



# LEARNING TOGETHER

*Families in Museums  
Staff Training Curriculum*



# Learning Together: Acknowledgements

“Learning Together” was produced from 2008-2012 through a collaboration between Boston Children’s Museum and Chicago Children’s Museum, thanks to support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Many people were involved in the production of these materials, and several museums from across the country piloted the activities and offered their comments and improvements.

## **Authors**

Tim Porter, Boston Children’s Museum  
Tsivia Cohen, Chicago Children’s Museum

## **Contributors**

### **Boston Children’s Museum**

Cora Carey  
Leslie Swartz  
Ellen Thompson  
Crisley Wood  
Susan O’Connor  
Jeri Robinson

### **Chicago Children’s Museum**

Angie Velez  
Natalie Bortoli  
Liza Sullivan

### **Cover Photography**

Clive Grainger © 2012

### **Logo and Curriculum Design**

Karin Hansen  
Tim Porter

## **Evaluators**

### **National Institute on Out-of-School Time**

Georgia Hall  
Svetlana Smashnaya

## **Pilot Museums**

40 institutions across the U.S. and Canada, including children’s museums, science centers, zoos, aquaria, history museums and more reviewed this curriculum. Feedback from pilot museums was critical to validating and in revising “Learning Together”. In particular, we would like to thank the following museums that provided extensive assessments of the materials. We thank them for their time, thought and effort:

**Chabot Space & Science Center**, Oakland, California  
**Children’s Museum of Phoenix**, Phoenix, Arizona  
**Discovery Center of Springfield**, Springfield, Missouri  
**Headwaters Science Center**, Bemidji, Minnesota  
**Imagine Children’s Museum**, Everett, Washington  
**Maryland Science Center**, Baltimore, Maryland  
**Ontario Science Center**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
**Providence Children’s Museum**, Providence, Rhode Island  
**Stepping Stones Museum for Children**, Norwalk, Connecticut  
**The Children’s Center for Science and Technology**, Youngstown, Ohio  
**The Paul Revere House**, Boston, Massachusetts  
**Turtle Bay Exploration Park**, Redding, California

# Learning Together: Families in Museums

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ACTIVITIES LISTED ALPHABETICALLY



# Learning Together: Families in Museums

## Introduction

Welcome! **Learning Together** is a flexible curricular package primarily created to support staff who work directly with visitors in interactive museums. This training package focuses on family learning and on skills that will allow front-line staff in museums to better meet the needs of visiting children and their adult caregivers. This skill set includes providing a welcoming atmosphere; interacting with adults effectively and respectfully; recognizing the needs of visitors from different cultures; understanding the developmental needs of children of different ages; understanding the different supportive roles that adults can assume during their visit; etc. It is important to note that the term “family” is inclusive of all intergenerational units that visit museums—this includes children who arrive with parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, nannies, neighbors, teachers...any unit that includes children and care giving adults.

This curriculum includes: ten validated ***Standards of Engagement***; a series of ***Activities*** supporting these standards; and a ***Staff Profile Tool***, a self-assessment tool which is designed to help managers determine the strengths and areas for possible improvement in their staff. The ***Staff Profile Tool*** provides staff with an opportunity to reflect on their own skills in facilitating family learning; and provides managers and supervisors with data that will help them design training sessions that target skills their staff still need to develop. The ***Staff Profile Tool*** is organized according to the ***Standards of Engagement***, which are then linked to a number of training ***Activities***—including group experiences for staff to do and discuss together, individual reflective exercises and presentations. These activities can be combined into workshops or conducted during morning or closing meetings or assigned to specific individuals or small groups. The **Learning Together** curriculum allows you as a supervisor and mentor to flexibly configure a training approach that works for your staff, regardless of their range and variety of expertise and experience. In many ways the curriculum may be most advantageous with a staff that is at a variety of levels, allowing them to reflect on their own strengths and needs, and to learn collaboratively. No two museums will use this package in exactly the same way since each museum will have its own training needs and resources.

While the primary audience for **Learning Together** is your museum’s front-line staff members who work with visitors on a daily basis, many of the activities are suitable for other museum staff, with the understanding that most staff will at some point interact with visitors. The curriculum package includes a number of activities that would be useful training resources for staff in your development, marketing, exhibits, administrative, and human resources departments to ensure that all staff share an understanding of family learning. An understanding of these basic concepts is critical to planning, implementing and communicating experiences that build on socially-mediated museum learning. Perhaps more importantly the activities can serve as a strategy to bring together staff across your museum and to strengthen the connection between your staff and your museum visitors.

Your use of this curriculum is indicative of the level of thought and effort you are already putting in to training your staff. This staff development is critical and, as you are aware, ongoing. We hope that these materials are useful to you as you build and grow the capacity of your staff in serving your visitors. Every activity, chart and document in this curriculum has been tested in museums across the country. We hope that you will find them as useful to your work as all of our other participant museums have. **Learning Together** has been produced through a collaboration between Boston Children’s Museum and Chicago Children’s Museum, thanks to support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). For more information about the individuals involved, please see the acknowledgements section.

### **The Standards of Engagement.**

The ***Standards of Engagement*** are ten basic principles that define what skills and concepts staff need for family learning to thrive in their interactive museum setting. Informed by research on family learning in museums, the ***Standards*** were validated through evaluation and testing at Boston Children’s Museum and Chicago Children’s Museum. The ***Standards*** are the organizing principle of the **Learning Together** curricular package—they frame the ***Staff Profile Tool*** and are intended to guide you in designing training to meet the needs of your staff and institution.

### **The Activities.**

The activities are the heart of this curriculum—they are a series of tested training sessions designed specifically for staff at museums, and they are organized around the ***Standards of Engagement***. Activities range from a few minutes to multiple sessions; from individual to large group work; and all of them address how staff can best have quality and meaningful interactions with museum visitors. It is important that trainers familiarize themselves with activities before implementing them—each set of instructions includes suggestions and issues that may arise during the session; and on occasion you may need to prepare or find particular materials in advance. See ***Getting Started with This Curriculum*** following this introduction for suggestions that will help you to choose which activities are best for your needs, based on time commitment; preparation required; experience level of your staff and more.

An important note about these activities—some are direct in their message, and staff will leave with information that will impact their performance immediately. Other activities are meant as points of reference as you work with staff to influence their attitudes and perception, such as helping them to see the point of view of parents of young children or to consider their own cultural assumptions. As an example one of the curriculum’s activities, “A Trip to the Museum—How Hard Can it Be?” is a fun game that points out some of the hurdles and challenges that families encounter on their way to the museum. It is unlikely that, after playing this game, staff will completely appreciate how complex and, at times, difficult parenting in a public interactive setting can be. But the activity will provide a point of reference for continued conversations with your staff as they grow to understand and appreciate their audience.

### **When to Use These Activities.**

Because there is a good deal of reflection and discussion involved in each of the ***Activities***, it is best to use most of these training resources after your front-line staff has had some experience

working with and interacting with your audience. Day-to-day experiences interacting with visitors will provide fodder for the trainings, and will lead to richer and more meaningful conversations. While some of the training sessions included in the **Activities** are appropriate for new staff, most were designed to be implemented after 1-2 months of experience, and all activities will work well with a mix of old and new staff members. The **Getting Started with This Curriculum** section following this introduction will help you determine which activities are best suited for new staff, and which should be done after staff have had some experience working with your visitors.

### **How to Use This Curriculum: No One Way is the Right Way.**

Every museum has different time frames that are set aside for training staff. The **Learning Together** curriculum was designed to work for a wide range of needs. Two suggested methods are *Recurrent Trainings* and *Themed Trainings*. *Recurrent Trainings* are frequent and periodic (daily, weekly or bi-weekly), often taking place in morning or end-of-the-day meetings or weekly training sessions, typically lasting 15 minutes - 1 hour. Such recurrence affords sustained and regular contact with front-line staff, and a constant flow of concepts and ideas. *Recurrent Trainings* can also be immediately responsive to staff needs—if an issue comes up that a training session could address, one can be organized immediately.

*Themed Trainings* occur less regularly (once a month or once a quarter), and require larger blocks of time (3 hours – a full day); but they maintain the advantage of allowing for more in-depth conversations and a weaving together of activities that address complementary or identical topics. When planning a *Themed Training*, identify the focus of the concepts and skills you are hoping to develop. This focus may include one or more **Standards of Engagement**, depending on the needs of your staff. For instance activities related to the standards “*Ourselves as Invitation*”, “*Environment as Invitation*” and “*Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation*” could be combined to focus on the issue of how staff invite caregivers to play. See the **Suggested Trainings** section following this introduction for ideas on how you might group together *Themed Trainings*; and for a suggested order of *Recurrent Trainings*.

An introduction to this curriculum may be helpful to your staff in understanding the goals and intent of the trainings as well as the ideas and experience on which they are based. Even for novice staff, exposure to the rationale of this training package can be an important step in creating a context in which to understand their experiences and observations in the museum. This level of understanding can also provide important motivation for staff to strive for their best in the roles they are asked to play, and help them identify themselves as professionals.

### **Why Family Learning?**

Based on the work of numerous researchers and museum practitioners, the concept of how children learn in museums has evolved. We no longer think of children as interacting with and learning from exhibit components by themselves, but have come to understand that their experiences are often mediated by the adult caregivers with whom they are visiting. Several theories are at the center of our growing understanding of how learning occurs in museums and other informal learning environments:



- **Jean Piaget** is generally considered the father of **constructivism**, which suggests that individuals construct new knowledge based on their experiences. This theory holds that learners assimilate new experiences into their already existing framework of knowledge about how the world works; and that they reframe their understanding of the world based on experiences that contradict their existing knowledge.
- **John Dewey's** assertion that learning is a social and interactive process has long influenced museum education, and highlights the important role that families and museum staff play in a child's learning experience. Dewey became one of the most famous proponents of "hands-on" learning, which changed the way museums think about exhibits and education.
- **Lev Vygotsky's** theory of a "**Zone of Proximal Development**," a term he coined to describe the kinds of things children are ready to do, but perhaps not doing yet, and could do with support from others, suggests a critical role for adult caregivers in informal learning environments. Vygotsky was very aware of the social context of learning—that we often don't learn just by ourselves, but with support from others who are possibly more expert than we are. This "Zone" that he described is the "sweet spot" in which a child is challenged, but not frustrated by a task, and in which they develop new knowledge, skills or understanding because they have been stretched beyond their current skill or understanding.
- Based on Vygotskian theory, the notion of "**scaffolding**" suggests certain behaviors and support structures that caregivers can provide for their children while in the museum. Scaffolding is the support that adults or capable peers provide for children when they are being stretched (into their "Zone of Proximal Development") beyond their current skill or knowledge base.

All of these theories together paint a picture in which children often learn best when supported by adult caregivers and staff. This notion is central to the **Learning Together** curriculum.

### **Effective Trainings: What We've Learned.**

If there is one take away from this curriculum, we hope it is this: give your staff an opportunity to talk, both with each other and with you as their supervisor. The title "Learning Together" is not only a reference to families learning and exploring together in museums; but also to your staff, which will learn more and grow more if that learning and growing is done collaboratively. Developing your staff as a *Community of Practice* will encourage more effective and meaningful growth. A Community of Practice is a group of professionals that develop ideas; share tips, strategies and best practices; and support each other by asking questions and solving problems collaboratively. Museum educators often share a passion for the content or mission of their museum. Too often staff members are treated as silos of skill and information, but it is this shared passion and responsibility that makes a community approach to building museum staff an effective one. See ***Your Guide to Effective Trainings***, following this introduction, for tips and suggestions related to presenting effective and engaging staff training sessions.

# Getting Started with This Curriculum

“Learning Together” is designed to be a flexible curriculum that can be tailored to meet the needs of a variety of museums, regardless of size. In order to help you select the units that are best suited to your staff training needs, we have organized the activities into descriptive categories based on the following criteria:

- Time Commitment
- Amount of Preparation Required
- New or Experienced Staff
- Suggested Group Size
- Number of Suggested Sessions
- Front Line Staff Only or All Staff

## Time Commitment

The times suggested here are typically the minimum amount of time needed, and do not include prep time. If you are working with a group larger than 10, you can anticipate slightly longer times:

### **15 Minutes or less:**

- Wrap it Up – Reflecting on the Day
- Who ARE Our Visitors?

### **20 Minutes:**

- Welcoming Without Words
- What Kind of Parent Would I Be?

### **30 Minutes:**

- Bringing the Learning Home
- Fun Enhancers vs. Fun Spoilers
- Kids Rule! Adults Rule!
- Oops! No One is Perfect
- Parenting Styles: Stick Together or See You Later?
- Sound Familiar? Making it Relevant
- What Makes an Activity Memorable?
- What Matters Most

**40-45 Minutes:**

- A Trip to the Museum – How Hard Can it Be?
- Adult Roles in Collaborative Play
- Finding Your Own Play Style – Alter Egos
- Making Learning Visible
- Parenting in Public
- Putting the Family Back in Family Programs
- So...You Had a Bad Day
- Play and Learning for All in Our Exhibits
- Sorting Standards and Behaviors
- Starting the Conversation
- The Role of the Facilitator
- What Techniques Would You Use?

**1 Hour:**

- Building Understanding
- Caregivers – What Are They Up To?
- Feeling the Collaboration
- Hot Spots and Cold Spots: Where Are Families Engaging?
- Reaching All Audiences – Adaptive Facilitation
- Signs That Reveal: Communicating the Point
- Wonder Boxes

**1 Hour or More:**

- Who's Doing What, and When?
- Expectations That I Have of Visitors and They Have of Me
- MuseumLife – Computer Simulation Game

**Several Days:**

- 100 Stories of Collaborative Learning
- It's the Little Things – Maintaining a Learning Environment

## **Amount of Preparation Required**

Some activities require advance preparation. Most require that you gather materials such as pens, markers, flip charts; or that you prepare photocopies. When that is all that is required, we have designated these activities as “Pick Up and Go”. This does not mean there is NO preparation required—you should still read the instructions and gather the necessary materials ahead of time. Activities designated as needing advance preparation require some creation of and/or gathering of extra materials.

**Pick Up and Go:**

- Adult Roles in Collaborative Play
- Bringing the Learning Home
- Caregivers – What Are They Up To?
- Expectations That I Have of Visitors and They Have of Me
- Fun Enhancers vs. Fun Spoilers
- Hot Spots and Cold Spots: Where Are Families Engaging?
- It's the Little Things – Maintaining a Learning Environment
- Kids Rule! Adults Rule!
- Making Learning Visible
- Oops! No One is Perfect
- Parenting in Public
- Parenting Styles: Stick Together or See You Later?
- Putting the Family Back in Family Programs
- Sound Familiar? Making it Relevant
- Starting the Conversation
- The Role of the Facilitator
- What Kind of Parent Would I Be?
- What Makes an Activity Memorable?
- What Matters Most
- What Techniques Would You Use?
- Who's Doing What, and When?
- Wrap it Up – Reflecting on the Day

**Preparation Required:**

- 100 Stories of Collaborative Learning
- A Trip to the Museum – How Hard Can it Be?
- Building Understanding
- Feeling the Collaboration
- Finding Your Own Play Style – Alter Egos
- MuseumLife – Computer Simulation Game
- Play and Learning for All in Our Exhibits
- Reaching All Audiences – Adaptive Facilitation
- Signs That Reveal: Communicating the Point
- So...You Had a Bad Day
- Sorting Standards and Behaviors
- Welcoming Without Words
- Who ARE Our Visitors?
- Wonder Boxes

## New or Experienced Staff

“Learning Together” activities were designed primarily for front line staff in museums. Some of these activities work well for new staff who are just starting at the museum, while others are intended for staff who have been working in the museum for some time. These latter activities require that staff reflect on experiences they have had with visitors...a difficult task for new staff with little or no experience to call upon. In general, “experienced staff” are assumed to be those who have worked at the museum for at least 2-3 months. NOTE: **EVERY** activity will work for experienced staff, but it is not suggested that you use the activities designated as intended for experienced staff with new staff.

### **Activities That Work For New and Experienced Staff Alike:**

- A Trip to the Museum – How Hard Can it Be?
- Expectations That I Have of Visitors and They Have of Me
- Feeling the Collaboration
- Finding Your Own Play Style – Alter Egos
- Fun Enhancers vs. Fun Spoilers
- Kids Rule! Adults Rule!
- Parenting Styles: Stick Together or See You Later?
- So...You Had a Bad Day
- Sound Familiar? Making it Relevant
- Welcoming Without Words
- What Kind of Parent Would I Be?
- Who ARE Our Visitors?
- Who’s Doing What, and When?
- Wonder Boxes
- Wrap it Up – Reflecting on the Day

### **Activities Designed for Experienced Staff Only:**

- 100 Stories of Collaborative Learning
- Adult Roles in Collaborative Play
- Bringing the Learning Home
- Building Understanding
- Caregivers – What Are They Up To?
- Hot Spots and Cold Spots: Where Are Families Engaging?
- It’s the Little Things – Maintaining a Learning Environment
- Making Learning Visible
- MuseumLife – Computer Simulation Game
- Oops! No One is Perfect
- Parenting in Public
- Play and Learning for All in Our Exhibits
- Putting the Family Back in Family Programs

- Reaching All Audiences – Adaptive Facilitation
- Signs That Reveal: Communicating the Point
- Sorting Standards and Behaviors
- Starting the Conversation
- The Role of the Facilitator
- What Makes an Activity Memorable?
- What Matters Most
- What Techniques Would You Use?

## Group Size

Most of the exercises in “Learning Together” have, as the name implies, staff working collaboratively. If you have 4 or more people in your trainings, most of these activities will work well. But in general, the larger the group you have for these activities, the more diverse the discussion will be, and the better the training will be—so invite as many as you can. A few activities are much more effective with larger groups and, in fact, you should not implement these activities with small groups. The curriculum activities with suggested group size are:

### **Activities Best done with groups of 6 or More Participants:**

- MuseumLife – Computer Simulation Game
- A Trip to the Museum – How Hard Can it Be?
- Feeling the Collaboration

### **Activities Best done with groups of 8 or More Participants:**

- Building Understanding

## Activities Requiring Multiple Sessions

Most activities are designed to be completed in an hour or less, but some are more effective as multiple sessions. The activities that either need to be implemented over multiple sessions, or are most effective when done over more than one session include:

- Hot Spots and Cold Spots: Where Are Families Engaging?
- Who’s Doing What, and When?
- Expectations That I Have of Visitors and They Have of Me
- MuseumLife – Computer Simulation Game



## Front Line Staff Only or All Staff

While the primary audience is front-line staff members who work with visitors on a daily basis, some of the “Learning Together” activities are suitable for other museum staff, with the understanding that most museum staff will, at some point, interact with visitors. These materials include an overview of family learning—including the basic concepts—but, more importantly, a strategy to forge direct connections between your staff and your museum visitors. Some of the activities in this curriculum that can also be used with all staff include:

- 100 Stories of Collaborative Learning
- Feeling the Collaboration
- Wonder Boxes
- Who ARE Our Visitors?

# Your Guide to Effective Trainings

Training is an art—and much like art, many people think they can do it...but none of us are perfect at it. But effective training can be a learned skill. Below we list some tips that we have developed through years of training museum staff as well as in-school and afterschool educators, and other adults that work with children. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it includes some of the most important things to keep in mind...and addresses what we have seen as the most common stumbling blocks for ineffective trainers. This list is just the beginning. Want more ideas? Read on after this list for more in-depth suggestions.

Our top ten tips to tip top training:

1. **Be on time**—your staff deserve your respect, and this includes respecting their time. And don't just start on time...end on time as well.
2. **Be prepared and be organized**—Show up EARLY, set up EARLY and test all technology and materials ahead of time. Make sure that your computer and projector are working, if you are using them. Make sure pens work or pencils are sharpened. Make sure you have enough of every material, and a little extra. The quickest way to lose your audience is if it appears that you don't know what you are doing...and nothing encourages that opinion more than when a presenter is scrambling to set something up that should have been ready when the participants arrived.
3. **Be welcoming**—Say hello when staff enter. Chat with them. Play music. A dull, quiet and uninviting room suggests a dull and uninviting training—and then you're off on the wrong foot.
4. **Know your stuff**—Read the instructions for the activity! Know ahead of time how things will run. And make sure you understand the goals of the training, so that tangents can be limited and conversations can be well-led.
5. **Treat them with respect**—you work with children. Your staff is comprised of adults. Treat them differently. If you present the same tone to your staff as you do to young children, it will likely come off as condescending and patronizing.
6. **Take care of your participants' needs**—Give periodic breaks, especially during long training sessions (we all need to use the bathroom at some point; check messages from the babysitter; etc.). Provide food and drinks when possible, especially if you hold evening or lunchtime training sessions. Make it clear where the training is and what to expect once there. Be clear about the agenda, the expectations and what is going to happen. All of this attentiveness to the comfort and needs of your participants makes it possible for them to focus on what they're really there for.
7. **Be Yourself**—because you are training your staff, you likely know them, and they likely know you. If you put on a showy air (and it's not your normal *modus operandi*), your presentation will feel forced, or fake...neither of which will lead to the kind of

environment you want. Be natural and be collegial—your staff will respond best that way.

8. **Listen more than you talk**—or at least as much. This training is not about YOU...it is about your staff, your visitors and your museum. Do not talk AT your staff, but talk WITH them. Most of the time, your role should not be as expert, but as facilitator. If you've done your job well, you have hired a capable, dedicated staff that has much to offer. If you're doing all of the talking, they won't have any opportunities to offer their input...and that will leave them feeling underappreciated and underutilized.
9. **Provide a trusting environment**—it is important that staff feel like they can share their ideas, thoughts and opinions without fear of harsh judgment. This kind of collaborative learning is unfamiliar for many people—in school, we primarily learn individually. With time, participants will grow more comfortable with a collective forum; will begin to see disagreement not as disagreeable, but as an opportunity for discussion and growth; and as a result will trust the process and will be more open to sharing and contributing. At the same time, make sure to stress solutions, not problems—training sessions can run the risk of turning into a dumping ground for long-standing issues. Steer conversations about difficult work issues toward collaboratively suggesting better ways of doing things.
10. **The discussion is the key**—with most of these activities, there are hands-on and engaging sessions followed by a group discussion. The activity is the fun part—the discussion afterward is the critical part. The two rely on each other, but it is in the discussion that follows each activity that staff will reflect on what they experienced or learned and how it relates to their work. Do not short-change the discussion. Use open-ended questions to stimulate more conversation: *Can you say more about that? What do others think? How might we solve this?*

## Taking it Further

The list above is just a start...there is much to learn and share about training staff in museums. There are books, courses and entire industries dedicated just to training adult learners. The following is a little more information that will hopefully be helpful as you think about your own training techniques and methodology. This information is also not exhaustive...it can't be. People, museums and content are all different. But hopefully it will help start you on your path as you develop your own techniques and practices as a trainer.

### **Setting the Tone.**

For new groups especially it may be helpful to establish ground rules for their training in the interest of supporting open dialogue and building a learning community. Regularly review these rules, especially if you have noticed that training sessions have gotten off track. Basic rules such as always starting and ending on time; and having a clear agenda will certainly come up, but some deeper concepts about the way the group functions can be included, such as:

- Have one conversation at a time
- Honor different points of view
- Speak openly and honestly, etc.

### **Help participants be present in the training.**

One way to do so is to give participants the chance to move around—the use of movement provides a cognitive-motor link to learning. Active icebreakers, energizers, and closing activities can accomplish this if the activity itself is more sedentary.

People might also enter trainings with thoughts, issues or concerns that can prevent them from contributing or effectively participating. Warm-up activities connected to the content might help them make the transition from the world outside of the session to your training. However, if you sense that many in the group arrive seeming distracted, or that a participant is experiencing a deeper issue, you may need to respond more directly. The first step, as always, is to talk to them.

### **Be aware of your own feelings and of your role as facilitator.**

- Stay on track—if your mind is wandering to things outside of the training room, take a moment during a break in the action to collect yourself. Some people find it helpful to jot down their concerns, and then bring themselves back to the present.
- Concentrate on what is happening with the group, and be prepared to shift gears if they have lost interest or seem tired.
- While it is important to stay on track with the training agenda, don't neglect time that the group may need to process an important point. Make sure you always have a "parking lot" sheet on the wall in case you feel you do need to move forward—if an important issue or idea has been raised that requires further discussion, but you don't have the time to discuss it adequately, record the issue or idea on the "parking lot" so that you won't forget to address it later in the training or during another training session.
- Sometimes, when something is going on with the group, it is best to "name it" and have a discussion about it.
- Learn strategies for dealing with people who are challenging within the group, and focus on these strategies, rather than reacting emotionally to an annoying behavior in the group. Some suggestions include:

#### For the person who talks too much:

- Encourage others to talk.
- Impose air time limits by giving each person 5 pennies, paper clips, etc., each representing 30 seconds of talk time.

- During a break, talk to the person and ask them for help in getting other participants that are quieter to talk more.

For the person who is silent:

- Use a turn and talk approach or small group discussion to make it easier for them to participate.
- When working in teams, have each person write down their thoughts and have a team leader read all comments aloud.
- Ask a team leader to help encourage participation by the silent participant.

For those who are disruptive:

- Place yourself next to them—this may be enough to help them rejoin the work of the group. If not, remind them about the ground rules for one person to be talking at a time; or that breaks are for socializing.

### **Supporting the Learning.**

Provide opportunities in your trainings for involvement, connection to experiences, ownership and excitement. The more active and engaged your participants are, the more they will learn and retain. Use activities that are more learner-centered (small group discussions, case studies, role plays, etc.) than trainer-centered (lectures, demonstrations, etc.), and keep lectures to no more than 10 minutes, before using another strategy to apply the information. If you feel that the group has not understood a key concept, use a more learner-centered strategy for that concept.

Remember to keep the learning active. Give participants the opportunity to move around, with a chance to take on a wide variety of roles, beyond just listening (e.g. group leader, recorder, role-playing, etc.)

### **Adults Learn Best When...**(from *Sit & Get Won't Grow Dendrites* by Marcia Tate)

- They have input into the selection of the content and development of learning experiences.
- Learning is connected to the background, knowledge and experience that adults bring to the table.
- Learning is collegial and directed at solving specific job-related problems.
- They have ample opportunity to reflect on the implementation of new competencies, either through peer discussions or through recording their thoughts and experiences in a journal.

- They have ongoing support to apply what they have learned through peer coaching, study groups or appointments with managers to discuss questions or challenges they are facing.
- Learning is received and processed in more than one way—try to incorporate multiple modalities into every training. Visual learners, for instance, would benefit from PowerPoints, flip charts, posters, etc.; Auditory learners benefit from brainstorming, small and large group discussions; Tactile learners benefit from manipulatives and models, writing, etc.; and Kinesthetic learners benefit from movement, role plays, simulations, games, etc.

**Speaking of Visual Learners...**visuals are powerful tools. Research suggests that most people are visual learners to some degree, so try to incorporate visuals into your trainings when possible. Use clips from movies or DVDs to illustrate concepts; use flip charts to record salient ideas and concepts; use preprinted posters with relevant messages; even a quotation or a cartoon that captures the concept being covered can aid in retention of information.

#### Flip chart tips

- A border around content helps the reader focus their attention
- Fill only 2/3 of the flip chart, unless the group is creating a list
- Use only 6 points on each flip chart
- Red, pink, yellow markers are harder to see
- A colorful agenda is something you can refer to throughout the session
- Write pertinent ideas from a discussion down on the chart as a summary
- Use flip chart sheets as a graffiti wall to capture short reflections

#### PowerPoint tips

- Try to limit the use of PowerPoint—it can be an excellent presentation tool, but use it ONLY when it is the best tool for the information being presented, not as a default communication method.
- DO NOT simply read the words on a slide. Your staff can read. Your job is to punctuate what is on the slides with additional information, clarifying points and illustrative anecdotes.
- Limit to five or six lines per slide. No one likes clutter.
- Print large enough for a person sitting in the last row to read.



### **Seek feedback on how you are doing as a trainer/facilitator**

Your job is to meet the needs of the learning community. To do this, you need to find multiple ways to get feedback. You can use written evaluations or you can ask directly:

- What is working well and what needs to change in our training sessions?
- What needs to happen so our training sessions are as effective and useful as possible?
- What would you like me to be doing that I am not in supporting you?

**So what next?** Is the training itself enough for you to meet your goals with your staff? Likely not. Reflection and discussion can go a long way toward cementing key concepts with your staff. Sometimes (as heavy-handed as it may seem) bluntly calling out the learning goals and/or key concepts of a training can reinforce what you hope your staff will learn. There are many strategies for this meta-cognitive analysis, including:

- Divide into teams. Assign a key concept to each team, and have them write down what they remember about that concept in 5 minutes. Then have the teams rotate, read what the group wrote, and take 2 minutes to add what they remember about that concept. By typing up the list, the group has a summary of key ideas about the training.
- Tennis ball recall: Have each person name the idea or concept they most remember from the training, then toss the tennis ball to another person to do the same until the whole group has shared the thing they remember the most (Koosh balls, beanbags, etc. also work if you're not a tennis fan).
- Use peer coaching or study groups.
- Create flash cards. Have a key concept on one side and ideas about the concept on the reverse side. Have the group review the ideas and name the concept.
- Provide real-world examples so teams can combine ideas they have learned in the training with previous experience and knowledge to solve challenges.
- Have participants design a newspaper headline, articles, or poster to illustrate their understanding of a concept.

### **Some suggested resources for trainers**

- Hughes, Marcia, Patterson, L. Boniata et al (2005). *Emotional Intelligence in Action: Training and Coaching Activities*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Pike, Robert W. (1994). *Creative training Techniques Handbook: Tips, Tactics and How-To's for Delivering Effective Training*. Minneapolis, MN: Lakewood Publications 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
- Pike, Robert W. and Lynn Solem (2002). *Training Openers and Energizers*. Minneapolis, MN: Lakewood Publications.
- Tate, Marcia L. (2004). *"Sit & Get" Won't Grow Dendrites: 20 Professional Learning Strategies That Engage the Adult Brain*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

## Suggested Trainings

Every museum has different time frames that are set aside for training staff. The “Learning Together” curriculum was designed to work for a wide range of needs. Two suggested methods are *Recurrent Trainings* and *Themed Trainings*. *Recurrent Trainings* are frequent and periodic (daily, weekly or bi-weekly), often taking place in morning or end-of the day meetings or weekly training sessions, typically lasting 15 minutes - 1 hour. Such recurrence affords sustained and regular contact with front-line staff, and a constant flow of concepts and ideas. *Recurrent Trainings* can also be immediately responsive to staff needs—if an issue comes up that a training session could address, one can be organized immediately.

*Themed Trainings* occur less regularly (once a month or once a quarter), and require larger blocks of time (3 hours – a full day); but they maintain the advantage of allowing for more in-depth conversations and a weaving together of activities that address complementary or identical topics. When planning a *Themed Training*, identify the focus of the concepts and skills you are hoping to develop. This focus may include one or more **Standards of Engagement**, depending on the needs of your staff. For instance activities related to *Ourselves as Invitation*, *Environment as Invitation* and *Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation* could be combined to focus on the issue of how staff invite caregivers to play.

Below are some suggested groupings of activities. Our hope is that you will select trainings based on your need, but the following suggestions may serve as a starting point for you:

### ***Suggested Themed Trainings***

You will notice that these suggested *Themed Trainings* are organized by curriculum **Standards**. You will also notice, when you read the activity instructions, that many activities address multiple **Standards**. You should feel free to group additional activities together in these suggested trainings, as you see fit.

#### **1. *Ourselves as Invitation***

- a. Welcoming Without Words
- b. So...You Had a Bad Day
- c. Starting the Conversation

#### **2. *Fun***

- a. Kids Rule! Adults Rule!
- b. Finding Your Own Play Style - Alter Play Egos
- c. Fun Enhancers vs. Fun Spoilers

**3. *Environment as Invitation***

- a. Hot Spots and Cold Spots
- b. It's the Little Things – Maintaining a Learning Environment
- c. Signs That Reveal: Communicating the Point

**4. *Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond***

- a. A Trip to the Museum – How Hard Can It Be?
- b. Parenting in Public
- c. Caregivers – What Are They Up To?
- d. Adult Roles in Collaborative Play
- e. Parenting Styles: Stick Together or See You Later?
- f. Putting the Family Back in Family Programs

**5. *Respect for Families' Cultures***

- a. Who ARE Our Visitors?
- b. What Kind of Parent Would I Be?
- c. Building Understanding

**6. *Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation***

- a. The Role of the Facilitator
- b. What Techniques Would You Use?
- c. Feeling the Collaboration
- d. What Matters Most

**7. *Play and Learning for All***

- a. Reaching All Audiences – Adaptive Facilitation
- b. Play and Learning for All in Our Exhibits
- c. Who's Doing What, and When?

**8. *Making Learning Visible***

- a. Wonder Boxes
- b. Making Learning Visible

**9. *Extending Learning Beyond the Museum***

- a. Sound Familiar? Making it Relevant
- b. Bringing the Learning Home
- c. What Makes an Activity Memorable?

**10. *Reflective Practice***

- a. Sorting Standards and Behaviors
- b. Expectations That I Have of Visitors and They Have of Me
- c. Oops! No One Is Perfect
- d. MuseumLife - Computer Simulation Game

## ***Suggested Recurrent Trainings***

There is no real hierarchy to the “Learning Together” activities. While some are designated to happen later in the year (see ***Learning Together Index*** for more information), all of the other activities can be done at any time, either early on in your staff’s tenure, or later, after they have had some experience in the museum. The following is a suggested order for the activities, but it is by no means the preferred way of presenting these trainings.

### ***Early in the year:***

1. Who ARE Our Visitors?
2. What Kind of Parent Would I Be?
3. Parenting Styles: Stick Together or See You Later?
4. Kids Rule! Adults Rule!
5. Fun Enhancers vs. Fun Spoilers
6. Finding Your Own Play Style – Alter Egos
7. Feeling the Collaboration
8. Wonder Boxes
9. Welcoming Without Words
10. Sound Familiar? Making it Relevant
11. A Trip to the Museum – How Hard Can it Be?
12. Expectations That I Have of Visitors and They Have of Me
13. So...You Had a Bad Day
14. Wrap it Up – Reflecting on the Day

### ***After a few months:***

1. Starting the Conversation
2. Who’s Doing What, and When?
3. Reaching All Audiences – Adaptive Facilitation
4. Sorting Standards and Behaviors
5. It’s the Little Things – Maintaining a Learning Environment
6. Parenting in Public
7. Making Learning Visible
8. Bringing the Learning Home
9. The Role of the Facilitator
10. Play and Learning for All in Our Exhibits
11. What Techniques Would You Use?
12. What Makes an Activity Memorable?
13. Hot Spots and Cold Spots: Where Are Families Engaging?
14. Adult Roles in Collaborative Play
15. Caregivers – What Are They Up To?

16. Building Understanding
17. Oops! No One is Perfect
18. Signs That Reveal: Communicating the Point
19. What Matters Most
20. 100 Stories of Collaborative Learning
21. MuseumLife – Computer Simulation Game

## Standards of Engagement

The following 5 pages contain the curriculum’s ***Standards of Engagement***: the ten basic principles that define what skills and concepts staff need for family learning to thrive in an interactive museum setting. Informed by research on family learning in museums, the ***Standards*** were validated through evaluation and testing at Boston Children’s Museum and Chicago Children’s Museum. The ***Standards*** are the organizing principle of the “Learning Together” curricular package—they frame the ***Staff Profile Tool*** and are intended to guide you in designing training to meet the needs of your staff and institution. These ***Standards*** are meant to be shared with staff and referenced in training sessions.



## Learning Together Standards of Engagement

Standard of Engagement	Expected Behaviors and Outcomes	Beliefs, Knowledge and Core Values
<b>1. Ourselves as invitation:</b> We provide inclusive physical and verbal cues that let the visitor know we are approachable and knowledgeable about the museum, its philosophy, exhibits, and programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I interact with caregivers and children from the time they arrive.</li> <li>2. I learn about the programs being offered on the days I work and share information about the content and the age range with visitors.</li> <li>3. To help visitors find fitting and available exhibits, I explain what they are about and who they were designed for.</li> <li>4. My appearance is appropriate for a family audience and clearly identifies me as part of the museum staff.</li> <li>5. I smile and make eye contact with adults in order to be friendly and approachable.</li> <li>6. When conducting programs or standing in an exhibit, I look like I am happy to be there.</li> <li>7. I speak directly with adult visitors when they are close by—for instance during programs or when they are watching their child.</li> <li>8. If I don't speak a family's language, I smile, make eye contact, and use gestures to show them they are welcome.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smiling is the universal way to show approachability—it doesn't need translation.</li> <li>• Team members have different styles, strengths, and preferences—there are many ways to be inviting and approachable.</li> <li>• Some families are naturally comfortable in museums, others are not. We strive to ensure that ALL families feel welcomed and comfortable in our museum.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Fun:</b> We create a playful climate that is conducive to fun—whatever that means to our individual visitors.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I invite visitors to play, and I share information about how fun the Museum is.</li> <li>2. I let visitors take the lead in what they want to do and how they want to do it.</li> <li>3. I am engaged and engaging with visitors, and I show that I am enjoying the process of playing with them.</li> <li>4. When appropriate, I use props or exhibit elements to invite visitors to approach and play with me.</li> <li>5. I am ready to facilitate high-quality programs that are intrinsically memorable, surprising, and/or multi-sensory.</li> <li>6. I find ways to make activities inviting and engaging and, when appropriate, exciting.</li> <li>7. If a visitor does not seem to be enjoying themselves, I talk with them about their interests, and then suggest other opportunities in the museum.</li> <li>8. I model ways that grown-ups can share in the fun.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each child and each adult has his or her own way of having fun.</li> <li>• Each of us needs to find our own authentic playful style that works for us.</li> <li>• If you're here, you're here—and you are ON.</li> <li>• Fun is important to learning in museums—it can make learning more engaging and memorable.</li> <li>• Certain staff behaviors and attitudes facilitate fun; others impede fun.</li> <li>• Fun is contagious: what you do (model) has an impact on the visitor.</li> </ul>

Standard of Engagement	Expected Behaviors and Outcomes	Beliefs, Knowledge and Core Values
<p><b>3. Environment as invitation:</b> We create and maintain a physical environment that is comfortable and engaging for both children and adults.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When working in an exhibit space, I clean and reset it at least once an hour and more often as needed.</li> <li>2. I make sure there is seating in my programs and exhibits (chairs, pillows, rugs) so that children and adults can sit near each other.</li> <li>3. I set up for programs so that the space or table looks inviting, including elements such as tablecloths, achievable sample products, containers for supplies and signage.</li> <li>4. I make sure the program materials are clean, work the way they are supposed to, and are well laid out.</li> <li>5. Programs for which I am responsible begin at their advertised time.</li> <li>6. I listen respectfully and actively to families' opinions or concerns about exhibits or programs; I respond by letting them know they have been heard; and I follow up as needed (call in other staff, adjust the activity, etc.).</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults need to feel physically, emotionally and cognitively comfortable in order to support their child's learning through play.</li> <li>• Children are more likely to engage in an inviting, well-maintained space.</li> <li>• Families need to control choices and personal space.</li> <li>• The Museum is an environment that values everyone's comfort zone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Nurturing the adult-child bond:</b> We support adult caregivers in their chosen role, which may include play partners, observers, learners, or mentors.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When facilitating an activity, I'm aware of roles caregivers can play including ways they can support their child's learning, engage in the activity themselves, or actively observe.</li> <li>2. I directly invite caregivers to participate, and I give them permission to choose if they want to interact with their child, play themselves, or observe their child playing.</li> <li>3. When facilitating an activity, I include information, conversation and/or humor aimed at the adult visitors.</li> <li>4. I provide "just-in-time" information to caregivers—tips or ideas that can help caregivers better support children's learning in that moment (e.g., Children who are just learning to use scissors should keep their thumbs up to get a more efficient cut).</li> <li>5. I support families when children and/or caregivers are having a difficult time in the museum (e.g., tantrums, wet clothing, accidents, etc).</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connections between learning and play can be deepened through adult-child interactions.</li> <li>• We believe in the importance of families playing together.</li> <li>• Caregivers are important teachers and know their child better than anyone else. They are also in the best position to enhance learning through reflective practice.</li> <li>• Caregivers need our support. Coming to the museums with young children can be difficult and exhausting.</li> </ul>

Standard of Engagement	Expected Behaviors and Outcomes	Beliefs, Knowledge and Core Values
<p><b>5. Respect for families' cultures:</b> We employ an array of skills as we interact with families with a variety of backgrounds, needs and styles.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I am welcoming and I speak and act comfortably with persons from all cultural/racial/ethnic groups.</li> <li>2. I am aware of my own cultural assumptions when observing how families interact within the museum.</li> <li>3. When talking with my colleagues, I speak in respectful and accepting ways about the actions of visitors from different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>4. I modify activities and situations to allow visitors to participate regardless of their cultural beliefs and practices (for instance, turning off music during an activity if requested, providing space for afternoon prayers, etc.).</li> <li>5. When I see the opportunity, I invite visitors to share first hand experiences that reflect their culture and background.</li> <li>6. I respect families' personal space while offering support that can enhance their interactions and activities.</li> <li>7. I respect caregivers' decisions about how and when they want to interact with their child.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different families have different interaction/child-rearing practices.</li> <li>• Families have different understandings of the relationship of play to learning.</li> <li>• Families have different reasons for being at the museum.</li> <li>• Families have different beliefs about adult roles in children's play/learning.</li> <li>• Museums have their own culture and need to welcome people on their own terms.</li> <li>• We need to be aware of cultural differences and be sincere in our attempts to include everyone, but understand that it's okay to make mistakes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Exemplary play and learning facilitation:</b> We model positive, educational, creative and respectful ways to interact with children and their caregivers through play.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I observe visitors interacting before interacting with them.</li> <li>2. When leading an activity within the museum, I am aware of what behaviors, prompts, hints, and questions will support visitors' play and learning.</li> <li>3. When leading an activity or program I invite the whole family to participate together.</li> <li>4. When in an exhibit in the museum, I can talk about the learning that can occur through play and have strategies to enable visitors to get the most from the experience.</li> <li>5. I follow visitors' leads and cues, knowing when and how to intervene to support play, learning, safety and enjoyment—I recognize when it is best to step in and when it is best not to interrupt.</li> <li>6. I recognize and make use of teachable moments—times when children are ready for more challenge or to make a connection.</li> <li>7. I actively listen to what children have to say, asking open-ended questions that help them form connections to prior knowledge and form new connections.</li> <li>8. I guide visitors in exhibits and during programs so that everyone can be successful.</li> <li>9. If I don't speak a family's language, I use gestures and demonstration to aid them in interacting with an exhibit or participating in an activity.</li> <li>10. I redirect play when it's unsafe or inappropriate, providing positive alternatives and</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children learn through play.</li> <li>• Learning occurs both through individual exploration and socio-cultural support.</li> <li>• What we do in the museum is intentional, but we are open to learning from our visitors.</li> <li>• Success is defined as a process, not a product.</li> <li>• Museums convey a) a point of view; b) a commitment to content; c) a methodology—open-ended, inquiry, discovery, child-centered, etc.</li> <li>• The role of staff is to support family learning—sometimes that means stepping in and interacting with a family, and sometimes that means</li> </ul>

Standard of Engagement	Expected Behaviors and Outcomes	Beliefs, Knowledge and Core Values
	seeing families through the transition.	stepping back and not interrupting.
<b>7. Play and Learning for all:</b> We recognize and can adjust for each individual child's and adult's cognitive, physical, cultural, and social differences.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When leading an activity, I adapt it to children who are at different levels of expertise or need different entry points.</li> <li>2. When leading an activity, I rephrase instructions to enable visitors with different abilities to understand the task.</li> <li>3. During activities, I help participants monitor progress, noting their accomplishments at different points.</li> <li>4. I adapt activities for children and families who do not speak my language.</li> <li>5. When possible, I use various forms of communication to invite visitors to engage (sight, language, music, smell, touch, movement, etc.).</li> <li>6. I adjust activities up or down so that every visitor can be successful and challenged.</li> <li>7. I am prepared with adaptive materials and strategies to assist visitors with disabilities throughout the museum.</li> <li>8. I use "people-first language" in talking to and about others (e.g. <i>"Girl who uses a wheelchair, rather than "wheelchair girl"</i>).</li> <li>9. If/when I develop an activity or program, I consider children's varied learning styles and needs.</li> <li>10. If/when I train others on an activity or program, I identify multiple entry points and adaptations for visitors with disabilities.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People's intelligence is multifaceted—everyone learns in a variety of ways.</li> <li>• Children understand the world differently at different stages in their lives.</li> <li>• Different children develop and learn differently.</li> <li>• Every child can succeed in our exhibits and programs.</li> <li>• Children and adults use various intelligences to learn.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Making learning visible:</b> We provide opportunities for families to witness and talk about their learning and experiences.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have friendly and informal ways to explain the developmental and educational importance of play to adult caregivers.</li> <li>2. I share my own excitement about children's achievements with everyone in the family including the child and caregiver.</li> <li>3. I can speak knowledgably about the connection between play and learning in the context of each exhibit and program the museum offers.</li> <li>4. I look for ways to showcase learning, for instance through saving and sharing examples or writing down children's words about their process.</li> <li>5. I use conversation to enable adult caregivers to see and appreciate children's learning as well as their important role in that learning.</li> <li>6. I spark conversations among family members, asking questions like "Did you ever do this when you were a child?" "Why do you think your mom is smiling right now?"</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We recognize the developmental issues/learning addressed in exhibits and programs.</li> <li>• Language is an important way in which experience becomes knowledge (processing).</li> <li>• Sharing with parents what their child is learning can offer a new sense of appreciation for their child; investment in an activity or program; and a greater likelihood that the learning will continue at home.</li> </ul>

Standard of Engagement	Expected Behaviors and Outcomes	Beliefs, Knowledge and Core Values
<p><b>9. Extending learning beyond the museum:</b> We engage in strategies that help museum experiences resonate after families leave, providing resources, ideas or inspiration for extending learning beyond the museum visit.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I create personal connections with families, understanding how important this can be to learning.</li> <li>2. I help visitors put words to their experiences.</li> <li>3. I suggest ideas for follow-up activities to visitors that use affordable and available items, especially things they might have in their own homes.</li> <li>4. If/when I develop a program or activity, I look for ways to extend beyond the visit, including take-home products, and intrinsically memorable experiences.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Museum learning is reinforced and extended when it is recalled and shared once families leave (“latent learning”).</li> <li>• Experience is never quite enough—processing is what it’s really all about.</li> <li>• Visitors process experiences to different degrees.</li> <li>• Museum experiences can extend beyond the confines of the visit.</li> <li>• Conversations that start in museums often extend beyond the length of the visit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Reflective practice:</b> We engage in an on-going professional improvement process that includes reflecting on successes and challenges, setting personal goals, and monitoring growth.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I examine and assess my own behaviors and skills.</li> <li>2. I build upon my strengths and seek to improve my weaknesses.</li> <li>3. I know my own personal “style” of engaging with families, and I play to my strengths.</li> <li>4. I am open to constructive feedback from others.</li> <li>5. I am always looking for ways to improve my performance.</li> <li>6. I set goals for professional development and participate in determining the best strategies for my growth.</li> <li>7. I take time each day to evaluate my facilitation and interactions with visitors in light of my goals for myself and the mission of the museum.</li> <li>8. I share my reflections about my performance with my supervisor and ask for help and support.</li> <li>9. I learn and grow from mistakes, misunderstandings or awkward interactions with visitors by assessing what happened and determining how I can improve.</li> <li>10. If I’m in a position to supervise or mentor others, I give them opportunities to reflect on their own performance and to set their own goals.</li> <li>11. If I’m in a position to supervise or mentor others, I ask them how I can best help them grow.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All of us need to take responsibility for our on-going professional development.</li> <li>• A great way to learn what visitors do and need is to watch, record and reflect. We can also survey people.</li> <li>• Each staff person is at a different stage in their growth, but all of us can grow.</li> <li>• Staff are not expected to become “cookie cutter” employees, but rather to know who they are, and be the best they can be based on their own strengths and personality.</li> </ul>

## Staff Profile Tool

The following 7 pages contain the curriculum's **Staff Profile Tool**, a self-assessment tool which is designed to help managers determine the strengths and areas for possible improvement in their staff. The **Staff Profile Tool** provides staff with an opportunity to reflect on their own skills in facilitating family learning; and provides managers and supervisors with data that will help them design training sessions that target the skills that their staff still need to develop.

This tool includes an introductory letter to participant staff—feel free to use your own, more personalized letter in its place. The **Staff Profile Tool** is organized according to the **Standards of Engagement**, and is intended to be completed by staff before engaging in any of the training sessions; then completed again at the end of the year. The two assessments provide points for comparison and evaluation of individual and group growth.



# LEARNING TOGETHER

## Staff Profile Tool

This survey is an opportunity for self-reflection—to consider how you are doing in respect to staff behaviors that relate to family learning in the museum. **This process will be most valuable if you respond truthfully.** Try to let your responses reflect your current reality—which may not be the way you would like it to be. In some cases, your job may not include the behaviors described, or you may not have been trained on them yet—we know that this is sometimes the case, so it won’t reflect poorly on you if you give them a “rarely, if ever” rating. By being honest, you’ll have a way to measure your own progress. Remember, there are no “right or wrong” answers and everyone is an individual with potential for personal and professional growth. You can use the results of this self-assessment to identify areas or expected behaviors where you have opportunities for growth.

The survey is divided into ten sections and has a list of expected behaviors under each “Standard of Engagement”. **Please read each behavior, rank yourself using the provided scale, and note the number in the lined section.** The process will probably take between 20 and 30 minutes, but please don’t rush. Take your time. There is space in each section for you to add any comments you might have—this is optional, but could include any ideas, suggestions or questions you might have.

Your answers to this survey will be kept confidential and will only be used for professional development purposes. The results of this survey will in no way be linked to your job performance assessments, nor will it be part of the information in your Human Resources file.

As we’ve emphasized before, if any part of this survey process makes you uncomfortable or is difficult for you to complete for any reason, PLEASE tell us and we will accommodate you. You may feel free to contact your manager with your questions or concerns.

**When you have completed this survey, please turn it in to your manager.  
THANK YOU!**

Rating System				
5	4	3	2	1
Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Not Very Often	Rarely, if ever

### Standard 1: Ourselves as Invitation

- \_\_\_ a) I interact with caregivers and children from the time they arrive.
- \_\_\_ b) I learn about the programs being offered on the days I work and share information about the content and the age range with visitors.
- \_\_\_ c) To help visitors find fitting and available exhibits, I explain what they are about and who they were designed for.
- \_\_\_ d) My appearance is appropriate for a family audience and clearly identifies me as part of the museum staff.
- \_\_\_ e) I smile and make eye contact with children in order to be friendly and approachable.
- \_\_\_ f) I smile and make eye contact with adults in order to be friendly and approachable.
- \_\_\_ g) I speak directly with adult visitors when they are close by—for instance during programs or when they are watching their child.
- \_\_\_ h) If I don't speak a family's language, I smile, make eye contact, and use gestures to show them they are welcome.

Comments:

### Standard 2: Fun

- \_\_\_ a) I share information with visitors about how to play and have fun in the museum.
- \_\_\_ b) I let visitors take the lead in what they want to do and how they want to do it.
- \_\_\_ c) When conducting programs or standing in an exhibit, I look like I am happy to be there.
- \_\_\_ d) When there's an opportunity to do so, I act playful and/or get messy.
- \_\_\_ e) When appropriate, I use props to invite visitors to approach and play with me.
- \_\_\_ f) I find ways to make activities inviting and engaging---building suspense, adding hoopla, creating excitement.
- \_\_\_ g) When needed, I talk with visitors and suggest activities in that museum that fit their interests.
- \_\_\_ h) I model ways that grown-ups can share in the fun.

Comments:

Rating System				
5	4	3	2	1
Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Not Very Often	Rarely, if ever

Standard 3: Environment as Invitation	
_____	a) When working in an exhibit space, I clean and reset it at least once an hour and more often as needed.
_____	b) I make sure there is seating in programs (chairs, pillows, rugs) so that children and adults can sit near each other.
_____	c) I set up for programs so that the space or table looks inviting (e.g. utilizing elements such as table cloths, achievable sample products, containers for supplies, and signage as available).
_____	d) I make sure program materials are clean, work the way they are supposed to, and are well laid out.
_____	e) Programs for which I am responsible begin at their advertised time.
Comments:	

Standard 4: Nurturing Adult-Child Bond	
_____	a) When facilitating an activity, I'm aware of roles caregivers can play including ways they can support their child's learning, engage in the activity themselves, or actively observe.
_____	b) I directly invite caregivers to participate, and, if they want to, I offer them a variety of ways to do so.
_____	c) When adult caregivers express an opinion or concern, I respond by letting them know they have been heard and I follow up as needed (call in other staff, adjust the activity, etc.)
_____	d) When facilitating an activity, I include information, conversation, and/or humor aimed at adult visitors.
_____	e) I provide just-in-time information to caregivers—tips or ideas that can help caregivers better support children's learning in that moment (e.g., Children who are just learning to use scissors should keep their thumbs up to get a more efficient cut.).
_____	f) I support caregivers when they become separated from their children in the museum.
_____	g) I support caregivers when children are having tantrums.
_____	h) I support caregivers when children have wet or soiled clothing and need assistance.
_____	i) I support families when children are involved in accidents in the museum, recognizing the importance of risk taking for young children.
_____	j) I respect caregivers' decisions about how and when they want to interact with their child.
Comments:	

Rating System				
5	4	3	2	1
Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Not Very Often	Rarely, if ever

Standard 5: Respect for Families' Cultures	
_____	a) I am open and welcoming to all visitors and respect their culture.
_____	b) I speak and act comfortably with persons from all cultural/racial/ethnic groups.
_____	c) I am aware of my own cultural assumptions when observing how families interact within the museum.
_____	d) I modify activities and situations to allow visitors to participate regardless of their cultural beliefs and practices (for instance, turning off music during an activity as requested, providing space for afternoon prayers, etc.).
_____	e) When I see the opportunity, I invite visitors to share first-hand experiences that reflect their culture and background.
_____	f) I listen respectfully and actively to families' opinions of exhibits or programs and share that feedback with colleagues.
_____	g) I respect families' personal space while offering support that can enhance their interactions and activities.
_____	h) When talking with my colleagues, I speak in respectful ways about the actions of visitors from different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
Comments:	

Standard 6: Exemplary Play-Learning Facilitation	
_____	a) I observe visitors interacting before interacting with them.
_____	b) When leading an activity within the museum, I am aware of what prompts, behaviors, hints, and questions will support visitors' play and learning.
_____	c) When leading an activity or program I invite the whole family to participate, often using the word, "together."
_____	d) When in an exhibit in the museum, I talk easily about the learning that can occur through play and have strategies to enable visitors to get the most from the experience.
_____	e) I follow visitors' leads and cues, knowing when and how to intervene to support play, learning, safety and enjoyment.
_____	f) I recognize and make use of teachable moments--times when children are ready for more challenge or to make a connection.
_____	g) I ask open-ended questions that help visitors connect museum experiences to prior knowledge and form new connections.
_____	h) When facilitating an activity, I find ways to ensure that all participants can feel successful.
_____	i) I redirect play when it's unsafe or inappropriate, providing positive alternatives and seeing families through the transition.
Comments:	

Rating System				
5	4	3	2	1
Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Not Very Often	Rarely, if ever

### Standard 7: Play for all

- \_\_\_ a) When leading an activity, I adapt it to children at different levels of expertise or needing different entry points.
- \_\_\_ b) When leading an activity, I rephrase instructions to enable visitors with different abilities to understand the task.
- \_\_\_ c) During activities, I help participants monitor their progress, noting their accomplishments at different points.
- \_\_\_ d) I adapt how I present activities for children and families who do not speak my language.
- \_\_\_ e) When possible, I use various forms of communication to invite visitors to engage (e.g. sight, language, music, smell, touch, movement, etc.).
- \_\_\_ f) If/when I develop an activity or program, I consider children's varied learning styles and needs.
- \_\_\_ g) If/when I train others on an activity or program, I identify multiple entry points and adaptations for visitors with disabilities.
- \_\_\_ h) I adjust activities up or down so that every visitor can be successful and challenged.
- \_\_\_ i) I am prepared with adaptive materials and strategies to assist visitors with disabilities throughout the museum.
- \_\_\_ j) I use "people-first language" in talking to and about others. (e.g. "Girl who uses a wheelchair, rather than "wheelchair girl")

Comments:

### Standard 8: Making Learning Visible

- \_\_\_ a) I have friendly and informal ways to explain the developmental and educational importance of children's play to adult caregivers.
- \_\_\_ b) I share my own excitement about children's achievement with everyone in the family including the child and caregiver.
- \_\_\_ c) I can speak knowledgeably about the connection between play and learning in the context of each exhibit and program the museum offers.
- \_\_\_ d) I look for ways to showcase learning, for instance through saving and sharing examples or writing down children's words about their process.
- \_\_\_ e) I enable adult caregivers to see and appreciate their important role in children's learning.
- \_\_\_ f) I spark conversations among family members or within a visitor group.
- \_\_\_ g) When appropriate, look for opportunities for caregivers to document children's learning, during programs or activities (e.g. for instance by acting as a scribe or reporter).

Comments:

Rating System				
5	4	3	2	1
Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Not Very Often	Rarely, if ever

### Standard 9: Extending Learning Beyond the Museum

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) I create personal connections with families, understanding how important this can be to learning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) I help visitors put words to their experiences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) I am ready to facilitate out-of-the-ordinary programs that are intrinsically memorable: larger than life, surprising, and multi-sensory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d) I engage visitors in conversations about what they do while at the museum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e) I suggest ideas for follow-up activities to visitors that use affordable and available items, especially things they might have in their own homes.

Comments:

### Standard 10: Reflective Practice

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) I assess my own behaviors and skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) I am open to constructive feedback from others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) I am always looking for ways to improve my performance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d) I set goals for professional development and participate in determining the best strategies for my growth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e) I take time each day to evaluate my facilitation and interactions with visitors in light of my role and the museum's mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f) I share my reflections about my performance with my supervisor and ask for help and support.
- \_\_\_\_\_ g) I examine misunderstandings or awkward interactions with visitors and other staff for information about how I can learn and grow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ h) When I am in a position to mentor or support staff and volunteers, I give them opportunities to reflect on their own performance and to set their own goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ i) When I am in a position to mentor or support staff and volunteers, I ask them how I can best help them grow.

Comments:

Additional Comments:

# Learning Together Training Activities

The following pages contain the instructions for the “Learning Together” **Activities**. The activities are the heart of this curriculum—they are a series of tested training sessions designed specifically for staff at museums, and they are organized around the **Standards of Engagement**.

Activities range from a few minutes to multiple sessions; from individual to large group work; and all of them address how staff can best have quality and meaningful interactions with museum visitors. It is important that trainers familiarize themselves with activities before implementing them—each set of instructions includes suggestions and issues that may arise during the session; and on occasion you may need to prepare or find particular materials in advance.

Because no two museums will use this training series in the same manner, the activities are listed according to the primary Standard that they each address, rather than in a suggested order of implementation. See **Getting Started with This Curriculum** following the opening introduction for suggestions that will help you to choose which activities are best for your needs, based on time commitment; preparation required; experience level of your staff and more.



## Ourselves as Invitation

*“We provide inclusive physical and verbal cues that let the visitor know we are approachable and knowledgeable about the museum, its philosophy, exhibits, and programs.”*

As Malcolm Gladwell asserts in his book “Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking”, we make snap judgments of people every day, and faster than you might imagine. Research suggests that assessments of people and situations are often made in 2 seconds, and sometimes instantaneously. So what could that mean for our interactions with visitors? In short it means that our first words, and more likely our first actions or even postures, will signal to our visitors whether they are welcome or not in an exhibit, program or show. The cues that we give to families are the first things that they will notice, and could color the entire experience that follows. A welcoming staff member will invite families in to the experience. A dour or closed-off staff member will send exactly the message you do not wish to send to your visitors: that they are not welcome in that space. This is not to say that every staff member should be cloyingly happy and bubbly. This is not the only manner of invitation, and actually disingenuous cheer can have an effect opposite of that intended. The key to being inviting is to be yourself, be warm, smile when appropriate, and welcome visitors to the space or experience that you are staffing. Remember that body language can say as much as your first words to a family. And remember that especially with child visitors, this may be their first-ever museum experience...and the impression they have of you may be their very first impression of that first experience. So you are setting the bar for them—set it high.

The following activities address how we can be thoughtful about our body language and verbal invitations as we welcome visitors to the museum and its exhibits.

# Welcoming Without Words: Ourselves as Invitation

## Time:

20-30 minutes

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Ourselves as Invitation
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## Learning Objectives:

- Reminder that communication consists of information given through body language as well as spoken words.
- Emphasize that body language and visual cues are the first method of communication with visitors, and that impressions are made about how approachable you are before a single word is even spoken.
- Reflect on the messages your body language sends and how it is perceived by others.

## Materials and Preparation:

- Blank index cards and pens OR **Task Cards** and **Body Language Cards** (below)
- Stopwatch, wristwatch or clock with second hand (many cell phones have stopwatches)

**PREPARATION:** There are two options for creating the **Task Cards** and **Body Language Cards** used in this game. You can print out the pre-made cards found in the *Appendix* at the end of this curriculum and cut along the dotted lines to create a stack of individual cards, and then use them for the game. If possible, print the **Task Cards** and **Body Language Cards** on different-colored paper so that they are easily differentiated. Note that some of these cards have blank spaces for you to personalize them to programs in your museum (ex. “Facilitating the (blank) program”). Or you can hand out 4 blank index cards and pens to each participant and ask them to write two Tasks that they do as part of their job on two cards and emotions or moods on the other cards. You should then collect those cards, keeping them separated as **Task Cards** and **Body Language Cards**, shuffle them and use them for the game.

## **Overview:**

In this improv/charades game, participants will experiment with various cues to emphasize how our overall presentation—including words, tone, body language, posture, gestures, and facial expressions—combine to convey a message to visitors.

## **Instructions:**

1. NOTE: This activity is fun, but it is the discussion afterward that brings the message across. Be certain not to short change this discussion.
2. *Optional Introduction:* As participants enter the room, adopt a mood and convey it through your body language. Act upset, or angry or cheerful, etc. When they have all arrived, ask them what kind of mood they think you are in. What cues from your behavior led them to that assessment? Do they think that body language can often convey our current moods/attitudes?
3. Divide the group into two teams, and have teams sit together. You will need a reasonable amount of space to allow participants to stand in front of the larger group and “act out”. You will serve as judge for this game (see the note below about your role).
4. Tell the group that they will be playing a game with the following rules:
  - a. One team at a time will take turns playing. One person from that team will randomly select a **Task Card** and a **Body Language Card**.
  - b. Once a player has chosen their cards and looked at them, they should hand their cards to the judge, then act out the task and body language from their cards and get their team to guess what was on the cards (e.g., Happy + Greeting Visitors; Angry + Cashiering, etc.). \*\*\*IMPORTANT NOTE – You will serve as judge for this activity. Some of the Task and body language cards are open to allowing “close guesses”—for instance, if someone drew “Inviting + Leading a School Group into the Building” and their team guessed “Welcoming + Guiding a Group”, that is close enough to grant the points. The idea is not that teams guess exact words, but the general MOOD and task being impersonated.
  - c. Players may ONLY use gestures, facial expressions, etc to get their teammates to guess what they are doing. They may not use words, sounds, sign language, etc.
  - d. Teams have 1 minute to guess what their teammate is acting out. If they run out of time, the other team has 10 seconds to guess and try to steal the points.
  - e. Teams can receive 2 points—1 point for correctly guessing the Task, and another point for correctly guessing the emotion/feeling that the actor portrayed.
5. As a warm-up to this game, you could choose an example **Task** and have each person try to express a different emotion or attitude while acting out that task.
6. Take turns playing until you have played a few rounds per team, then break for discussion.

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Spend time discussing the activity and how it relates to museum work:

1. *What do you think the point of this activity is, other than having fun together? How does body language impact our interactions with visitors?*
2. *What kinds of body language might tell a visitor to “stay away”? What kinds of body language are welcoming and inviting to families?*
3. *What kinds of “micro behaviors” make up the overall impressions we give (ex. eye contact, arm position, positioning in relation to the visitor, etc.)?*
4. *Are there ever times when body language that is normally not considered welcoming might be OK? Are there situations in which inviting smiles, etc. might be inappropriate?*
5. *How might VISITORS’ body language give us clues as to how we can best serve them?*

# ***Task Cards***

Cashiering	Greeting Visitors
Cleaning Part of an Exhibit	Facilitating the _____ Program
Taking Tickets	Leading a School Group into the Building
Facilitating the _____ Program	Waiting in an Empty Exhibit
Finding a Lost Child	Setting Up For the _____ Program

# ***Task Cards***

Cashiering	Greeting Visitors
Cleaning Part of an Exhibit	Facilitating the _____ Program
Taking Tickets	Leading a School Group into the Building
Facilitating the _____ Program	Waiting in an Empty Exhibit
Finding a Lost Child	Setting Up For the _____ Program

## ***Body Language Cards***

Happy	Angry
Disinterested	Sad
Inviting	Bored
Rushed	Nervous
Busy	Scared

# ***Body Language Cards***

Happy	Angry
Disinterested	Sad
Inviting	Bored
Rushed	Nervous
Busy	Scared



# So...You Had a Bad Day

## Time:

30-45 minutes

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Ourselves as Invitation
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Reflective Practice

## Learning Objectives:

- Development of strategies to do our best even when we are not feeling at our best.

## Materials and Preparation:

- **Calamity Cards** - Index cards you have prepared with descriptions of unpleasant life events on them (see PREPARATION below)
- Chart paper and markers

**PREPARATION:** Create the **Calamity Cards** by writing a description on each card of a negative life event that staff members may experience. These should cover the range between trivial and traumatic. Some suggestions are:

- You missed the bus in the morning and arrived at work late
- You and your significant other broke up last night
- Your car or bicycle broke down on your way to work
- You just received a bill that you can't afford to pay
- You got a bad ankle sprain from your kickboxing class
- You had an argument with a coworker
- Your favorite team lost the most important game of the year
- Your boss yelled at you for something you did wrong

## Overview:

We all want to do good work, but sometimes we're not feeling up to it—discuss strategies for coping with difficult times and doing our best even when we're not at our best.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Life throws a lot at us all—challenges, successes, distractions, obstacles, etc. We talk a lot about how our visitors are all different, with unique needs and life circumstances. Our staff members are deserving of that same recognition. Conveying the understanding that none of us arrive at work as “blank slates” will present the workplace as supportive and manageable even in tough times; and will further demonstrate that the museum treats its visitors as well as its staff with respect and care. It will also help staff begin to develop strategies to succeed at all times, regardless of what distractions may be dividing their attention. A note on this activity—the conversation can get personal, so try to focus on general strategies rather than personal drama.

## **Instructions:**

1. When staff are gathered together, ask them how their day is going. Tell them that you have a challenge for them, and say *I’m going to pass out some hypothetical scenarios, and I would like you to discuss in teams what strategies you might use to help you do the best work you can at the Museum in spite of dealing with each situation. Remember that it is important that we are welcoming, inviting and engaged with our visitors, even if we’re not feeling at our best.*
2. Divide the participants into teams of 2-4. Pass out 2-3 of the **Calamity Cards** to each team.
3. Ask each team to talk with each other about how they might cope with their selected life events and still manage to do their job well. What strategies might they use? What needs do they have in order to help them do the best work they can in spite of dealing with difficulty? How might we work with a peer who is experiencing any of these difficulties?
4. After 15 minutes or so, when the teams seem to have wrapped up their discussions, ask each team present what they discussed. What strategies came up? What needs? What ideas for supporting other staff?

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Were there any common themes among the suggested coping strategies? Any common needs for staff dealing with difficult times? With whom might we share these strategies and needs? What can the Museum do to help staff do their best work during tough times?*
2. *What behaviors that are critical to us interacting positively with families might be impacted by difficult days? Some examples are being friendly, being ready to play, using open body language, greeting visitors, etc.*

3. *What does this activity suggest for our work with families? What implications might these discussions have for how we interact with and support visitors?*

NOTE: Some of the events listed above are difficult, and some might be easy for us to write off as trivial, with the expectation that people should simply be able to “deal with it”. We all have a range of life events that impact our lives and our psyches. It is important to remember that the focus should be on WHAT a staff member is feeling when they are going through a tough time...not necessarily WHY they are feeling it.

# Starting the Conversation

## **Time:**

30-45 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Ourselves as Invitation
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will develop strategies and tips for engaging families, particularly adult caregivers.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- 100 scrap pieces of paper, large enough to write a full sentence on (about 8.5" X 2")
- Pens
- 10 full sheets of blank paper per participant (*Optional*)

If you have a paper cutter, create your scrap pieces of paper by cutting 1 to 2 inch strips of copy paper. You can also simply tear these pieces of paper.

## **Overview:**

In this activity, participants play a game in which they invent “pick-up lines”—brief introductions that help break the ice when they engage families in conversations.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

When museums hire their staff, they typically search for candidates with experience and skill in working with children. But engaging with adult caregivers is a critical skill, and one that may not come naturally to staff members who are adept at working with kids. Developing basic strategies for engaging adult caregivers in conversation will help ease any uncertainty that might exist regarding how to approach adults. NOTE: stress the importance of observing families before approaching them—if a family is having a lively interaction already, then staff should not disturb them. The strategies elicited below are for families that are not interacting with each other or the exhibits in positive or meaningful ways, and who could engage together better with the help of staff interaction.

## **Instructions:**

1. If using, hand out 10 sheets of paper to each participant and ask them to write, as large as they can, the numbers 1-10 on each piece of paper (1 on one sheet; 2 on another sheet, 3 on another, etc.). These will be their scorecards for this activity. If you'd prefer, you can skip the paper and people can share their scores using their fingers.
2. Hand 5-10 pieces of scrap paper and a pen to each participant. Tell participants: *Talking to adults is an important part of your job. But sometimes, we don't know what to say or how to approach them. We're going to play a game in which you must create "pick-up" lines—ways to approach adult caregivers and start a conversation with them. I will read off a scenario, and each of you will have 1 minute to write down something you would say to the family in order to "break the ice" and approach them. What you write can be humorous, serious...whatever you think is appropriate to the situation. I'll collect each person's pick-up lines, read them all off, and we'll then vote on the best one. We'll then try to guess who wrote the winning pick-up line. You each score points for votes that your pick-up line receives, and for correctly guessing who wrote a line.*
3. Play the game using the following scenarios, and/or make up your own:
  - A mother and a 5 year-old child are at a sand table. The mother is quietly watching her child scoop and pour sand.
  - A father with two children is having a difficult time, as one child is running around in circles screaming and the other is laughing at her.
  - A child is working on a construction project, but is clearly struggling. His mother is standing not too far away, but offering no help.
  - A 4 year-old girl has taken a toy away from another child, who is on the ground crying. The parents look like they are about to have a disagreement over it.
  - A family of 5 tourists have all put on fireman outfits in the dress-up area and are pretending to put out fires together.
  - The line to get into the next show is long and families are getting restless waiting for it to start.
  - A young boy in the toddler area just did something really amazing...but his grandmother missed it because she was looking somewhere else.
  - A toddler has wet her pants and is crying. Her nanny seems a little flustered.
4. After reading the first scenario and collecting the responses, read each one aloud and ask for participants to hold up their score cards to vote for each response. Add up the totals, and keep score. After reading everyone's responses, announce the winner and ask participants to point to who they think wrote it. The winning party should admit it. The winning pick-up line receives 5 points. Guessing the author of the line wins 1 point. Keep people's scores on a separate piece of paper. If you wish to keep playing but you run out of scenarios, ask participants to suggest some. If you prefer to not keep score, you can have a discussion about the responses and how to improve those that need it.
5. After you have played the game, ask participants how they came up with their icebreaking lines. What tips and tricks do they have—*Do you typically use humor? Do you look for ways to compliment the adult or child? What are some other tips for*

*starting conversations with adults visitors?* Keep a running list of these tips, and after each one, ask participants why they think the technique works. Suggested tips include:

## Tips For Breaking the Ice With Adult Caregivers in the Museum:

- ***Just say “hi”***

**Why it Works:** Simplicity is often the best...the most effective icebreaker is a simple hello. Even asking “Have you been to the Museum before” can lead to conversations about how the Museum has changed, what program is happening that day, favorite exhibits, etc.

- ***Give a genuine compliment***

**Why it Works:** Almost everyone loves positive feedback. Flattery gets you everywhere! Pointing out things you notice about their child can also contribute to “making learning visible” for caregivers...“Wow! I have never seen anyone use the blocks in that way before,” or “He’s so focused at building that dam – does he like to build at home?” are examples used by staff from different museums.

- ***Ease a difficult situation with (appropriate) humor***

**Why it Works:** Humor is a great coping mechanism. When people laugh together at uncomfortable or difficult situations, it says “I understand and accept you.”

- ***Focus on commonalities (especially if you have kids too!)***

**Why it Works:** Sharing similarities is the basis for the beginning of many great conversations. And in difficult circumstances, sharing an “I feel your pain” moment can be especially soothing—no one likes to feel like they are going through things alone!

- ***Tie the situation to the “real world”***

**Why it Works:** Grounding an experience in familiar terms can help adults see what role they might play, and will make it easier for them to talk about the activity, program, etc. After all, if you’re talking about something in their lives, you’re talking about something they are experts in!

- ***Snap a photo!***

**Why it Works:** Parents sort of like taking photos...why not use that to help break the ice? If you see a good moment, recognize it and ask the family if they have a camera so you can capture it.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to approach a family but didn't know how? Did this activity give you any ideas for how you might have approached them?*
2. *Are there ever instances in which you should NOT approach families? What clues should you look for that tell you whether you should or should not jump in to a situation?*
3. *Think about your "personal style"—humor, for instance works for some people, but not everyone. Which of the suggested tips might work best for you?*

# Fun

*“We create a playful climate that is conducive to fun—whatever that means to our individual visitors.”*

Play is the work of the child. To some this sounds like a contradiction in terms, or maybe it sounds cliché – but it couldn’t be more true. We too easily assign to children adult expectations of behavior and decorum. And we too easily forget our own childhood, and how it was that we discovered our worlds. What looks at first gloss to some as trivial play is actually a child creating understanding, synaptic connections, and theories about their world and how it works. The most salient memories in our lives, as children or as adults, are typically those in which we are actively engaged in some pursuit, pastime or interest. It is the active moments in life that create our memories and, especially for children, our understanding.

This is why museums can be such a powerful part of children’s lives. Engaging experiences with real objects, materials and activities are a diminishing presence in children’s lives. So much is virtual that the “real” is starting to feel like the poor stepchild of experience. Open opportunities to play and to investigate their world is a critical component of a child’s developing understanding, and providing those opportunities is something that museums do better than almost anyone.

Encouraging children to actively play may seem at odds with the mission of your institution. It may be inappropriate for children to be active and boisterous, particularly if the subject matter of your organization is of a serious nature. But you may have noticed that when children visit, they will engage in playful behaviors whether you invite them to or not. It is in their nature, it is in their DNA and it is perfectly natural. There are ways in which you can leverage that need in children to actively explore their world. Have your docents carry around with them an evocative object (or even a common one) that will allow children to have a tactile experience in a setting that does not encourage such investigation. If you are in an art or cultural museum, for example, your floor staff might choose a favorite displayed item and each carry with them a material that is a part of or is reminiscent of the piece. Maybe a favorite painting shows a Paiute family and a staff member can hand to children a piece of deerskin or beadwork similar to the woman’s dress in the painting. Or maybe a staff member can hold a piece of marble as they engage with visitors around a compelling sculpture, and children can touch the material that the sculpture is made of, even if they cannot touch the work itself. Now you are inviting children to actively engage—ask them what the marble feels like. How do they think an artist might have made this sculpture out of such a hard material? Where else have they seen marble before? If they were to make a sculpture, what material would they use? What would they sculpt? This is a much more interesting and captivating conversation for a child than a dry recitation of the life and tribulations of a long-gone artist.



The point is that children don't just want to be active...they need to be active. And yes, play is fun. It is supposed to be. But don't let the fun fool you—there is some serious thought happening there, and providing opportunities for children to have fun with your subject matter will invite them to enjoy the content that you would like them to appreciate and understand.

The following activities address how you can invite your visitors to have fun in the museum...and how your staff can provide a playful atmosphere for families. And remember—"fun" is not about being goofy all the time. Fun experiences are simply genuine and engaging. Your staff should be the same.

# Kids Rule! Adults Rule!

## Time:

30-40 minutes

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Fun
- Ourselves as Invitation

## Learning Objectives:

- Staff will explore individual differences regarding what is considered fun and how that changes over time.

## Materials and Preparation:

- Large empty room
- Tokens or Place Markers (such as post-it notes, cardboard squares, etc.—anything that can be placed on the floor to delineate spots for people to stand on or near)—one per participant

## Overview:

Participants will play a game that highlights what we consider to be fun as adults, and what we used to think was fun when we were children.

## Instructions:

1. As participants enter the room, hand out the place markers, one to each person. When everyone is there, tell them:  
*Today we're going to play a game to explore how fun differs from individual to individual. It also changes over time. Choice is important to fun, so it's up to you whether you want to play and you can join or quit at anytime. If you want to play, please form a circle, standing on a place marker. You may know this game, called "Everyone Who." Today we're going to add a twist. We're going to play the game both as we are now, and as we remember being as kids.*
2. **Adults Rule: What's Fun for Us Now?**  
Everyone should form a circle and put a place marker at their feet. You (the facilitator) should stand in the middle of the circle with your hands on your hips and call out, **Adults Rule**. Name an activity you like to do now. (It has to be true), starting with the phrase

*Everyone who likes to...* Everyone who agrees with you has to cross the circle and find a new marker. For instance, if you call out *Adults Rule!* *Everyone who likes to sing*, all the participants who also like to sing have to run to the middle of the circle and then find a new place marker to stand at (meanwhile you would find yourself a place marker).

### **Kids Rule: Comparing What was Fun for Us as Children**

Explain that you can switch to **Kids Rule** at any time, by pumping a fist and calling out, **Kids Rule!** *The game is the same but we all need to name things we liked to do as a kid. It can include things you still like to do, or things you no longer like to do.*

#### Examples:

**Kids Rule:** Pump your fist and call out *Kids Rule!* *Everyone who liked to play in the sandbox.*

**Adults Rule:** Hands on hips, call out *Adults Rule!* *Everyone who likes to read movie magazines.*

3. Play several rounds to ensure that everyone has at least one turn.
4. Some museums have even played this game with visitors, to great effect. If appropriate, try this yourselves, having your floor staff lead the game with families.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *What does this game tell us about our staff?* Sample responses may include:
  - *The kid in us is still alive and well.*
  - *We've changed over time.*
  - *We're different from each other in terms of what we enjoy.*
  - *We're also the same in many ways.*
2. *What does it tell us about visitors to our museum?* Sample responses may include:
  - *Adults and children need different things to do, or ways to be, during their visit.*
  - *They'll enjoy some of the same things, too.*
  - *Not everything is for everyone.*
3. *Why is choice so important to learning in our setting?* Sample responses may include:
  - *Having a choice about what you do impacts the energy with which you do it.*
  - *Different things will interest different people.*
  - *People may know more about activities and topics that interest them.*

# Finding Your Own Play Style – Alter Egos

## **Time:**

10-30 minutes with staff as a group; 30-45 minutes of individual time during staff's work day (optional)

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Fun
- Ourselves as Invitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Participants will reflect on their individual play style and may develop a playful persona to enhance how they interact with visitors.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

All materials are optional. See "Background for the Facilitator" for notes.

- Arts & crafts supplies (ex. paper, markers, scissors, yarn, fabric, sequins, glitter, glue)
- Costume elements (old clothes, hats, boas, capes, etc.)
- Props (puppets, wands, guitar, plastic banana, giant flowers, etc.)
- Nametags
- Camera and printer (optional)

## **Overview:**

Staff explore their individual play style and reflect on how they prefer to interact with visitors.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

The key piece to this activity is that staff members think about their style of playing/interacting with visitors, and that they hear from their peers about the range of play styles in the group. We all have our own ways of interacting, and these methods should reflect who we are. But we can also learn new ways of being and playing, and grow in our interaction styles.

There are two parts to this activity: the first is a discussion among your staff about their own play styles. The second is an invitation to create costumes, accoutrements or other "wearable" elements that enhance/announce their play style. This part of the activity is optional – some museums encourage this kind of dressing up, while other museums may have dress policies

that make such elements difficult to incorporate. This dress up part can be fun, but the discussion and consequent reflection is the key piece to the activity.

The creation of wearable elements can take place when staff have time—perhaps when they are floating on a less busy day or during an hour that has been set aside to create and record their “alter ego”. Some staff may need more time or coaching to figure out what their play alter ego might be.

## **Instructions:**

### **PART 1 – Identifying Your Alter Ego (10-30 minutes with staff together as a group)**

1. Tell staff that today you would like them to think about how they play with children in the museum. What is their “play style”? Are they silly or serious (or somewhere in between)? Are they talkative or more quiet? Tell them:  
*We are going to be creating play “alter egos” to utilize when we are working with visitors. These are personas that you can show to visitors through a few costume elements or they can even just be a part of your manner of interaction with visitors. Your alter ego can enhance your interaction and play with visitors, but it doesn’t have to be wild and wacky. It can be quiet, sweet and/or sensitive—it’s just your special (and personalized) way of finding a playful connection.*
2. Encourage staff to spend some time thinking about what their alter ego will be. You may want to have staff brainstorm with a partner to help identify some ideas. An alter ego is a character or personality that is comfortable and fun to become.

To help identify their alter egos, staff might consider the following questions:

- What is your “fun style”?
- How does this fit with the museum’s emphasis on playfulness?
- How do you incorporate your fun style into your daily interactions on the floor?
- How do you think children will react to your alter ego? Family members?
- How can you use your alter ego to facilitate play and learning with the whole family?

### **PART 2 – Creating Your Alter Ego**

3. After staff spend 10-15 minutes coming up with an idea for their alter egos, you can now ask them to bring them to life.

**\*\*Note to facilitator:** Co-workers can be assigned to work in pairs to help each other create and draw/photograph their alter egos. Gather together as many materials as you can, such as those listed above, to make this easier.

4. Tell staff: *Take any of the materials that I've brought that you think you will need. They'll be in my office for the next few days—over the next few days, when you have some time, create a fun name tag that reflects your playful alter ego, including a nick name and self-portrait. The self-portrait can include any alter ego props (cape, crown, wand, ears, etc.) to go along with the name. Play nicknames should reflect your personal “fun style”. You can also create an alter ego costume, using the materials provided.*

Some example alter ego names from staff in the past include:

- Miss Chievous
- Wild Man
- The Puppet
- Senor Complimento

5. Staff can either draw their own self-portraits or have a photograph taken anywhere in the museum with their costumes. Tell them: *Your new alter ego nametag can be displayed alongside your usual museum badge.*

### **PART 3 – Test Driving Your Alter Ego**

6. Once their alter egos are created, staff should feel free to try them out with visitors. They can either wear their whole costume or just their name tag while they're out on the floor. Encourage them to think about how it impacts their interactions with visitors, including both children and adult caregivers.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

After everyone has created their alter egos (it may take a few days), find a time when you are all together so you can reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *How does either wearing or channeling a “play alter ego” impact facilitation? How do you feel about being in that costume/role? Does it change how you interact with museum visitors? Does it change how visitors interact with you? Does it enhance the fun for children and families? Does it seem to inhibit the fun for anyone? How do you adjust when that happens?*
2. Remind staff that alter-egos are flexible. *Your play alter ego is a tool to bring out your playfulness. You can change it depending on the situation and how you're feeling.*

# Fun Enhancers Vs. Fun Spoilers

## **Time:**

30 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Fun
- Environment as Invitation
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will generate ideas on how to enhance fun and identify behaviors that may inhibit fun.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Paper and pens
- Chart paper
- Markers

## **Overview:**

Staff discuss elements of an exhibit, program or interaction that might enhance the fun a family is having, and elements that might spoil that fun.

## **Instructions:**

1. Hand out paper and pens to each participant, and ask them to think about memories they have of fun experiences. Have them write down some memories they have of fun:
  - As a child
  - As an adult
  - At the museum
2. Ask them to take a moment, turn and talk with a neighbor and share at least one of these memories.
3. Divide the group into teams of 2-3. Each team should create two columns on a sheet of paper. In the first column, teams should create a list of ***Fun Enhancers***. These are

environmental or interpersonal elements that encourage fun. In the second column, they should create a list of **Fun Spoilers**.

- On a piece of chart paper, create a large **Fun Enhancers** and **Fun Spoilers** chart. Ask teams to share their lists—you should record what they say on the large chart. If you feel there is an important concept to add and discuss, you can add some items. Some enhancers and spoilers that have been suggested in the past include:

Fun Enhancers	Fun Spoilers
Getting to choose what to do	Grumpy people (with arms crossed, no smile, rude responses)
Having fun yourself	Not having a choice about what to do
Being interested in the topic	Know it alls, condescending
Learning about yourself	Feeling overwhelmed
Feeling a personal connection	Being physically uncomfortable or tired
Being surprised/“Aha” moment	Not having materials
Finding an achievable challenge	Broken components
Having a sense of success/confidence	Not understanding
Working/playing or talking together	Being sure you’ll fail/failing
Feeling proud of yourself	Feeling isolated
Having a positive feeling	Feeling forced to participate
Laughing	Being told you are wrong/scolded
Competition	Feeling embarrassed
Prior Knowledge	Competition

- You may see some elements that fall into both categories. Ask participants why they think this might be. Is it possible that these elements are sometimes fun and sometimes not?

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

- Did “competition” come up? Was it listed as a fun enhancer, a fun spoiler or both? What about “surprise”? Or “being the center of attention”?*
- Smiling is a universal sign of fun. Frowning or looking confused can mean that people are not having fun. What are other signs to watch for to assess whether children and adults are having fun? What do you do when part of the group seems to be having fun and part of the group is not?*
- While failing can be a fun spoiler, it is also an important part of learning. What can we do to support efforts to try new things and to make approximations?*



## Environment as Invitation

*“We create and maintain a physical environment that is comfortable and engaging for both children and adults.”*

Just as with “Ourselves as Invitation”, people will make split-second assessments of the museum environment as they visit it. The exhibit space, placement of seating and signage, availability of materials and more will signal to families whether it is a space that they wish to visit or not. Some of these elements are beyond the control of front-line staff interacting with visitors. But there are some things that can be done to make each space in the museum as enticing as possible for families of all stripes and leanings. The following activities address how you can be thoughtful about the environments you present to visitors, and how you might augment those spaces in the museum that are not currently as inviting as you might like them to be.

# Hot Spots and Cold Spots: Where Are Families Engaging?

## **Time:**

1-2 hours

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Environment as Invitation
- Fun

## **Learning Objectives:**

To investigate areas of the museum which encourage or discourage positive family engagement; and to analyze what characteristics are supporting that engagement.

## **Materials:**

- Post-It Notes
- List of guiding questions (included here) for each participant
- Clip boards, paper and pens
- Chart paper

## **Overview:**

As a group, you will explore what areas of the museum are conducive to family engagement based on your experience. Each participant will identify:

**Hot Spots**—places where whole families are often seen engaging together

**Cold Spots**—places where families are rarely seen engaging together

**Neutral Spots**—places where some engagement is occurring, but more is possible

## **Instructions:**

1. Pair participants up in teams of 2. Explain that they're going to spend 15 minutes finding places in the museum they think are particularly hot or cold. This time will be used to not only look for family engagement, but also to help them think about their past experiences with families in the exhibits. Each team should have a clipboard, paper and a pen.

***Suggested Instructions:*** If you believe that the exhibit/component/activity is great for family interaction then list it on your paper as a “Hot Spot”. If you believe that the exhibit/component/activity is not a great place for family interactions then list it as a “Cold Spot”. “Neutral Spots” are those that lie somewhere in the middle, or exhibits/exhibit pieces that you and your teammate have judged differently.

2. Provide each participant with a sheet of paper with the following guiding questions:

**HOT SPOTS**

- Where are families having fun here? What activity are they engaged in?
- How are adults and children interacting?
- What makes this fun for families?

**COLD SPOTS**

- What sorts of behaviors do you wish you would see here?
- What makes this a hard spot for families to have fun together?
- What, if anything, can you think of to warm this spot up—make it easier for families to have fun?

Before they spread out, ensure that the group knows when to return with their assessments of the exhibits.

3. **ALTERNATE INSTRUCTIONS**—If you have access to the museum while it is closed to the public, this activity can be done as a “tour”. Send each participant out with red (hot) and blue (cold) Post-It notes, and ask them to “tag” exhibits and exhibit components. You can then take the entire group on a tour of these tags, and discuss exhibits and their assessments together.

4. **Discussing the Results**

Post up a sheet of chart paper with the heading “Hot”, one with the heading “Cold” and one “Neutral”. After everyone has returned from their assessments, have teams list each exhibit, exhibit component, program or area of the museum that they assessed on a Post-It note; one exhibit, area, etc. per note. Ask teams to stick their Post-Its on the appropriate chart paper so that everyone’s “Hots” are together, etc. Once everyone has posted their assessments, ask them to share what they posted and why. Be prepared to take notes about what is being shared—this can be very valuable information both for your team and for other teams in your museum. Use the guiding questions (above) to begin the

conversation. Ask staff to talk about what they have seen families doing in the assessed exhibits. If two or more teams have picked the same spot, they can both share their impressions and insights into what makes the area a hot or cold spot for family engagement. Write notes or ask someone in the group to take on this task.

**Possible explanations for what makes an area cold or hot:**

***Hot Spots***

- Easy concept for families to understand
- Lots of roles so the whole family is engaged
- Has instructions and/or pictures of what families can do
- Activity allows parallel play
- Open-ended activity with no right/wrong answer
- Design of table encourages interaction—i.e. round
- Activity requires more than one person

***Cold Spots***

- Children don't stay long enough for families to engage
  - Activity is too easy to require collaboration
  - Placement of chairs—parents are removed from activity
  - Adults don't fit—component is too small for most adults
  - Area is too messy or disorganized
  - Component is unpleasant for adults
  - Activity is too hard—children get discouraged
5. Brainstorm ways to warm up some of the colder spots:
- What can we as museum educators do to make this area more engaging for families?
  - Are there any simple things our exhibits team could do to make this area more conducive to family engagement?

- Are there any issues we want to communicate to other staff in the museum—both positive and negative?

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Spend time discussing what you learned and how to move forward:

1. *Were there any surprises? Were some areas listed as both hot and cold? Why?*
2. *What does this activity tell us about our exhibits and programs?*
3. *What are things we can do to create more “hot spots”? (Examples follow)*
  - a. *Sharing the results of our tour*
  - b. *Talking with the exhibits department about an area that could be redesigned*
  - c. *Ensuring that we have adult-sized materials and aprons*
  - d. *Bringing out seating*
  - e. *Ensuring that areas of the museum are reset and cleaned regularly*

Create a plan that includes next steps to take. Talk about who can do what, and try to set a timeline so that the tour is not just an exercise, but a way to start communication and improve systems.

# It's the Little Things: Maintaining a Learning Environment

## **Time:**

This activity takes place over multiple days. Approximately 15 minutes is required for an introduction, 1 hour for each participating staff person and/or volunteer during the day, plus 30 minutes to debrief as a group at a later time.

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Environment as Invitation
- Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond
- Reflective Practice

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To recognize how maintenance of exhibit environments contributes to family learning.
- To note features of the environment that can be impacted by the care staff take in maintaining them.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Chart paper and marker (prepared as described in “Instructions”)
- Index cards
- A pen for each participant

This activity is best done on a busy day with a schedule that allows each staff person or volunteer to observe for at least one hour

## **Overview:**

During the day, each staff person takes turns “going on rounds”—walking around the museum to identify environmental cues that encourage or discourage family interaction. The activity is introduced at morning meeting by brainstorming what might encourage or discourage an adult or child visitor to play, then debriefed at a later meeting.

## **Instructions:**

### **PART 1 (15 minutes)**

1. At your morning meeting, explain that they will be taking turns examining the environment of your museum and how it is being used by families. Put up a piece of chart paper and divide it into three columns.  
What can we do?                      How does it impact kids?                      How does it impact adults?
2. Refer to the generated list and ask participants *What are things about the environment that we can change?* Call attention to items on the list that you (or that they) think are particularly important/relevant. Discuss their role in maintaining the environment and in reporting problems. Discuss if and how they feel this role impacts the visitor experience.
3. Explain that each of them is going to have a chance today to go on rounds—to walk around the museum to examine the exhibits and to watch what visitors are doing. *How are families playing together? Where are you seeing adults playing comfortably with children?* Remind them how important adult-child collaborative play is to learning. Tell participants that they'll each have a set of index cards on which to jot down their observations both about people and about the area itself.
4. Distribute the cards and have everyone write the names of each exhibit and/or programming space they will all be observing. Explain that they will need to jot down at least one observation about the environment in each exhibit. Impress upon them that the idea is not to simply be critical or complementary, but to honestly assess what is working and what is not, and to gain more perspective about the museum environment. Ask the group, *What are some things you think you might see?* Encourage them to include the following kinds of observations in their "rounds" (this list is simply for illustrative purposes...generate your own list with them, specific to your museum):
  - a. Materials that are nicely sorted
  - b. Signs that are missing
  - c. Packaging on the floor
  - d. Dust along the floor boards
  - e. Rugs that are out of place
  - f. Strollers blocking exhibit components
  - g. Chairs supplied for visitors doing a program
5. Encourage everyone to sign up for "rounds" on the daily schedule, or schedule their observations for them. This can happen when staff are "floating" or during time designated for this purpose. Inform staff that they will have 1 hour to observe, so they should pace themselves in order to examine all the exhibits. When they are done, they can give their notes to the daily supervisor or keep their notes until the end of the day.

### **PART 2 (30 minutes to an hour depending on the size of your museum)**

6. Ensure that each staff person and/or volunteer has time to complete this task. NOTE: This activity can take place over several days if you have part time staff on flexible schedules.

Encourage them to think of themselves as visitors from another museum or a “secret shopper”—someone who is taking an objective look at how the museum looks and runs.

7. Discourage the observers from recording any other staff members’ names, or even what time they are observing in a specific space. The goal is not to call attention to individuals, but to call attention to practice in an effort to raise the bar for everyone.

### **Debrief and Connect (30 minutes):**

At the end of the day, collect everyone’s observations for each exhibit and program space (or set-up). Consolidate these observations by typing them into one document, grouping observations from the same exhibit or program together. Note comments or observations that are made multiple times or that need to be addressed immediately.

NOTE: Try to schedule the following discussion during a time that allows as many participants as possible to participate (for instance during a staff training or morning meeting if time allows).

Distribute this information to everyone, ensuring that no one’s comments are connected to any individual, either as author or as the person responsible for an area at the time of the observation.

Go through each of the areas, giving the participants time to read the comments. When there are anecdotes about visitors and how they interacted, read these aloud and talk about how their behavior might connect to the environment. Below are some questions to guide the discussion:

1. *What elements of these exhibits can we control (ex. cleanliness; materials; seating available; etc.)? How do these elements impact how families interact with the materials or with each other?*
2. *What are the unique challenges or needs of this particular exhibit in terms of your role?*
  - a. *Are there trends here in terms of what we’re seeing?*
  - b. *What are some strategies for improving how this exhibit space is used?*
3. *Having discussed all the exhibit and program spaces, what is predictable, surprising, interesting. What information is most useful to our team? What information needs to be passed along to other teams (for instance exhibits or marketing)?*
4. *How useful has this exercise been in understanding your role?*



# Signs That Reveal: Communicating the Point

## Time:

1 hour

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Environment as Invitation
- Play and Learning for All
- Making Learning Visible

## Learning Objectives:

- Deepen staff's understanding of the purpose of activities they do regularly.
- To converse about a familiar activity, unpacking where it may not be legible to visitors as well as the kinds of learning the activity can support.
- Create a sign to communicate what an activity is and the learning that can occur to variety of visitors.

## Materials:

- One copy of the ***"Signs That Reveal"*** handout (below) for each group
- Plans and materials for selected activities
- Large paper for drawing signs and writing notes
- OPTIONAL - Color print-outs of photographs of visitors involved in programs that staff commonly facilitate. Aim for pictures that show children and caregivers deeply involved in the activities as well as of staff facilitating in an active way. (if you don't have capacity for this, staff can simply describe photos they would like on their signs; and/or create drawings)
- Paper the size of the signs that are planned.
- Glue sticks
- Rulers and/or other straight edges
- Pencils and erasers
- Markers
- Scissors

## **Overview:**

Following an introductory discussion, teams of 3 to 5 persons create a sign to clarify what a program is and what can be learned by participating.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Creating a sign together can be an authentic reason to have a deeper conversation about programs—allowing staff to consider how to make a program more inviting and legible as well as helping caregivers understand the learning that is occurring. If you have done this activity before and/or have signs that can serve as examples, that can be extremely helpful.

## **Instructions:**

### **Part 1 (10 minutes)**

1. Explain to participants that they are going to create signs to accompany activities that are implemented on a regular basis. If possible, you might even offer to review the signs they create and then send them on to the museum's graphics department. These signs could then become signs that facilitators can bring out with the activity, to both help visitors understand what the activity is and to help caregivers understand its value. Do not make this offer without first consulting with your exhibits and then your graphics department.
2. Work through an example as a group, using a familiar program. Start two large pieces of chart paper on which to keep notes. Ask:
  - a. *How would you describe this program?*
    - i. *What is the activity about? How does it work?*
    - ii. *What would help visitors understand this program easily?*
    - iii. *What are ways adults support children's learning and participation?*
  - b. *Why is this valuable?*
    - i. *What's the point of this activity?*
    - ii. *What are the developmental areas that might be impacted?*
      1. *Motor?*
      2. *Cognitive?*
      3. *Language?*
      4. *Social?*
      5. *Emotional?*
    - iii. *What kinds of things are visitors thinking and saying while they're engaged in this activity?*
3. Take notes and then ask the group to share how to use this information:
  - a. *What makes a strong sign?*
  - b. *How can we limit the amount of text?*
  - c. *What are ways to guide visitors who don't speak English?*
  - d. *What are guidelines to keep in mind?*

## **Part 2 (40 minutes)**

4. Divide the participants into teams of 2-3. If applicable, consider having people on each team who are familiar with the activity as well as who are familiar with children's development.
5. Allow participants to select among the activities for which you have pictures and materials. Give them 30 to 40 minutes to work together using the *"Signs That Reveal"* handout before choosing pictures and adding text. Each team should produce a sketch of their layout and a mock-up of the sign (at least 11" by 18"). On that mock up they can indicate how they'd like pictures resized and/or if they feel additional photos would improve the sign.
6. Provide an opportunity for each team to share their sign and discuss any challenges they faced while designing it. If you will be reproducing the sign, write down the names of everyone on each team for future reference.

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion, such as:

- *Do all of the Museum's programs and activities have clear goals? Are any easier to determine and are any difficult?*
- *What role do signs typically play in our museum?*
- *Did the process of creating these signs make you think differently in any way about any of our programs?*

## **IF YOU CHOOSE TO REPRODUCE THE CREATED SIGNS:**

After you have a chance to review the signs and note any issues or missing elements, meet with the team that created it. Talk about other documentation they would like to collect. Ask them to help with remediating the sign and discuss changes you are considering. Share the timeline for submitting their sign to the graphics department and the process at your museum. Ask the graphics department to create a prototype so the signs can be field tested—with input collected by participating staff—before the signs are mounted.

# Signs That Reveal

1. Each team selects a program they would like to focus on. Pick one you know and find interesting. First come, first served!
2. Work through the program together. How hard is this program for visitors to understand? How can we make it clearer to visitors who don't speak English? Does this program have steps—how can these be made clear? What are ways to make the program immediately legible to visitors?
3. Consider how this activity works for children at different ages and with different abilities. How can you adjust it for their different entry points?
4. Think about the four areas of developmental: **Motor, Cognitive, Language, and Social/Emotional**. What might children be doing and saying that fits into these areas?
5. What is the play and learning connection for this program? What could a two year-old learn? How about an eight year-old? What are ways to reveal—to illuminate—this learning to families?
6. Plan a sign to support and illuminate the learning that can occur through this program:
  - a. Using words (be sparse)
    - i. Visitors' words—What kinds of quotes would help?
    - ii. Your words
  - b. Using pictures, either singly or in a series
    - i. Pictures we have
    - ii. Pictures we need (focus on behaviors you typically see during this program)
  - c. Using products visitors have made
    - i. Partially finished products
    - ii. Products that show the process
    - iii. Products that model different levels of skill and/or development
7. Create a sketch of the layout. Note documentation, including photographs, you hope to add. What kinds of typical behaviors would they show?
8. Create a mock-up of your sign. Discuss how to gather any additional documentation.

## Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond

*“We support adult caregivers in their chosen role, which may include play partners, observers, learners, or mentors.”*

Countless studies highlight the importance of adult-child interactions in learning environments—a child who benefits from interactions with an adult caregiver will be more engaged in learning, and adult-child interaction has been tied to positive cognitive and language development. What is important to note is that “interaction” covers a range of ways that adult caregivers might engage with their children. It is common for educators to think of one type of interaction as the “best” type—this is typically idealized as direct and enthusiastic play with a child. But recent studies into supportive adult-child interactions suggest that there are many ways that adults can be supportive and encouraging of their child’s learning, and not all of these techniques look the way we might expect.

It is also important for museum staff to understand the world of the adult caregiver. A family’s needs extend well beyond the fun and engaging learning experiences they might have at the museum. Young children especially create demands on a caregiver’s time and energy—snacks, naps, diaper changes, tantrums, conflicts with other children are all a part of a child’s life. And the maneuvers that a family needs to go through just to get themselves organized, collected, and to the museum can often leave them exhausted before they even get to their first exhibit. A staff that understands all of this will be better prepared to interact with families in thoughtful and understanding ways. This will lead to happier visitors, and happier visitors will have better and more resonant experiences.

Adults likely represent at least 50% of your audience...even if you are a children’s museum. Keep that in mind when you think about how you are serving families. Adults should be engaged too—they will then be that much more likely to be your ally in providing positive experiences for their children. And one more note: families are more than just parents and children. Family units can have as their caregivers aunts, uncles, grandparents, godparents, cousins, older siblings and more. Treat every group that comes to engage together as a family, and respect the role that the caregiver is playing. Invite those caregivers to engage with their children in whatever manner they are most comfortable with, remembering that parenting and caregiving styles are not for us to dictate, but rather to support.

The following activities delve into the different roles and behaviors that adult caregivers assume in the museum, and how front line staff can be supportive of caregivers as they engage with their children.

# A Trip to the Museum: How Hard Can It Be?

## **Time:**

30-45 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond
- Respect for Families' Cultures
- Ourselves as Invitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

To understand how difficult it can be for caregivers to simply get children to the museum, and why caregivers must refuel sometimes.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Printed ***Family Pit Stop Cards*** (found in the *Appendix* at the end of these materials)
- 4 rulers (the rulers **MUST** have a flat side – wooden rulers work best)
- 120 pennies or small washers (more if working with more than 12 participants)
- Cups to hold pennies – one for each team
- Chart paper and markers

## **Overview:**

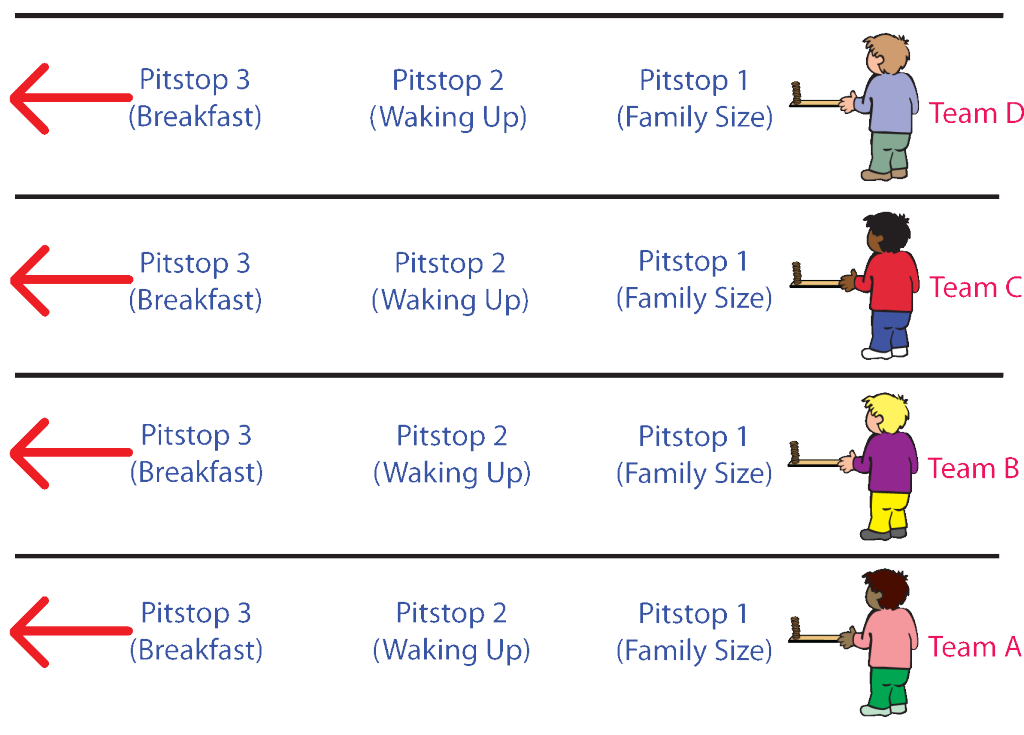
Participants will put themselves in the shoes of families trying to get to the Museum for a visit, and discover all of the challenges and pitfalls along the way.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

It is easy to judge parents and caregivers who arrive tired, frazzled or frustrated to the museum. Our visitors are not blank slates—it is often quite an ordeal packing up the family and getting them anywhere. Frontline staff at museums are often young, and may not have children of their own...so it is difficult for them to empathize with caregivers. By giving them an opportunity to experience (albeit analogously) the oft-treacherous world of the parent, we can help staff to better understand the world of their audience.

## **Instructions:**

1. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** This activity has been tested with several different materials, and with different team sizes. It is strongly suggested that you follow the instructions as written and do not substitute materials, particularly the pennies and rulers. The challenge has to be difficult, but not impossible...if it's too easy, participants will breeze through it and miss the point. If it is too hard, they will be frustrated. The pennies and rulers offer that balance.
2. Print out the **Family Pit Stop Cards** (see *Appendix* at the end of these materials). You will need to cut each card out individually. Laminating these cards can be helpful, especially if you plan on repeating this activity in future trainings.
3. Set up the room—a long room is best, since teams will be engaged in a “relay race”. The room needs to be long enough to accommodate at least 8 stations, and wide enough for 4 teams. Laying tape along the floor to create lanes is also helpful. You will have 4 lanes (Team A, Team B, Team C and Team D). For each team, lay their 8 **Family Pit Stop Cards** in their lane, evenly distributed with at least 3 full strides in between each Pit Stop. Make sure that the “Your Family” cards are first, and the “Lost Child” cards are at the very end of each team’s lane. You may tape the “Lost Child” cards to the wall at the end of each lane:



4. Divide participants into 4 teams of 2-5 (3-4 is ideal; anything more than 5 is too large). If you have more than 12 participants, you should create 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, etc. teams. You will then need new sets of cards (it is OK if there are two Team A's, etc.), extra lanes, and more pennies—each team needs exactly 30 pennies.
5. The challenge to this activity is for one team member to make it through all of the “Pitstops”, carrying stacked pennies on a ruler. Each Pit Stop will have a **Family Pit Stop Card** that details what each team’s “family” had to deal with while waking up, eating

breakfast, heading to the Museum, etc. At each Pit Stop, participants will be asked to stack more pennies onto their ruler, and occasionally to accomplish some task...still balancing those pennies. The very first Pit Stop card will detail what size family each team has. As they travel down the lane reading the Pit Stop cards, teams will advance through the “morning” all in an effort to achieve the final goal...making it with their families to the Museum.

6. While not necessary, you might choose to preface this activity with some introduction about what parents experience in their everyday lives before arriving at the museum. If you have any parents among your staff, they could identify themselves as such and share their experiences; or non-parent staff could share their experiences as caregivers (as babysitters, aunts or uncles, older siblings, etc.).
7. To start the game, distribute one ruler and one cup with 30 pennies to each team. One person should be designated as the ruler holder; one person as the penny stacker and challenge reader. If there are three team members, the stacking and reading tasks can be split up.
8. Some rules:
  - a. One person is in charge of holding the ruler with the balanced pennies. All other teammates are in charge of stacking pennies and reading the **Family Pit Stop Cards**.
  - b. Pennies must be stacked IN ONE STACK. They must also be within the last 3 inches of the ruler.
  - c. Ruler holders can only use one hand, and must hold the ruler at the opposite end of the pennies.
  - d. Any teammate may reposition the pennies at any time, but the ruler holder may not walk while the pennies are being touched.
  - e. All team members must be together—no sneaking ahead to see the next challenge.
  - f. Pit Stop Card readers must read the entire card aloud to their teammates.
  - g. If at any time a team drops their pennies, they must go back to the previous Pitstop, stack all the pennies back on the ruler and accomplish any required tasks again.
  - h. The first team to finish all tasks wins!

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Collect all of the **Family Pit Stop Cards** and ask teams to bring them to the discussion. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Aside from having fun, what was the point of this activity? Were any of the challenges familiar or eye-opening to you? Read off some of your favorite or most surprising **Pit Stop Cards**. Have you ever thought about all of the things that adult caregivers must accomplish just to get to the Museum?*
2. *What does this activity suggest for our interactions with families? How is it similar to what families must do...balance tasks and responsibilities, stay on track, persevere, etc.?*



3. *Have you ever seen a parent or caregiver “taking it easy”, and judged them for not interacting with their kids in the manner you thought they should? What role might rest play for parents and caregivers? How can it be seen as a positive behavior? How can we be supportive of caregivers that had a rough time getting to the Museum?*
4. Ask participants to brainstorm a list of other tasks, challenges, etc. that parents might encounter on their way to getting to the Museum. Are there any they have encountered themselves or that people they know have encountered?
5. This activity may lead to a discussion about “parent-bashing”. It is not uncommon for staff members who have worked with adult caregivers all day to lose patience and perspective. If you have ever encountered your staff parent-bashing, this is a great opportunity to address that directly.

# Parenting in Public

## Time:

40 minutes

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## Learning Objectives:

- Staff will recognize common challenging behaviors children exhibit and learn strategies to assist parents in dealing with them.

## Materials and Preparation:

- Handout, “*Helping Caregivers with Challenging Behaviors*” (below)
- Pens
- Chart paper and markers
- OPTIONAL—TV and DVD player or Computer and projector; Video clips of challenging behaviors

## Overview:

A discussion of “challenging” behaviors exhibited by children in the Museum and how staff can support caregivers as their children exhibit these behaviors.

## Instructions:

1. Tell participants:  
*At various stages of development, children exhibit behaviors that may embarrass the parents, trouble the staff, or disturb other visitors. Believe it or not, many of these behaviors have a developmental purpose. Still, visitors are not likely to think about the developmental gain when their 2 year-old is having a tantrum in the middle of the floor. As staff, we want to put them at ease as much as possible and to support them as they deal with the behavior.*
2. Ask participants to give you examples of challenging behavior they have seen in the Museum. Record the examples on a piece of chart paper. OPTIONAL—instead of having staff list these behaviors, you can show video clips of behaviors in your museum. This will require that you film these behaviors ahead of time. Be certain that you go through the proper steps for film and photo releases for any filmed visitors.

3. Discuss the examples. Ask participants some of these questions:
  - *Did this behavior surprise you?*
  - *What might have triggered the behavior?*
  - *Is this behavior more typical of children at a particular age or stage?* NOTE: Starting at age 1 ½, children start exhibiting temper tantrums. Ever heard the term “terrible twos”? That term directly stems from this stage, between 1 ½ and 3, when children are most likely to exhibit tantrums. 3-5 year-olds begin to develop mechanisms and abilities that lessen the frequency of these outbursts, though they still do occur in children at these ages as well.
  - *What might the caregiver have been feeling?*
  - *What level of anxiety did the caregiver exhibit?*
  - *How did the caregiver react?*
  - *Did the caregiver’s reaction help calm or exacerbate the situation?*
  - *Can you tell the difference between an experienced caregiver and an inexperienced one by how he reacts?*
  - *What kind of developmental issues might children be trying to come to terms with when they throw tantrums, hit, bite or refuse to share?*
  - *Might there be cultural factors that are important to take into account?*
  - *What was your reaction to the behavior and why?*
  - *What assumptions did you make about this child and this caregiver?*
  - *Can you think of ways you might have helped the caregiver in this situation?*
4. Distribute the Handout, **Helping Caregivers with Challenging Behaviors**. You will notice that some boxes in the “How Staff Can Assist Caregivers” column are empty, and most have only one or two suggestions. Ask participants to work in small teams of 3-5, and to list additional strategies that staff might use to come to a caregiver’s aid in each situation.
5. Back in the large group, have teams share the strategies they discussed.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Were there any new supportive strategies you learned today?*
2. *Have you ever seen a child that was having a difficult time and judged that child or their adult caregivers? What are some factors that might have contributed to that child’s behavior?*

## Helping Caregivers with Challenging Behaviors

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton reminds us that “any impulsive behavior such as biting or hurting is frightening to a child... these start out as normal exploratory behavior, but when adults overreact or disregard the behavior the child will repeat the behavior as if to say, “I am out of control. Help me!” (Touchpoints, Ages 3 to 6: Your Child’s Emotional and Behavioral Development. T. Berry Brazelton and Joshua D. Sparrow. 2001.).

Tips for Caregivers	How Staff Can Assist Caregivers
<b>Temper Tantrums</b>	
Be aware of the stresses on a child and intervene before the child loses control (e.g. thirsty, hungry, over-stimulated, tired, etc.). Get them the food or water they need, or find a quiet place. Offer a simple choice: “Would you like crackers or pretzels for your snack today?”	Let family know where quiet places, water fountains, and snacks are in the museum.
Try distracting your child. Lead her to a different activity or do something totally unexpected. Sing an operatic song, whisper a secret, check on the squirrels outside the window.	Use a prop to distract the child and invite her into an activity.
Don’t try to reason with your child in the middle of a tantrum. Make sure he is safe and can’t hurt himself. You can stand quietly nearby, having told him that you are here and that you know he is upset. You can try to hold him if that is possible. Or take your child to a quiet place and give him a chance to calm down.	Move any furniture that they might hurt themselves on; provide the adult with a chair.  Suggest a quiet place the parent could take them to. If the child can’t be moved, try to redirect other museum visitors.
Develop techniques that are soothing to your child such as holding, soft singing, or bring an item from home that is a comfort object.	
Keep in mind that yelling at your child or punishing her for her tantrums will make her frightened of expressing her feelings. When it has run its course, hug her and say “I’m so glad you’re feeling better now.”	Give parent positive feedback on his patient handling of the tantrum. “You showed remarkable patience and understanding.”
Give them positive feedback when you see them working hard to master their frustrations and not have a tantrum or act out their aggression.	
<b>Hitting or Biting</b>	
Stay calm. Be certain that your facial expression and tone of voice are firm and clear that this behavior will not be tolerated. Say, “It is not ok to bite”.	Comfort the victim, so that the caregiver can deal with their child.
Stop the child from the behavior and tell them that you will stop them until they learn to stop themselves.	
It is important that you not lose control by yelling	

or hitting, as the child will feel you are also out of control.	
Teach them to comfort the victim.	
If the child has been having trouble with biting or hitting in a group situation, give them a strategy to use if they feel the urge, and remind them of this before coming into the museum or social settings.	
<b>Sharing</b>	
Children that are 1 or 2 have trouble sharing. Try to divert their attention to something else. Children that are 3 or 4 are still working on the concept and will more readily share with a friend than with a stranger.	Find something that might divert attention. If there is a duplicate of that toy or object in the space, bring it over.
Help young children understand the concept. Model sharing and taking turns. If your child grabs someone's toy, explain to your child that the other child was using it and ask if they would like to have a turn when the child is done with the toy, and that for now, they should give it back.	Bring something else to the child and say that you are willing to share this other object with him while he waits for his turn.  Let the adult know that it is typical for children of this age to have trouble sharing. All of us who work here can attest to this!
If your child is older and refuses to share, explain that you might need to move on to a different exhibit.	Explain to the older child that in the museum he must share because he has to teach all the younger children how.
<b>Leaving the Museum</b>	
Prepare yourself for leaving before you tell your child to get ready to go.	
Tell your child in advance that you will be leaving and offer a choice of last activities. "We will be leaving in 5 minutes. Would you like to go on the slide one more time, or finish playing with the train before we go?"	
Acknowledge your child's feelings about wanting to stay. "I know that when you are having fun it is hard to leave. But we have to go now."	
Develop a good-bye routine. Say good-bye to the staff and other friends you've played with in the exhibit. Put the train on the track or the shopping cart in the corner. Go out through the climbing structure or ride down in the elevator.	Say good-bye to the child and add, "Come back soon—we will have some special things for you to do next time you visit!"
Talk about all the things you'll do and see after you leave the museum (look at the water, feed the pigeons, have a picnic).	
Remind the child that her favorite things will be waiting for her when she returns.	

# Caregivers: What Are They Up To?

## **Time:**

1 hour

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Nurturing Adult-Child Bond
- Respect for Families' Cultures

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Deepen understanding of the diversity of responsibilities that caregivers maintain during their visit to the museum.
- Increase acceptance and appreciation of caregivers' roles and behaviors.

## **Materials:**

- "Caregiver Behaviors in the Museum" chart (below) – copies for teams of 2 participants
- Paper and pen for each group

## **Overview:**

Small group activity to identify the prevalence of specific caregiver behaviors within the museum and the benefits of each. This activity tasks staff with acting as field researchers, observing adult caregivers in their "natural environment" (out in the Museum), then reporting back what behaviors they observed. These observations are then categorized using a research-based list of caregiver behaviors.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Young staff may not be aware of the stresses on families or for caregivers' needs in the museum, including their need to relax.

## **Instructions:**

1. Welcome staff, and tell them that the Museum is engaged in some critical research about a well-known but often misunderstood species—the adult

caregiver. Tell them: *These caregivers are sometimes parents, sometimes other family members, sometimes nannies or teachers...but all of them exhibit certain behaviors when visiting the Museum, and we would like to better understand these behaviors. Today you serve as field researchers, and your subject is these adult caregivers. You will go out into the wilds of the museum in pairs, armed only with your clipboard and pen, and observe these caregivers in their natural environment. Record everything you see these caregivers doing, even if it seems minor or trivial, and do not assign any judgment about whether you think a behavior is good or bad. Focus on only 1 or 2 caregivers at a time and make sure to be thorough in your recoding and observation*

2. Divide the group into teams of 2 (there can be one team of 3 if the numbers are odd) and ask them to return after 20 minutes of observation.
3. When they have returned, ask teams to share their impressions. Was there anything that surprised them? Anything they expected to see but didn't?
4. Hand each team a copy of the blank "Caregiver Behaviors in the Museum" sheet. Ask them to review the categories, and record in the "Examples in Our Museum" column each of the behaviors that they saw adult caregivers engaging in. If there are any behaviors that they observed that they feel do not fit in any Caregiver Behavior category, have them make a note of that behavior for discussion later with the larger group.
5. When the "Examples in Our Museum" column is completed, ask teams to fill in the "Value or Benefit" column for each of the behaviors.
6. Have teams share their observations with each other, with one team at a time reading what they observed and the benefits of each behavior.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

1. Ask participants if there were any observed behaviors that they had trouble categorizing. Have other participants weigh in on where those behaviors might fit.
2. Ask participants what they thought about the "Refueling" category. *What kinds of judgments do staff sometimes make when they see caregivers "taking it easy"? What benefits does refueling have for adults? For children?*
3. *Were there any behaviors that were perceived as having NO value or benefit, or even as being detrimental? What is the staff members' role when observing these behaviors?*
4. Ask participants if this exercise confirmed what they already thought about caregivers' roles in the museum or if it changed their minds in some way. *Was any of this surprising to you? Does it change how you feel about caregivers' behaviors?*
5. Discuss the fact that these roles are played by caregivers, but can also be played by staff members as well. Talk about issues with managing this overlap. *When you step in, do caregivers sometimes step back, letting you take the lead? What is a way to invite the caregiver to participate, too?*
6. Refer to the "Caregiver Behaviors: Research-based Descriptions (for the facilitator)" sheet (below) for research-based examples of these caregiver behaviors as observed in museums across the country.

## Caregiver Behaviors in the Museum

Caregiver Behavior	Examples in Our Museum	Value or Benefit
<b>Player</b> <i>(jumping in and playing with their child)</i>		
<b>Student (of the child)</b> <i>(watching their child to study his/her development)</i>		
<b>Co-Learner</b> <i>(learning from their child or their experience together)</i>		
<b>Interpreter</b> <i>(guiding their child's learning and experience; teaching)</i>		
<b>Facilitator</b> <i>(setting up the exhibit and/or manipulating the exhibit environment to optimize the experience)</i>		
<b>Supervisor</b> <i>(managing behavior)</i>		
<b>Refueler</b> <i>(recharging, resting, taking a break)</i>		



## Caregiver Behaviors: Research-based Descriptions (for the facilitator)

Caregiver Behavior	Looks Like	Value or Benefit
<b>Player</b> ( <i>jumping in and playing with their child</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing actively with child</li> <li>• Sharing lead with child</li> <li>• Having fun – sometimes playing on their own</li> <li>• Doing what child wants to do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Adult-child bond</li> <li>• Connections to home</li> <li>• Fun</li> </ul>
<b>Student (of the child)</b> ( <i>watching their child to study his/her development</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughtfully observing child at play</li> <li>• Appreciating child's work</li> <li>• Thinking about child's developmental needs</li> <li>• Talks to other parents about their kids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult-child bond</li> <li>• Better understanding of child and child's needs/abilities</li> <li>• Appreciation of child</li> </ul>
<b>Co-Learner</b> ( <i>learning from their child or their experience together</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning skill from child</li> <li>• Being reminded of concepts or skills they may have forgotten</li> <li>• Relying on child's thinking to stimulate their own thinking</li> <li>• Asks child for help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult-child bond</li> <li>• Appreciation of child</li> <li>• Connections to home</li> <li>• Boost to child's self-confidence</li> </ul>
<b>Interpreter</b> ( <i>guiding their child's learning and experience; teaching</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving praise or encouragement</li> <li>• Narrating the activity (intentional talk)</li> <li>• Explaining a concept</li> <li>• Giving verbal instructions</li> <li>• Asking or answering questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More positive experience for child</li> <li>• Child more likely to learn concepts and skills</li> <li>• Adult-child bond</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitator</b> ( <i>setting up the exhibit and/or manipulating the exhibit environment to optimize the experience</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulating parts of the exhibit to give child cues</li> <li>• Setting up or modifying the environment for their child</li> <li>• Modeling how to accomplish a task</li> <li>• Smiling/nodding/using hand gestures to reinforce behavior</li> <li>• Moving closer to child to let them know they are available</li> <li>• Lifting child up to make it easier to access exhibit components</li> <li>• Encouraging children to use their skills to meet a challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimized experiences in exhibits</li> <li>• Adult-child bond</li> </ul>
<b>Supervisor</b> ( <i>managing behavior</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining careful watch over their child, monitoring interactions with others; their child's frustration, safety, mood, hunger, bodily functions, etc.</li> <li>• Removes child from perceived unsafe situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child is safe</li> <li>• Child learns how to interact with others</li> <li>• Child is comfortable</li> </ul>
<b>Refueler</b> ( <i>recharging so they can accomplish all above behaviors</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resting</li> <li>• Taking time for themselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregiver is comfortable and relaxed, and therefore better able to play, teach, care for and guide their child</li> </ul>

# Adult Roles in Collaborative Play

## **Time:**

30-40 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond
- Respect for Families' Cultures

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will understand the different roles caregivers play when interacting with children and develop strategies to support these positive adult roles.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Handout:
  - *"Caregiver Roles in Family Learning"* (2 pages)
- Chart paper and markers
- Pens or pencils

## **Overview:**

This activity focuses on the roles that adult caregivers assume during collaborative play with their children; and how staff can help support these roles.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Children and families come to the museum for many reasons. During their time at the museum, caregivers choose different approaches to facilitate playful family learning. It is important for staff to understand the various adult roles and learn how and when they might assist in family play and learning.

## **Instructions:**

1. Give each staff member a copy of *"Caregiver Roles in Family Learning"* and ask them to review the roles. In teams of 2 or 3, ask them to fill in at least one example for each role that they have observed in their work with families. ALTERNATIVELY—ask staff to go

out into the museum for 20-30 minutes and observe adult caregivers, looking for examples of each role.

2. On a piece of chart paper, create a table listing the 6 Caregiver Roles from the ***“Caregiver Roles in Family Learning”*** chart in one column, and a second column titled ***“Supportive Techniques”***. Ask participants to consider each role, and brainstorm ways in which they can support caregivers in each of these roles. Fill in the chart as you go.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *What is the value of each of these roles as they relate to family learning?*
2. *Select one example or scenario from the chart and ask: What would be different about the family learning if the caregiver had played a different role?*
3. *Have you as staff played some of these roles? Have you ever modeled a role and seen an adult caregiver adopt the same role with their child?*
4. *Do some exhibits or activities in your museum seem to demand certain roles of caregivers? What are some examples?*
5. *Are there some supportive behaviors by staff that seem to work for many of the adult caregiver roles? Are some supportive behaviors unique to specific roles?*

## Caregiver Roles in Family Learning

Caregiver Roles	Examples and supportive techniques
<p><b><u>Player</u></b>            Adult gives the child undivided attention and plays actively and on an equal basis with the child. Examples of this kind of play include tea parties, playing school, building something, parallel golf ball races.</p>	<p><b><u>Examples</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>Supportive techniques</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Student (of the Child)</u></b>            Adult thoughtfully observes their child at play, and thinks about their child's developmental needs and/or notes progress. Adult talks to other adults about what their child is doing (ex: He loves this part; she always does it that way; he has trouble sharing; he likes to think up new ways of doing things.) Adult plans for making connections or extending the experience after the visit. This role is most easily determined through an interview.</p>	<p><b><u>Examples</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>Supportive techniques</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Co-Learner</u></b>            While playing with the child, adult is reminded of concepts or skills he/she may have forgotten. Adult works collaboratively with the child to solve a problem, relying in part on the child's own thinking to stimulate their own thinking. Adult asks the child for help to accomplish a task or to figure something out.</p>	<p><b><u>Examples</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>Supportive techniques</u></b></p>

<p><b><u>Interpreter</u></b>          Adult gives praise or encouragement, narrates the activity, explains a concept, gives verbal instructions and/or asks/answers questions. Adult is ready to offer “just in time” help for the child to explore on own. The adult may give some instruction or demonstration but does not do the activity for the child. The adult is present but not overbearing, does not complete the project or activity for child.</p>	<p><b><u>Examples</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>Supportive techniques</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Facilitator</u></b>          Adult physically manipulates a part of the exhibit to cue the child to next step; sets up or modifies the environment to make it easier for the child; or models for the child how to accomplish a task or do an activity. Adult smiles at child or nods to reinforce that he or she is using the exhibit components in appropriate ways, and uses hand gestures to encourage child to persist and keep going. Adult moves physically closer to the child to let him or her know they are available, if needed. Adult lifts child up to make it easier to reach exhibit components.</p>	<p><b><u>Examples</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>Supportive techniques</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Supervisor</u></b>          Adult maintains careful watch over child to secure his/her safety (close physical proximity, eyes on the child, looks around cautiously). Adult monitors child’s interactions with others, intervening to solve conflict (especially regarding turn taking or sharing). Adult monitors and controls child’s frustration. Adult removes child from exhibit due to crowding or perceived safety concerns.</p>	<p><b><u>Examples</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>Supportive techniques</u></b></p>

# Parenting Styles: Stick Together or See You Later?

## **Time:**

30 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond
- Respect for Families' Cultures
- Reflective Practice

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To sensitize staff to how our expectations of what caregivers should do in the museum are connected to our own upbringing.
- To recognize that there are a variety of appropriate roles caregivers can play in an informal learning setting.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Create two 2-sided signs that can be put up on the wall with masking tape:
  - **SIGN 1** should say "Stick Together" on one side, and "Adults Lead" on the other side.
  - **SIGN 2** should say "See You Later" on one side, and "Kids Lead" on the other side.

Before the first exercise, place the two signs up showing the sides "Stick Together" and "See You Later" on opposite ends of a wall, far enough apart from each other that all participants can line themselves up.

## **Overview:**

Participants will reflect upon how their parents or caregivers behaved in certain situations, and will then think about how they behave or will choose to behave with their own children.

## **Instructions:**

1. Explain to participants that today they are going to be thinking back to early experiences they had with their families. Point to the two signs that you've put up ("Stick Together"

and “See You Later”), and share that you’d like them to think back to their own childhoods and how their parents behaved in different settings: Ask the participants, *Did your parents expect you all to stick together? Or did they let you go off on your own?*

2. Ask everyone to stand up. Tell participants that you will list a series of settings or scenarios that families might encounter. Each participant should think back to when they were a child, then find a position on the wall that characterizes how strict their parents were about the family sticking together in that setting, or how willing they were to allow everyone to explore on their own. The wall between the signs should be seen as a spectrum—people don’t have to be at one extreme or the other, rather they can be anywhere in between. Tell participants that if any of the settings or scenarios were things they didn’t do as a child, they should make their best guess about how their family might have chosen to explore together. After you have shared all of the scenarios and people have lined up on the spectrum for each of them, turn each of the signs over so they now read “Adults Lead” and “Kids Lead”. Re-read each of the scenarios/settings and ask participants to move along the spectrum if these new criteria change where they are standing.

Suggested Scenarios:

- a. Park
  - b. Art museum
  - c. Children’s museum
  - d. Family barbecue
  - e. Weekend day at home
3. Have the group sit down and ask them what they think influenced their caregivers’ expectations. As the group reflects, highlight the following concepts:
    - a. Size of family
    - b. Age of children
    - c. Cultural differences
    - d. Security issues
    - e. How they were raised
    - f. Personality differences
  4. Ask participants to share how their caregivers’ expectations influence their own. Even if participants don’t have children, ask them to imagine how they’d like to parent in the future. Do they think they’ll be similar to their own parents, or different?

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. Reflect on the diversity among the participants (or lack of diversity):

- a. *Is there a range among us as colleagues, or are we more or less alike?*
- b. *What might that say about us?*

Ask them if there are other spectrums that could be used to describe caregivers: strict/lenient, playful/serious, loves to teach/hates to teach, etc. (You might ask participants to raise their fingers—1 through 10—to indicate how their caregivers might rank on these dimensions, as well.)

- 2. Tie this back to the museum:
  - a. *How do you think the way that each of us was raised impacts what we expect from caregivers who visit our museum?*
  - b. *Do we see a range of attitudes among parents at our museum?*

Explain that one of the goals of this activity is to help staff find ways to support caregivers in whatever their parenting style.



# Putting the Family Back In Family Programs

## **Time:**

30-45 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Nurturing Adult-Child Bond
- Environment as Invitation
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Play and Learning for All

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Explore strategies to increase family involvement, reflection and processing.

## **Materials:**

- “Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement” chart (below) – 1 copy for each team of 2 participants
- “10 Tips for Increasing Family Involvement” (below) – 1 for each team
- Paper and pen for each group
- Chart paper and markers

## **Overview:**

Participants will identify strategies to increase family involvement, reflection and processing based on the variety of roles that caregivers assume during a visit to the Museum.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

This activity is best done after they have been introduced to the caregiver roles in the chart below. The activities “Adult Roles in Collaborative Play” and “Caregivers – What are They Up To?” both touch upon these roles.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask participants to brainstorm a list of their top strategies for increasing family involvement, reflection and processing.
2. Divide the group into teams of 2 and distribute the “Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement” chart to each team. Ask them to fill out the chart by considering how they might support family engagement, reflection and processing in ways that allow adult caregivers to still maintain the roles they are comfortable in. Each team should select one exhibit or program to use as a context for this support across all of the caregiver roles.
3. When teams are finished, ask them to share with each other what they came up with.
4. Distribute the “10 Tips for Increasing Family Involvement” (below). These are suggested tips, rather than a definitive list. Do any of the strategies that participants came up with when filling out the “Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement” chart align with these suggested tips? Are there any new strategies not on this list of tips?

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Were any of the suggested tips new or surprising to you? Which have you tried before and which would you like to try?*
2. *Are there ways that you might improve family involvement simply by manipulating the exhibit or program Environment?*
3. *What clues tell you when you should step in and interact directly with families, and when it might be best to not interrupt?*

## Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement

Caregiver Behavior	Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement, Reflection and Processing
<b>Player</b> <i>(jumping in and playing with their child)</i>	
<b>Student (of the child)</b> <i>(watching their child to study his/her development)</i>	
<b>Co-Learner</b> <i>(learning from their child or their experience together)</i>	
<b>Interpreter</b> <i>(guiding their child's learning and experience; teaching)</i>	
<b>Facilitator</b> <i>(setting up the exhibit and/or manipulating the exhibit environment to optimize the experience)</i>	
<b>Supervisor</b> <i>(managing behavior)</i>	
<b>Refueler</b> <i>(recharging, resting, taking a break)</i>	

## **10 Tips for Increasing Family Involvement**

1. Provide opportunities for caregivers and children to work as teams.
2. Assign roles to caregivers, especially something they know they can perform.
3. Be direct—say things like “You can do this together”; and “Here is a role you can play”.
4. Observe first! Invite, don’t intrude. Let people approach you. Always consider the timing of your invitation, and look for group “surface tension”.
5. Inject some humor or an interesting fact/information targeting the adult caregiver.
6. Be playful! When you model playful behavior, adults are often likely to join in.
7. Vary content and modalities—such variation provides opportunities for ALL types of children to learn, contribute and succeed. Lots of different programs about lots of different things done in lots of different ways will integrate many of the child’s senses and appeal to a variety of learning styles...in children as well as adults.
8. Allow caregivers opportunities to show off their talents.
9. Provide comfortable amenities—especially places to sit.
10. Be memorable—no easy task, but if an experience is memorable in personal or flashy ways, families are likely to talk about it long after their visit is over.

## Respect for Families' Cultures

*"We employ an array of skills as we interact with families from a variety of backgrounds, needs and styles."*

A quick inventory of your local communities will likely yield some interesting and unexpected results. We live in a highly diverse country, and our urban communities especially reflect a growing diversity. Most museums aim to serve a culturally diverse population, but often default to one style of teaching and interacting. A better understanding of who your visitors are and the different values that they bring to the museum will help you to better serve and communicate with your audience. And a reflection on how you can serve all different kinds of visitors—those who are similar to and those who are different from your front line staff—will lead to more welcoming and more positive interactions with your visitors.

Despite the diversity that your visitors might bring, they certainly have at least one universal need, and that is to be treated respectfully and with understanding. The following activities begin to touch upon how you might better serve a wide range of visitors. The conversations that result will help you develop an even broader understanding of how to best work with everyone who walks through your doors, and how to provide a welcoming environment for families of all cultures and creeds.

# Who ARE Our Visitors?

## **Time:**

15-20 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Respect for Families' Cultures

## **Learning Objectives:**

- A greater awareness of the diversity of the Museum's visitors.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Demographics of your city or town (see below), especially the top 10 ethnic groups

This activity requires some legwork on your part. The best place to start is with any data that your museum has generated through demographic surveys, collection of ZIP codes, etc. While this is likely to be VERY basic information, and geographic rather than demographic, it is a good start to know what communities your visitors are coming from.

The next place to look is the U.S. Census Bureau. Keep in mind that these numbers can sometimes be up to 10 years old, but they will give you a good idea of who lives in your area:

<http://www.census.gov/>

When visiting this site, choose a city and state through the Population Finder, then select "Fact Sheet" from the menu. You may wish to choose "Fact Sheet for a Race, Ethnic or Ancestry Group" for more detailed information. For a quick set of facts use this link: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>.

Many other sites exist that detail new immigrants, such as the Migration Policy Institute at <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/>.

For more detailed information about your area, you can contact your city or town government. Many cities have good information on its constituents – for example, in Boston, the Office of New Bostonians offers a wealth of information on new immigrant populations and the countries they come from. You can also often find good data through the public school system. Some of the more interesting data may not be the top 10 ethnicities in your area, but the top 5 GROWING populations. From what countries are the highest numbers of new immigrants to your area coming? What does that tell you about what groups you should be targeting in the future?

## **Overview:**

A closer look at the population of the city and towns that surround the Museum.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Part of respecting families' cultures rests in knowing a little more about them—especially who they are and what cultures they represent. Every museum hopes to reach a diverse audience and to serve its visiting population respectfully. Often, a closer look at the demographics of our home area can cause us not only to reflect on who is visiting us, but who is not...and how we can change that.

Once you have gathered the necessary data, there are many ways that you can utilize them. Anything from a detailed “Quiz Show” style game, to a much more simple “Did you know?” reading of the numbers can all be instructive for your staff and can lead to interesting conversations. The following activity is a suggestion for a very basic use of what you have found. It is by no means the best way to present these data—every museum should decide how they wish to conduct this discussion. Conversations about ethnicities and immigration are rife with potential sensitivities, but they can also lead to meaningful conversations and thought about who you serve and why.

## **Instructions:**

1. In a large font (36 or higher), print out the ethnic groups you have found that represent the top 5 or top 10 ethnicities in your area. In the same font, print out the percentage of population that matches each group. Cut each of these groups and percentages into individual pieces of paper. Challenge the group of participants to place the groups in order from highest percentage of the local population to lowest and to assign the percentages to them. You can do the same for cities and towns that visit the museum most frequently.
2. Reveal the actual percentages and discuss.

## **Debrief and Connect (10 minutes):**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Are you surprised by any of these numbers?*
2. *Have you seen this breakdown of who lives in our area reflected in our visitorship? If not, why do you think we have not attracted a more diverse visitorship? What can we do to remedy that?*
3. *Does knowing a little more about who lives in our area make you think differently about how we interact with our visitors, or what exhibits and programs we provide?*
4. *What other information might you like to know about our city or town?*

# What Kind of Parent Would I Be?

## **Time:**

20 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Respect For Families' Cultures

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Gain an understanding of different parenting styles and explore our own expectations of parents.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- 2 pieces of chart paper and a marker
- A room with space for people to line up and move around

Write, in large letters, the word "DIRECTIVE" on one piece of chart paper; and the word "PERMISSIVE" on the other. Place them on the wall, as far apart from each other as you can.

## **Overview:**

This activity explores the range of parenting styles that exist or might exist in a group of people, and leads to a discussion about the parenting styles of the museum's visitors.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask participants if they considered their parents to be directive (meaning the parent was in charge and set very strict rules); permissive (meaning their parents gave them free reign to mostly do as they pleased), or somewhere in between. Did those parenting styles have any impact on how they choose to parent, or on how they think they will choose to parent their children when and if they have them?
2. Point out the two pieces of chart paper you have placed on the wall. Tell participants:  
*Parenting styles differ along a continuum from directive to permissive. Let's explore where we stand as parents or where we think we will stand whenever we become parents. I will read a statement, and you should go stand along the wall at the place on our imaginary continuum between permissive and directive that reflects your parenting style. Base your decision on how YOU parent your children or on how you think you will parent your children, if you have them:*



- We have arrived at the museum, and my 7 year-old children have asked to head off by themselves.
  - I am engaging with my child in an activity, and she is struggling a little.
  - There is a climbing structure at this museum, and my 5 year-old wants to climb in and zoom away.
  - Looks like the museum has brought out a water play activity—there is a small baby pool outside with cups, spoons and basters. My child is sure to get wet.
  - It's only 11:00 and I'm not hungry, but my child wants to stop for lunch.
  - My 4 year-old is throwing a tantrum.
  - We're in the gift shop and I promised my child one item. He chose the \$90 giant stuffed tiger.
  - My 5 year-old child is having fun in an exhibit and my 8 year-old wants to leave.
  - My 3 year-old has climbed into the sand table.
  - My 6 year-old is running up and down the hallway.
  - My daughter wants to push the baby's stroller.
  - I'm tired and want to leave, but my children are not very happy about it when I suggest we go.
  - My 7 year-old wants to buy some earrings from the gift shop and go get her ears pierced after the museum visit.
  - My 9 year-old has removed his socks and shoes and tossed them in my direction.
3. Ask participants to make up their own scenarios and have participants continue to position themselves along the wall accordingly.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Are there other parenting attributes that we should think about, beyond the continuum of directive and permissive?*
2. *For those of you who are parents, what did you learn about yourself in doing this exercise? For those of you who aren't parents?*
3. *What kind of parents do you see in the Museum? Is there a right way or a wrong way to parent?*
4. *Is there a parenting style that is troubling to you? If so, what are some ways you can be effective interacting with that family?*

# Building Understanding

## **Time:**

45 minutes – 1 hour

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Respect for Families' Cultures
- Play and Learning for All
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Development of a foundational appreciation for the museum's diverse visitors and how we can strive to treat each of them with equal respect.
- Individual and group reflection on the level of equity and respect in our interactions with all visitors.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

*Note: The following materials are for a suggested activity that serves as the context for this exercise. You may choose to do a different activity, but make sure it meets these important criteria: 1) The participants have never done the activity before; and 2) There are a sufficient number of "rules" and constraints that they must follow, allowing you some leeway in how you interact with participants. If you choose a different activity, you will need to create your own activity sheets instead of using those that follow these instructions.*

- **Season Nametags**
  - Prepare nametags (or index cards) with the words "Winter", "Spring", "Summer" and "Fall" written on them. There should be enough nametags so that each participant has one and at least two participants are in each season.
- Recycled copy paper, 150-200 sheets (no need to count)
- A few sheets of cardstock paper (8.5" X 11")
- Masking tape, 4 rolls
- Markers
- Scissors
- Heavy washers or nails or half-liter bottles filled with water, etc. to use as weight
- 4 coffee cans or quart-sized containers for holding the weight when testing the bridges
- Chart paper

- Several books and/or boxes. You will need enough for 4 teams to create 2 “riverbanks” at least 6 inches high, across which teams will build their bridges. Tables or chairs can suffice if boxes or books are not available.
- Large nametag that says “Building Inspector” (cardstock and string work well), hung around the neck of one of the presenters
- 10 #64 rubber bands or several sets of mittens (optional)

**PREPARATION:** Create 4 boxes or bags labeled Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Each box will have slightly different materials:

- **Winter** – Lots of paper (50 sheets or more), 2 rolls of masking tape, scissors, washers or nails or filled water bottles, 1 coffee can, markers.
- **Spring** – 20-30 sheets of paper, 1 roll of masking tape, scissors, washers or nails or filled water bottles, 1 coffee can.
- **Summer** – 20-30 sheets of paper, 1 roll of masking tape, scissors, washers or nails or filled water bottles, 1 coffee can.
- **Fall** – 10 sheets of paper, scissors, washers or nails or filled water bottles, 1 coffee can.

Print out a copy of each of the instruction sheets for Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall (below). You will hand those instructions out to each team once they are ready to begin.

### **Overview:**

This immersive activity provides a context for discussions about treating museum visitors fairly and respectfully, regardless of who they are; and offers a glimpse into what it might be like to be treated differently.

### **Background for the Facilitator:**

The most critical part of this activity is the discussion that follows it. If done well (and thoughtfully), this is a very powerful experience and it engenders some fantastic discussions. Make sure you leave plenty of time for people to debrief.

In this activity, teams will be challenged to build a bridge...but not every team is created equally. Do not let participants know what the goal is, what they are building, etc. The less information you give them at the outset, the more effective the message will be.

This activity will require some acting on your part – you will treat each team differently in your interactions with them. Do not tell any of the teams what these differences are...simply treat them differently (these descriptions will make more sense once you have read the instructions):

- The **Winter** team is a group of “haves”...give them anything they ask for, let them bend the rules (they can use extra paper, all the tape they want, their bridges can touch the “water” or be taped to the “riverbanks”, etc.), give them hints on how to accomplish the task, etc.
- The **Spring** team is a group with some sort of disability – it is suggested that you ask them to accomplish the task with their thumbs held tight to their hands with thick rubber bands; or that they must all wear mittens; or that they can each use only one hand (and that hand must be their non-dominant hand). You may also invent some other impediment, but be careful not to choose something extremely difficult (like blindfolding them), and that you take care to not offend. You may speak with this team occasionally, and once in a while you should step in and say “let me do that for you”, and accomplish a task for them that they are working on.
- The **Summer** team will receive instructions in another language. **DO NOT SPEAK TO THIS TEAM IN ENGLISH.** You may speak in another language, or in gibberish. Throw in some English words occasionally. Speak loudly. If you see them breaking any of the rules (because their instruction sheet is in another language, you should refer to the **Spring** instruction sheet for the rules you will have to enforce...but don’t let them read that instruction sheet), immediately approach them and let them know they have broken a rule of the challenge...not in any language they can understand, of course. They **SHOULD** be confused and have difficulty understanding you—that is the point.
- The **Fall** team is a group that is ignored and/or discriminated against. This interaction will likely be difficult—try not to be blatant or mean about it, but rather cite “rules” when making things difficult for them. This team will have fewer materials and should receive little instruction and attention from you. If they ask you for materials or guidance, tell them that they will have to contact the “Building Inspector” (this will be you or your co-presenter). Your primary role in visiting their table is to stress the rules—make sure you are strict with them about their bridge not touching the “water”; the riverbanks being 8.5” apart; and their bridge not being taped or attached to the “riverbanks”. If the **Fall** team asks for things, make it difficult for them to get what they need: have them make an “appointment” with the Building Inspector for some later time; or tell them they will have to provide a written request detailing what they need, how much, and why. After they turn this request in (if the paperwork seems to be in order), you may give them some materials...but give them a good deal less than they asked for. For example, this team will ask for tape—rather than give them a roll, give them 1 foot worth, citing a severe tape shortage. If they ask for more, request more paperwork.

### **Instructions:**

1. THIS ACTIVITY IS BEST LED BY TWO PEOPLE. Place the materials boxes labeled **Winter**, **Spring**, **Summer** and **Fall** on four tables, with the tables spread as far apart as possible. As participants enter the room, randomly hand out a prepared **Season Nametag** to each of them and have them place or tape the tag to their shirt so everyone can read it. Make sure that there are at least two participants with “summer” tags, at least two “winters”, etc. Ask

participants to sit together at the tables that match their nametag, take the materials out of their boxes, and wait for instructions.

2. Share (in English) two very important rules for every team: 1) Teams may not leave their tables at any time; and 2) If they have any questions, concerns or requests they should contact the Building Inspector and schedule an appointment (point out the Building Inspector, which may be you).
3. Go talk to each team individually, and try to make sure the other teams cannot hear what you are saying. Hand each team the appropriate instruction sheet (each “season” has different instructions). Tell each team that if they have any questions or requests, they should contact the Building Inspector. All instructions to the **Summer** team should be in another language or in a language you make up. Your verbal instructions to the **Spring** team will have to include information on their impediment—you should decide what this is ahead of time. You can either have them accomplish the task with their thumbs held tight to their hands with thick rubber bands; or with them all wearing mittens; or they must each use only one hand (and that hand must be their non-dominant hand). You may also invent some other impediment, but be thoughtful about this choice. Give no extra instruction to the **Fall** team; simply hand them their instruction sheet and tell them that they should start.
4. One presenter should serve as the Building Inspector, and should spend most of their time near the **Winter** team. When the **Winter** team asks for the Inspector’s time, he or she should willingly grant it...and even offer it when they don’t ask. When the **Fall** team requests time with the Building Inspector, the Inspector should take their time getting to this team. You might also tell them that they’ll have to make an appointment (2 minutes from now, 5 minutes, etc.), and then arrive late. The other teams should receive help from the Inspector according to their requirements/impediments (different language, etc.).
5. The other presenter can mill around talking with the teams...mostly ignoring the **Fall** team and speaking to **Summer** in a non-English language. Both presenters should spend a lot of time with the **Winter** team, giving them hints, etc.
6. 5-10 minutes into the activity, give some cardstock to the **Winter** team. Tell them that they can ignore the rule about not touching the “water”, and that they can tape their bridge to the “riverbank” if they would like. They can also use more than 5 sheets of paper and they are allowed to roam around the room as they wish. Also, give them the hint that if they roll their paper into tight tubes (the tighter, the better), they can make a strong bridge, and if they make columns that touch the water, their bridge will be very strong. You can offer assistance to the **Spring** team (but don’t give them any hints or extra paper)—occasionally suggest that you just do it for them. Make sure they stick to the rules. Offer help to the summer team, but only in a non-English language. 20 minutes in, try something that inconveniences the **Fall** team—take the chairs away from them, ask to borrow their testing weights, or ask them to move to a smaller table, then give the chairs, weights or table to another team, preferably **Winter**.
7. After 30 minutes or so (could be sooner, could be later...you should judge the room and how it’s going), end the activity. Sometimes this activity can get rowdy, as teams notice that they are all being treated differently. The group will be ready for discussion when you think they have arrived at the place where they have all felt what it is like to not understand

what is happening around them; or to not be able to do things they have been tasked with; or to be treated unfairly. Once you feel you have reached that point, begin the debrief.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. This activity is ripe for discussion, and **this debrief session is the most important part**. This activity is NOT about building bridges (not literally, at least). Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *How did you feel? Did you ever get frustrated, upset, or feel helpless?*
2. *Did you notice what was happening with the other teams? Have each team share with the other teams what their experience was like (instructions were in another language; couldn't use one hand; had all the materials they wanted, etc.).*
3. *What does this activity suggest for our work with our diverse families? How can we ensure that we are treating all families fairly and respectfully?*
4. *Do we ever make snap judgments about visitors? How does this influence our interaction with them?* Stress that we shouldn't assume what people can or cannot do—for people with disabilities, we need to ask the person *how* we can help (rather than jump in and assist them uninvited). Ex. Not all people who are deaf read lips; wheelchairs are used for many reasons—not just because a person can't use their legs.

Note: For those who ask, the **Summer** instructions are in Swedish. The translation is choppy at best...if you have any Swedish speakers in the group, we apologize!

## TIP SHEET FOR FACILITATOR – YOUR EYES ONLY!

You may wish to carry this sheet around to remind you how you are expected to act.

- **Winter**
  - Give them anything they want
  - Praise them constantly
  - Give them clues for accomplishing the task
  - Let them bend the rules
  - 10 minutes in, sneak them some cardstock or other stiffer paper
- **Spring**
  - This team has some disability – coddle them and make it clear that you don't expect them to succeed without your help.
  - They must accomplish the task blindfolded or using only their non-dominant hand.
  - Step in occasionally, say “let me do that for you”, and accomplish a task for them that they are working on.
- **Summer**
  - DO NOT SPEAK TO THIS TEAM IN ENGLISH.
  - You may speak in another language, or in gibberish.
  - Throw in some English words occasionally.
  - Point out rules they have broken, but always in another language.
  - They SHOULD be confused and have difficulty understanding you.
- **Fall**
  - This team should be ignored and/or discriminated against.
  - Don't be mean, but cite “rules” when making things difficult for them.
  - This team will have fewer materials and should receive little instruction and attention from you.
  - If they ask you for anything, refer them to the Building Inspector. The Inspector should take their time responding to this team's requests.
  - Make sure you are strict with them about their bridge not touching the “water”; the riverbanks being 8.5” apart (measure it often); and their bridge not being taped or attached to the “riverbanks”.
  - Require a written request detailing what they need, how much, and why any time they ask for something.
  - When giving them materials, give them a good deal less than they asked for—you can tell them there is a national shortage of the material. If they ask for more, request more paperwork.
  - 10 minutes or so in, take something away or make something more difficult for them.

# Build a Bridge!

Build the strongest bridge you can using the following materials:

- 5 sheets of paper
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Weight for testing your bridge
- Books or boxes

## Instructions:

Create your “riverbanks” for your bridge to get across: Create 2 equal stacks of books at least 6 inches high and 8.5” apart; or place two boxes 8.5” apart. The space in between these books or boxes is the “water” that your bridge needs to pass over. If you have no boxes or books, you can space chairs or tables 8.5” apart and build your bridge between them.

## Some rules:

- Your “riverbanks” must be 8.5” apart from each other (the width of a piece of paper)
- Your bridge cannot touch the “water”
- Your bridge cannot be taped to the “riverbanks”

Use the heavy objects to test your bridge. How much weight can it hold? Can you make it stronger? What are some strong shapes you can think of that will help you when you build your bridge?



## Build a Bridge!

Build the strongest bridge you can using the following materials:

- 4 sheets of paper
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Weight for testing your bridge
- Books or boxes

### Instructions:

Create your “riverbanks” for your bridge to get across: Create 2 equal stacks of books at least 6 inches high and 8.5” apart; or place two boxes 8.5” apart. The space in between these books or boxes is the “water” that your bridge needs to pass over. If you have no boxes or books, you can space chairs or tables 8.5” apart and build your bridge between them.

### Some rules:

- Your “riverbanks” must be 8.5” apart from each other (the width of a piece of paper)
- Your bridge cannot touch the “water”
- Your bridge cannot be taped to the “riverbanks”

Use the heavy objects to test your bridge. How much weight can it hold? Can you make it stronger?

## Bygga en Bro!

Bygga den starke bro du kanna användande den följande materialen:

- 4 ark av papper
- Sax
- Mask tape
- Vikt för provande din bro
- Bokna eller boxarna

### Instruktionerna:

Skapa den "riverbanks" så pass din bro måste korsa: Skapa 2 lika stacken av bokna det vill si 6 tummen hög och 8.5" avsides; eller ställe två boxarna 8.5" avsides. Mellanslagen i mellan dissen bokna eller boxarna är vatten så pass din bro nödvändigtvis till korsa. Om du har nej boxarna eller bokna , du kanna utrymme stolarna eller borden 8.5" avsides och bygga din bro i mellan dem.

### Något reglerna:

- Din riverbanks måste bli 8.5" bort från varandra ( bredden av et stycke av papper)
- Din bro kan icke röra det hat vatten
- Din bro kan icke bli tape till riverbanks

Använda den tung syfte till prov din bro. Hur mycket vikt kanna den hålla? Kanna du göra den starke?

## Build a Bridge!

Build the strongest bridge you can using the following materials:

- 3 sheets of paper
- Scissors
- Weight for testing your bridge
- Books or boxes

### Instructions:

Create your “riverbanks” for your bridge to get across: Create 2 equal stacks of books at least 6 inches high and 8.5” apart; or place two boxes 8.5” apart. The space in between these books or boxes is the “water” that your bridge needs to pass over. If you have no boxes or books, you can space chairs or tables 8.5” apart and build your bridge between them.

### Some rules:

- Your “riverbanks” must be 8.5” apart from each other (the width of a piece of paper)
- Your bridge cannot touch the “water”
- Your bridge cannot be taped to the “riverbanks”

Use the heavy objects to test your bridge.

## Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

*“We model positive, educational, creative and respectful ways to interact with children and their caregivers through play.”*

Learning, understanding and appreciation are hallmark goals of most museums. Your front line staff serve as facilitators of that learning, understanding and appreciation. But they can also model for families what quality engagement and informal learning looks like, in the museum and at home. Developing the skill set necessary to be successful facilitators takes time and thought. It is one thing to simply be there to answer questions. It is another skill entirely to spark curiosity and discovery. Trainings around best practices, shared strategies and challenges encountered can help your staff grow to become a “community of practice” that regularly collaborates to improve their skills as a group. The following activities will help you begin those conversations.

# The Role of the Facilitator

## Time:

40 minutes

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Reflective Practice

## Learning Objectives:

- Staff will reflect upon their role while facilitating programs in the museum.

## Materials and Preparation:

- Chart paper and a marker
- Paper and pens

## Overview:

This activity offers staff a chance to reflect on the different roles they can play while interacting with families while leading programs, and how they can best facilitate learning and collaboration.

## Instructions:

1. Write the following on a piece of chart paper or dry erase board: **“While facilitating programs, our job is to...”** Ask them to think about how they would finish that statement. *What is the spectrum of behaviors that are part of leading a program? What are all the ways you support play, support learning, reveal learning, etc.*
2. Divide the group into small teams of 3-4, hand each team paper and pens, and ask them to complete the statement. The only requirement is that they encapsulate what they do in one or two sentences, and try to make it as comprehensive a statement as they can.
3. When they are done, bring the teams together to compare their statements. Each team should read what they have written and the other teams should comment. *What is missing from the statements? What do they have in common? After hearing their peers’ impressions, would any of the groups make any changes to their statements? If not mentioned, bring up the notion of family learning. How important is it to our work?*

4. Ask the larger group to now work together to create one consensus description of their roles as facilitators of programs. As you lead this discussion, it is your role to ask questions and repeat salient points. Some suggested questions and points of emphasis include:

**Questions for Discussion:**

- *What are our roles when we're in an exhibit? How is it different than when we're leading a program?*
- *How do we know how to respond to a child? How about to an adult?*
- *How do we create an environment (physically, socially, etc.) that encourages children and caregivers to play?*
- *How do we reveal the learning that is occurring?*
- *What are our behaviors that support family learning through play?*
- *How do we help the adult caregiver recognize achievement and learning?*
- *How can we structure programs so that we invite adults to join in a supportive way?*

**Points and responsibilities to emphasize:**

- Observing carefully to know what's needed and desired by the whole family, including caregivers and children.
  - Personalizing support to match caregiver's and child's needs.
  - Taking care not to interrupt what is already a meaningful family interaction.
  - Treating caregivers like peers and allies.
  - Remembering that some support is nearly invisible (ex. producing extra markers without being asked, etc.).
  - Encouraging caregivers to share a talent, experience from their own childhood, or knowledge about a topic.
  - Making ourselves available to play.
  - Creating invitations to play (what the activity entails, how "extra special" it is, etc.).
  - Modeling skills for caregivers.
  - Providing seating so caregivers feel invited and can be at eye level with their child.
  - Using humor that can appeal to caregivers.
5. Once the team has created their descriptive sentence, ask them how satisfied they are with it. Is it even possible to describe their role in only one or two sentences?

**Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Was it difficult or relatively easy to create the description of your roles as program facilitators?*
2. *Are there any roles that were discussed that you feel you would like more practice at? Does this discussion make you think about anything you might do differently?*

# What Techniques Would You Use?

## Time:

45 minutes

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond
- Reflective Practice

## Learning Objectives:

- Staff will consider and practice some of the roles they can play to support family learning.
- Staff will assess when it is best to step in and interact with a family, and when it is best to not interrupt.

## Materials and Preparation:

- Handout: *“Techniques for Respecting, Supporting and Engaging Families”* (below)
- A space for role-playing

If you have an opportunity to be in the exhibits (after hours), ask the cleaning crew about their schedule so staff can role-play where visitors interact. If you prefer to stay in the workshop room, bring some materials and supplies for a program you do in your museum.

## Overview:

An examination of behaviors and abilities that serve as developmental milestones for children, and the ages that these behaviors are typically exhibited.

## Background for the Facilitator:

Before you implement this activity, it is important to have discussed the various reasons children and families come to the museum. We want to promote playful family learning but also to respect visitors' boundaries and needs. The activities *“Caregivers—What Are They Up To?”* and *“Adult Roles in Collaborative Play”* both look at the variety of roles adult visitors might assume in the museum, and serve as good precursors to this activity. Understanding and respecting this spectrum can help staff decide if, when and how to intervene.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask participants to review the handout, ***Techniques for Respecting, Supporting and Engaging Families***. *Are there behaviors that we've discussed that aren't on this list?*
2. Divide participants into teams of 2 to discuss common family experiences—how do they see families interacting? Have each team also brainstorm all the roles they as staff play in relation to visitors. Discuss the balance between respecting visitor's boundaries and encouraging them to participate.
3. Each team should invent at least one scenario to role-play as a visiting family. They should determine the size of the family, the age of the children, the relationship of the adult caregiver to the children (ex. parent, grandparent, nanny, etc.), what exhibit they are in and what activity they are doing in the exhibit (it can be an exhibit component, special program, etc.).
4. Prepare to role-play. Explain that each team is going to act as a family in an exhibit while another team will play museum staff, and will decide how and when to interact with the family. Depending on how you have set up the workshop, they can either do this in the museum or in a workshop room using materials you have supplied. Tell them: *When I call freeze, everyone has to freeze, so we can talk about what was going on.* Pair teams up—one team will play the family, the other will be museum staff; then the two teams will switch roles. If there are an odd number of teams, try to find a team that will volunteer to go twice.
5. Once the first team starts role-playing, the second team should use the handout and their shared wisdom to decide if there is a role staff could play to support or supplement what the family is already doing. The second team should then try their strategy. Let it run a minute or two before calling freeze.
6. Ask the participants to talk about what happened. *What were you thinking and feeling? Did you like what happened? Were you surprised? How did you decide what to do?*

## **Debrief and Connect:**

After all the teams have had a chance to role-play being both a family and staff, talk about how well this exercise related to the real world of working in the museum.

1. *Were we realistic in how we behaved as families or staff? How do you think actual families would react?*
2. *How useful are the techniques on the handout?*
  - a. *Which techniques are easiest to use?*
  - b. *Which are easiest to forget to use?*
3. *Which ones are tricky to use? Why?*



# Techniques for Respecting, Supporting and Engaging Families

## IN EXHIBITS

**Observe first**—Watch. Wait. Act. Are they already having a great interaction? What's needed?

**Make yourself accessible**—Things that could make a difference: a smile, eye contact, a funny hat. How do we let visitors know it's okay to approach us?

**Offer comfort**—Bring out stools, chairs, pillows, smocks for adults. How can we make playing—or not—comfortable for everyone in the family?

**Clarify exhibit resources**—Help visitors see what's available. Do both adults and children know what to do? Does the family know if there's an early learning option?

**Share extra props and resources**—Offer something extra. Would they like to try a new tool? Bring out a kit or drop-in activity—"Would you like to try this?"

**Appreciate visitors' actions**—Being noticed means a lot. "That's quite a building you built together. Very impressive team work!"

**Empower adults**—Provide information or skills that enable the caregiver to assist their child. "You put the washer on, then the nut, like this." "There are footholds to help your child climb up."

## **Model mentoring/scaffolding strategies**

- a. Narrate—Describe exactly what a young child is doing without comment or judgment.
- b. Ask questions that invite discussion: "Tell me about what you made."
- c. Challenge visitors to solve problems or to push a little further.

**Engage whole families in friendly conversation:** *Great starter:* "Is this your first time at the museum?"  
*Great strategy:* Listen!

## **Help caregivers through a challenge:**

- a. Tantrums—How do we support caregivers so they can see it through?
- b. Sharing—How do we provide opportunities for children to practice sharing?
- c. Leaving—How do we model preparing children for transitions?
- d. Lost children or alarms—How do we offer reassurance?

## DURING PROGRAMS

**Invite families to participate "together"**—This magic word can tell adults they're welcome to join in.

**Offer caregivers a specific role**—Adults are more comfortable when they know what to do.

**Bring out chairs**—If we're seated, visitors should have that option too. It's hard to stay at a child's level when you have to squat. Caregivers will look for the nearest seat—even if it's across the room.

**Offer dual sets of materials**—Would you like to try this, too? I have a book for you, too.

**Model mentoring/scaffolding strategies**—Same as above, but specific to the activity.

# Feeling the Collaboration

## **Time:**

45 minutes - 1 hour

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Reflective Practice

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Experience how collaborative learning feels and works.
- Connect the experience to family learning and families' experiences in the museum.

## **Materials:**

*For each team of 2-5 staff you will need:*

- 2 raw eggs
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- 1 roll of masking tape

*Shared materials, for all teams to use:*

- Newspaper or large plastic drop cloth to drop the eggs on
- Tissue paper and/or plastic grocery bags
- String
- Paper clips
- Scraps of paper, cardboard, cereal boxes, fabric, and any other miscellaneous recycled materials you have
- Glue guns (if available)

*Plus, these shared "specialty" materials—these should be monitored and distributed sparingly. For more of a challenge, do not offer these materials:*

- Bubble wrap if available
- Balloons

## **Overview:**

Staff will work together to solve a problem, and then discuss how it felt to be on a team and how that might relate to family experiences in the museum.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

This activity is intended to be introduced early in the year to help staff understand the concept of family learning. You may use a similar activity that requires teamwork...the following is a suggestion.

## **Instructions:**

1. **Introduce:** *Today we're talking about collaborative learning—the ways in which a group might work together to solve a problem. Here's your challenge: Figure out a way to protect an egg that's dropped off a stairway landing. There's only one rule: work together.*
2. If you have a large group of participants, divide them into teams of 2-5 individuals, and give them table space to work at. Create a variety of team sizes, some with only 2 members; some with 3, 4 or 5. Explain that there are a limited amount of materials—ask them to please only take what they'll use because they need to share what has been provided.
3. **Encourage team cohesion.** Ask the teams to come up with a name for their team. They could write this name on their egg-protection system in some way.
4. **Monitor the teams to ensure full participation.** Encourage them to listen to each other and to piggy back on each other's ideas. Warn the teams when there are five minutes left. Teams will probably need 20-30 minutes to come up with a shared solution.
5. **Test the solutions.** Go out to a balcony or stairwell landing to test the solutions. Set up a "drop zone" by laying out newspaper or plastic drop cloth on the ground where you plan to drop your eggs...cleanup is a lot easier this way! Introduce each team before their drop and give a drum roll. After they drop their egg, pause to see if the team was successful.

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *How did you work together? Talk about how you fed off each other's ideas. Was the activity challenging? A little scary? In what ways did you support each other?*
2. *What roles did people play? Did you switch between learner and teacher?*
3. *Was it difficult being in a small or large team? How can we make sure that everyone in a large team is contributing? How can we assist a smaller team that has fewer voices/ideas to call upon?*
4. *When you were dropping your egg, did you feel as if you were testing an individual's idea or a shared solution?*
5. *What about this activity reminded you of what you see in the museum—of how families and other visitor groups play together? What sorts of behaviors might you see in family groups?*

# What Matters Most

## **Time:**

20-30 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Reflective Practice

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will reflect upon their role in the Museum, what it is in practice, and what it ideally should be.
- Staff will discuss the priorities for their role and what they need or what they can do in order to focus on the most important aspects of their job.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Chart paper and markers
- Blank paper and pens or pencils

## **Overview:**

This activity offers staff a chance to reflect on their role in the Museum, on what their priorities are and on how they can best meet those priorities.

## **Instructions:**

1. NOTE: If possible, this activity should be facilitated by the person or persons who directly supervise the floor staff.
2. Ask the group to list for you all of the roles and responsibilities that they fulfill in their job at the Museum. Keep a running list on a piece of chart paper.
3. Divide the group into teams of 3-4 and distribute a few sheets of paper and pens to each team. Using the brainstormed list that you just created, ask teams to list on a piece of paper, in order of priority, the roles and duties discussed. The most important roles and duties should be listed first; the least important last.
4. Using this same list that everyone brainstormed together, ask teams to create a new list on a new sheet of paper, this time detailing the roles and duties that they fulfill, on average, in order of the amount of time that they commit to each of these roles and duties. The things

that they spend the most time on should appear first on the list; and the things they spend the least amount of time on should appear last.

5. Ask teams to compare the two lists (one that lists what's most important; the other that lists how much time they commit to tasks), and note if there are any similarities or differences. Have each team report to the larger group. Did anything surprise them? What does this tell us about their jobs and the work that they do?

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *As you think about what is most important about your job, is there anything that you can do or anything that you need in order to spend more time on these priorities and in order to do them better?*
2. *Does thinking about these priorities cause you to consider any new strategies or behaviors?*
3. *If there are aspects of your job that you are not able to spend enough time on, what can your manager do to help change that?*

While the goal of this activity is to have floor staff think about their interactions with families and how they can improve and increase those interactions, be careful not to diminish the importance of the “dirty work” (maintaining exhibit spaces; keeping things in order; cleaning up; etc.).

# Play and Learning for All

*“We recognize and can adjust for each individual child’s and adult’s cognitive, physical, cultural, and social differences.”*

Just as your visiting families represent a diversity of cultures, so too do they represent a wide range of abilities and needs. Some of that range is reflective of age, some of physical ability, some of cultural or social mores and beliefs. Such a range can make it challenging to best serve each visitor that walks through your door. The best your staff can do is to be “adaptable”—to be ready to think on the fly and make adjustments to programs and interactions based on who is in front of them. This is a skill that can be developed over time, and a staff well-versed in adaptive facilitation is better prepared to provide inviting, engaging experiences for every visitor at your museum.

The best way to learn how to be adaptive in facilitation is to have as clear as possible an understanding of the needs of your audience. Some background on child development and on the needs of visitors of varying abilities will go a long way toward helping your staff to broaden their facilitation and interaction skills. With that in mind, the following activities address how your staff can begin to better understand the needs of your audience, and to practice adapting their interactions to best suit those needs.

# Reaching All Audiences: Adaptive Facilitation

## Time:

45 minutes – 1 hour

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Play for All
- Respect for Families' Cultures
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## Learning Objectives:

- Development of strategies to adapt visitor interactions to best meet the needs of all museum visitors.
- Increased appreciation for the different needs and abilities of our diverse visitors.
- Critical thinking about how we can adapt current programs to best meet all visitors' needs.

## Materials and Preparation:

- **Visitor Cards** - Index cards you have prepared with visitor descriptions on them (see PREPARATION below)
- Before implementing this activity, choose 5 (or more) programs or activities that your museum conducts with visitors. *Note: it is important that you choose programs and activities that your staff already knows how to do. Otherwise, the exercise will be more about the activity itself, and less about adapting them to better serve the public.* Write the names of the 5 activities/programs you have chosen on a piece of chart paper and post it up. If applicable, gather any necessary materials for presenting those programs.
- Chart paper and markers

**PREPARATION:** Create the **Visitor Cards** by writing a description on each card of a family that might visit your museum. Make sure that each family has some attribute or need that would require staff to adapt their delivery of a program or interpretation of an exhibit to better serve that family. NOTE—save these cards for use with the “Play and Learning for All in Our Exhibits” activity. Some suggestions are:

- A family from Ukraine that speaks almost no English
- A young visitor in a wheelchair with limited use of her arms and hands
- A family with two children, one of whom is an 8 year-old with autism

- A family with two parents who have visual impairments and two children who are sighted
- A school group from a school for the deaf
- A family from Cote D'Ivoire who speak no English with a young son who speaks some English
- An inclusive school group with half of its students in wheelchairs

## **Overview:**

Practice effective strategies for adapting museum programs to best meet the needs of all museum visitors, regardless of language or ability.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

**Adaptive Facilitation** is defined in this context as the ability of staff to readily modify their visitor interaction in order to best meet the needs of the visitors they are serving at any given moment. It also requires the ability to assess visitors' needs "on the fly", and adapt accordingly.

## **Instructions:**

1. **OPTIONAL INTRODUCTION** (if you choose not to introduce the activity this way, skip to #2) – if you have the time and capacity, you could begin this session by presenting an activity (one no one has seen before) in a language that no one speaks (you can present in a made up dialect, if need be). Use minimal gestures/visual cues...focus on the assumption that everyone understands what you are saying, eliminating the necessity for visuals. Ask participants to share what it felt like to try and understand what you were saying. Do they feel prepared to do the activity you presented? What could you have done to make things clearer for them to understand?
2. When staff are gathered together, point out the list of programs/activities you have posted. Ask staff if these activities should be presented in the same manner to all visitors, or if there are times when the presentations could be adapted to better meet the needs of visitors. After a brief discussion, introduce the activity—tell participants that you will be asking them to present one of the posted programs to the rest of the group, as they would to visitors. Divide participants into teams of 2-3 and ask each team to choose one of the posted activities for discussion. Provide any materials you have prepared to each of the teams (some teams may need to share). In their presentations they can "pretend" to use any unavailable materials.
3. After 10-15 minutes of discussion, ask for a team to volunteer to go first. Ask this team to select one of the prepared **Visitor Cards** at random. Their challenge is to present their selected activity to the family or group described on their chosen card. Give them one more minute to discuss how they would work with these visitors, then have them present. While they prepare, ask one of the other teams to act as a family that this first team will present



to. Share with this “family” what their group they will be acting as, according to the card that the presenting team selected (ex. an inclusive school group with half of its students in wheelchairs). Ask them to tailor their interactions to match the family or school group they are representing, and ask them to try to do so respectfully.

4. Have each team present the activity as they would to their chosen family or group. Was it difficult to adapt this program? Did they have any other ideas for presenting that they did not use? After each team presents, other teams should offer comments and suggestions. Ask them to share what they liked about the presentation and what they might have done differently. Teams should also make a list of any additional materials they might have liked for their modified activity. During the debrief discussion ask participants if they would like these materials to be available for future use with visitors.
5. Ask the next team to present, and have them also select one of the prepared **Visitor Cards** at random. Continue until each team has presented, then gather for a discussion.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *It was probably difficult to have so little time to adapt your presentation to suit the visitors you selected, but that is just what it is like when you are in the exhibits. How can you prepare yourselves to make those quick adjustments?*
2. *What does this activity suggest for our work with families who do not speak English? How about visitors who are visually impaired and hearing impaired? Or visitors with limited mobility or use of their hands? What strategies can we use to best serve these groups? **EX. if not brought up, raise the idea of presenting with limited words, but using actions or gestures to convey messages and concepts when working with non-English speakers.***
3. *What implications does adaptive programming have for how we interact with and support visitors in exhibits (as opposed to presenting programs)?*
4. Ask staff to share times they have worked with visitors and felt challenged by the needs of the visitors or groups. Reflecting back, how might they address that situation differently? Can the group help brainstorm effective practices related to these situations?
5. Ask the participants to list for you any information they would like in order to help them be better prepared to work with a diverse range of visitors. For instance, your group may not know a lot about autistic children and how to best serve them, so training with a specialist on autism could help develop that skill and knowledge. Record this list and use it to help inform your selection of future trainings.

# Play and Learning for All In Our Exhibits

## Time:

45 minutes-1 hour

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Play for All

## Learning Objectives:

- Staff will develop variations on activities to promote learning for children in various age or developmental ranges and learning styles.
- Staff will gain insight that will help them be able to recommend exhibits or activities that will appeal to children based on their development or their learning styles.

## Materials and Preparation:

- **Visitor Cards** from the “Reaching All Audiences - Adaptive Facilitation” activity. If you have not done this activity, you can prepare the index cards as described in PREPARATION below.
- Chart paper and markers
- **Play For All Assessment Chart** (below)

**PREPARATION:** Create the **Visitor Cards** by writing a description on each card of a family that might visit your museum. Make sure that each family has some attribute or need that would require staff to adapt their delivery of a program or interpretation of an exhibit to better serve that family. Some suggestions are:

- A family from Ukraine that speaks almost no English
- A young visitor in a wheelchair with limited use of her arms and hands
- A family with two children, one of whom is an 8 year-old with autism
- A family with two parents with visual impairments and two children who are sighted
- A school group from a school for the deaf
- A family from Cote D'Ivoire who speak no English with a young son who speaks some English
- An inclusive school group with half of its students in wheelchairs

## **Overview:**

Participants will assess the museum's exhibits with an eye toward how these exhibits can work best for a diverse range of learners.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

This activity is best done after the "Reaching All Audiences - Adaptive Facilitation" activity.

## **Instructions:**

1. If you have done it, reflect with participants on the "Reaching All Audiences - Adaptive Facilitation" activity. What sorts of strategies did participants come up with for adapting programs to better suit a diverse range of learners? Tell participants that you will now look at the EXHIBITS in your museum, and how they might best serve all visitors.
2. Divide your group into teams of 2-3. Ask each team to select an exhibit that they want to observe, and to share with the rest of the group what exhibit they'll be assessing. Once each team has selected an exhibit, have them randomly select a **Visitor Card** (or 2 if you have enough), and ask them to focus their assessment on their selected group(s). Hand out the **Play and Learning for All Assessment Chart** to each team so they can record their ideas and observations.
3. Give teams 15-25 minutes to visit their chosen exhibit and make their observations, then have them return to share their findings with the rest of the group.
4. After sharing their assessments, open up the conversation to all the selected exhibits and all of the visitor groups. Ask teams to discuss how they might modify the exhibits and their interactions in them to best suit all of the different types of visitors. What resources, materials or supplies might help them to adapt programs or their interactions in exhibits to suit a diverse range of visitors? Stress that we shouldn't assume what people can or cannot do—for people with disabilities, we need to ask the person *how* we can help (rather than jump in and assist them uninvited). For example, not all people who are deaf read lips; wheelchairs are used for many reasons-not just because a person doesn't have use of their legs, etc.

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion, such as:

1. *Were there any common strategies to modifying exhibits or interactions to best suit the needs of most visitors?*
2. *Were any ideas made for modifications to exhibits or interactions that would serve one group well, but might be a detriment to other groups?*

## Play and Learning for All Assessment Chart

Exhibit Name:	
What are the younger children doing here? What are the older children doing here?	
What exhibit elements might be challenging for your selected visitor group?	
What exhibit elements might work well for your selected visitor group?	
What changes might you suggest to this exhibit to make it more successful for your visitor group?	
Without making any major changes to the exhibit, how might you adapt your interactions with visitors to make this exhibit as successful as possible with your visitor group?	
What other exhibits might you recommend for your visitor group?	

# Who's Doing What, And When?

## **Time:**

1-1 ½ hours. Can be done as two 30-40 minute sessions

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Play and Learning for All
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Making Learning Visible

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will review the basics of child development.
- Staff will practice observing child behavior to identify children's developmental levels.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Handouts:
  - *"Who Is Doing What and When? Sample Behaviors" (and answer key)*
  - *"Child Development Chart, First Five Years"*
  - *"Child Development Chart Ages 5-11"*
- Pens or pencils

## **Overview:**

An examination of behaviors and abilities that serve as developmental milestones for children, and the ages that these behaviors are typically exhibited.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

From birth, children develop in 4 primary areas: Social-emotional, Motor (gross motor and fine motor), Cognitive and Language. Most children go through particular stages of development in these four domains at about the same age. By observing behavior, staff can determine approximate age and developmental level of a child and can make decisions about what spots in the museum would most interest the child. When museum staff recognize specific behaviors as representing developmental levels, and they understand how children learn, they can successfully tailor their expectations, activities and engagement with children.

## **Instructions:**

### **PART 1 (30 minutes)**

1. **NOTE:** This activity is primarily intended for experienced staff, however it can serve as a useful tool for new staff as well. If you are implementing this training exercise with newer staff, you should begin with Part 2, below, and spend 30-40 minutes on these observations. Introduce the activity by asking them if they think it is important to know the age of a child before interacting with them. Why? After completing Part 2, introduce Part 1 to them.
2. Ask participants if they ever try to determine the age of a child they are interacting with. *Does knowing this age impact how they choose to interact? Are children of some ages capable of thinking or interacting in ways that children of other ages are not? Does anyone have any examples of how they have tailored their interactions based on their perception of a child's age?*
3. Tell the participants that they will be exploring “ages and stages”—an examination of behaviors and abilities that serve as developmental milestones for children, and the ages that these behaviors are typically exhibited.
4. Divide the group into teams of 2 or 3 and give each team a copy of the handout “**Who Is Doing What and When? Sample Behaviors**”, but do NOT distribute the answer key.
5. Ask each team to select 10 of these behaviors from the list, and write next to these behaviors the age level that they think best describes, on average, when a child might first demonstrate the behavior.
6. After each team has made their estimations, distribute the “**Who Is Doing What and When? Sample Behaviors Answer Key**” and the two handouts “**Child Development Chart, First Five Years**” and “**Child Development Chart Ages 5-11**”. Ask them to use these charts and the key to modify their estimations of the behaviors they chose from the “**Who Is Doing What and When? Sample Behaviors**” handout.
7. Ask participants, *How easy or difficult was it to make these age estimations? Did any of the ages surprise you? Do you remember when you first exhibited any of these behaviors? Have you seen any of these behaviors in the museum?*
8. Refer to the child development charts. *How can these handouts help us support children's learning? How can it help us do our jobs in supporting family learning? What other behaviors have you observed in the Museum that you might place on these charts?*

### **PART 2 (10-20 minutes)**

1. Ask participants to observe children in the museum. Ask them to choose one child, observe them for 5-10 minutes in an exhibit and record every behavior they observe. If they have time, they may observe a second child. **NOTE:** If implementing this activity with new staff, you should afford them more time to observe in the exhibits.
2. Give participants 10-20 minutes to observe and return.
3. When they have returned, refer them to the charts again and ask them to use the recorded behaviors from their observations to determine the developmental age of the child they observed.

4. If implementing this activity with experienced staff, ask teams to identify one challenge that they think would be good for the child they observed in the exhibit that they observed them in. Then ask them to identify 1-2 other exhibits that the child might enjoy. Are there any exhibits that the child might not enjoy or that might not work for them, given their developmental age?

### **Debrief and Connect (10 minutes):**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Armed with the charts, was it easier, harder or about the same trying to determine a child's developmental age as it was before?*
2. *How can a clearer understanding of a child's developmental age help you work with them more effectively?*

There may be some disagreement about some of the ages and behaviors detailed on the charts. It is important to note that these charts catalog when behaviors are first exhibited in children **ON AVERAGE**. There will certainly be some children who exhibit some behaviors earlier or later than the charts indicate. Also note that it is not important that staff are able to identify exact ages, but rather to become practiced at estimating within a range.

### **Who Is Doing What and When? Sample Behaviors**

<b>A.</b> Birth-6 months	<b>B.</b> 6-9 months	<b>C.</b> 9-12 months	<b>D.</b> 12-18 months
<b>E.</b> 18-24 months	<b>F.</b> 2-2 ½ years	<b>G.</b> 2 ½ - 3 years	<b>H.</b> 3-4 years
<b>I.</b> 4-5 years	<b>J.</b> 5-6 years	<b>K.</b> 6-8 years	<b>L.</b> 9-11 years

Which age range best describes on average when a child might first demonstrate the following:

1. Plays cooperatively with minimum conflict and supervision
2. Stacks 2 or more blocks
3. Can jump rope
4. Waves "Bye-bye."
5. Picks up toy with one hand
6. May belittle or defy adult authority
7. Skips or makes running "broad jumps"
8. Scribbles with circular motion
9. Makes sounds like da-da, ma-ma, ba-ba
10. Can print name
11. Shows sympathy to other children, tries to comfort them
12. Talks in long, complex sentences (10 or more words)
13. Walks without help
14. Draws recognizable pictures
15. Can begin to understand time and the days of the week
16. Toilet trained
17. Picks up small objects—precise thumb and finger grasp
18. Opens door by turning knob
19. Interested in reading fictional stories, magazines, and how-to project books
20. Follows simple rules in board or card games
21. Understands phrases like "No-no" and "All gone."
22. Invents games with simple rules
23. Prints a few letters or numbers
24. Can understand time concepts like yesterday, today and tomorrow
25. Cuts with small scissors
26. Talks in single words
27. Plays a role in "pretend" games like house or school—mom, dad, teacher
28. Feeds self cracker
29. Laughs out loud
30. Capable of understanding concepts without having direct hands-on experience
31. Climbs on play equipment—ladders, slides
32. Uses at least 10 words
33. Distinguishes mother from others
34. Girls want to play more with girls; boys with boys
35. Answers questions like, "What do you do with a cracker? A hat?"
36. Sits alone...steady, without support
37. Takes off open coat or shirt without help





# CHILD DEVELOPMENT CHART – FIRST FIVE YEARS

Harold Ireton, Ph.D.



	SOCIAL	SELF-HELP	GROSS MOTOR	FINE MOTOR	LANGUAGE	
5-0 yrs.	Shows leadership among children.	Goes to the toilet without help.	Swings on swing, pumping by self.	Prints first name (four letters).	When asked, for example, "What is an orange?" answers, "A fruit."	5-0 yrs.
4-6	Follows simple rules in board or card games.	Usually looks both ways before crossing street.	Skips or makes running "broad jumps."	Draws a person that has at least three parts - head, eyes, nose, mouth, etc.	Reads a few letters (five+).	4-6
4-0 yrs.	Protective toward younger children.	Buttons one or more buttons.	Hops around on one foot, without support.	Draws recognizable pictures.	Prints a few letters or numbers.	4-0 yrs.
3-6	Plays cooperatively with minimum conflict and supervision.	Dresses and undresses without help, except for tying shoelaces.	Hops on one foot without support.	Cuts across paper with small scissors.	Follows a series of three simple instructions in order.	3-6
3-0 yrs.	Gives directions to other children.	Washes face without help.	Rides around on tricycle, using pedals.	Draws or copies a complete circle.	Talks in long, complex sentences (10 or more words).	3-0 yrs.
2-6	Plays games like tag, hide and seek.	Dresses self with help.	Walks up and down stairs - one foot per step.	Cuts with small scissors.	Answers questions like, "What do you do with a cracker? a hat?"	2-6
2-0 yrs.	Plays a role in "pretend" games like house or school - mom, dad, teacher.	Washes and dries hands.	Stands on one foot without support.	Draws or copies vertical (   ) lines.	Speaks clearly - is understandable most of the time.	2-0 yrs.
18 mos.	Plays with other children - cars, dolls, building.	Opens door by turning knob.	Climbs on play equipment - ladders, slides.	Scribbles with circular motion.	Talks in sentences at least four words long.	18 mos.
12 mos.	"Helps" with simple household tasks.	Takes off open coat or shirt without help.	Walks up and down stairs alone.	Turns pages of picture books, one at a time.	Has a vocabulary of at least 20 words.	12 mos.
9 mos.	Usually responds to correction - stops.	Eats with spoon, spilling little.	Runs well, seldom falls.	Builds towers of four or more blocks.	Follows two-part instructions.	9 mos.
6 mos.	Shows sympathy to other children, tries to comfort them.	Eats with fork.	Kicks a ball forward.	Scribbles with crayon.	Names a few familiar objects in picture books.	6 mos.
Birth	Sometimes says "No" when interfered with.	Feeds self with spoon.	Walks without help.	Picks up two small toys in one hand.	Asks for a drink or food, using words or sounds.	Birth
	Gives kisses or hugs.	Insists on doing things by self such as feeding.	Stands without support.	Stacks two or more blocks.	Uses at least ten words.	
	Waves "Bye-bye."	Lifts cup to mouth and drinks.	Walks around furniture or crib while holding on.	Picks up small objects - precise thumb and finger grasp.	Talks in single words.	
	Plays social games, "peek-a-boo," "patty-cake."	Picks up a spoon by the handle.	Crawls around on hands and knees.	Uses two hands to pick up large objects.	Says "Mama" or "Dada" for parent, or similar.	
	Pushes things away he/she doesn't want.	Feeds self cracker.	Sits alone . . . steady, without support.	Transfers toy from one hand to the other.	Understands phrases like "No-no" and "All gone."	
	Reaches for familiar people.	Comforts self with thumb or pacifier.	Rolls over from back to stomach.	Picks up toy with one hand.	Makes sounds like da-da, ma-ma, ba-ba.	
	Distinguishes mother from others.	Reacts to sight of bottle or breast.	Turns around when lying on stomach.	Looks at and reaches for faces and toys.	Responds to name - turns and looks.	
	Social smile.		Lifts head and chest when lying on stomach.		Babbles.	
					Laughs out loud.	
					Makes sounds - ah, eh, ugh.	
					Cries in a special way when hungry.	

# Child Development Chart - Ages 5-11

	Social/emotional development	Physical development	Intellectual development
<b>5 Year olds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Invents games with simple rules</li> <li>◦ Still confuses fantasy/reality sometimes</li> <li>◦ Often fears loud noises, the dark, animals, and some people</li> <li>◦ Can take turns and share, but doesn't always want to</li> <li>◦ Expresses anger and jealousy physically</li> <li>◦ Is not emotionally ready for competition</li> <li>◦ Converses with other children and adults</li> <li>◦ Sometimes can be very bossy</li> <li>◦ Likes to try new things and take risks</li> <li>◦ Likes to make own decisions</li> <li>◦ Notices when another child is angry or sad</li> <li>◦ Basic understanding of right and wrong</li> <li>◦ Plays contentedly and independently without constant supervision</li> <li>◦ Understands and respects rules - often asks permission</li> <li>◦ Understands/enjoys giving and receiving</li> <li>◦ Enjoys collecting things</li> <li>◦ Seeks adult approval</li> <li>◦ Sometimes critical of other children and embarrassed by own mistakes</li> <li>◦ Enjoys jokes and laughter with adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Throws ball overhead</li> <li>◦ Catches bounced balls</li> <li>◦ Balances on either foot for 5-10 seconds</li> <li>◦ Cuts on a line with scissors</li> <li>◦ Left or right hand dominance is established</li> <li>◦ Walks down stairs, alternating feet without using a handrail</li> <li>◦ Jumps over low objects</li> <li>◦ Can run, gallop, and tumble</li> <li>◦ Can skip and run on tiptoe</li> <li>◦ Can jump rope</li> <li>◦ Interested in performing tricks like standing on head, performing dance steps</li> <li>◦ Capable of learning complex body coordination skills like swimming, ice or roller skating, and riding bicycles</li> <li>◦ May be able to tie shoelaces</li> <li>◦ May be able to copy simple designs and shapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Likes to argue and reason</li> <li>◦ Knows basic colors</li> <li>◦ Understands that stories have a beginning, middle, and end</li> <li>◦ Enjoys creating/telling stories</li> <li>◦ Enjoys tracing or copying letters</li> <li>◦ Understands and uses comparative terms like big, bigger, or biggest</li> <li>◦ Sorts objects by size</li> <li>◦ Identifies some letters and numbers</li> <li>◦ Understands "more, less, same"</li> <li>◦ Counts up to 10 objects</li> <li>◦ Recognizes categories ("these are all animals; these are all toys.")</li> <li>◦ Understands before and after, above, and below</li> <li>◦ Block and dramatic play is much more elaborate and complex</li> <li>◦ Is project minded - plans buildings, play scenarios, and drawings</li> <li>◦ Interested in cause and effect</li> <li>◦ Can understand time concepts like yesterday, today, and tomorrow</li> </ul>
<b>6-8 Year olds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Interested in rules and rituals</li> <li>◦ Girls want to play more with girls; boys with boys</li> <li>◦ May have a best friend and an enemy</li> <li>◦ Strong desire to perform well, do things right</li> <li>◦ Begins to see things from another child's point of view, but still very self-centered</li> <li>◦ Finds criticism or failure difficult</li> <li>◦ Views things as black and white, wonderful or terrible, with little middle ground</li> <li>◦ Seeks a sense of security in groups, organized play, and clubs</li> <li>◦ Generally enjoys caring for and playing with younger children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Skilled at using scissors and small tools</li> <li>◦ Enjoys testing muscle strength and skills</li> <li>◦ Good sense of balance</li> <li>◦ Can catch small balls</li> <li>◦ Can tie shoelaces</li> <li>◦ Enjoys copying designs and shapes, letters and numbers</li> <li>◦ Can print name</li> <li>◦ Long arms and legs may give gawky awkward appearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ May reverse printed letters (b/d)</li> <li>◦ Enjoys planning and building</li> <li>◦ Doubles speaking and listening vocabularies</li> <li>◦ Reading may become a major interest</li> <li>◦ Increased problem-solving ability</li> <li>◦ Interested in magic and tricks</li> <li>◦ Longer attention span</li> <li>◦ Enjoys creating elaborate collections</li> <li>◦ Able to learn difference between left and right</li> <li>◦ Can begin to understand time and the days of the week</li> </ul>
<b>9-11 Year olds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Begins to see parents and authority figures as fallible human beings</li> <li>◦ Rituals, rules, secret codes, and made-up languages are common</li> <li>◦ Enjoys being a member of a club</li> <li>◦ Increased interest in competitive sports</li> <li>◦ Outbursts of anger are less frequent</li> <li>◦ May belittle or defy adult authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Girls are generally as much as 2 years ahead of boys in physical maturity</li> <li>◦ Girls may begin to menstruate</li> <li>◦ Increases body strength and hand dexterity</li> <li>◦ Improves coordination and reaction time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Interested in reading fictional stories, magazines, and how-to project books</li> <li>◦ May develop special interest in collections or hobbies</li> <li>◦ May be very interested in discussing a future career</li> <li>◦ Fantasizes and daydreams about the future</li> <li>◦ Capable of understanding concepts without having direct hands-on experience</li> </ul>

## Making Learning Visible

*“We provide opportunities for families to witness and talk about their learning and experiences.”*

Sometimes play looks like just play. Some adults can remain unconvinced that the natural inclination of children—to playfully engage with materials and experiences—is anything more than diversion. But when caregivers are made aware of all that their child is learning, and the skills that their child is developing through their experiences in the museum, it gives them a new appreciation not only for the museum, but for their child as well. Maintaining an awareness of the intentionality and the goals of museum exhibits and programs will help your staff appreciate those exhibits and experiences; and will help staff as they communicate with adult caregivers about the learning that is occurring. When that understanding is shared with your visitors, it can transform the museum experience from a fun afternoon to a thing of value, and to an experience that they will seek to revisit.

The following activities focus on how staff can begin to think about the learning goals of your exhibits and programs, and how they can effectively communicate those goals to your visitors.

# Wonder Boxes: Exploring Collaborative Play

## **Time:**

1 hour

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Making Learning Visible
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To understand the dynamic that occurs during collaborative play, including how members of a group can support each other (also called “scaffolding”) and how collaboration can encourage some members to develop new skills or knowledge.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

1. A large piece of paper with the following areas of development written on them:
  - a. Motor
  - b. Cognitive
  - c. Social/Emotional
  - d. Language
2. A “wonder box” for each of the groups. The boxes do not need to be identical but should EACH include a variety of items that support different forms of play. Some suggested examples are:
  - Juggling balls (may need a note attached that says “for juggling”)
  - Jump rope
  - Sudoku
  - Chess
  - Musical instruments (especially guitars/ukuleles)
  - Art supplies
  - Hula hoops
  - Playing cards with a note suggesting magic tricks

**NOTE:** Because this activity is about scaffolding, and the audience is adult staff, materials need to be chosen with this audience in mind. There will need to be a mix of challenges that some adults will have difficulty with (juggling, Sudoku, playing a musical instrument, etc.), and that some staff members are likely to have proficiency with. If the activities are too simple (ex. playing with blocks or Legos), then little to no scaffolding will take place.

## **Overview:**

Participants explore a variety of activities that will encourage some to learn new skills with the assistance of their peers, and others to “scaffold”, or provide that assistance. A discussion of what role this kind of support plays in child development follows this activity.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

The process of “scaffolding” occurs constantly in informal learning environments when adult caregivers and children are collaborating together. Scaffolding refers to the support that an adult, older sibling, or peer provides for a child that helps that child to develop a skill or knowledge as a result of that support. By feeling what it is like to receive such support and develop knowledge or a new skill, participants can begin to appreciate the important role that family members play as they explore the museum with their children.

## **Instructions:**

1. Divide the participants into groups (no more than 6 people per group). Distribute “Wonder Boxes”—with lids off, and tell the groups: *Today we’re going to take an opportunity to explore play: by playing.* Each of the boxes should be full of an assortment of materials as mentioned in ***Materials and Preparation*** above.
2. **Directions to the group:** *Here’s what you need to do: Play with what’s in your box with others in your group. Just let yourselves go and have fun. If you don’t know how to do something..ask around. Maybe someone in your group knows how.*
3. Give the group 20-30 minutes to explore the contents of their box and to play together. Circulate to ensure that everyone is playing with someone even if the whole group is not playing together.

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

### **Focus on the experience itself:**

1. *What happened while you were playing?*
2. *What materials were most interesting and/or fun for you?*

**Focus on the process:** *How did you facilitate each other’s play?*

1. *What if anything made your play more meaningful or challenging?*
2. *Did anyone help you to learn a new skill, or did you provide such assistance? How did it feel to receive that support? How did it feel to give that kind of support?*

**Focus on development: Review the four areas of development**

*If you were a child, what areas of development would have been involved?*

- **Motor:** Juggling, strumming, jumping, throwing...
- **Cognitive:** Problem solving, strategizing, creating...
- **Social/Emotional:** Working together, taking turns...
- **Language:** Talking, listening, writing...

**Connect to the museum:**

1. *How can we apply this experience to our work in the museum?*
2. *What does it tell us about family learning?*
3. *What does it tell us about our own roles?*

When scaffolding is occurring between children and adults, siblings or peers, it happens within what is sometimes referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development. This zone refers to a child's developmental ability, and what they are capable of learning or doing. Collaborative play helps children (and some might argue, adults) to stretch within their "zone". If you have discussed this concept with staff before, or if you wish to do so, this might be an interesting time to discuss this theory and how it plays out in the museum.

**Zone of Development**—*What does it mean to be at your developmental level? You're comfortable. You have expertise.*

**Proximal**—*closest. In terms of this theory, it is the next level up, just a little beyond what you already know how to do.*

1. *Did you ever find yourself in your own Zone of Proximal Development—where you were both challenged and engaged; maybe even in flow?*
2. *Have you ever observed children being "stretched" through their zone to learn something new?*

# Making Learning Visible

## Time:

40 minutes

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- Making Learning Visible
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## Learning Objectives:

- Staff will develop strategies and techniques for sharing with adult caregivers what their children are learning in programs and exhibits.

## Materials and Preparation:

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Paper and pens
- One minute timer or stopwatch
- A list of at least 5 exhibits and/or 5 programs done in the museum

## Overview:

This game helps staff practice the skill of examining programs, activities and exhibit components in an effort to discern what children are learning; then to share this insight with adult caregivers.

## Instructions:

1. Tell the group that they are going to play a game that challenges them to figure out what children are learning during an activity. As an example, choose a program or exhibit from your museum and write its name at the top of a piece of chart paper. Ask the group to shout out as many things as they can think of in one minute that children learn during the program or exhibit visit. Start the one-minute timer or stopwatch, say “go” and record everything they shout out.
2. Review the list that the group created. How might they categorize their contributions? Did they mostly come up with **knowledge**, **skills** or **attitudes** that children practice or learn? For example, a list about a bubbles exhibit might include things like “surface tension”; “evaporation”; or “dry hands pop bubbles, wet hands don’t”. These could all

be considered **knowledge**. But **skills** like observation; using tools, problem solving, measurement, estimating and more can also be learned and practiced; as can **attitudes** like “science is fun”. Ask them to also think about different kinds of skills: Gross Motor; Fine Motor; Language; Self-Help; Social and Cognitive skills all can be developed or practiced in museum exhibits and programs.

3. Divide the group into teams of 2-3 for this activity. Distribute paper and pens to each team, and tell them that you will read off the name of an exhibit or program—when you do they will have one minute to write down as many THINGS LEARNED as they can think of that children learn or practice in that exhibit or program.
4. Read off the name of a program or exhibit, time one minute and tell all teams to stop.
5. Ask one team to volunteer what they came up with. As they read off their list, all teams should be looking at their own lists—if two or more teams wrote down the same THING LEARNED, it is removed from all teams’ lists (if you have ever played Boggle, you are familiar with this method of scoring). After the 1<sup>st</sup> team has shared their entire list, they should count up one point for each THING LEARNED that they and they alone wrote down. Ask other teams if they have any other THINGS LEARNED to share, and again ask other teams if they came up with the same THINGS LEARNED. All teams should score their lists, receiving one point for each unique THING LEARNED that they came up with.
6. If any teams list a THING LEARNED that anyone disagrees with, other teams can challenge it and ask the submitting team to defend their choice. Teams should then vote on whether to allow that THING LEARNED to count.
7. Begin round two with a new exhibit or program, and continue to play the game as long as you see fit.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion, such as:

- *How does this exercise relate to what we might do in our exhibits or programs?*
- *How and when might you share this information with adult caregivers?*
- *If any team had to defend a THING LEARNED, ask: Was it difficult to explain why you thought children learn what you said they do? How might this relate to how you talk to parents about what children are learning?*
- *Were some exhibits or programs difficult to assess? Whom can we talk to in order to find out more about what kids are learning there?*



## Extending Learning Beyond the Museum

*“We engage in strategies that help museum experiences resonate after families leave, providing resources, ideas or inspiration for extending learning beyond the museum visit.”*

At Boston Children’s Museum we like to talk about “resonant” experiences—our goal with our visitors is to inspire and excite in a way that sticks with the families that visit us. Real and sustained impact occurs after a museum visit, if an experience they had manages to kindle more and greater discovery. If staff can share connections with families between their museum experience and their everyday lives, such resonance can be encouraged. Connecting experiences to families’ everyday lives also contributes to “buy-in”—if families understand why what they are learning about matters to their own lives, they are that much more likely to be invested in the experience. The following activities address how staff can begin to make connections between museum exhibits and programs, and experiences that families have had or could have in their lives.

# Sound Familiar? Making it Relevant

## **Time:**

20-30 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Extending Learning Beyond the Museum
- Ourselves as Invitation
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will develop skills in engaging the public around diverse topics and subjects.
- Staff will learn how to spark visitors' interest in a potentially unfamiliar topic by relating it to the familiar.
- Staff will understand that being an effective educator does not necessarily require extensive expertise in a subject.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Blank index cards, scraps of blank paper, or similar
- Box, bag, hat or something to draw pieces of paper from
- Pens or pencils
- Clock or watch (optional)
- Chart paper and markers

## **Overview:**

This improvisational game helps staff develop the skill of making a program or exhibit topic relevant to museum visitors, and tying experiences to visitors' everyday lives.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask the group if, when they are talking to visitors, they ever try to relate an experience to visitors' everyday lives. What are some of the advantages to making these connections (good way to start a conversation; provides a cognitive reference point for an experience; offers a context for why what they are doing and learning matters to their lives)? Tell the group:

*Today, we will practice strategies to make program topics relevant and compelling to kids and families. In order to do so, we need to try and build a bridge between the topic and the visitor's everyday life. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to introduce a topic or idea to museum visitors? How did you do it? What kinds of questions did you ask visitors? What information did you share?*

Make a list of responses on chart paper or whiteboard. Sample responses may include:

*"Have you ever seen a....."*  
*"Have you used one of these before...?"*  
*"What does this remind you of...."*  
*"Did you ever wonder.....?"*  
*"Have you ever heard of.....?"*  
*"Do you like to.....?"*

2. Tell the group that today, they're going to play a game that challenges them to "think on their feet" to build these bridges between program topics and visitors. We all have areas of expertise, but it's important to remember that you don't have to be an expert in a subject to get visitors interested in it. In fact, sometimes it's better if you're not an expert!
3. Distribute the scraps of paper and pens/pencils so that each person has at least two pieces of scrap paper. Ask the group to think for a moment and then write down a sample topic for a museum program. The only requirement is that this topic be something they are reasonably confident everyone in the group will have at least heard of. It could be a hobby, a tradition, a place, a craft, an activity, a food, a sport, or just about anything you can imagine being featured in a museum program or exhibit.

Sample responses from past participants have included:

*Chinese New Year*  
*Marching bands*  
*Dollhouses*  
*Dirtbikes*  
*Aliens*  
*Snowboarding*  
*Conservation of America's wetlands*  
*Thai Basketweaving*  
*Baking bread*  
*Paper airplanes*  
*Eco-friendly housekeeping*

4. Have each person in the group submit at least one topic, and then mix the scraps of paper up in a hat, box or bag so that they may be drawn at random.
5. Ask for a volunteer to act as the first Program Leader. Have that person pick a topic randomly from the hat, and take about a minute to think about how they will engage

their audience in the topic and “build the bridge” to the visitor’s experience. The Program Leader should feel free to set some specifics before starting if they wish, such as “Imagine I am approaching a family with 2 parents and a 3, 5 and 7 year-old in the Bubbles exhibit” or “Imagine that I am leading a paper-making workshop in the Art Studio, and a mother and her 8 year-old son are watching but not participating” etc. The Program Leader should then introduce a fictional activity or program to the group, based on the topic that he or she drew at random. For example, if the Program Leader drew a slip of paper with the topic, “Baking Bread”, he or she might start off with simple questions for the “visitors” like:

- *“Do you like to eat sandwiches? What is the most important part of a sandwich?”*
- *“I need some help here. Who can tell me the difference between baking and cooking?”*
- *“What do you call it when you take flour and sugar and some other ingredients and mix them and put them in the oven?”*
- *“Do you have an oven in your kitchen at home? What do you use it for?”*
- *“Who can name 3 different kinds of bread that they have tried?”*

The job of the people in the “audience” is to engage as if they were typical museum visitors.

6. When the Program Leader is done (this could take 30 seconds, or it could take a few minutes), or you feel like they have engaged the audience around their chosen topic, ask the group to reflect on how the Program Leader got them interested in the topic. Which questions were the most engaging to the audience and why? Were their questions that excluded some of the audience? How could this be avoided?
7. Ask the group to come up with a few other questions that could have been asked to connect with the audience and make the topic relevant.
8. Repeat this exercise with several topics and Program Leaders as time allows.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion, such as:

1. *Can we identify any common strategies for engaging kids and families by making program topics relevant to everyday life?*
2. *What were some of the hardest topics to engage the group in, and why?*
3. *Can you recall an example of a time you struggled to engage visitors in a program and make it relevant to them? Ask the group to brainstorm solutions and ideas for your example.*
4. *If you’re delivering a program in a topic that you’re excited about, does this make it easier or harder to engage visitors that may not find the topic inherently interesting?*
5. *Do you think there are some topics or programs that simply are too obscure to be presented to an audience in this way? What are they—and can they group challenge themselves to find a way to make them relevant?*

6. *Why is it important to make connections between museum programs and a visitor's life outside the museum?*
7. *How important is it that the questions relate to what the activity is really about?*

# Bringing the Learning Home

## **Time:**

20-30 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Extending Learning Beyond the Museum

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will practice suggesting at-home extensions to Museum activities, exhibits and programs.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Blank index cards, scraps of blank paper, or similar
- Box, bag, hat or something to draw pieces of paper from
- Pens or pencils
- Clock or watch (optional)
- Chart paper and markers

## **Overview:**

This activity helps staff develop the skill of suggesting at-home activities that extend the learning that happens in the Museum.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

This activity is a follow-up to “Sound Familiar? Making it Relevant”. That activity is about relating programs and exhibits to families’ lives, and using what they already know to make a program meaningful. “Bringing the Learning Home” is about what happens after the museum visit—it focuses on developing ideas for extensions to the activity being done, and encourages staff to suggest these at-home extensions to the families they are working with.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask the group if, when they are working with visitors, they ever suggest things families can do at home that relate to an activity, program or exhibit. What are some of the advantages to making these connections (extends the learning beyond the museum;

keeps kids interested in the topic; keeps adult caregivers involved in their children's learning)? Tell the group:

*Today, we will practice making suggestions to families for ways that they can continue what they learned or did at the museum at home. Have you ever made any such suggestions to families? What program or exhibit were you in, and what at-home extensions did you suggest?*

Make a list of responses on chart paper or whiteboard.

2. Tell the group that today, you are challenging them to “think on their feet” to offer suggestions for at-home extension activities. It is important that these extensions relate to what the activity is really about...what the child learns, or what skill they practice.
3. Distribute the scraps of paper and pens/pencils so that each person has at least two pieces of scrap paper. Ask the group to write down a museum program or exhibit on each piece of paper. This can include past programs and exhibits that may no longer exist.
4. Have each person in the group submit at least one exhibit or program to you. Mix the scraps of paper up in a hat, box or bag so that they may be drawn at random.
5. Divide the group into teams of two. Randomly distribute the scraps of paper with the Museum exhibits or programs on them, 2 to each team. Ask teams to take a minute or two to think about two things:
  - i. What is this activity, program or exhibit REALLY about? What are we hoping children will learn or practice?
  - ii. What is something that families can do together at home, outside, etc. that relates to the learning goals of this activity, program or exhibit, and helps visitors to continue the learning after their Museum visit?
6. Have teams share their work. What did they determine were the core learning goals of the exhibit or program? What at-home activities can they suggest? Do other teams have thoughts on the core goals or other at-home activities they can suggest? For example, if the selected program was “Building paper airplanes”, this activity is about manipulating materials; problem solving; observation; and possibly about flight (though paper airplanes are not great corollaries to real airplanes). Related at-home activities that extend the learning could include origami (manipulating materials); any building/construction activity with straws, blocks, etc. (problem solving and observation); observing birds in the backyard (observation and flight); etc.

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion, such as:

- *How difficult is it to think of an extension to an exhibit or program? Are any exhibits or programs well suited to extensions? Are any poorly suited to thinking of extensions?*
- *Do all of the Museum's exhibits, programs and activities have clear goals? Which were easier to determine and which were difficult?*
- *Does anyone have any strategies they can share about how to think of extension activities for families?*
- *Did any teams think about asking families what their interests are first, and then thinking of extension activities based on those interests?*



# What Makes an Activity Memorable?

## **Time:**

30 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Extending Learning Beyond the Museum
- Making Learning Visible
- Fun

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will identify strategies and facilitation skills that help make activities memorable; enhance learning; and ensure that learning is more visible to visitors.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Chart paper and markers (prepare the blank chart below ahead of time)
- Post It notes and pens

## **Overview:**

A discussion about the ways staff can make activities more memorable, and by definition more effective, for families.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Memorable activities are just that...they live on in visitors' minds well beyond the time of their visit. Such resonance can lead to continued learning and connections made at home, as well as enhanced learning while they are at the museum. There are many ways to make an activity or program memorable—one of the most impactful for adult caregivers is when they gain insight into what their brilliant little child is learning. Staff can help both adults and children to be more aware of the learning that is taking place, as well as how caregivers can support that play.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask participants about a memorable experience they had in a museum; at a summer camp; in an afterschool or in school. *What made the experience memorable? Did the memorable experience lead to any further investigation or behavior?*

2. Place the following chart on the wall and have participants read the first column. Ask them if these look like strategies that the museum currently uses to help make activities and programs memorable for families.
3. Have each participant write on Post It notes a few examples of things they have done or might do that relate to these detailed strategies—encourage, discourage, stimulate, facilitate, etc. Have them post their notes in the second column next to the related strategies. If they are stuck, refer to the filled in chart that follows to give them an example or two:

<b>Strategies to help families remember and extend museum experiences:</b>	<b>Staff behaviors and activities that help meet the strategies</b>
Conversations among <b>visitors in a family</b> about the experience	
Conversations between <b>visitors</b> and <b>staff</b> about the experience	
The whole family is actively involved in an experience	
Adults' have an appreciative understanding of their child's learning or achievements	
An experience is seen as personal to a family or child.	
Families refer to their prior experience or knowledge about the subject matter or skill set.	
Families are part of "over the top" activities that make the moment memorable and easy to talk about later.	
Visitors engage many senses, including taste and smell	
Visitors have an emotional response to what is occurring.	
Visitors take home a product, including one that the child wears	
Adults write down kids' reflections	
Adults record kids' progress or achievements.	
Family takes home pictures of themselves at work or with their product.	

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Are there any strategies that are not listed but that might contribute to making activities and programs memorable? What are some examples of what staff can do related to these strategies?*
2. *Did any of the strategies or behaviors make you think about how you interact with families? Is there anything you might try to help make activities more memorable?*
3. *Why do you think it is important for experiences to be memorable?* This will hopefully lead to a discussion about how critical the processing of an experience is to learning and retaining knowledge. Much research has been done on this subject—if you can share some of that research with staff, it can be helpful.

## **Facilitator Tips**

The following is a list of specific activities that match the discussed strategies above. They are meant as examples, rather than as “answers”. Feel free to add any of these examples to the list that your staff create, and feel free to create your own.

<b>Strategies to help families remember and extend museum experiences</b>	<b>Staff behaviors and examples of activities that will help meet the general strategies</b>
Conversations among <b>visitors in a family</b> about the experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pull up chairs or stools so caregivers can be close by as well as be at their child’s level without stooping.</li><li>• Provide spaces for families to work together on projects/activities.</li><li>• Encourage children to share what they have done with caregivers who are less involved.</li></ul>
Conversations between <b>visitors</b> and <b>staff</b> about the experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask adults, “Did you ever do this when you were a child?”</li><li>• Ask visitors “What” questions: “What did you notice about how the golf ball rolled?”; “What might happen next?”; “What else do you know?”; “What if the dinosaur was hungry?”; “What if you had a magic power?”</li></ul>
The whole family is involved in an experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invite the family to participate together. Suggest a number of roles: adults can record their children’s thoughts, could make their own art project, or can assist the child.</li><li>• Show children how to do something and then have them show their caregiver. Reciprocal teaching is a powerful learning tool.</li></ul>

Adults' have an appreciative understanding of their child's learning or achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help adults recognize how cool what their child did is.</li> <li>• Share our own excitement about a child's achievement with everyone in the family.</li> <li>• Talk about some of the learning that the child is accomplishing by engaging in the activity.</li> <li>• If you know about child development, talk about why what the child is doing is important.</li> <li>• Remark about how engaged a child is in a project—including how long they persist.</li> </ul>
An experience is seen as personal to a family or child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask a caregiver or child to relate the experience to something in the child's life.</li> </ul>
Families refer to prior experience or knowledge about the subject or skill set.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask visitors if they have ever done anything like this before.</li> <li>• Make connections to similar experiences that visitors might have had, but may not think of—e.g. <i>This is a lot like jumping rope. Have you done that before?</i></li> </ul>
Families are part of "over the top" activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show excitement during fun dramatic activities: Count down from ten before you drop a melon off the balcony (to demonstrate helmet safety) or before you launch a rocket the child designed.</li> <li>• Be a little silly—joke with families. Wear a costume or lead an activity with a puppet.</li> </ul>
Visitors engage many senses, including taste, smell, touch, and hearing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include food in an activity (if possible)</li> <li>• Add a musical element (create a song, play a song that connects to the learning, play gentle background music, etc.).</li> <li>• Invite visitors to use their senses: smell the paint, touch the frost you made, smell the clay, listen to the sounds you make when you jump rope.</li> <li>• Engage family in touching the exhibit or in building a model.</li> </ul>
Visitors have an emotional response to what is occurring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build suspense.</li> <li>• Turn out the lights; use black lights.</li> <li>• Use humor and laughter.</li> </ul>
Visitors take home a product, including one that the child wears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capes and crowns</li> <li>• Create a game</li> <li>• Create a drawing or flip book</li> </ul>
Adults write down kids' reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poetry program: adults record words for child's word books</li> <li>• Adults write down children's "newspaper article" about their amusement park ride creation.</li> </ul>
Adults record kids' progress or achievements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involving adults as personal trainers with counters and clip boards during a hula hoop activity.</li> <li>• Family records how long their flying object stays in the air...can they beat their own record?</li> </ul>
Family takes home pictures of themselves at work or with their product.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff offers to take pictures using the family's camera.</li> <li>• Staff suggests a good place or time to snap a picture if the caregivers is already doing so.</li> <li>• Staff asks if the child would like to take a picture.</li> </ul>

## Reflective Practice

*“We engage in an on-going professional improvement process that includes reflecting on successes and challenges, setting personal goals, and monitoring growth.”*

Reflective practice is not necessarily easy: it takes time and it takes skill. It asks participants to take a realistic look at their abilities and their weak points, and to think about how they can improve. Learning how to think objectively, either alone or with one's peers, is an excellent professional development opportunity for your front line staff. It is a skill that they will use later in their careers; and it will contribute immediately to more thoughtful, more intentional work with your visitors.

If you do not already do it, getting into the habit of asking your staff to reflect on their practice will likely require some adjustments in how you think about your staff and how they spend their time. It also requires thoughtful feedback from staff managers. But the work that is necessary is far outweighed by the benefits that such reflection will afford you. The following activities can help you and your staff begin to adopt reflective practice as a regular part of your work.

# Sorting Standards and Behaviors

## Time:

45 minutes – 1 hour

## Related Standards of Engagement:

- All 10 Standards

## Learning Objectives:

- Familiarize participants with the **Standards of Engagement** and the corresponding staff behaviors.

## Materials and Preparation:

*Note: This activity requires a bit of prep time, printing out and cutting out the Standards and Behaviors. Do not let that dissuade you – the activity is very worthwhile and leads to good conversations about your museum’s mission and values.*

- Copies of the **Standards of Engagement**, one per participant
- Easel-sized chart paper (10 sheets).
  - Write one **Standard** and its description on each sheet, then post the sheets on the wall around the room.
- The **Standards of Engagement Behaviors** sheets (found in the *Appendix* at the end of this curriculum). Print the behaviors out, cut along the dotted lines, but keep them in stacks according to their **Standard** to make sorting them into envelopes easier.
- Enough envelopes to divide your participants into teams of 2-3. Place the cut-out behaviors (from previous bullet point), into the envelopes, distributing them so that each envelope contains a few behaviors for each of the 10 **Standards**.
- Tape for each group. If you have different color tape, it can help groups recall which behaviors they sorted.

## Overview:

An introduction of the **Standards of Engagement** and the behaviors associated with them.

## **Instructions:**

1. Divide into teams of 2-3 participants (if you have a very large group, teams of 4-5 are OK). Provide each team with an envelope containing behaviors associated with each of the ten ***Standards of Engagement***.
2. Ask each team to discuss the behaviors in their envelope and then decide which ***Standard*** they think it best supports. Explain, *These slips of paper each have behaviors that are associated with one or more **Standard**. Try to decide as a team, where you think it is most important or appropriate.* As the teams figure out where their behaviors belong, they can add them to the chart paper. Please note some behaviors will cross over to more than one ***Standard***.
3. After the teams have finished, give them a copy of the ***Standards of Engagement***. Ask them to compare the behaviors they placed on the chart paper with the **Standards** as they are detailed on the copy you gave them. Encourage discussion about how many behaviors fit within several ***Standards***.
4. Ask each team to select one behavior that they think is especially important for family learning.

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on the process of sorting out the behaviors, including the overlap among ***Standards***. Ask each team to present the behavior they selected.

1. *What made this sorting task easy or hard? Why do you think there is so much overlap among the behaviors?*
2. *What behavior did your team select as important? What makes that behavior especially important to family learning?*
3. *How would this list of behaviors help someone who is new in the museum?*

Remind the group that this is the list of behaviors that is on the ***Staff Profile Tool***. Explain, *You didn't get to discuss all of the behaviors, since each team only saw a sample.* Segue to discussing the logistics for taking the ***Staff Profile Tool***, including release time and rationale. Review the rationale for the tool and its uses: helping staff reflect on their own behavior and helping the museum identify training needs.

# Expectations That I Have of Visitors... And They Have of Me

## **Time:**

1 ½ hours, 2 sessions if necessary

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Reflective Practice
- Ourselves as Invitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To reflect upon staff expectations of visitors and to address visitors' needs.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Chart paper
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Clipboards

## **Overview:**

Participants will share their expectations from visitors to the Museum, and will then interview visitors to find out what they expect from staff.

## **Instructions:**

### **PART 1—Expectations We Have of Visitors (30 minutes)**

1. Everyone brings expectations and attitudes into their work. Visitors also have expectations for their visit and of the Museum's staff. This activity will explore staff expectations of visitors and how they can impact family interactions; and visitor's expectations of staff.
2. Divide the group into teams of 2-4. Ask teams to create a list detailing "What do I/we as staff expect/wish/want from visitors?"
3. After 10-15 minutes, when all teams are done, ask them to share their lists with the larger group, with each group sharing one item at a time in a round robin. Record all of these expectations on a large group list. Where are there similarities? Differences?



4. Ask each team to record on a piece of paper what they think visitors want/expect from staff. Collect these lists and, if you have time, create a large group list of these expectations.
5. Return to your group and create a list with your answers. Again, use a round robin format to create a large group list.

## **PART 2—Expectations They Have of Us (1 hour or more)**

1. Refer to the group list of expectations staff think visitors have of them. Ask staff how accurate they think the list is. How could they test this accuracy? Tell participants that they will be stepping out into the Museum and asking visitors directly about their expectations and needs from staff.
2. In the same teams of 2-4, have participants visit the Museum with a pen, clipboard and the following questions:
  - Have you noticed the Museum staff here on your visit today?
  - What are your expectations from Museum staff while you are visiting?
  - What do you NEED from staff when you visit?
  - Is there anything that you would like to see from staff that they are not doing?
3. Give teams 30-40 minutes to interview at least 3 adult caregivers/families. When they return from their interviews, have them read off the responses. Record these responses to create a master list, then debrief this exercise.

*Note: It is possible that the public may be hesitant to be completely open when interviewed in person about suggestions for staff improvement. You might ask visitors to complete questions on a response sheet and leave their responses in a designated answer box, at the admissions desk, etc.*

## **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Did any of the visitors' responses surprise you? What do these visitor expectations tell us about the work that we do? Is there anything we can change to better meet their needs?*
2. *What are some things I might not know about visitors before I make assumptions about them (ex. they are deaf, dealing with family situations, illness, etc.)?*
3. *In what situations are you uncomfortable with visitors and their attitudes (e.g. pushy, loud, non-English speakers, dressed differently, etc.)?*
4. *What first impressions do you think people have of you? What "prejudices" have people had that were off base?*
5. *Identify one thing you want to focus on to better meet the expectations of families.*
6. *Identify one kind of situation you can become uncomfortable in with visitors and their attitudes, and write down 3-4 ways you can improve your family interactions around that situation.*

# Oops! No One Is Perfect.

## **Time:**

30 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Reflective Practice
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will identify times when they have not been at their best or have missed opportunities to engage with families.
- Staff will discuss challenges that can lead to not being at their best, and develop strategies for turning failure into success.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Scrap paper
- Pens or pencils
- Chart paper and a marker

## **Overview:**

Staff will discuss barriers to successful interactions with families and develop strategies for overcoming those barriers.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Everyone likes talking about successes, but we can learn a great deal from assessing moments when we have been challenged and not performed as we wished we had. It is often difficult to coax staff to admit times when they did not succeed, but with repetition this kind of thoughtful reflection gets easier and can be very fruitful.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask participants if they are better at their job now than when they first started. What helped them to improve? What are some things they have learned? Tell participants that any job is a learning experience and that when working in a setting such as a museum, it's a

good thing to begin to see ways to improve. *The more we're around families, the more we may notice missed opportunities or even times we wish we'd said or done something different.* Tell them that the activity that follows is intended to provide an opportunity to share some of these missed opportunities, and to problem solve ways to improve.

2. Divide the group into teams of 3-4 and give each team paper and pens. Ask teams to write down any times any of them remember missing a chance to increase family interactions or made mistakes that shut down interactions. They should record both what happened and what they wish they had done—if they know what this is.
3. Ask the teams to select examples they are willing to share with the larger group. Talk about not only what happened, but also why it happened—record the things that can make it hard for staff to be at their best (e.g. being in a hurry, being busy, being tired, not having enough experience, not knowing what to say or do, etc.).
4. *OPTIONAL* - Create a chart like the one that follows below (this activity may work better for your group simply as a conversation, without recording what is shared).
5. Give each team a few minutes to identify as many solutions as they can. Share these ideas, and talk about ways in which the museum or supervisors could support these solutions.
6. If you have time, create a role play to share what it looks like when an opportunity is missed and what it looks like when it is done well.

Missed Opportunity	Reason	Solutions
<i>Example: A family wanted to start an activity but there was no room at the table. I was busy and they walked away.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I was busy</i></li> <li><i>I didn't know where I could get more tables or chairs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I could let the family know that I would find some tables and chairs, and ask the front desk to find someone to bring them.</i></li> </ul>
<i>Example: I was working on the climbing structure and the child wanted to try it, but the parent said, "No, remember you were afraid last time."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I didn't know what to say, so I didn't say anything.</i></li> </ul>	

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Reflect on this exercise and help the group connect it to their role at the museum. Include questions that might lead the discussion:

1. *Is it difficult to share with others the times when you missed an opportunity or did not succeed at something?*
2. *What are some ways that we can support each other to succeed?*

# MuseumLife: Computer Simulation Game

## **Time:**

1 ½ hours. Can be done as two sessions

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Reflective Practice
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To recognize the characteristics—including disposition, qualities, skills, etc—that would make someone an exemplary facilitator of collaborative learning—and consider how to evolve to this state and to appreciate their own evolution since they started.
- To articulate the connection between the Standards of Engagement and the work done at the Museum.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- Large chart paper for each team
- Markers, colored pencils, etc.
- Construction paper
- Cardboard/poster board
- Scissors
- Copies of the Standard of Engagement

## **Overview:**

Teams of participants collaborate to create a concept for a computer simulation game about their role in the museum.

## **Instructions:**

1. Ask participants to list the qualities that they feel are most important for a staff member in their role. Which of these qualities can be improved or developed, and which are qualities that you either have or you do not?

2. Ask staff if any of them have ever played a computer simulation game (if you're working with an audience who is familiar with these games, you can call it a "Sim")? Which games? List the games as they name them. Some games that might be referenced include:
  - a. World of Warcraft
  - b. The Sims
  - c. SimCity
  - d. Second Life
  - e. Oregon Trail
  - f. Spore
  - g. Zoo Tycoon
  - h. Farmville

**NOTE** – this activity can also be done as a board game, rather than a computer game. If done as a board game, provide lots of recycled materials so participants can create tokens, cards, etc. and actually play their games when they are done.

3. Identify the participants that have familiarity with these kinds of games—these are your "experts". Divide the group into teams of 3-5 and make sure that each team has at least one of these experts.
4. Set the challenge—*Teams will work together to design a computer simulation game about your job at the museum. Consider **situations with families, opportunities to interact—programs, facilitation, maintaining the museum, etc.** Your goal is to create a game that will introduce a novice to the complexities and challenges of doing your job well; that teaches the player how to improve family learning in the Museum; and that highlights the skills necessary to grow from inexperienced to amazing. A front line staff person should be the point-of-view character in your game. This character is an avatar...so it can be as true-to-life or as goofy as you see fit (for example, characters in the game "The Sims" are more like real people..."World of Warcraft" avatars are fantasy-based, but all are in some ways an extension of the player and how they see themselves).*
5. Post the following list on a piece of chart paper. Tell participants that they should work together to design their game, and that they should consider:
  - a. How does the character get started?
  - b. What do you call their role?
  - c. Do they give themselves a name?
  - d. Is there a tool bar of available (if limited) resources? What resources or tools can players collect? What are the limits or costs for these?
  - e. How do challenges and situations arise? What can you do in the game?
  - f. What are the trade-offs? (ex. If you're good at one thing, you may not be so good at another; If you do one thing that makes one family happy, it may have a cost to other families).
  - g. Are there levels? How do you progress to new levels?
  - h. How do you earn and lose points? What statistics are impacted by gaining or losing points?
  - i. How do you win?

- j. Create some sample situations and challenges. What are the players and other characters' responses/reactions to these situations and challenges? Is there a cost for these situations (to the character; to families; etc.)?
6. Create the games! Provide any materials that participants will need—they may choose to “storyboard” their games (drawing or creating “scenes” that might play out); they may simply create a narrative description; etc. Check in with each team to see how they are doing. Make suggestions as necessary—especially those that get them thinking about the Standards of Engagement, how they relate to the game, and how things like training, professional development and self reflection can contribute to their characters' evolution. Make sure that everyone is participating and contributing.
7. When teams are nearly done, give them word that they have 10 minutes to complete their games and prepare a presentation to their peers. Remind them that their game should have a name.
8. Present the games! Encourage teams to ask each other questions about their games, especially referring to the posted questions (see #5 above). Some questions to ask teams include:
  - a. How well does the game reflect your experience?
  - b. How well would the game introduce a novice to your job?
  - c. Do the challenges reflect the reality of museum work?
  - d. How did you collaborate on creating the game?
  - e. What did you learn from doing this activity?

### **Debrief and Connect:**

Encourage the groups who are listening to the game being described to make connections to the Standards of Engagement:

1. *Think back to the Standards of Engagement. How does your game reflect the process a staff person goes through to meet those standards?*
2. *What does the learning curve look like for a new staff person? How do other people and processes support that person as they learn?*

# Wrap it Up - Reflecting on the Day

## **Time:**

5-10 minutes

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Reflective Practice

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Staff will reflect on their work for the day, what they did well and what they could improve.

## **Materials and Preparation:**

- None needed—chart paper and markers are optional

## **Overview:**

A series of end-of-the-day questions that staff can use to help them think about how they performed.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

Taking time to reflect on how we perform is often the first thing that is trimmed from our day as other responsibilities take priority. But such reflection can only serve to improve what we do, how we do it, and ultimately how we serve the public. Reflection among staff may best be accomplished through simple and direct questions. It should not be a drawn-out, laborious process...a few minutes, a few thoughts should suffice. It's not about answers; it's about having an opportunity to reflect and feel safe to be honest. The list of questions below is meant to serve as a sample. Develop your own questions, and get into the practice of reflection.

## **Instructions:**

1. Time for reflection may fit into your staff routine, or it might require that you set time aside. If you have a gathering of floor staff at the end of the day, after all visitors have left, this can serve as an ideal time for reflection. Some museums, for instance, schedule their staff to stay for 10-30 minutes after the museum closes in order to reset exhibits, clean, and reflect on the day as a group. Other museums even close their exhibits 15 minutes before the end



of the day (ex. 4:45) so that staff can fulfill these duties. A meeting the following day prior to the museum opening can also suffice for reflection. When all staff are gathered together, pose one of the following questions (or a new question that you have invented) and give staff a chance to respond. Try not to force responses unless no one is chiming in. Sometimes staff will have much to say, and sometimes they may not. The more you make this kind of reflection a part of your regular routine, the more response you will get from your staff. Some questions to ask:

- a. What would you tell your friends about your day today?
- b. What were your favorite and least favorite parts of today?
- c. Does anyone have any successes they wish to share from today? Does anyone have any challenges they would like to share?
- d. Who can tell us something that they learned today?
- e. What was the most rewarding experience you had today? Did anything happen today that made it a difficult day?
- f. What worked today? What didn't work?

NOTE: It may be difficult to encourage staff to share times in which they did not succeed, or things that they tried that did not work. The more often you have them reflect together as a group, the more you will see a willingness to share. Make sure that you create an atmosphere of trust and safety when talking about difficulties.

# 100 Stories Of Collaborative Learning

## **Time:**

A few weeks

## **Related Standards of Engagement:**

- Reflective Practice
- Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation
- Making Learning Visible

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To highlight examples of family/collaborative learning in your museum.
- To provide an opportunity for front line staff to share their successes and clarify how they impact visitors in your museum.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the concept of collaborative learning among families and other visitor groups.

## **Materials:**

- A posted sign in the staff lounge or other high-traffic staff area
- Post It notes or a submission box with slips of paper and a pencil next to it
- A shared reward for reaching 50 examples (chocolate-dipped fruit, pizza, 15-minute massages with local massage school students, etc. have been used in the past), and another reward for reaching 100

## **Overview:**

In this improve/charades game, participants will experiment with various cues to emphasize how our overall presentation—including words, tone, body language, posture, gestures, and facial expressions—combine to convey a message to visitors.

## **Background for the Facilitator:**

This activity would work best after you have introduced concepts related to collaborative/family learning. Activities that explore these concepts include:

- *Caregivers – What Are They Up To?*
- *Feeling the Collaboration*
- *Wonder Boxes: Exploring Collaborative Play*

The title of this activity is a play on the phrase “100 Languages of Learning”, which comes from the work of educators in the Reggio-Emilia town in Italy. That school system has been an important leader in the field of early childhood education by encouraging educators to document learning when they see it. The goal of this activity is to raise the awareness of your entire staff about the many ways that families and other visitor groups are learning collaboratively in your museum. This activity focuses on narrative—capturing stories from the point of view of exhibit staff and volunteers. Sharing these stories in a highly public manner is meant to encourage other staff, perhaps even your board members, to also contribute positive examples of what they observe families saying and doing in your museum.

### **Instructions:**

1. At a staff-wide meeting invite all museum employees, including upper level personnel, to observe and document examples of family/collaborative learning they see within the museum. Ask if anyone can provide an example from memory and talk about how it shows collaborative learning. Explain that you are challenging the entire staff to collect as many stories in one month as possible and that this is a collective challenge, so everyone can contribute by sharing what they observe.
2. Explain that observed collaborations can be shared and added to via a list (or sign, or submission box) posted in the staff lounge (or other designated high-traffic area). Explain that you will also send out an email for people to respond to, detailing their observations. An example of an email is included below.
3. Offer the challenge—ask the group how many examples they think they can generate in a month (or set a target of 50 or 100). Set a level you feel is appropriate for your staff given how busy your museum will be. Set an end date and share what the reward will be.  
*Anyone who contributes will be invited to share the reward with us at our meeting.*

### **Debrief and Connect:**

When the list is complete, make sure to compile and send to all staff. Then, in a floor staff training session, hand out that list for the following discussion. Have them scan the list for 5-10 minutes, and then ask them some questions to prompt discussion:

1. *Do all of these examples look familiar, or were some new to you?*
2. *Do you notice any common interactions, or stories that sound very similar?*

In teams of 2, participants should select 3 of the stories from the list and discuss with their partner what kinds of learning they think children are engaged in; and what kinds of support roles the adult are or might be assuming. Have teams share what they discussed.

## Example of Email:

Subject heading: OUR STORIES OF FAMILY LEARNING: LET THE CHALLENGE BEGIN!

Today is the first day of our challenge to document 100 examples of family/collaborative learning at our museum. You may include examples from the past AND those that you observe between now and the end of the challenge on {{XXX Date XXX}}. You can include any group that is playing and learning together, including school or camp groups.

Here's how it works:

- Reply to this email (do NOT hit "Reply All" – just send it to me!)
- Share your observation. Be brief, but if you're in the mood you might include:
  - a. Who is in the group or family? (Is it a cross generational group; a group of peers; etc.?)
  - b. What are they doing?
  - c. How are they interacting?
  - d. Is anyone supporting someone else's learning?
  - e. Is there anything about the situation—the way it's set up, something you or someone else said that encouraged the interaction/learning?
- Hold your breath for 10 seconds. Breathe.
- Hit send.
- Thank yourself.

When we get to 100 stories, everyone will be notified and congratulated. Chocolate-fruit fondue will follow!

Thanks all!

Seth R.

## Learning Together Appendix

The following pages contain supplemental materials for some of the “Learning Together” activities. Included are materials that support the following activities:

- A Trip to the Museum: How Hard Can it Be?
- Sorting Standards and Behaviors

## ***Family Pit Stop Cards***

The following 10 pages contain the ***Family Pit Stop Cards*** for the “A Trip to the Museum: How Hard Can it Be?” activity. Print them out and cut out the individual cards. Note the blank cards at the end, for you to add your own text if you would like.

**1 - Your Family**

**You are a  
single parent  
with 3 boys!**

**ADD 3 PENNIES TO YOUR RULER.**

**A**

**1 - Your Family**

**You are  
married  
with 1 child!**

**ADD 1 PENNY TO YOUR RULER.**

**B**

**1 - Your Family**

**You are  
married with  
2 daughters!**

**ADD 2 PENNIES TO YOUR RULER.**

**C**

**1 - Your Family**

**You are  
married  
with 3 kids!**

**ADD 3 PENNIES TO YOUR RULER.**

**D**

## **2 - Waking Up**

**The baby was crying all night – you're running on no sleep.**

**ADD 5 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

# **A**

## **2 - Waking Up**

**A car alarm was going off all night – you're running on no sleep.**

**ADD 7 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

# **B**

## **2 - Waking Up**

**While getting out of bed you step on your child's action figure - time to limp around all morning!**

**ADD 4 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

# **C**

## **2 - Waking Up**

**You're stuffy and have a bad cold...this is going to be a rough day.**

**ADD 9 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

# **D**



## 3 - Breakfast

**Out of eggs – you have to run to the store to get some.**

**ADD 5 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN STAND ON ONE FOOT AND COUNT TO 20.**

**A**

## 3 - Breakfast

**Your spouse used the last of the milk, so you'll have to skip breakfast.**

**ADD 3 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN STAND ON ONE FOOT AND COUNT TO 20.**

**B**

## 3 - Breakfast

**Your daughter tests the laws of gravity by throwing oatmeal on the floor – big messy cleanup for you!**

**ADD 7 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN STAND ON ONE FOOT AND COUNT TO 20.**

**C**

## 3 - Breakfast

**Your spouse makes you pancakes...isn't that sweet?**

**REMOVE 3 PENNIES FROM YOUR STACK, THEN STAND ON ONE FOOT AND COUNT TO 20.**

**D**

## 4 - Getting Dressed

**Your son thinks running away from you naked is funny...it takes 30 minutes to catch and dress him.**

**ADD 7 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN SPIN IN A CIRCLE 3 TIMES.**

# A

## 4 - Getting Dressed

**While dressing your child the throw-up fairies visit and deposit a gift from your child all over you. Now you both need to get dressed again.**

**ADD 9 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN SPIN IN A CIRCLE 3 TIMES.**

# B

## 4 - Getting Dressed

**Your 6-year old has a screaming tantrum because she will not leave the house unless she is wearing her pirate outfit.**

**ADD 7 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN SPIN IN A CIRCLE 3 TIMES.**

# C

## 4 - Getting Dressed

**First try dressing your child... poop in the pants. Clean up the kid, then try again.**

**ADD 11 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN SPIN IN A CIRCLE 3 TIMES.**

# D

## 5 - Packing Up

**An unexpectedly smooth transition – you remembered to pack everything you need last night.**

**REMOVE 3 PENNIES FROM YOUR STACK.**

# A

## 5 - Packing Up

**Your spouse is riveted to a Today Show story about a sponge that saved a man's life...you're on your own getting ready.**

**ADD 2 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

# B

## 5 - Packing Up

**Lunch, check.  
Bottles, check.  
Diapers, check.  
Stroller, broken.**

**ADD 3 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

# C

## 5 - Packing Up

**Your daughter is so excited about going to the Museum that she introduces her head to the stairs. Bandage and 30 minutes of consoling.**

**ADD 2 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

# D

## 6 - Transportation

**You just missed the bus  
because your son is  
pretending to be a tree.**

**ADD 7 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

**A**

## 6 - Transportation

**Your little angel gets right  
in the car with  
no problems – you're  
on your way!**

**REMOVE 3 PENNIES FROM  
YOUR STACK.**

**B**

## 6 - Transportation

**The sidewalk on the way to  
the subway is being  
paved – you have to take  
the long way, and you miss  
your train.**

**ADD 5 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

**C**

## 6 - Transportation

**Two of your children are  
squirming like mad and are  
impossible to buckle into  
the car seats.**

**ADD 2 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.**

**D**

## 7 - Traveling

**The bus is full and you don't get a seat – it's a rough ride.**

**ADD 1 PENNY TO YOUR STACK, THEN TAKE 3 FULL STEPS WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED.**

# A

## 7 - Traveling

**You sit next to the smelliest human ever on the subway. Suddenly, you're not feeling so good.**

**ADD 6 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK, THEN TAKE 3 FULL STEPS WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED.**

# B

## 7 - Traveling

**Traffic is backed up for miles, but you get to take the commuter lane which is smooth sailing. You're going to make it to the Museum in record time!**

**REMOVE 3 PENNIES FROM YOUR STACK, THEN TAKE 3 FULL STEPS WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED.**

# C

## 7 - Traveling

**For the 8,000th time your children demand that you play that terrible children's CD that you hate. It'll be stuck in your head all day.**

**ADD 1 PENNY TO YOUR STACK, THEN TAKE 3 FULL STEPS WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED.**

# D



## 8 - At the Museum

**It's raining and the line is out the door.**

**ADD 5 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.  
HAND THE RULER OFF TO A  
TEAMMATE, WITHOUT  
SUPPORTING THE PENNIES. THIS  
TEAMMATE WILL FINISH THE RACE**

# A

## 8 - At the Museum

**You're having fun playing with your kids, then you get the call that the baby sitter canceled tonight. You have to get on the phone right now and scramble to find someone else.**

**ADD 5 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.  
HAND THE RULER OFF TO A  
TEAMMATE, WITHOUT  
SUPPORTING THE PENNIES. THIS  
TEAMMATE WILL FINISH THE RACE**

# B

## 8 - At the Museum

**The line is long and the diaper is smelly...sigh.**

**ADD 5 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.  
HAND THE RULER OFF TO A  
TEAMMATE, WITHOUT  
SUPPORTING THE PENNIES. THIS  
TEAMMATE WILL FINISH THE RACE**

# C

## 8 - At the Museum

**Your credit card is declined... you're very embarrassed. Good thing you brought cash.**

**ADD 5 PENNIES TO YOUR STACK.  
HAND THE RULER OFF TO A  
TEAMMATE, WITHOUT  
SUPPORTING THE PENNIES. THIS  
TEAMMATE WILL FINISH THE RACE**

# D

## **9 - LOST CHILD!**

**Your child has run off and you can't find them! A Museum employee has located them back at the Museum information desk.**

**HEAD BACK TO THE BEGINNING TO REUNITE WITH YOUR CHILD AND COMPLETE YOUR DAY!**

# A

## **9 - LOST CHILD!**

**Your child has run off and you can't find them! A Museum employee has located them back at the Museum information desk.**

**HEAD BACK TO THE BEGINNING TO REUNITE WITH YOUR CHILD AND COMPLETE YOUR DAY!**

# B

## **9 - LOST CHILD!**

**Your child has run off and you can't find them! A Museum employee has located them back at the Museum information desk.**

**HEAD BACK TO THE BEGINNING TO REUNITE WITH YOUR CHILD AND COMPLETE YOUR DAY!**

# C

## **9 - LOST CHILD!**

**Your child has run off and you can't find them! A Museum employee has located them back at the Museum information desk.**

**HEAD BACK TO THE BEGINNING TO REUNITE WITH YOUR CHILD AND COMPLETE YOUR DAY!**

# D



A

The image consists of a 2x2 grid of squares, each with a different pattern and color. The top-left square (A) has a light gray background with a repeating pattern of small, dark gray, stylized waves. The top-right square (B) has a light green background with a repeating pattern of small, dark green, stylized diamonds. The bottom-left square (C) has a light purple background with a repeating pattern of small, dark purple, stylized circles. The bottom-right square (D) has a light blue background with a repeating pattern of small, dark blue, stylized waves. Each square is labeled with a large, bold, black letter in the center: 'A' for the top-left, 'B' for the top-right, 'C' for the bottom-left, and 'D' for the bottom-right. The letters are positioned in the lower half of each square.

B

C

D



## ***Standards of Engagement Behaviors***

The following 54 pages contain the ***Standards of Engagement Behaviors*** for the “Sorting Standards and Behaviors” activity. Print these pages and cut out each of the sentences along the dotted line. Keep these behaviors organized according to the standards they fall under. You will NOT need to cut out and use the Standards titles (ex. “Standards 1: Ourselves as Invitation).

## **Standards of Engagement Behaviors**

Print out these pages and cut out each of the sentences along the dotted line. These are the Standards of Engagement Behaviors. Keep these behaviors organized according to the standards they fall under. You will NOT need to cut out and use the Standards titles (ex. "Standards 1: Ourselves as Invitation).

# **Standard 1: Ourselves as Invitation**

-----

I interact with caregivers and children from the time they arrive.

-----

I learn about the programs being offered on the days I work and share information about the content and the age range with visitors.

-----

-----

To help visitors find fitting and available exhibits, I explain what they are about and who they were designed for.

-----

My appearance is appropriate for a family audience and clearly identifies me as part of the museum staff.

-----

-----

I smile and make eye contact with adults in order to be friendly and approachable.

-----

When conducting programs or standing in an exhibit, I look like I am happy to be there.

-----

-----

I speak directly with adult visitors when they are close by (ex. during programs or when they are watching their child).

-----

If I don't speak a family's language, I smile, make eye contact, and use gestures to show them they are welcome.

-----

# **Standard 2: Fun**



-----

I invite visitors to play, and I share  
information about how fun the Museum is.

-----

I let visitors take the lead in what they want  
to do and how they want to do it.

-----

-----

I am engaged and engaging with visitors,  
and I show that I am enjoying the process of  
playing with them.

-----

When appropriate, I use props or exhibit  
elements to invite visitors to approach and  
play with me.

-----

-----

I am ready to facilitate high-quality programs that are intrinsically memorable, surprising, and/or multi-sensory.

-----

I find ways to make activities inviting and engaging and, when appropriate, exciting.

-----

-----

If a visitor does not seem to be enjoying themselves, I talk with them about their interests, and then suggest other opportunities in the museum.

-----

I model ways that grown-ups can share in the fun.

-----

# **Standard 3: Environment as Invitation**

-----

When working in an exhibit space, I clean and reset it at least once an hour and more often as needed.

-----

I make sure there is seating in my programs and exhibits (chairs, pillows, rugs) so that children and adults can sit near each other.

-----

-----

I set up for programs so that the space or table looks inviting, including elements such as tablecloths, achievable sample products, containers for supplies and signage.

-----

Programs for which I am responsible begin at their advertised time.

-----

-----

I listen respectfully and actively to families' opinions or concerns about exhibits or programs; I respond by letting them know they have been heard; and I follow up as needed (call in other staff, adjust the activity, etc.).

-----



-----

I make sure the program materials are  
clean, work the way they are supposed to,  
and are well laid out.

-----

# **Standard 4: Nurturing the Adult-Child Bond**

---

When facilitating an activity, I'm aware of roles caregivers can play including ways they can support their child's learning, engage in the activity themselves, or actively observe.

---

-----

I directly invite caregivers to participate,  
and I give them permission to choose if they  
want to interact with their child, play  
themselves, or observe their child playing.

-----

---

When facilitating an activity, I include  
information, conversation and/or humor  
aimed at the adult visitors.

---

-----

I support families when children and/or caregivers are having a difficult time in the museum (e.g., tantrums, wet clothing, accidents, etc).

-----

---

I provide “just-in-time” information to caregivers—tips or ideas that can help caregivers better support children’s learning in that moment (e.g., Children who are just learning to use scissors should keep their thumbs up to get a more efficient cut).

---

# **Standard 5: Respect for Families' Cultures**



-----

I am welcoming and I speak and act  
comfortably with persons from all  
cultural/racial/ethnic groups.

-----

I am aware of my own cultural assumptions  
when observing how families interact  
within the museum.

-----

-----

When talking with my colleagues, I speak in respectful and accepting ways about the actions of visitors from different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.

-----

I respect caregivers' decisions about how and when they interact with their child.

-----

---

I modify activities and situations to allow visitors to participate regardless of their cultural beliefs and practices (for instance, turning off music during an activity if requested, providing space for afternoon prayers, etc.).

---

-----

When I see the opportunity, I invite visitors to share first hand experiences that reflect their culture and background.

-----

I respect families' personal space while offering support that can enhance their interactions and activities.

-----

# **Standard 6: Exemplary Play and Learning Facilitation**

-----

I follow visitors' leads and cues, knowing when and how to intervene to support play, learning, safety, enjoyment—I know when to step in and when not to interrupt.

-----

I observe visitors interacting before interacting with them.

-----

-----

When leading an activity within the museum, I am aware of what behaviors, prompts, hints, and questions will support visitors' play and learning.

-----

When leading an activity or program I invite the whole family to participate together.

-----

-----

When in an exhibit in the museum, I can talk about the learning that occurs through play and have strategies to enable visitors to get the most from the experience.

-----

I guide visitors in exhibits/during programs so that everyone can be successful.

-----



-----

I recognize and make use of teachable moments—times when children are ready for more challenge or to make a connection.

-----

-----

I actively listen to what children have to say,  
asking open-ended questions that help  
them form connections to prior knowledge  
and form new connections.

-----

-----

If I don't speak a family's language, I use gestures and demonstration to aid them in interacting with an exhibit or activity.

-----

I redirect play if it's unsafe/inappropriate, providing positive alternatives and seeing families through the transition.

-----

# **Standard 7: Play and Learning for All**

-----

When leading an activity, I adapt it to children who are at different levels of expertise or need different entry points.

-----

When leading an activity, I rephrase instructions to enable visitors with different abilities to understand the task.

-----

-----

During activities, I help participants monitor progress, noting their accomplishments at different points.

-----

I adjust activities up or down so that every visitor can be successful and challenged.

-----

-----

I adapt activities for children and families  
who do not speak my language.

-----

When possible, I use various forms of  
communication to invite visitors to engage  
(sight, language, music, smell, touch,  
movement, etc.).

-----

-----

I am prepared with adaptive materials and strategies to assist visitors with disabilities throughout the museum.

-----

I use “people-first language” in talking to and about others (*e.g. “Girl who uses a wheelchair, rather than “wheelchair girl”*).

-----



-----

If/when I develop an activity or program, I consider children's varied learning styles and needs.

-----

If/when I train others on an activity or program, I identify multiple entry points and adaptations for visitors with disabilities.

-----

# **Standard 8: Making Learning Visible**

-----

I have friendly and informal ways to explain the developmental and educational importance of play to adult caregivers.

-----

I share my own excitement about children's achievements with everyone in the family including the child and caregiver.

-----

-----

I can speak knowledgeably about the connection between play and learning in the context of each exhibit and program.

-----

I look for ways to showcase learning (ex. saving and sharing examples or writing down children's words about their process).

-----

-----

I use conversation to enable caregivers to see and appreciate children's learning as well as their important role in that learning.

-----

---

I spark conversations among family members, asking questions like “Did you ever do this when you were a child?” “Why do you think your mom is smiling right now?”

---

# **Standard 9: Extending Learning Beyond the Museum**

-----

I create personal connections with families,  
understanding how important this can be to  
learning.

-----

I suggest follow-up activities to visitors that  
use affordable/available items, especially  
things they might have in their own homes.

-----



-----

If/when I develop a program or activity, I look for ways to extend beyond the visit, including take-home products, and intrinsically memorable experiences.

-----

I help visitors put words to their experiences.

-----

# **Standard 10: Reflective Practice**

-----

I examine and assess my own behaviors and skills.

-----

I build upon my strengths and seek to improve my weaknesses.

-----

-----

If I'm in a position to supervise or mentor others, I give them opportunities to reflect on their own performance and to set their own goals.

-----

I am open to constructive feedback from others.

-----

-----

I am always looking for ways to improve my performance.

-----

I learn and grow from mistakes, misunderstandings or awkward interactions with visitors by assessing what happened and determining how I can improve.

-----

-----

I take time each day to evaluate my facilitation and interactions with visitors in light of my goals for myself and the mission of the museum.

-----

I know my own personal “style” of engaging with families, and I play to my strengths.

-----

-----

I set goals for professional development and participate in determining the best strategies for my growth.

-----

I share my reflections about my performance with my supervisor and ask for help and support.

-----

-----

If I'm in a position to supervise or mentor others, I ask them how I can best help them grow.

-----



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