

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING DOCUMENTATION PANELS

How Do I Make a Documentation Panel?

1. Collect documents.
 - Collect related work samples—drawings, paintings, and photos of children’s three-dimensional representations.
 - Collect dialogue. Record science-related conversations with and among children, jot down a conversation that can be typed up later, or ask children to tell you about their work or a photo.
 - Pull together notes and data that have been collected during the exploration—science inquiry charts, a list of predictions, descriptive observations, new questions, and so on.
 - If you have access to a camera, take photos of children making science-related observations or interacting with living things. Get close-ups of children’s hands and faces. Enlarge 3- by 5-inch and 4- by 6-inch photos on a photocopier, or print digital photos on 8- by 11-inch paper (the photos should be large enough for a group of children to view together).
2. Decide the panel’s focus.
 - Discovery—Children discover pill bugs under rotting logs, bricks, stones, and old leaves.
 - Exploration—Children explore a local park for living things. Where do they look? What do they see?
 - Data collection—Children measure the breadth of various maple trees, or they sequence a dozen oak leaves by size, from smallest to largest.
 - Comparison—Children compare and contrast the snails and slugs in their classroom terrarium to the ones they saw during their visit to a greenhouse.
 - Tool use—Children use hand lenses, penlights, and bug boxes to look more closely.

How Do I Put Together the Panel?

1. Arrange your documents in chronological order, from left to right, across the board in a single, straight line. Adhere your photos with a glue stick, rubber cement, or two-sided tape. (White glue wrinkles paper.)
2. Add text to your panel. Suggestions include the following:
 - Interview the children whose work is featured on the panel and use some of their words as captions under their work samples.
 - Add the question or challenge that guided the children’s focused exploration.
 - Add the names of the tools children were using.
3. Add a title that focuses your reading audience on the panel’s key message. For example:
 - Max uses a hand lens to look very closely.
 - Making a terrarium for our snails.

How Can I Display the Panels and Share Them with Families?

- Post the panels at children’s eye level. When you run out of wall space, move the ones that aren’t currently being using into the hall or to some other location where families and colleagues might enjoy them.
- Invite children to share panels with family members. Post a couple of questions next to the panel to prompt conversation and help focus it on the aspect of science inquiry featured on the panel.
- Share panels during parent conferences. Use them to reflect on specific aspects of children’s science experiences and their growth and development.