

Eighth Grade Exhibition

The Lake Tahoe School Eighth Grade Exhibition provides an opportunity for students to engage in a capstone educational experience. Created by the Coalition for Essential Schools and Ted Sizer, the Exhibition is used by middle and high schools throughout the country. It is a student-driven enterprise that involves parents, teachers, advisors and community members in a multi-faceted, performance-based and year-long project. Centered on and inspired by an essential question, the Exhibition involves three main components: a research paper, a hands-on project, and a multi-media presentation. Each Exhibition component possesses merit in its own right, and their combination allows students to 'exhibit' aptitude and responsibility for learning.

Lake Tahoe School values the Exhibition because it:

- Incorporates a culminating assignment that assesses the effectiveness with which our students can apply what they have learned;
- Offers a cross-curricular academic project in which students can pursue their individual passions and interests;
- Provides a public forum for students to exhibit their abilities and academic work.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this Exhibition, students will be able to:

Content

- Make relevant connections between subject areas
- Apply academic, research and literary skills to a multi-faceted, year-long project
- Gain a profound level of understanding about a genuine topic of interest

Communications

- Demonstrate excellent public speaking skills
- Respond effectively when answering questions
- Demonstrate sound writing and research skills
- Demonstrate active listening skills
- Conduct personal interview(s) to gather primary source information

Critical Thinking

- Formulate an essential question and thesis statement about a self-selected topic
- Answer/solve a question/problem
- Formulate and organize a plan
- Research a topic using primary and secondary sources
- Produce or demonstrate knowledge of information in a related field

Self-Management & Self-Advocacy

- Establish, manage and follow a timeline
- Seek advice and take initiative as necessary from teacher/advisor/mentor/parents
- Review/monitor progress and self-evaluate
- Consult and work with others outside of school

Technology

- Preview, edit and incorporate video and/or still photography and/or graphic arts
- Use WWW/Internet as tool for research and support for presentation
- Develop a presentation using multi-media tools, software and audio-visual equipment

MLA Format

- Students will follow MLA format guidelines in writing their research papers.

We understand that this Exhibition entails a fairly significant change for our Eighth Grade students and represents a work in progress. Certainly, we intend for this change to benefit them as they advance to high school. By allowing them to pursue their passions, exhibit their ability and produce a piece of work to add to their portfolio, they can gain confidence and proof in their capability. If you have questions or thoughts about this project, please contact the student's advisor.

The Essential Question

At the heart of this project lies the essential question, which each student constructs after choosing a general topic of interest. The question is derived from intellectual curiosity and provokes serious contemplation, more questions and connections between subjects.¹ For example, a student curious about ethics in science may ask the following essential question: How far should we tamper with our own biology and

chemistry? To answer this question in the Exhibition a student may write a research paper on the history of ethics in science, create a project that tests the question itself, and publish a short film taking a stance about the future of ethical science. A student interested in the composition of music might ask: Is it more difficult to be a composer or a rocker? This student may develop a research paper about arranging and performing music in both fields, compose a piece of music, and then perform and record the piece for a film reproduction. With either one of these examples, the student will look outside the school walls and seek guidance from experts in the field. Moreover, these potential Exhibitions, based on an essential question, allow our students to pursue individual passions, use a variety of academic skill sets and take pride in presenting their findings and work before a community-based audience.

¹ Wiggins, Grant. *Understanding by Design: What is an essential question?* November 2007. "A question is essential when it causes genuine and relevant inquiry into the big ideas and core content; provokes deep thought, lively discussion, sustained inquiry, and new understanding as well as more questions; requires students to consider alternatives, weigh evidence, support their ideas, and justify their answers; stimulates vital, on-going rethinking of big ideas, assumptions, and prior lessons; sparks meaningful connections with prior learning and personal experience; naturally recurs, creating opportunities for transfer to other situations and subjects." <http://www.authenticeducation.org/bigideas/article.lasso?artId=53>

The Process

Student interest, initiative and responsibility drive the year-long Exhibition, yet each student's Advisor guides him/her throughout the process. The Exhibition involves work inside and outside of school and, if student chooses, replaces other performance-based projects throughout the year like the Spelling Bee, Science Fair and Declamation. Students will invariably need encouragement and support from the Advisor and parents, but once they are sufficiently directed and motivated, students will take responsibility and ownership for the completion of the Exhibition. Also, a student may seek help and guidance from other teachers or individuals as needed and depending on the subject matter. The time needed to complete each phase will depend on each student's ability, the extent of the subject, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the student's planning, preparation and effort.

Exhibition Benchmark Dates

Monday, Sept. 21, 2015- Essential Question

Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2015- Letter of Intent

Friday, Oct. 16, 2015- Interview questions written

Friday, Oct. 23, 2015- Project proposal

Friday, Nov. 13, 2015- Initial sources due for paper

Friday, Nov. 20, 2015- Completed interview

Friday, Jan. 22, 2016- Project completed

Friday, Feb. 12, 2016- Outline of paper

Friday, Feb. 26, 2016- Draft 1-paper

Friday, March 4, 2016- Draft 2-paper

Friday, March 11, 2016-Final draft-paper

Friday, May 6, 2016- Abstract and Portfolio

Monday, May 16, 2016- Presentation practice

Tuesday, May 24, 2016-Presentations

Selecting the Topic

The first step to begin the Exhibition is to choose a general topic of interest. The topic should represent a passion of your own, involve more than one academic discipline and lend itself to performing or constructing a project. You may ask yourself these questions while choosing a topic.

- **Why does this topic interest me?** You will be working on this project for a while, so make sure the topic is of personal interest to you.
- **Is there enough information available?** Some topics may be too specific or too recent to have enough material at the local library.
- **Can an essential question and a hands-on project be developed from this topic?** Keep in mind that the end result is a performance, object, or tangible product that reflects the research.
- **Is the topic, along with the related project, one that I would want to present to an audience?** Does it have an audio/visual element? Think about how your project will incorporate technology during the oral presentation.
- **Can this topic be sufficiently limited in scope?** It is better to have a narrow topic that is fully developed than a broad topic that is covered superficially.
- **What other subject areas might be involved with the topic?** The experience includes more than just a research paper. Consider what other academic or career areas will be involved with your topic.
- **Does this topic offer a challenge?** Pick a topic that offers you the opportunity to grow and learn new ideas about something that is of interest to you.
- **Have you (the student), your parent(s), and your Advisor agreed upon the topic?** The project is a big undertaking and you may need help along the way. Discuss your topic choice with your advisor, parent(s) and teacher(s) to keep them informed of what you are working on so they can offer advice and guide you in the process.

Once agreement has been reached on a topic between the student, parent and Advisor, each student will turn it into an Essential

Question and a write a Letter of Intent.

Letter of Intent

Due Wednesday, Sept. 30th, 2015

The Letter of Intent is considered a contract for the completion of the paper and project. It describes the essential question and topic and outlines the student's intentions and reasons for choosing the topic. A template and a sample letter are included in this packet.

Letter of Intent (template)

Student Name and Address

Date

Lake Tahoe School and Address

Dear Advisor and Parents:

Paragraph 1

Describe the general area of interest, i.e., history, art, music, etc... and the essential question that will drive the Exhibition. Explain why you chose this area to research. Explain what you already know or have accomplished in this area.

Paragraph 2

Include the specific research your paper will focus on. Discuss some of the basic ideas you hope to include. Discuss possible resources.

Paragraph 3

Explain your understanding of plagiarism. Describe the consequences of plagiarism.

Paragraph 4

Explain in a sentence or two the link between your paper and your project. Describe your project (what it will be, who will be involved, potential time, costs, and resources).

Paragraph 5

Describe what you plan to accomplish personally, academically and communally by completing this Exhibition.

Sincerely,

Signature

Your Name Typed

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is the foundation of your research report. Just as a building must have a foundation that is sturdy and strong, so must a research paper have a thesis statement that is strong and unites the various elements of your paper. **This thesis statement answers the essential question in a concise, clear and provable way.**

- All parts of the research paper must **explain, describe, and inform** about the thesis statement. A thesis statement is a claim that a reasonable person could argue. It should be **detailed, arguable, and specific**. A thesis statement must appear in the **first paragraph** of your research report. A thesis statement is **not** a topic sentence. It is more than a description of the topic; a thesis statement must take a stand.
- Your topic must be narrow. You may begin by asking yourself a question such as, “How was the Space Station built?” You can convert this question into a thesis statement such as, “Many designs for the Space Shuttle were theorized; only one was eventually chosen as the most likely to be successful.”

The following are examples of topic sentences and their revision to create a thesis statement.

Topic: Mt. St. Helens erupted in the 1980s. *Thesis:* The destruction caused by the eruption of Mt. St. Helens affected the surrounding areas and their economies for more than a decade.

Topic: Tupac Shakur is my favorite musical artist. *Thesis:* The music of Tupac Shakur was influenced by his upbringing, schooling, and early music experience.

Topic: Soccer is an exciting sport. *Thesis:* Soccer is as important in Europe and Central and South America as baseball is in the United States.

Topic: There is terrible pollution in the creeks and rivers of San Jose. *Thesis:* Local businesses should be required to clean up the creeks and

rivers of San Jose so we do not suffer the long-term effects of pollution.

Topic: BMX biking is considered an extreme sport. *Thesis:* BMX biking has recently entered the area of extreme sports and has yet to be considered both legitimate and eligible for inclusion in the Olympics.

Paper Format

The following format guidelines are based on the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th edition. Additional information regarding effective writing and research papers standards may be found in references such as *Holt Handbook* or *Write Source*.

Paper:

Use white, 8 and 1/2-by-11-inch paper.

Font:

The paper should be written in a standard font, size 12. Recommendations include: Geneva, Times New Roman, and Helvetica.

Margins and Indentations: Except for page numbers, the text of your paper should be surrounded by a one-inch margin on all four sides (left side, right side, and top and bottom). Paragraphs in the research paper should be indented half an inch from the left margin, while set-off quotations should be indented an inch.

Spacing:

Double-space your text, including your heading, any quotations, and the list of works cited.

Heading and Title:

Type your name, your Advisor's name, and the date on separate, double-spaced lines at the top of the first page, at the left-hand margin.

Centered under this information and above your first paragraph should be your title; *there is no need for a title page on your research paper.*

Page Numbers:

The pages of your manuscript (including the first page) should be numbered consecutively in the upper right-hand corner of each page, one half inch from the top. Type your last name before the page number. Most word processing programs provide for a "running head," which you can set up as you create the format for the paper, at the same time you

are establishing things like the one-inch margins and the double-spacing. This convenient feature simplifies the page numbering process, allowing you to set up consistently formatted page numbers. Make sure the page-number is always an inch from the right-hand edge of the paper (flush with the right-hand margin of your text) and that there is a double-space between

the page number and the top line of text. Do not use the abbreviation *p.* or any other mark before the page number.

Tables and Figures:

Tables should be labeled "Table" and given an Arabic numeral above the table's title. The table should appear below the title and above the caption (with those words flush to the left-hand margin). Other material such as photographs, images, charts, and line drawings should be labeled "Figure" and be properly numbered and captioned. The label and the caption appear below such illustrative material.

Binding:

A simple staple in the upper left-hand corner of your paper should suffice. Your teachers may have their own rules about binders, and you should consult with them.

The Hands-on Project

The most fun and challenging part of the exhibition experience is the hands-on, homemade project. The project provides the learner with the opportunity to make connections in the real world and apply the research information gathered from the paper. Students use information to create a product to demonstrate learning and mastery of the topic. It can be tied directly to the research or only be related. The student should choose a project that will allow them to experience something new and challenging. An important aspect of the exhibition is being able to demonstrate that the student has made a stretch to broaden his/her physical, emotional, and/or intellectual learning.

Project requirements:

The project must:

- *Reflect at least 10 hours of work*
- Reflect your knowledge and understanding of the topic
- Be homemade (you may not put together a purchased model)

- Be tied directly to an **action verb** (create, build, produce, invent, etc...)

Examples of successful projects:

- Physical Product: painting, building a model, creating a computer program, rebuilding or inventing new machines or furniture
- Written Product: writing one of the following: a short story, book of poetry, children's book, publishing a newspaper article
- Performance: dancing or singing recital, producing a musical video, creating a drama show, writing and performing your own piece of music or dance
- Teaching or Leadership Experience: teaching young children a particular skill, teaching a class on alcoholism, coaching a team
- Physical Experience: learning to scuba dive, training for and running in a marathon, earning a black belt in karate
- Career Related Project: shadow a police officer, view a medical procedure, and write your observations, feelings, etc.

A backboard is **not** a product; rather, it is a visual aid for your presentation. Although you may choose to create a project that uses technology, do not confuse your project technology with the technology needed for the presentation. Creating a web page meets the requirements for the project; however, you will have to use it again in your presentation as a visual aid.

The project will be done outside of school, and the student will need to provide visual evidence of its completion. The student will turn in a student log and self-evaluation to verify the project. The student must receive a rubric score of 2 in each category to successfully complete this section of the exhibition experience.

Speech Preparation

Step 1: Gathering Information for the Presentation

What are you going to talk about in your presentation? The following questions will give you a focus for what you want to say to the panel. Use the Project Self Evaluation Form to help you answer the questions.

- How are the research paper and the project connected?

- What emotions did you experience as you worked on the exhibition project (Excitement? Frustration? Pride? Anger?)?
- What problems did you encounter and how did you solve them (Money? Time Management?)?
- How did you personally grow from the experience of working on the paper and project? What did you learn about yourself?
- What knowledge did you gain about your topic?
- How did your project affect your plans for the future?
- What exhibition advice would you pass on to next year's participants?

Step 2: Writing the Content of the Presentation Use the answers to the questions to help you write what you are going to say. !

1. Plan and write an introduction. The introduction should:
 - Grab a person's attention (Consider using quotations, interesting statistics or facts, dramatics, audience participation, demonstrations, questions, or games)
 - Make the thesis statement clear (make sure you mention the paper and the project)
 - Take no more than one minute
2. The middle of your presentation should include some of the information from the other questions you answered in the section above. Organize and write what you want to say in a clear and concise manner. Remember you only have ten minutes.
3. Plan and write a conclusion. The conclusion should:
 - Restate the topic thesis
 - Leave the audience thinking
 - Take no more than 30 seconds
4. Plan how you will display your project. Will it be an on-going part of your speech? Part of the introduction? Happen after the conclusion? Can it be worn, eaten, viewed, used or played during the presentation? Avoid passing items around during the presentation because it causes too much distraction.
5. Plan what visual aids, if any, you will show during the speech.
6. Write your presentation on 3-by-5-inch cards. Include all aspects of the presentation on the cards including visual aids and displays. The cards should be organized and numbered in the order of your speech.
7. Let the teacher know what audiovisual equipment you will need one month prior to the presentation.

Step 3: Practicing the Presentation

You may have heard of the expression, “Practice makes perfect.” You are strongly urged to practice your presentation in front of a mirror, for family and friends, or in front of classmates to become used to performing in front of an audience. You will also be able to relax and enjoy the experience more if you are comfortable and confident with the material to be presented.

1. Eye contact is extremely important because it engages an audience and makes them participants in the presentation. True communication happens with the eyes, so make sure you make eye contact with all members of the panel. Practice often enough so you do not have to look at your cards.
2. Smile! Remember the audience is friendly and they are pulling for you. You will need the reinforcement their encouraging expressions will give you.
3. Stand up straight and proud. You have a right to be proud because you have accomplished a challenging task.
4. Speak clearly and loudly enough for people to hear your speech. Show excitement and enthusiasm in your voice when appropriate.
5. Use hand gestures to help make a point, but they should be natural and not choreographed or mechanical.
6. Plan and practice using any props.
7. Avoid gripping the platform, twitching, or squirming. You want the audience to pay attention to what you are saying.
8. Consider what you wear.

Step 4: Preparing for Questions

Although you do not know the questions the panel will ask, you can make some educated guesses and be prepared with answers. Below are some brainstorming questions.

1. If you were on the panel, what would you want to know about your presentation?
2. What questions would you like people to ask?

3. What unusual quality does your paper or project have that will
4. What controversial topics, if any, do you touch on?
5. What are the reasons for choosing the topic?
6. Who helped?
7. How did you finance the project?
8. How much time did you spend?

Abstract (sample)

Dear Panel Member:

As a soon to be graduate of Middle School, I will take this opportunity to tell summarize my Exhibition using this abstract.

Topic: *Achieving Quality in Education: Strategies for Change* Essential Question: *What assessments and evaluation strategies work best for school children?*

Abstract:

During a period of four years, a new psychological assessment tool has been developed to use with blind children between the ages of 5 and 17 in the UK. Based on the sighted version of Speed of Information Processing Test of the British Ability Scales and the American version, the Differential Ability Scales, it aims to give an accurate way of assessing the speed at which blind pupils can process tactile information, for example a brailed text. Results can be used to compare a blind pupil with other blind pupils and to make comparisons of improvements in ability. The research also draws upon the differences of reading speeds between fully sighted and blind pupils

This Exhibition explains the rationale behind the development of the two parts of the test and then takes delegates through the testing and scoring. Some of the difficulties of standardizing a new assessment tool for use with a low incidence population will also be examined. It will finally look at how the information can be used within the profile of a child or young person who is blind.

I hope you enjoy my Exhibition. There will be time for you to ask questions at the end of my presentation and encourage you to inquire

further about the work I have completed this year.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Eighth Grade Student

Portfolio Submission Guidelines

Each student will present a portfolio for panelists to review on the day of the presentation. In addition to being reviewed by panelists, the portfolio will be evaluated by the Advisor.

The portfolio must include the following information on the cover: Topic, Student Name, School Year, Advisor Name, and School Name. The following items are to be included inside:

- 3 copies of the Abstract the panelists (see below)
- Letter of Intent
- A clean copy of the research paper
- A completed student log of project experiences
- A completed project self-evaluation
- Any additional relevant and appropriate items (such as photographs, newspaper articles, or other artifacts)

The portfolio should be neat and clean. Students are encouraged to compile the above items in an organized, loose-leaf fashion.

Exhibition Project Self Evaluation

Name: _____

Directions: Answer the questions below in complete sentences. Students may add/edit/delete the questions with approval from the Advisor.

1. In at least 50 words describe your performance on the Exhibition.

2. Estimate the number of hours spent on each component of the Exhibition (paper, project & presentation). For each component please list the date started and the date completed.
3. List the three most valuable things you have learned from completing this Exhibition?
4. What comments about your Exhibition have you heard from students, parents, teachers, or community members? (For example: "I didn't know you knew PowerPoint so well.")
5. Describe what risk(s) you took in completing this Exhibition.
6. In what way is your Exhibition original or creative?
7. If given the opportunity, what would you do differently? Or what advice would you give a student before she begins the Exhibition next year?
8. Beyond the project itself, what have you learned about yourself?
9. What overall rubric score would you give yourself for your project?