the attached excerpt on subjectivity, objectivity, relativity, and balance in academic writing (pages 6-7 from Toby Fulwiler, *College Writing*. Boston: Scott, Foresman, 1988). As you read it, think how the points he makes apply to his research paper. Then write an essay reflecting on how these ideas are illustrated by your paper. Specifically, you need first to prepare a topic outline, including a thesis statement, for the essay. Then summarize in your own words each of Fulwiler's main points, and cite at least one specific example from your research paper of each of these points. Where you identify subjectivity or use of judgment in your paper, discuss whether there was adequate evidence in your paper to support these subjective statements. Finally, discuss why you think you made these particular subjective statements. In other words, how did one of your personal values enter into the research and writing of the paper?
 - b) An essay relating your English course readings to the thesis of your research paper. This will also involve an analysis of a short, related work during the final.

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TOOL

3. During the period scheduled for your history final examination, you will meet with both your history and English teacher to discuss your course work for the semester, your research paper, and your final examination.

[Thanks for this performance to John Bohannon, a history teacher at Vermont Academy who attended a CES exhibitions workshop. (Vermont Academy is not a member of CES)]

Sedona Red Rock High School
Sedona, AZ
<http://webpages.sedona.k12.az.us/~hirsch/>

To graduate from Sedona Red Rock High School, each senior will successfully complete one exhibition, which includes a process-folio, an oral presentation, and student-selected products. The school's website provides a comprehensive overview of what the exhibition entails, sample exhibitions from previous years, tips for student success, and answers to commonly asked questions. Some of this information is included below.

Exhibitions are an honorable way for students to demonstrate that they can do important work. Exhibitions are an assessment tool that illuminates students' potential and capacity for deep learning. The expectation is that the preparation of these performances will stretch the students' abilities beyond those demonstrated through class projects and other assessments.

All Graduates of SRRHS will complete an exhibition as a way of demonstrating to themselves, their families, the community, and the faculty and staff that they possess a strong set of skills, knowledge and understandings which has prepared them for their next stage of life. Exhibitions are a form of proof that the student has earned an SRRHS diploma.

The descriptions of the tasks themselves are intentionally brief. The goal has been to set the task, but to allow room for individual interpretation, imagination, and initiative. Each exhibition consists of three parts: understanding the task and planning how to do it; doing the work itself; and presenting the exhibition to a group and responding to questions about the exhibition.

Requirements:

Students are required to write their exhibition proposal by following the proposal-writing rubric. Students are required to submit their proposals to the staff for critique, and after several drafts the students need to obtain signatures from three exhibition committee members. The exhibition is a culmination of the student's academic experience. The faculty expects that the students' work will reflect the skills and knowledge gained over their four years. Further, this exhibition will demonstrate that the students can go beyond the classroom environment and work independently towards their goals.

Products:

At the end of a student's preparation an oral presentation, and process-folio will be assessed by a committee consisting of teachers, administrators, and often a community member. Each exhibition will also require particular products, which should consist of choices from research papers, visual representations, videos, plays, culinary items, poetry, lab reports etc. Each



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exhibition proposal will outline the products needed to express the main ideas and understandings.

Process-Folio:

A process-folio chronicles a student's work on his or her exhibition. This piece is an integral part of the learning process. The exhibition "process-folio represents an effort to capture the steps and phases through which students pass in the course of developing a project. A complete student process-folio contains initial brainstorming ideas, early drafts, and first critiques; journal entries on pivotal moments when ideas jelled; collection of works by others that proved influential or suggestive; interim and final drafts; self critiques and critiques by peers, informed mentors, and outside experts; and finally some suggestion of how one might build upon the current project in future endeavors." (Gardner, p.240) Students must also present an accurate and properly formatted bibliography.

Oral presentation:

This will be a thirty minute time period, including a 10 minute minimum presentation a 10 minute minimum question and answer period, and a discretionary 10 minutes that the student may use in either the presentation or question and answer time.

Exhibition Scoring:

Mastery

- Products are available for review one week prior to presentation
- Research/analysis/reflection are evident, thorough and insightful
- Work is stylistically sound and grammatically correct
- Visuals/performances/products are polished, interesting and refined
- Presenter is poised, prepared and confident
- Presentation is organized, rich in detail and concise
- Presenter fields questions succinctly, thoroughly and accurately
- Exhibition reflects mastery of topic related skills and knowledge

Honors Work

Students choose five of the following honors qualities to incorporate and combine with the mastery rubric requirements above. Honors is awarded only upon completion of honors proposal guide/rubric in advance of the presentation.

- Sees and synthesizes complex ideas / appreciates the complexity of ideas
- Analyzes, understands and communicates to audience in a sophisticated manner
- Bases conclusions on substantial / extensive evidence in a wide range of areas
- Searches out primary sources and other unusual avenues of research
- Clear and compelling explanations or products
- Arrives at conclusions that produce new meaning and understanding
- Work is incredibly rich in details, qualifications and argument
- Thoroughly considers alternative points of view, approaches or solutions

- Uses appropriate methods of inquiry, research and communication characteristic of an academic or professional discipline

Examples of Approved Student Proposals

Inspirational Drummers of the Twentieth Century

Introduction:

There have been many famous drummers who have inspired others with their natural talent and creativity. Drummers Buddy Rich and Max Roach were perhaps the first to revolutionize the art of drumming in their era during the 1930s through the 1950s. They produced creative new rhythms and off-beats which had never been heard before. The next generation of phenomenal drummers emerged during the rock and roll era. Keith Moon, John Bonham, and Mitch Mitchell brought drumming to the next level with their fast triplets and long fills. Modern-day professional drummers all have incredible talent, but the ones who stand out have unique styles that separate them from the rest. I am researching influential drummers because I am a drummer myself and have been inspired by many famous drummers.

Thesis:

Influential drummers have made significant contributions to revolutionize modern-day music and have inspired a whole new generation of drummers, including me.

Documentation:

This mastery-level exhibition will consist of:

- **Process Folio:**
Documentation of the different styles of drumming that I have learned from various famous drummers.
- **Photo journal:**
Pictures of the drummers and their album covers that I have chosen for the exhibition.
- **Research Report:**
The history and explanation of nearly twenty drummers from this century that have contributed to the evolution of music.
- **Audio/Video:**
Clips of live performances by the drummers in my research report, and an oral explanation of their styles.

Performance:

Demonstration of several styles of drummers who have influenced me with an explanation of skills and equipment needed to be a successful drummer.



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Domestic Violence and its Effect on Women

Introduction:

Battering is a term used to mean the abuse of one person in a relationship by another. Figures indicate that there were 15 million women beaten or otherwise abused by male partners in 1995; that's approximately one every 15 seconds. There are 1,400 women killed by those abusive spouses or boyfriends each year. Domestic violence is close to my heart, because I have worked in the local domestic violence shelter, and witnessed the devastation. I became very attached to a particular family at the Verde Valley Sanctuary. I witnessed how domestic violence altered their lives and psychologically of who they were. It was very painful for me to see them leave due to their perpetrator finding their location. They left before I could say good-bye, and therefore I feel compelled to do this exhibition.

In an otherwise seemingly hopeless situation, domestic violence can be preventable with adequate education.

Documentation:

This honors-level exhibition will consist of:

- Research report: Presentations the results of my inquiry into the subject of domestic violence, including interviews with domestic violence victims and domestic violence therapists, and reflections on ride-alongs with the Sedona Police Department.
- Displayed information: Presentation of Yavapai County's battered women's shelter services.
- Newspaper article portfolio: Six-month collection of local domestic violence criminal cases and follow-ups on selected criminal outcomes. Source: Sedona Red Rock News.
- Process Folio
- Honors Component: I will organize and host an assembly to educate my peers regarding domestic violence to hopefully prevent violent situations in their present and future relationships.



Parker Charter High School

Devens, MA

http://www.parker.org/DivisionIII/Senior%20Project%20Handbook/senior_project_handbook.htm

Parker offers a different take on the Senior Project than Sedona, including the use of essential questions and benefits to the larger community. The following excerpts are taken from Parker's *Senior Project Handbook* and are followed by a sample letter to exhibition jurors and the exhibition rubric.

The *Handbook*, available on the school's website, contains a clear description of each project element, plus a timeline, elements of a proposal, information about mentors, options for obtaining release time, internships, process documentation & assessment, final assessment rubrics, and guidelines for the (mandatory) Senior Seminar.

The Senior Project is designed to be the culmination of each student's academic experience at the Parker School. It is a genuine opportunity for Seniors to merge their various interests, passions, and curiosities with their academic lives at school. Similarly, the Project is a vehicle for Seniors to demonstrate autonomy, complexity, and awareness one final time before graduation. The Six Tenets of the Senior Project are:

1. The Essential Question
2. Benefit to the Larger Community
3. "Interdisciplinary" Approach
4. A "Research" Component
5. Collaboration
6. Academic Rigor

There are four assessed components of the Project: the **process**, the **product**, the **exhibition**, and the **reflection** paper. Each component is assessed individually with a rubric. Upon completion of the project, those assessments are combined for an overall course assessment of meets basic requirements, satisfactory or exceptional.

Senior Project Exhibition

The purpose of the Senior Project Exhibition is to provide an opportunity for each senior to:

- Explain the learning he or she did over the course of the project
- Explain the product of this year-long project and
- Explain the process he or she used to complete the work

Each senior will conduct a 30-60 minute presentation of their Senior Project to a panel (as well as other invited audience members). This panel is responsible for assessing both the substance and the style (the content and the delivery) of the exhibition. There will also be a question and answer



PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: EXHIBITIONS

component to the exhibition. Students are expected to be able to answer difficult questions from members of the panel on demand. An inability to answer relevant questions sufficiently will impact the assessment of the exhibition as a whole. *Please note, this exhibition is assessed on its own merits separate from the product and the process.*

Unlike the Gateway exhibitions of previous years, the Senior Project Exhibition *will be assessed* by a jury of panelists. Each panel will have the following five positions represented: the advisor, secondary mentor, one outside community member – can be a topic “expert” or other friend of Parker (visitors, non-Parker teachers, parents, etc.), one additional Parker faculty member, and one Division Three, non-senior student. The panel must come to consensus about whether the exhibition is Just Beginning, Approaching, Meeting or Exceeding the expectations. Exhibitions cannot be revised.

The exhibition must include the following three elements:

I. A Discussion of the Process

- A chance to “tell the story” of the Senior Project (an oral version of the reflection paper)
- How the student arrived at his or her topic/essential question
- How the student created the actual product
- Highs and lows; what the student feels good about/what he or she would do differently
- Benefit to larger community? Interdisciplinary nature? Collaboration with other people? Research?

II. A Presentation of the Product

- Connection between the product and the essential question (how does/might the work “answer” the student’s question)
- Show the film, play the guitar, exhibit the caricatures, browse the website, present the business plan, etc.
- Carefully planned visual aides are critical (PowerPoint, overheads, etc.)

III. Questions and Answers

- An oral defense of the project
- The jury’s opportunity to seek clarity, challenge the student’s thinking, or push deeper.



Listed below are examples of the **Essential Questions** for the Class of 2002's Senior Projects.

- What are the challenges of making a live-action film based on a book?
- What is conflict?
- How do you plan and execute a safe, small-group backcountry expedition?
- How is fencing related to previous forms of swordplay and what role did it play in Renaissance society?
- How do I set up an exhibit in a historical museum?
- Does casino gambling take advantage of people?
- How can I create a computer program to aid a person in composing a piece of music of the style of J.S. Bach?
- What is the experience of a Latin American immigrant to the United States?

A “Good” Essential Question

Poland Regional High School Senior Celebration

<http://www.poland-hs.u29.k12.me.us/>

- Cannot be answered with a single source
- Cannot be answered with facts alone
- Has no one right answer but does lead to a conclusion
- Is focused to allow for in-depth investigation
- Requires input from several perspectives and/or opinions
- Involves a topic about which you are passionate
- Searches for new meaning
- Promotes the development of new insight
- Fosters reflection

Sample Senior Project Exhibition Juror Letter

March 2002

Dear Senior Project Jurors:

Thank you so much for your participation in this important milestone in our students' academic careers. Attached is the rubric that we will all use to assess the senior project exhibition (there are five jurors on the panel). As you can see, we are very interested in how well the student can present his/her learning over the course of this project. We are looking for depth of understanding and ability to demonstrate good choices about conveying that understanding in this exhibition.

A note about the boxes on the rubric: We use the language of Just Beginning (JB), Approaches (A), Meets (M), and Exceeds (E) to assess our students' work. For people who are coming in from outside of our school community, we offer the following "translation" of this language.

- *Meets* means that the criteria has been satisfied to the level that you would expect from a high school senior.
- *Approaches* means that the particular criteria falls short of meeting expectations, but there is evidence of some serious and thoughtful work being done to address it.
- *Just Beginning* means that the criteria are not addressed or understanding is poorly or unsubstantially conveyed.
- *Exceeds* means that the student has gone above and beyond expectations and has demonstrated a deeply thoughtful and nuanced presentation of understanding.

Although you will have the opportunity to assess the exhibition individually, our task as a panel will be to come to consensus about an overall assessment for the student's presentation.

Each exhibition is individualized to the student presenting it, and s/he makes many decisions about what to share in the time allotted. However, the overall format is generally the same. After general introductions, the student has approximately thirty minutes to showcase what s/he has done. Then, the panel has the chance to ask questions for about ten minutes. After this, the panel convenes in another room, where they have about 15 minutes to discuss the exhibition and come to consensus on its assessment.

We thank you again for your willingness to serve as a panelist. If you have any questions, please make sure to ask them of the senior seminar teacher who will facilitate the exhibition and panel deliberation.

Sincerely,

The Senior Seminar Teachers
Diane Kruse, John Bohannon, Becky Wilusz, Deb Merriam



PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: EXHIBITIONS

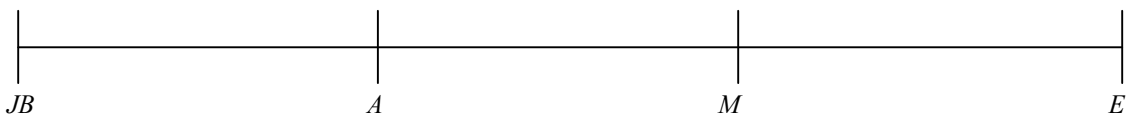
Senior Project Exhibition Rubric

Exhibition Criteria	JB	A	M	E	Comments
<p>You exhibit your project in a clear, engaging, and appropriate form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You successfully utilize presentation aids and other supporting materials. 					
<p>You shed unique, interesting, and relevant insight on your essential question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You demonstrate enthusiasm and confidence about material/subject. 					
<p>You clearly explain your process.</p>					
<p>You clearly explain your product.</p>					
<p>You demonstrate expertise in your topic, supported by a solid foundation of knowledge.</p>					
<p>You answer questions knowledgeably and thoroughly.</p>					
<p>You use the conventions of delivery well in your exhibition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You speak clearly, loudly, and at an appropriate pace. ▪ You make effective eye contact with your audience. 					
<p>You are well-prepared and organized for your presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You use your time effectively. ▪ You understand, anticipate, and fulfill your technical needs. 					



FIELD NOTE

Overall Assessment



http://www.parker.org/Homepage/senior_project_exhibition_rubric.htm

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: EXHIBITIONS

Poland Regional High School

Poland, ME

<http://www.poland-hs.u29.k12.me.us/>

Poland calls their senior exhibition the *Senior Celebration*. Below is the timeline and planning process that students follow, which includes checkpoints and a minimum number of conferences with the student's advisor. Following are a sample worksheet and assessment rubrics that support the exhibition. This information cannot be found on their website.

October 1 — Senior Celebration Proposal

Senior Celebration proposal is due (proposal worksheet follows). Proposals are reviewed and approved by a committee of Advisory leaders.

November 15 — Refined Essential Question & Initial Research Checkpoint with Advisor

Checkpoint Purpose:

- Establish a refined essential question to guide your research
- Communicate your general knowledge and understanding of your subject
- Explain your progress toward establishing a mentor relationship
- Discuss how your work is connecting to Maine's Guiding Principles (see following)
- Get feedback from you advisor

Checkpoint Content:

A written summary of—

- What is your refined essential question?
- What have you found out about your subject?
- Is your research supporting your essential question or do you need to refine it again?
- Who are the local experts or resources on this topic?
- What is really challenging you about this topic? What are the obstacles?
- What aspects of your work on this topic are you enjoying?
- What other areas do you really need to explore?
- What are your next steps?
- As of now, which Guiding Principles do you feel you are addressing? Which do you need to focus on the most?

At least five works cited (books, websites, videos, interviews, etc.).

A completed mentor agreement form.

December through March — Research Conferences Checkpoints

Conference Purposes:

- Communicate your progress on your project
- Determine how you will present your learning

- Demonstrate your level of research literacy using the school-wide rubric (see following)
- Demonstrate your understanding of yourself as a learner in relation to the Guiding Principles
- Plan your next steps in your work

Conference Content:

- Provide an updated Works Cited page
- Share your latest information with your advisor including any notes, drawings, outlines, initial products, etc.
- Discuss plans for your presentation so you can demonstrate your new learning
- As of now, which Guiding Principles do you feel you are addressing? Which do you need to focus on the most?
- Discuss your next steps
- Discuss your mentor contacts

April — Pre-Presentation Conference

Purpose:

- Communicate your progress with your presentation
- Demonstrate your research literacy skills for final assessment using the school-wide rubric — *this is for your final grade on this aspect of the Senior Celebration.*
- Demonstrate your ability to synthesize information
- Discuss your understanding of yourself as a learner in relation to the Guiding Principles
- Receive feedback from your advisor

Content:

- Discuss your progress with your presentation plan
 - Demonstrate how you've organized the information for presentation
 - Use the presentation rubric to guide your work
 - Show how your presentation answers the essential question you have asked
 - Explain how your presentation will highlight your new learning
- What do you need to do to prepare for the practice presentation?
- Reflect on the Guiding Principles you have worked on
- What audio/visual equipment do you need for your practice/final presentation?

Set a time for your practice presentation

Complete the audio/visual request form for the scheduling of your final presentation

April — Practice Presentation

Purpose:

- Practice your presentation and receive feedback
- Determine what you need to do next to be prepared for final presentation



PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: EXHIBITIONS

- Provide an opportunity to refine your presentation

Students will not be allowed to present to the grading panel without a full practice presentation.

Content:

- Conduct a full dress rehearsal of your presentation for your advisory members
 - Include all visuals, notes, and props
 - Use the rubric to create your presentation
 - Complete the presentation checklist.

Binder Organization

In order to be successful, and stay sane, during the Senior Celebration process, it is essential that you keep an organized binder. This will help you keep track of your research, your mentor contacts, your Works Cited page, and so on. Here is a suggested method for organizing your three-ring binder:

Section 1: Proposal and Essential Question

Section 2: Research

- Notes/notecards
- Articles
- Works Cited (from a variety of sources!!)
- Relevancy form
- Research rubric

Section 3: Presentation Planning

- Drafts of visuals
- Notecards for speaking
- Presentation rubric
- Practice presentation feedback/notes

Section 4: Mentor Information

- Emails/letters
- Brochures
- Pictures

Section 5: Other relevant stuff...

Guiding Principles
Possible Evidence of Mastery

A Clear and Effective Communicator will:

- Develop an effective essential question and answer the question asked
- Have a well written proposal and reflection
- Have a correctly formatted Works Cited page
- Use clear, attractive visual aids
- Use technology effectively
- Present new learnings clearly
- Speak slowly, clearly and loudly
- Prepare a well-planned presentation

A Self-Directed and Lifelong Learner will:

- Work well independently
- Pursue a topic of personal interest
- Read and research about the topic regularly
- Keep on a schedule
- Be persistent and ask good questions
- Use RT work days effectively

A Creative and Practical Problem Solver will:

- Investigate a subject from many angles
- Use a variety of resources
- Be open-minded to different ideas and suggestions
- Use original and creative thinking

A Responsible and Involved Citizen will:

- Keep appointments and meet deadlines
- Relate the project to a grading panel
- Use community resources
- Be courteous and respectful

A Collaborative and Quality Worker will:

- Do good work consistently
- Work well with others
- Be cooperative and responsible
- Produce a product of Competent or higher quality

An Integrative and Informed Thinker will:

- Analyze and synthesize knowledge
- Support a presentation with evidence from research
- Listen to and respect differing opinions
- Tie information together in a presentation
- Answer panel questions confidently and effectively



Senior Celebration Proposal Worksheet

Use this “worksheet” to help you organize your senior celebration proposal. Turn in your typed, edited proposal to your Roundtable Advisor. It will go to a Senior RT advisor committee for approval.

My essential question is: _____

Purpose: *first paragraph – answer the following:*

What do you hope to accomplish through this research / investigation / study?

What do you see as the most difficult or challenging aspects of this major project?

Prior Knowledge: *second paragraph – answer the following:*

What do you already know about the subject / topic?

How will you demonstrate significant new learning if it is a subject you already have some expertise in?

How does the topic you have chosen have value beyond school?

Passion!! *third paragraph – answer the following:*

Why is this topic of importance to you? Explain your investment / interest / passion.

Action Plan: *fourth paragraph – answer the following:*

Who might serve as your mentor? List names of potential people to ask:

What initial steps will you take to get started on this project?



FIELD NOTE

SENIOR CELEBRATION RESEARCH RUBRIC

THE SEARCH, INTERPRET, AND APPLY STANDARDS FOR RESEARCH WILL BE GRADED HOLISTICALLY SINCE THESE PROCESSES ARE FLUID. STUDENTS WILL NOT NECESSARILY COMPLETE THESE STEPS IN A LINEAR FASHION, BUT WILL GO BACK AND FORTH, DEPENDING ON HOW THEIR RESEARCH IS PROGRESSING.

COMPETENT	ADVANCED	DISTINGUISHED	NOTES
DEMONSTRATES ALL OF THE INDICATORS FOR THE PRESEARCH, SEARCH, INTERPRET & APPLY WITH ASSISTANCE	CAN DO AT LEAST HALF OF THE INDICATORS FOR THE PRESEARCH, SEARCH, INTERPRET & APPLY INDEPENDENTLY	CAN DO THE PRESEARCH, SEARCH, INTERPRET, AND APPLY INDICATORS INDEPENDENTLY	
PRESEARCH			
FORMS A GENERAL QUESTION OR IDENTIFIES PROBLEM			
• CAN FORM A QUESTION RELATED TO A PARTICULAR SUBJECT OR ISSUE			
BRAINSTORMS KEYWORDS AND PHRASES			
• DETERMINES KEYWORDS AND PHRASES TO LOCATE INFORMATION			
LOCATES GENERAL INFORMATION			
• IDENTIFIES RELEVANT GENERAL INFORMATION AND 5 SOURCES			
ORGANIZES GENERAL INFORMATION			
• OUTLINES/SUMMARIZES MAJOR POINTS USING STRUCTURED HANDOUTS			
• DETERMINES WHAT FURTHER INFORMATION IS NEEDED			
REFINES CENTRAL QUESTION			
• DETERMINES WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT QUESTION OR PROBLEM			
• MODIFIES QUESTION AS NEEDED			

SEARCH:

PLANS SEARCH & LOCATES INFORMATION

- PLANS SEARCH USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS & CHECKLISTS
- IDENTIFIES APPROPRIATE SOURCES
- LOCATES INFORMATION FROM SEVERAL DIFFERENT TYPES SOURCES

INTERPRET:

DETERMINES RELIABILITY & CREDIBILITY OF INFORMATION

- CHECKS SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR CURRENCY, ACCURACY, SCHOLARLY MERITS, AND OBJECTIVITY
- USES WEB EVALUATION FORM

EXTRACTS INFORMATION & DETERMINES IF INFORMATION ADEQUATELY ANSWERS RESEARCH QUESTION

- SKIMS ARTICLES & SOURCES FOR RELEVANT INFORMATION. IDENTIFIES MAIN IDEAS, OPINIONS & FACTS. PARAPHRASES AND ORGANIZES INFORMATION USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS, NOTES OR OUTLINES
- DETERMINES THAT ENOUGH INFORMATION HAS BEEN GATHERED

APPLY:

ORGANIZES INFORMATION AND PLANS PRESENTATION

- COMPARES, SUMMARIZES AND GENERALIZES INFORMATION TO ANSWER RESEARCH QUESTION
- PREPARES PRESENTATION PLAN/OUTLINE
- DEVELOPS APPROPRIATE VISUAL AIDS/PRODUCT
- CONFERENCE AS NEEDED

PREPARES WORKS CITED PAGE

- PREPARES ACCURATE WORKS CITED PAGE USING APPROVED FORMAT



FIELD NOTE

SENIOR CELEBRATION PRESENTATION RUBRIC (2003)

DISTINGUISHED

ADVANCED

COMPETENT

	COMPETENT	ADVANCED	DISTINGUISHED
PRESENTATION CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrates knowledge of essential question and new learning. ▪ Content directly relates to clear essential question. ▪ Works cited (& consulted) page provided to all panel members. ▪ Some sources of information are mentioned within the presentation. ▪ Reflects on personal learning. ▪ Makes a reasonable attempt to answer most panelist questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates thorough knowledge of essential question area by reliably supporting points with facts and evidence from research. • New learning is clear. • Deepens audience understanding of essential question. • Answers panelist questions with confidence most of the time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates in-depth knowledge and insight of essential question, including citations from research that broaden audience perspective. • Reflects deeply on personal learning and/or growth. • Answers panelist questions with confidence; answers serve to solidify student's understanding of topic.
STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information presented in a logical order with a clear opening and closing. ▪ Uses visual aids such as posters, props, hand-outs, video, costumes, PowerPoint, etc. ▪ Attempts to use transitions between ideas. ▪ Meets 15-20 minute time requirement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is relevant and well-integrated. • Most transitions between ideas are effective and smooth. • Visual aids are informative and clearly support content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information presented directly and thoroughly supports each point made. • Flow of the presentation increases audience enjoyment and understanding. • Presentation is compelling and grabs audience attention. • Visual aids are of high quality and are integral to the presentation.
INTERACTION AND PRESENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaker presents him/herself appropriately for the presentation. ▪ Uses appropriate body language and makes eye contact with audience. ▪ Presenter invites questions from the audience after presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenter is poised using good gestures and posture. • Body language, eye contact and speech enhance presentation. • Speaks at an appropriate rate with volume and clarity. • Works through possible discomfort of public speaking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks with passion and eloquence. • Exhibits good vocal variety, control and strength. • Interacts easily and confidently with audience. • Presentation is clearly rehearsed and well-paced throughout.
<p><i>After the presentation, the panel meets privately to discuss and grade the presentation, with the senior RT advisor acting as facilitator. The three grading panelists may be joined by the student's mentor and/or the student's RT advisor. The mentor and/or student's RT advisor will not grade the presentation, but will participate in the discussion in order to lend valuable insight and information. This conversation must be limited to 10 minutes.</i></p>			
<p>revised 4/18/03 *</p>			
<p>FINAL GRADE: _____</p>			

NOTES:

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: EXHIBITIONS

NOTES: