

Pre-Visit Preparation

A focused field trip to a professional museum is an important component of the school museum project. By carefully examining effective and / or ineffective professional displays, students learn the traits of high-quality exhibits and use that knowledge to shape their upcoming exhibit work. Careful preparation for this visit, including the selection or development of an observation guide, modeling the use of that guide, and clarifying the purpose of the museum visit for students and chaperones, is critical to the success of the visit. Some museums may be willing to provide a “curator chat” while on site, adding another dimension to the experience for students. The museum visit provides opportunities for students to build teamwork skills and develop a vision of high quality work for their exhibit designs.

BEFORE THE MUSEUM VISIT:

- Download photographs of exhibits from different museums. Have students study the photographs and generate a list of features that make the exhibits in the photos of high quality.
- Practice using the Observation Guide in class before your museum visit. Show a photograph of an exhibit (preferably from the museum you will visit) and have students complete the Observation Guide.
- Explain that student teams are to find an example of an excellent exhibit and explain how it meets quality indicators. With permission, students may photograph selected exhibits for later review in the classroom. (Museums have different policies on photographing exhibits, so consult museum staff before taking pictures.)
- Review behavioral expectations and logistics of trip.