Notes to the Future - Purple Gaze

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Purple Gaze was a rather fun exhibit to put together and display. This exhibit requires more research than actual work on producing the exhibit. The exhibit was well-liked by all the young kids and the parents as well. The effects of the different objects under the backlight truly caused all sorts of entertainment for each spectator. Key things to research include: how ultraviolet light works and what it means, how black lights work and basic types, how incandescent lights are different, why things glow, and UV blockers/absorbers.

Supplies:

Much of what you will need is not that hard to find and isn't too expensive. The most expensive thing would be buying a black light if you had to. We used our own that we had, but years past have said that Mr. Baird has one for use. Make sure that for the incandescent lamp you have a proper shade so that you can direct the light away from the other exhibitors. We used one from Mr. Baird. The hardest supply to acquire was the Bullfrog Sunblock. Buy this ahead of time! The only store that we have seemed to find that sold it was Raley's. If it isn't there you may have to order it online. To make the project more interactive we bought regular pipe cleaners, yellow pink and orange ones glow in the dark so children had fun making sculptures. They also had fun drawing pictures or writing messages with highlighters and sticky notes. The lab also states that you need fluorescent coated paper, among other examples. When looking for it you need to make sure it is actually coated with fluorescents, not just bright colors. We were not able to find this in a store and Mr. Baird ended up supplying us with the paper. Also as far as blockers, glass that actually demonstrated its effects was hard to find. We ended up not using any.

Daytime (younger audiences):

It is important to have an abundance of pens and writing utensils for the kids to color with. After explaining the importance of sunscreen and UV rays, as well as the laundry detergent, we let the kids pick different colored pieces of paper and pens to draw with. The kids really enjoyed watching the glowing detergent and the color of the clear sunscreen as it appeared yellowish-brown under the black light. For additional entertainment, consider bringing an invisible pen that does not show up under regular light but is visible under the black light. It is very important, however, to watch the kids with the pens. With all the kids coming to the exhibit, one exhibitor should keep track of all the pens and watch the kids to make sure they do not color all over their skin. We also had a black poster board with our exhibit so that the kids could stick their post-it notes that they drew on. As the day goes on the board fill up fast!

Nighttime (mostly parents):

The parents who approached the table were more interested in hearing us talk so make sure to have the research done and explanations ready. Some parents are a little shy when it comes to walking up the exhibit – they cannot be lured by the pretty lights and colored pens/paper so it is important to call them over and ask them if they would like to learn about fluorescence. Most will be happy to come over after you have acknowledged them. They are really interested in learning about how sunscreen protects the skin and how the UV light works.

Setup:

On setup day, you'll need to have your own table for enough room for your exhibit. Since we used our own backlight and it was separate you'll need to have something to raise it off of the table to allow room underneath it. We just used a bunch of textbooks on either side of the light. Make sure your exhibit items are in the front of the display so that the kids can see what you have and can do the exhibit themselves.