The Secret World of Elephants

BACKGROUND FOR EDUCATORS

Overview of Student Worksheets

Using worksheets in the exhibition, students observe and sketch life-size models of an African savanna elephant, a woolly mammoth, and a pair of dwarf elephants. Based on their observations, students then infer how the function of the physical traits of these animals help(ed) them survive in their habitats.

These observations will help students experience a **natural phenomenon**—that elephants and their relatives can have different body sizes, shapes of body parts, and amount of hair. This phenomenon should serve as an anchoring point in student exploration and discussion as they seek answers to the **investigation question**: How do the physical traits of animals help them survive in their habitats?

Extension Ideas

Back in the classroom, students can use their observations from the Museum as evidence to argue for a claim about how the physical traits of living elephants and their extinct relatives may have helped them adapt to their habitats.

Students can generate more ideas about how animals' physical traits help them adapt to their habitats. For example, students could create a list of the physical traits that help the polar bear survive in the arctic (i.e. white fur for camouflage; black skin for warmth).

Correlation to Standards

This activity supports the following Next Generation Science Standards:

Performance Expectations	**4-LS-1-1: Structure, Function, and Information Processing** Construct an argument that plants and animals have internal and external structures that function to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction.
Disciplinary Core Ideas	**LS1-A-E1: The Structure and Function of Organism** Plants and animals have both internal and external structures that serve various functions in growth, survival, behavior, and reproduction.
Crosscutting Concepts	**SF-E2: Structure and Function** Substructures have shapes and parts that serve functions.
Science & Engineering Practices	**ARG-E4: Engaging in Argument from Evidence** Construct and/or support an argument with evidence, data, and/or a model