

Make Your Own Museum

Whether it's a bulletin board or a dedicated room, putting students' work into an exhibit validates and expands the learning.

Your Classroom's Knowledge Exhibits

You can make a bulletin board an exhibit area.

What will your students exhibit in a bulletin board each quarter?

First Quarter		
Second Quarter		
Third Quarter		
Fourth Quarter		

OBJECTS AND IDEAS

A guide to organizing an in-school

PLACE FOR WONDER

A MUSEUM IN THE CLASSROOM

What is a Place for Wonder?

IT IS A MUSEUM!

It is a hands-on and minds-on museum.

It can be a special place for topic-focused learning in--

A CLASSROOM

A LIBRARY

A PARENT CENTER

ANY PLACE IN YOUR SCHOOL

It is a way to reinforce learning and give students a chance to gain reading, research, writing and organizational skills in projects that will enrich the whole class--even the whole school. For example, if your class sets up an exhibit about a topic--such as ancient Mexico, the solar system, or birds, your students--and other students in your school--will be able to visit a museum right in their own classroom.

STEP 1: Choose a topic.

It could be from social studies or science. It could be from geometry. It can be from any subject your students study. In fact, it could be a combination of subjects--such as Chicago transportation, which could combine science (the technology of travel), geography (the patterns of travel), and history (how travel has changed).

Step 2: Identify important ideas.

What ideas do your students need to learn about this topic?

Step 3: Plan the exhibit.

Think of objects that could help students envision those ideas--make those ideas three-dimensional. You can use objects or make models--or combine them.

What kinds of objects could you get?

Everyday objects can illustrate a topic. For example, you can illustrate transportation with models of trains, cars, and other forms of transportation.

Encourage students to make models or bring in objects for the place for wonder.

Add photos and books.

What else?

Use your imagination--and encourage your students to do research.

Step 4: Make Patterns Clear

Look for ways to combine the objects so they help students see patterns. Explain to students that ideas are patterns, ways to understand specific things.

> For example:

Do you want to teach about birds?

If so, then set up an exhibit that shows different kinds of bird feet and bird bills so that students realize that there are patterns to the ways birds are built.

> Another example:

Do you want to teach about sizes and shapes?

If so, then put objects of different sizes and shapes together.

Step 5: Use labels to ask questions.

The point of a Place for Wonder is that the objects themselves help answer questions and that the objects give students a reason to read and write. You can design an activity that gets students to look, draw, and think, or you can write a question that gets them to focus and find information visually.

Write questions for labels that help the children see those answers independently.

For example, if you want students to learn about different kinds of jobs, you could put out different tools used in different jobs and ask the children to name the kind of work that is done with each tool.

That would be one BIG label that then leads to looking and thinking about many different objects.

Step 6: Challenges/questions and projects/answers.

For example, if you set up an exhibit about dinosaurs, here's a possible project:

Draw the dinosaur and then tell two ways the dinosaur is like a bird.

The students' answers to questions can be added as labels. As much as possible, involve the students in writing labels.

Step 7: Keep Adding

Add more questions, add illustrations that students draw, add more objects that students collect or make.

Involve students in making up questions that can be answered by "reading" the objects and illustrations in the exhibit.

Step 8: Expand your exhibit--have a tour!

Invite another class and/or your students' parents to visit your room and learn from the exhibit. Your students are the tour guides.

Step 9: Start over--make another exhibit.

Be sure to vary the kinds of materials and activities that the students work on for each exhibit so that they continue to learn different skills as they learn about different topics.